Accepted Manuscript

Title: Is Acupuncture a Placebo Therapy?

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PII: S0965-2299(14)00069-7

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.ctim.2014.05.005

Reference: YCTIM 1343

To appear in: Complementary Therapies in Medicine

Received date: 20-11-2013 Revised date: 30-4-2014 Accepted date: 6-5-2014

Please cite this article as: Zheng Y-c, Yuan T-t, Liu T, Is Acupuncture a Placebo Therapy?, *Complementary Therapies in Medicine* (2014), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ctim.2014.05.005

Complementary Therapies in Medicine

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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Is Acupuncture a Placebo Therapy?

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Abstract

Complementary therapies such as acupuncture are suggested to have enhanced placebo effects. Numerous high quality randomized controlled trials found that acupuncture is no better than its placebo control, however patients in both real and sham acupuncture groups report clinically meaningful symptom improvements. A possible interpretation of these trials is that acupuncture acts entirely by engaging placebo mechanisms. This article provides further evidence supporting that acupuncture might be a potent placebo, and explains how to address major concerns following this suggestion.

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