Cite this as: Nicola ROBINSON. Integrating acupuncture: are there positive health outcomes for women? *Journal of Zhejiang University-Science B (Biomedicine & Biotechnology)*, 18(3):233-238.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1631/jzus.B1600260

Integrating acupuncture: are there positive health outcomes for women?

Key words: Acupuncture; Women's health; Evidence-based medicine; Acupuncture mechanisms of action; Integration; Health outcomes

JZUS-B

This review explores whether the current evidence for the use of acupuncture to address health issues experienced by women is sufficient for its integration into western medical practice.

It acknowledges that:

- **Acupuncture is commonly used worldwide, particularly by women and in conjunction with western medicine**
- **Cochrane systematic reviews have suggested that acupuncture reduces period pain and may have a role in pain relief during labour**
- **Conversely, systematic reviews on acupuncture for assisted reproduction and reduction of hot flushes do not currently provide sufficient convincing evidence of acupuncture's effectiveness. This is primarily due to poor trial methodology**
- **Evidence for acupuncture is increasing but the quality of research needs to be improved which has compromised its wider integration**

Future integration will depend on:

- Acceptance by western medicine
- Understanding of the mechanism of action
- Researching patterns of acupuncture use and preferences in women
- Building the evidence base with well designed, double blind randomised controlled trials
- Designing pragmatic trials that mimic acupuncture practice
- Cost effectiveness data