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Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association Submission to the Productivity Commission on Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans

The Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association (AACMA) is pleased to be able to contribute this submission to the Productivity Commission's review of Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans.

Chinese medicine is a registered profession governed by the National Law under the auspices of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) which implements the regulations set down by the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (CMBA). AACMA has been representing the majority of registered Chinese medicine practitioners for the last 45 years.

Registered Chinese medicine practitioners are required to have attained a minimum 4 year Bachelor degree in order to gain registration and continue to undertake mandatory, yearly professional development to be able to re-register annually. They are recognised as allied health practitioners by AHPRA and **not** as natural therapists.

The Impact of Physical and Mental Work Related injury

Veterans and current serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel by the very nature of their jobs, are more at risk of work related injury.

Injury in this instance not only covers the physical stresses that impact on bodies on manoeuvres and in training while carrying considerable weight on their backs, but also the mental impact of serving in war zones as evidenced by post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As found by the Van Hoof et al study, 2018, one third of ADF members who left the the defence force reported high to very high psychological distress and a quarter fulfilled the criteria for PTSD.

The mental health issues that these personnel must also deal with when leaving the defence forces, are compounded when trying to find suitable employment and fit back into every day society.

The physical injuries sustained in the service of their country can be the main contributing factor for their need to resign or retire from, often, the only job they have known. This enforced resignation adds to the mental and emotional impact of the physical injury.

These are very real issues faced by our defence force personnel and with approximately 80,000 personnel employed by the three arms of the Defence Force at the end of 2017, the impact of work related injury is a huge cost to the Australian government and tax payer especially if the health services provided do not provide easily accessible, appropriate, affordable service.



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With the review being prompted by the high suicide rate of veterans, it is imperative to provide high quality, cost effective treatment that promotes not just good health but on going wellbeing for our current and transitioned service men and women.

What Chinese Medicine Offers

Chinese medicine which includes acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, massage, food and exercise therapies, has been the source of health care in China for 2500 years. It is a viable and cost effective health treatment that can be utilised as either the primary or adjunctive therapy.

There are 4500 registered Chinese medicine practitioners around Australia making them easy to access even in rural and remote regions of our country.

The US Military has adopted the use of acupuncture for their armed forces personnel. The use of acupuncture in the fight against opioid abuse by military personnel was reported by Nicole Bauke in the article, "*Battlefield acupuncture? Yes, it exists, and the military is using it to fight troops' pain*" that was published in the Military Times on February 10, 2018

Acupuncture in Military Medicine written by

Alexandra M. York, Kevin G. Berry, Rick C. Welton, Joan A. G. Walter, Richard C. Niemtow and Wayne B. Jonas

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/55146> (licensee Intech)

also shows the benefits of acupuncture in treating pain and the holistic approach taken by acupuncturists when treating pain.

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Use of Acupuncture in the United States Military Healthcare System Cathaleen Madsen, PhD, Avni Patel, MPH, Megan Vaughan, RN, and Tracey Koehlmoos, PhD doi: [10.1089/acu.2017.1260](https://doi.org/10.1089/acu.2017.1260)

This most recent study on the benefits of acupuncture being used by the US Military was published on line and in the Journal of Medical Acupuncture on 1 February, 2018. This study focused on the use of acupuncture as an alternative to opioids in the relief of pain.

Cost Effectiveness

Registered Chinese medicine practitioners are trained to very high standards with a different set of skills and knowledge used in their extensive assessment to make a diagnosis effect a treatment. These skills and knowledge do **not** require the very costly investigations such as clinical pathology and medical imaging.



