

The Effectiveness of Acupuncture, Tai Chi, and Aromatherapy in the Management of Chronic Pain and Mental Illness.

Trinh Hoang, Neil Jones, Hannah Schumann, Uyen Tran

Faculty: Corey Rogers

Department of Physician Assistant, College of Health Professions

While the standard of care in Western medicine was established after substantial research, alternative medicine offers a more holistic approach at treating the human body as a whole functioning unit. As the fear of opioid addiction, adverse side effects to medications, and drug inefficacy continues to grow, many patients may find themselves looking into treatments outside of prescription medicines. Primary health care providers should continue to participate in the care of the patient by participating in a discussion on alternative methods that may possibly bring relief and improve quality of life for the patient. Acupuncture, Tai Chi, and aromatherapy are alternative methods that have been studied in the management of chronic pain and mental illnesses. Acupuncture involves the insertion of small needles into specific points on the body aiming to restore balance in the energy flow. Tai Chi is a traditional form of exercise involving slow body movements and deep breathing to improve the overall health of the body. Aromatherapy utilizes plant-based oils, either topically or via inhalation, to relax the mind. Current research on these three alternative methods are controversial and inconsistent; however, studies on safety have consistently shown low risk for any significant adverse reactions. In order to initiate the discussion of these alternative methods, primary care providers must understand the mechanism of action, efficacy, and the risks and benefits of each individual method, as discussed in this project with the most up to date research.