

## SELF-EFFICACY, SELF-ESTEEM, AND ACUPUNCTURE USE AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO MENTAL HEALTH IN HIV+ ADULTS

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People living with HIV/AIDS (PLH) struggle to cope with and some turn to non-traditional methods. PLH have more stressors than average people due to additional physical and mental demands of HIV/AIDS. This study examined associations between stressors (HIV), personal variables (self-esteem, self-efficacy) and an alternative coping strategy (use of acupuncture) with mental health.

Participants in this self-report, cross-sectional study were recruited from AIDS Service Organizations in Texas. Inclusion criteria were an HIV+ status and use of some complementary/alternative medicine. The gender-balanced sample was diverse (N=40, with 65% African American, 30% Caucasian, 5% Hispanic) and ranged in age from 31 to 61 (M=46,SD=7). Acupuncture use was reported by 27.5% of participants.

Relationships between self-esteem (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale), self-efficacy (Self-Efficacy for Managing Chronic Disease scale), acupuncture use and mental health (MOS-HIV) were examined. Regression analysis ( $\text{adj.}R^2 = .55$  [ $F(3,36) = 16.6, p = .000$ ]) suggests that self-efficacy ( $t = 4.6, p < .001$ ) and self-esteem ( $t = 2.5, p < .05$ ) are positively correlated to mental health. However, acupuncture use ( $t = -2.96, p < .01$ ) is inversely related to mental health.

The findings that both self-esteem and self-efficacy are positively associated with mental health support the study's hypotheses, however the inverse relationship between acupuncture use and mental health was surprising and did not confirm our hypothesis. One explanation is that participants who experienced severe mental distress sought out non-traditional therapies in desperation and may not be representative of people who use acupuncture. Nonetheless, clinicians should be cognizant that acupuncture as a coping strategy for HIV+ adults may not be associated with enhanced mental health.