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Acupuncture for cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy: Protocol for a programme of research

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Abstract

Introduction: Cancer patients experience a range of symptoms associated with their cancer and its treatment. Research suggests that acupuncture delivered under trial conditions may be an effective intervention for some such problems. This paper reports a protocol for a research programme to assess the feasibility of implementing and evaluating acupuncture embedded in the radiotherapy service of an academic medical centre.

The aims of the study are to examine the feasibility of acupuncture being delivered within the radiotherapy department by specially trained therapy radiographers when patients attend for treatment. The programme will culminate in a feasibility randomised controlled trial: Acupuncture for cancer patients undergoing Radiotherapy Treatment (ART).

Methods: The programme will use multiple methods: a systematic review and quality evaluation of the literature; expert consensus on model validity of the acupuncture intervention; implementation of a customised training course in acupuncture for therapy radiographers. The programme will culminate in a feasibility randomised clinical trial.

ART will investigate aspects of the feasibility of a possible definitive clinical trial of acupuncture. Aspects to be investigated include processes, resources, interventions, procedures, model validity and safety of the acupuncture intervention, and quantitative and qualitative patient outcomes, in the UCLH radiotherapy department.

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