



**CONTACT:** Susan Manko

**PHONE:** 412-647-3555

**FAX:** 412-624-3184

**E-MAIL:** [mankosm@upmc.edu](mailto:mankosm@upmc.edu)

## **PITT SEEKING OLDER ADULTS WITH CHRONIC KNEE PAIN AND OSTEOARTHRITIS TO STUDY THE EFFICACY OF ACUPUNCTURE**

**PITTSBURGH, Sept. 28, 2004** – The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine is seeking men and women age 65 and older with chronic knee pain and osteoarthritis to participate in a National Institutes of Health-funded research study to explore the efficacy of an alternative form of pain treatment – osteoacupuncture. The study is taking place at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center’s (UPMC) Pain Evaluation and Treatment Institute.

“More than 20 million older Americans are affected by the pain and difficulty with immobility associated with knee osteoarthritis,” said Debra Weiner, M.D., principal investigator of the study and associate professor of medicine, psychiatry and anesthesiology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Osteoarthritis (OA) is a chronic disease characterized by the destruction of cartilage in the joints, especially weight-bearing joints, causing painful bone-on-bone wear and tear.

“While oral medication is the mainstay of treatment for chronic pain associated with knee OA, non-responders with limiting co-morbidities such as kidney and heart conditions, may have few therapeutic alternatives,” said Dr. Weiner. “In this study, we will investigate the feasibility, effectiveness and duration of treatment response of a complementary medicine technique, osteoacupuncture, with which we have had positive clinical experience. This technique is thought to be more potent than traditional Chinese acupuncture, and we are very excited about its potential to help those suffering from chronic knee pain.”



The researchers will assess pain reduction and pain-related outcomes, including physical function limitations, postural instability, sleep disturbance, use of health care resources, psychosocial disability and reduced appetite.

The study calls for the enrollment of 88 men and women age 65 and older with persistent knee pain and x-ray evidence of OA with no current evidence or history of other rheumatological disorders, knee surgery or prominent pain in sites other than the knee. Study participants will be assigned randomly to one of two groups; all participants will have acupuncture needles placed in their knees and receive electrical stimulation for up to 30 minutes. The intervention will be administered for 30 minutes, once a week, for six weeks.

Prior to initiating treatment, within one week of the last treatment session and three months later, the following parameters will be assessed: pain severity, self-reported disability, physical performance, psychosocial function as defined by mood, self-efficacy, self-rated health, coping and pain-related fear, sleep and appetite reduction.

“If this exploratory study demonstrates that osteoacupuncture is feasible and effective in reducing the chronic pain associated with knee OA, future studies will then be designed to explore its mechanism of action and include physical reconditioning to optimize the function and quality of life for older adults with this prevalent and disabling disease,” Dr. Weiner added.

The National Institute on Aging is funding the study. Other investigators are Ronald Glick, M.D.; Ken Kwoh, M.D.; and Thomas Rudy, Ph.D.

Another clinical research study of acupuncture underway at UPMC’s Pain Evaluation and Treatment Institute explores an alternative treatment option for chronic low-back pain called percutaneous electrical nerve stimulation.

For more information about these studies and to learn details of enrollment qualifications, please call (412) 665-8050 or the University of Pittsburgh Institute on Aging (UPIA) toll-free at 1-866-430-8742. The UPIA strives to



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improve the health of older adults by linking and enhancing research, education and clinical programs offered by the University of Pittsburgh, UPMC and other private, public and government institutions.