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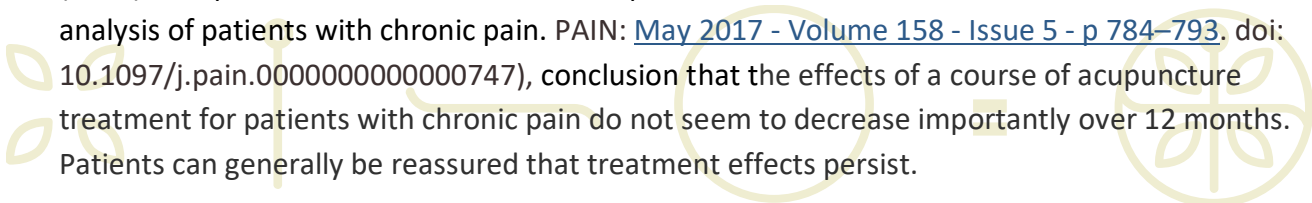
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Laboratory analysis of bodily fluids such as blood, urine and stool tests, MRIs, X-rays and scans consume a huge amount of the health budget even before a diagnosis can be made and any treatment offered.

Chinese medicine practitioners diagnose and perform a treatment during that consultation thus offering immediate relief to their patients which is extremely cost effective.

Because of the range of modalities that Chinese medicine practitioners are able to provide, they can perform acupuncture, massage and offer food and exercise therapy advice which offers the double benefit of lessening the burden on the health budget while giving immediate treatment.

Examples of how acupuncture can assist veterans in particular is demonstrated by Woods et al. (2017) (Woods B, Manca A, Weatherly H, Saramago P, Sideris E, Giannopoulou C, et al. (2017) Cost-effectiveness of adjunct non-pharmacological interventions for osteoarthritis of the knee. PLoS ONE 12(3): e0172749. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0172749), who found that acupuncture as an intervention had a cost of £13,502 per Quality-Adjusted Life Year (QALY), where currently in the United Kingdom cost effectiveness is positive if less than £20,000, and MacPherson et al. (2017) (MacPherson, H.; Vertosick, E.A.; Foster, N.E.; Lewith, G.; Linde, K.; Sherman, K.J.; et al. (2017). The persistence of the effects of acupuncture after a course of treatment: a meta-analysis of patients with chronic pain. PAIN: [May 2017 - Volume 158 - Issue 5 - p 784–793](#). doi: 10.1097/j.pain.0000000000000747), conclusion that the effects of a course of acupuncture treatment for patients with chronic pain do not seem to decrease importantly over 12 months. Patients can generally be reassured that treatment effects persist.



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Choice

Allowing ADF personnel to be able to choose the best care to suit them and their needs will improve health outcomes.

Adding Chinese medicine as a health care option opens up the choices available to be able to provide a truly integrated health care package for the best possible outcomes from their treatment.

Worker's Compensation

Chinese medicine practitioners are recognised by the worker's compensation boards in the States and Territories and as such are accredited to provide treatment to all workers who are eligible.



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Care provided by Chinese medicine practitioners should also be made available to the men and women workers of the ADF.

Conclusion

Chinese medicine as provided by registered Chinese medicine practitioners would be a valuable addition to the provision of health care for ADF personnel because

- Chinese medicine is provided by highly qualified, registered practitioners
- There are 4500 registered Chinese medicine practitioners around Australia making it accessible to country and city residents
- It is a cost effective health care modality which doesn't rely on expensive pathology and imaging investigations
- Offers ADF personnel a choice and thus some control in their health care and continued wellbeing
- Chinese medicine practitioners are recognised providers for the Worker's Compensation Boards around the country
- Chinese medicine is regarded as an allied health profession by the AHPRA
- Chinese medicine fits well into an integrated health care system

Chinese medicine can be provided efficiently and effectively while being of benefit in promoting the wellbeing of veterans and the Australian community.

The AACMA believes that Chinese medicine should be considered in the provision of health care for ADF personnel.

The AACMA Board thanks you for your consideration on this submission. We welcome the opportunity to offer further insight and specifics of how Chinese medicine and acupuncture by registered acupuncturists can provide improved health outcomes and cost effective services to the Department of Veterans Affairs and Australia's servicepersonnel.



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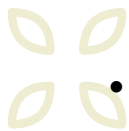
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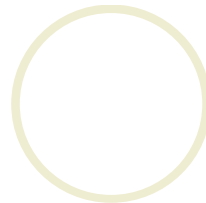
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