

## **Sham acupuncture is not a placebo treatment – implications and problems in research**

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To date no ‘sham acupuncture’ has been inert. This non-inertness always results in problems for studies that attempt ‘placebo-control’ in acupuncture trials, usually introducing bias against acupuncture. Despite almost 30 years of discussion of this topic, multiple publications about it, detailed descriptions of the problems, researchers still attempt sham acupuncture trials as though they can be placebo-control trials and/or researchers are required to use sham acupuncture controls by funding agencies and other institutions. Reviewers and readers of these trials routinely misinterpret results of sham acupuncture trials. Additionally knowledge of the practice of acupuncture and what methods are to be used to test it is often confused or inadequate, leading to selection of completely wrong study design using sham acupuncture to test the question which the study attempted to investigate. The lecturer will outline and illustrate these issues and discuss alternative approaches for researching acupuncture that have been proposed in Europe and the US.