

## Acupuncture for Major Depressive Disorders: A Systematic Review of the Randomized Clinical Trials

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**Abstract :** Background: Acupuncture, a potential alternative, and complementary therapy revealed insufficient evidence in depression treatment. The efficacy of acupuncture treatment was still uncertainty. To evaluate the effect of acupuncture in treating depression, the randomized controlled trials (RCTs) were examined. Methods: RCTs of the acupuncture therapy in treating major depression were searched from MEDLINE from 2007 to 2017. Keywords used for searching strategy included acupuncture, acupoint, and major depressive disorder. Results: Among the nine RCTs, four studies demonstrated great improvement in acupuncture treatment and five studies revealed the effectiveness of acupuncture intervention in medication. General trends suggest that acupuncture treatment is as effective as antidepressants with minimal side effects. Conclusion: Despite the promising results from the RCTs, there are still a variety of limitations, including small sample size, imprecise enrollment criteria, difficulties with blinding, randomization, short duration of study and lack of longitudinal follow-up. Therefore, the evidence that acupuncture as an alternative therapy for depression is inconclusive. More rigorously designed RCTs should be conducted in the future.

**Keywords :** acupuncture, major depressive disorders, randomized clinical trials, antidepressants

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