

Acupuncture for cancer survivors

Beverley de Valois PhD LicAc

Acupuncture can support cancer survivors to deal with the physical, psychological, and social consequences of cancer treatments and help them to live well again.



Up to 25% of cancer survivors experience long term consequences of cancer and its treatments, which may not be addressed by their healthcare system.



Acupuncture is a safe, evidence-based therapy recommended by oncologists to help relieve complex consequences of cancer treatment.



Acupuncture is a non-pharmacological intervention that can empower patients to manage the transition from cancer treatment to the new normal of life after cancer treatment.



Acupuncture should be part of the multi-disciplinary care of cancer survivors, supporting them in the 'new normal' of life after cancer treatment.



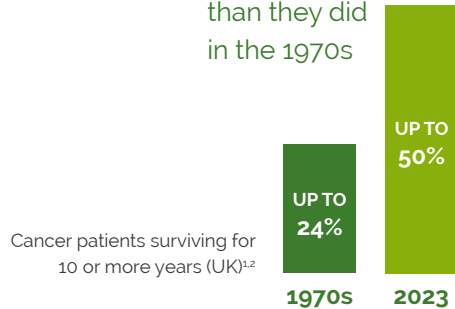
Cancer survivors who faced complex after-effects of cancer and its treatments **report dramatic improvements in their lives following acupuncture.**

Half of cancer survivors live in fear of their cancer returning, with up to a quarter living with at least one long-term consequence of treatment. Many survivors continue to suffer, as most GPs (64%) have not received training in how to deal with these symptoms. Acupuncture has potential for wide-ranging and long-term benefits for cancer survivors.



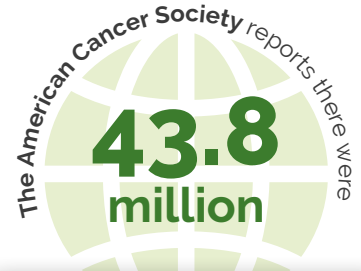
Up to 25% of cancer survivors experience long term consequences of cancer and its treatments, which may not be addressed by their healthcare system.

People now live longer after a cancer diagnosis than they did in the 1970s



3 million currently survivors in the UK

4 million predicted to rise to by 2030.³



Common consequences of cancer and its treatments:

PHYSICAL
 PSYCHOLOGICAL
 SPIRITUAL
 EXISTENTIAL



Many survivors are told that nothing can be done to alleviate their symptoms and that they need to learn to live with them.

1. Cancer Research UK, Cancer survival statistics for all cancers combined. 2014, Available at <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/survival/all-cancers-combined#heading-Zero> [Accessed November 24 2021].
 2. More people are surviving cancer but what's it like to live with the side effects? ([thetimes.co.uk](https://www.thetimes.co.uk))
 3. American Cancer Society, The cancer atlas. 2019, Available at <https://canceratlas.cancer.org/the-burden-cancer-survivorship/> [Accessed June 15 2023].
 4. Macmillan Cancer Support, Statistics fact sheet. 2021, Available at https://www.macmillan.org.uk/_images/cancer-statistics-factsheet_tcm9-260514.pdf [Accessed June 22].

Acupuncture is a safe, evidence-based therapy recommended by oncologists to help relieve complex consequences of cancer treatment.

The mechanisms for acupuncture have been researched for

>60 years¹



Numerous studies report acupuncture to be

a safe intervention,

with few serious adverse events.⁹

transient bleeding / pain at the needle site
mild bruising
drowsiness
headache
local skin irritation
light-headedness
fainting¹⁰

Acupuncture can support recovery, improve health and wellbeing, and facilitate a return to active living. **At its most**

powerful, acupuncture treatment can be the catalyst for a process of transformation and profound renewal.¹¹



Research studies show

Acupuncture can help alleviate:⁵

- Chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN),²
- Xerostomia,³
- Fatigue,⁴
- Hot flushes associated with hormonal treatments for breast and prostate cancers⁵

The evidence base for acupuncture is sufficiently robust for prestigious oncology organisations to recommend acupuncture as a treatment option.

