

International workshop on acupuncture research methodology: introduction to consensus reports on workshop topics

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In a novel approach to consensus building on key issues in acupuncture research methodology, an international group of acupuncture researchers from seven countries on four continents were invited to a workshop at Exeter University, UK on July 2–4, 2001. Arriving from Australia, Canada, England, Holland, Italy, Japan and the United States, the researchers met to present papers and find common ground on five pre-selected topic areas (listed below). The first two days were devoted to topic-based plenary and breakout sessions to hear and discuss papers presented by workshop attendees. On the third morning consensus summaries were prepared for presentation to a public audience later that afternoon. The following series of papers represent summaries of the consensus positions arrived at for each of the five topic areas. The present issue of *Clinical Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine* will be widely distributed to the acupuncture research community as a means of stimulating further discussion. Individual papers on each topic will appear in subsequent issues of this journal.

The topics presented to workshop participants were:

1. Matching research design to research question in clinical trials of acupuncture.

2. Designing clinical research to evaluate traditional East Asian systems of medicine.
3. Identifying and controlling for the non-specific effects of acupuncture.
4. Assessing strengths and weaknesses of systematic reviews of acupuncture.
5. Identifying research questions relevant to the acupuncture community.

Draft guidelines for the reporting of acupuncture clinical trials, the STRICTA guidelines, were also presented, modified and approved during the workshop. A final work-in-progress version of STRICTA, that has been fine-tuned and approved by the editors of five journals that have been major publishers of clinical trials of acupuncture, also appears in this issue of *Clinical Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine* and will appear in current issues of the other four journals.

The Exeter Workshop was held under the auspices of the Acupuncture Research Resource Center (UK) in collaboration with The Stichting for the Study of Traditional East Asian Medicine (Netherlands) and the Society for Acupuncture Research (USA). Other institutional sponsors of the Workshop were Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Klass. Akupunktur u. TCM e.V. (Germany), British Acupuncture Council

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(UK), Churchill Livingstone/Harcourt Publishers Ltd (UK), Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (USA), Redwing Book Company (USA), University of Technology Sydney (Australia), and the All Japan Acupuncture and Moxibustion Society (Japan). Individual supporters were Stephen Birch, Charlotte Furth, Efreim Korngold, Angela Kozlowski and James Ramholz.

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Additional participants were: Sarah Budd (University of Exeter, UK), Simon Mills (University of Exeter, UK), Sonya Pancucci (KST Health Services, Hamilton, Canada).