

Supplement 6. Experience of acupuncture treatment

"Well, you're relaxing anyway, in as much as you're just lying there. ... You're talking to him and you're passing the time of day and you're relaxing while he's doing it... I didn't feel any different at all....You're lying down and my ankles, elbows, and things like that and I didn't see what he was actually doing. And I'm just lying there passing the time of day, if you like. And at the end of it, I must admit, I didn't feel any different whatsoever.... There was nothing there that was to dislike. As I say, it was just really, well, it was a morning out." (p2,M,acu)

"100 times better. Not that I dislike my GP, I think he's fantastic, but you know, I've had counselling over the years and a lot of the problem was I did child protection work for most of my working life and eventually I became so depressed with it and I think this, you know, it's not talking it's treatment you go and have done like a physical treatment. ... I think that's really positive. And a lot more positive than talking to your GP. I think you get to the stage where you've just had enough discussion with people. You just want to feel better.... It made me feel better almost straight away. Whereas talking is a lot more emotional. It's taking a lot more emotion from you and it's also making you think and do things. Sometimes you don't want to do that, you just want to feel better."(p3,M,acu)

"I'm crippled with arthritis. I walk with a walking aid... It was the acupuncture, which was really good. And I really felt it helped. You know, and it also seemed to be doing my back pain good."(p6,F,acu)

"The very first session I had, I came home and I was utterly exhausted, for days... I just couldn't move one foot in front of another. It was really quite bizarre and I said to my husband, if this is what's going to happen every week, I really don't want to do this... I went back and I said, and she was lovely, because I think at first she thought I was not going to come any more. And I said, it made me so tired, please is there something you can do. And she said, oh yes, you could adjust – I don't know, whatever it was she could adjust – and after that I never felt that wretched again. I was absolutely fine... But as soon as I told her and she adjusted things it's never happened again." (p7,F,acu)

"I found that quite from the outset, you know, I soon got to think, oh, I think I'm feeling better. Quite quickly... with some people it works and I was getting a lot from it, while I was having it.... It was absolutely fine for maybe a couple of days, I felt, oh I'm getting better. But then as I stopped it, I thought, I don't feel -- for me, I think it would have to be an ongoing thing."(p8,F,acu)

"It has helped me realise now when I'm getting depressed. It's just something trivial that's set me off and it's not such a big deal after all. I can work around that. And I think without the trial, I don't think I'd be where I am now." (p10,F,acu)

"I found I was coming out of the...building -- I don't know what you'd call it, in a more upbeat and elated manner. So for me personally, I have to say that I found the acupuncture to be a very positive thing in my life. It was something that I found made me feel an awful lot better in myself.... You have to ask yourself the question, does acupuncture work as a form of medicine. Or does some people fussing about your body give you a feel good factor?... I can't answer that... But I would say that I found acupuncture to be very positive in my life."(p12,M,acu)

"The actual process itself wasn't at all painful. Occasionally she'd hit a sort of - a stinging pain – which she always said was something to do with the meridian or some acupuncture explanation... Walking home from it a couple of times I did feel a bit, I won't say light headed, but slightly different." (p14,Macu)

"It was quite relaxing when I was having the treatment, to be honest, which I didn't think it would be. But once I got used to it, and once the needles went in and she left me, that was my time to ... that was my time to relax... I used to look forward to going." (p17,F,acu)

"It wasn't an explanation that made much sense to me in that it was about things like holding grief in your lungs or something -- what on earth does that mean?It just sounded like new-age nonsense, to be honest. It sounded unscientific, which I find very off-putting. You know, we need to respect the scientific method, it's how knowledge is acquired and it seemed to me that it wasn't expressed in terms that I could relate to in that kind of way.... on a kind of broader level it did seem to verge on the snake oil." (p19,F,acu)

"as the treatments went on, she sort of tried to give me more energy with different treatments. But then I was having problems with skin rashes and anxiety and things like that, so on other weeks she would treat me differently, depending on what happened that week, whether I'd been feeling more anxious or less anxious or more lethargic.... and she linked it to my menstrual cycle as well. Because when I was coming back in saying that I'd had a particularly bad week, she noticed before I did that that was probably PMS, which sounded really basic. I felt like a right idiot at the time, but obviously that kind of helped me at least find a reason for why..." (p20,F,acu)

"I think that made a big difference because I knew I could feel the treatment instantly. Once the needles were in I could feel it, so I think that really sort of got me feeling positive because I felt as if it was doing me something good within my body. It was really acting for me and working for me... I did feel different and I did feel then as if I wanted to go – you know, the more I'd been the more I wanted to go and have another session!" (p21,F,acu)