2022

Acupuncture recommended for aromatase inhibitor (AI)-related joint pain, CIPN, and for general cancer pain.⁶

2017

Acupuncture recommended for anxiety, chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting (CINV); depression/mood disturbance, fatigue, pain, quality of life, vasomotor symptoms.⁷

2013

Acupuncture recommended for nausea and vomiting from either chemotherapy or radiation therapy; cancer related pain, and CIPN.⁸

1. Koppelman M, *Acupuncture: An overview of scientific evidence*. no date. Available at <https://www.evidencebasedacupuncture.org/acupuncture-scientific-evidence/> [Accessed June 26]
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3. Simcock R, Fallowfield L, Monson K, et al. *ARIX: A randomised trial of acupuncture v oral care sessions in patients with chronic xerostomia following treatment of head and neck cancer*. *Annals of Oncology*. 2013; 24(3): p. 776-783 %R 10.1093/annonc/mds515.
4. Molassiotis A, Bardy J, Finnegan-John J, et al. *Acupuncture for cancer-related fatigue in patients with breast cancer: a pragmatic randomized controlled trial*. *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. 2012; 30(36): p. 4470-4476.
5. Frisk JW, Hammar ML, Ingvar M, et al. *How long do the effects of acupuncture on hot flashes persist in cancer patients?* *Supportive Care in Cancer*. 2014; 22(5): p. 1409-1415.
6. Mao JJ, Ismaila N, Bao T, et al. *Integrative Medicine for Pain Management in Oncology: Society for Integrative Oncology-ASCO Guideline*. *J Clin Oncol*. 2022: p. JCO2201357.
7. Greenlee H, DuPont-Reyes MJ, Balneaves LG, et al. *Clinical practice guidelines on the evidence-based use of integrative therapies during and after breast cancer treatment*. *CA Cancer J Clin*. 2017; 67(3): p. 194-232.
8. Deng G, Rausch SM, Jones LW, et al. *Complementary therapies and integrative medicine in lung cancer*. *CHEST (May 2013 Supplement)*. 2013; 143(5): p. e4205-e436S.
9. Bäuml P, Zhang W, Stübinger T, et al. *Acupuncture-related adverse events: systematic review and meta-analyses of prospective clinical studies*. *BMJ Open*. 2021; 11(9): p. e045961.
10. Cancer Research UK. *Acupuncture*. 2022. Available at <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/treatment/complementary-alternative-therapies/individual-therapies/acupuncture> [Accessed 14 June].
11. de Valois B. *Acupuncture and cancer survivorship: Recovery, renewal and transformation*. 2023. London: Singing Dragon.

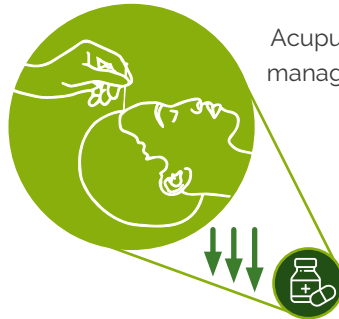




Acupuncture is a non-pharmacological intervention that can empower patients to manage the transition from cancer treatment to the new normal of life after cancer treatment.



Acupuncture offers a non-pharmacological approach, which sometimes **equals the effectiveness of conventional drugs**.^{1,2}



Acupuncture used in the management of pain can

reduce the need for analgesics



Drug treatment has more side effects, so you give a drug, and you give a drug to help with a drug, and where do you stop? And what you don't want to do is to be giving these patients any more drug treatment – they've had enough. [To] offer them a treatment that does not involve drugs which is effective is extremely valuable.

