

## ABSTRACT

Complementary and alternative therapies and medicines (CAM), consist of a wide range of modalities including acupuncture, herbs, massage and aromatherapy. CAM is widely used by the general population with over 50 percent of the population using one form of CAM during the previous 12 month period. These therapies and medicines are provided in the private sector and are not generally accessible through Australia's health care system. Individuals use these modalities to treat a wide range of acute and chronic health problems, as well as to maintain health and wellbeing. However, it is increasingly well documented that patients do not disclose their use of complementary therapies to health professionals. Given the high prevalence of use of CAM in the community it is important that all members of the health care team become aware about the different methods of complementary medicines and increase their understanding of the possible benefits and limitations. This paper describes the application of acupuncture to treat painful symptoms of diabetic peripheral neuropathy. An explanation of this modality is provided along with an outline of the current evidence base, a discussion of safety and the physiological basis of acupuncture. The paper concludes with suggestions of how complementary medicine and allied health practitioners can work together towards a common goal of improving patient care and outcomes.

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