

# RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

## Can Acupuncture Help Fatigue?

**Associate Professor Caroline Smith from the Centre for Complementary Medicine will be evaluating the use of acupuncture as a treatment method for fatigue for women undergoing cancer treatments. This research has been funded through a Research Innovation Grant from the Cancer Institute NSW.**

'Breast cancer has quickly become the most common form of cancer for women in Australia' says Associate Professor Smith. 'With the advances in medical knowledge, screening programs and self-detection, the survival rate for breast cancer has increased. However, the side effects of many chemotherapies involved in treating breast cancer can be unpleasant - fatigue, nausea, vomiting - and dangerous, for example, bone marrow suppression. Our study will be looking at how one of these side effects, fatigue, may be treated and managed with complementary medicines, such as acupuncture'.

Women between the ages of 18 and 70 who have completed chemotherapy at least one month previously and are experiencing moderate levels of fatigue will be part of the three group study trial. The first group will receive traditional acupuncture, the second will receive placebo acupuncture, and a third group will act as a control and be allocated to a wait list control: the women randomly assigned to this group will not receive any treatment during the six week period but will be able to have some acupuncture on completion of their involvement in the study. All women will be asked to complete a brief "fatigue inventory" at the second, fourth and sixth week and a MYMOP (Measure Yourself Medical Outcome Profile, which is a patient-generated problem-specific questionnaire) on the sixth week. Following this, eight women will be randomly selected (from the first and second group) to participate in in-depth interviews to explore the range of effects and outcomes that they have experienced and to understand what effects they value and why.



As the rates of breast cancer continue to rise among Australian women, early detection and chemotherapy remain the best methods of survival. This study will aid in decreasing one of the more challenging symptoms of chemotherapy and help women recover from their cancer treatment faster and more efficiently.

**Project Title:** Randomised controlled trial of acupuncture to reduce fatigue post breast cancer treatment: a pilot study

**Funding has been set at:** \$49,697

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<http://www.uws.edu.au/complemed>

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