

THE ROLE OF ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT IN THE AWAKENING
OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS: A PRELIMINARY
SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Purposes: This study addressed the potential impact of acupuncture on human consciousness through the systematic review of meditation and acupuncture studies. If relationships can be formed between the established benefits of meditation and acupuncture with measurable brainwave states, perhaps this could be a contribution to understanding some of the inherent benefits of acupuncture reported by patients, but not yet quantified. Some of the benefits may be related to mental-emotional health.

Methods: There is paucity in the available literature investigating the benefits of acupuncture and mental-emotional health; therefore, this study provides a preliminary systematic review of literature. The study examined the phenomenological benefits of acupuncture by comparing scientific studies examining brain states, using fMRI and EEG, of acupuncture subjects, with studies examining brain states of meditation subjects, to see if there is a correlation between the state and trait changes identified between the two.

Findings: The data revealed an increase in activity in regions of the brain that were implicated in both the acupuncture and meditation studies. Regions of the brain associated with the processing of mood, emotions, and changes in behavior, such as the insula, hippocampus, amygdala, posterior cingulate cortex, and prefrontal cortex, were implicated in both the acupuncture, as well as the meditation studies.

Conclusions: The decrease in default mode network activity seen in both meditation state and trait studies, as well as acupuncture state studies, implies that one key overlap between these two phenomena (meditation and acupuncture) is the decrease in the normal “self-narrative” process mediated through the default mode network.