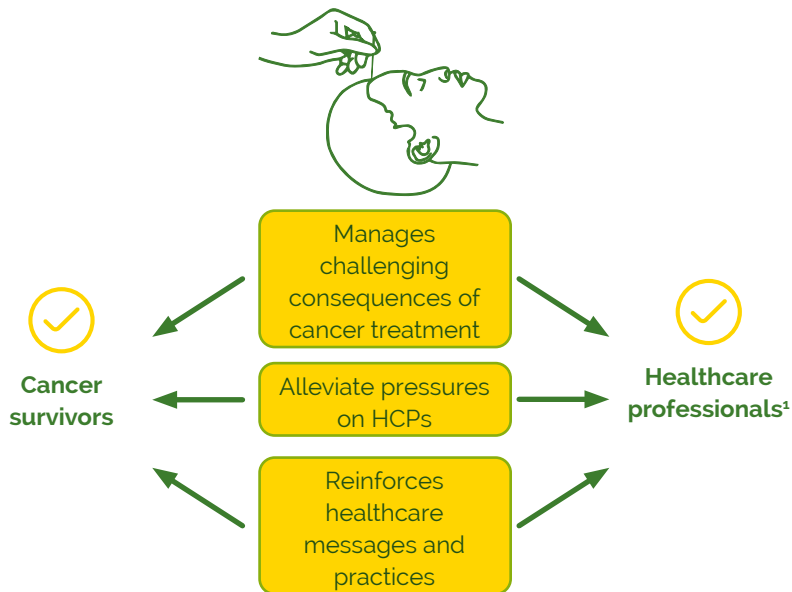
DR RICHARD ASHFORD

Clinical Oncologist Breast Cancer (retired)
Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.⁴

Acupuncture can give cancer survivors a **safe space**, which allows them to process the physical and emotional trauma of a cancer diagnosis and treatment.

1. Walker EM, Rodriguez AI, Kohn B, et al. Acupuncture versus venlafaxine for the management of vasomotor symptoms in patients with hormone receptor-positive breast cancer: a randomized controlled trial. *J Clin Oncol*. 2010. 28(4): p. 634-40.
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4. British Acupuncture Council, *To the Point Trailer*, 2023 video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15sFjy6gtfM>
5. de Valois B. *Supporting resilience and the immune system, in Acupuncture and cancer survivorship: Recovery, renewal and transformation*. 2023, Singing Dragon: London.

Acupuncture should be part of the multi-disciplinary care of cancer survivors, supporting them in the 'new normal' of life after cancer treatment.



I have regularly seen how helpful, and sometimes life-changing, supportive therapies like acupuncture can be for people after a diagnosis of cancer.

DR CATHERINE ZOLLMAN

NHS GP and former Medical Lead of the cancer charity Penny Brohn UK

What would be the benefit (of acupuncture) to the NHS?
The benefit to me is that I have happier patients and I could see more patients ... I could speed the throughput of patients. Patients that are happy patients need less of my time. They also need less in the way of drug treatment. They will go to their GPs less often. And that's beside the moral and ethical issues of returning people to their lives after they've been treated, which is what we do as doctors. Our job is to return these people to their normal lives ... we want them to be better. I think this is an important political point that needs to be made clear, that here is an area that could be delivered cheaply and benefit patients in many ways as well as making it easier to run a health service.

DR RICHARD ASHFORD

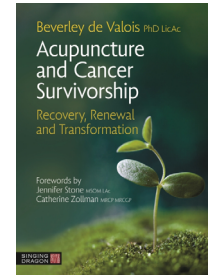
Clinical Oncologist Breast Cancer (retired)
Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.²

1. Fenlon D, Morgan A, Khambaita P, et al., *Management of hot flushes in UK breast cancer patients: clinician and patient perspectives*. J Psychosom Obstet Gynaecol, 2017, 38(4): p. 276-283.
2. British Acupuncture Council, World Cancer Day 2020, video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzeeSfYwd40>



Cancer survivors who faced complex after-effects of cancer and its treatments report dramatic improvements in their lives following acupuncture.

Beverley de Valois PhD, author of 'Acupuncture and Cancer Survivorship; Recovery, Renewal and Transformation', is Researcher in Integrative Medicine in the Supportive Oncology Research Team at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre in Middlesex. She has worked with cancer survivors in the NHS for over two decades, undertaking and publishing a series of well-designed and highly informative acupuncture studies. She has collected empirical evidence from many cancer survivors,^{3,4} who report that:



Cancer survivors report poorer health and wellbeing

than those living with other chronic conditions.¹

Many experience complex consequences

of cancer treatments.²



Many cancer survivors say that "acupuncture has given me my life back"

They 'feel normal again' and that acupuncture has given them hope and a sense of wellbeing

Increased energy is one of the major benefits of acupuncture

Acupuncture has empowered them to take back control of their lives

1. Elliott J, Fallows A, Staetsky L, et al., *The health and well-being of cancer survivors in the UK: findings from a population-based study*. British Journal of Cancer, 2011. **105**, p. S11-S20.
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3. de Valois B, Asprey A, and Young T, "The monkey on your shoulder": a qualitative study of lymphoedema patients' attitudes to and experiences of acupuncture and moxibustion. Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine, 2016. Article ID 4298420.
4. de Valois B, *Acupuncture and cancer survivorship: Recovery, renewal and transformation*. 2023, London: Singing Dragon.