

Acupuncture as Supportive Care in Oncological Patients: From AcCliMat Project to Med.I.O.Rer (Integrative Medicine in Oncology, Emilia-Romagna Region) - a Feasibility Study

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Introduction:

Despite the rising evidence that integrative therapies can be used as supportive care during cancer treatment, CAM integration is still at a very early phase within the Italian National Health Service. A recent multicentric randomized clinical trial (AcClimat) in Emilia-Romagna that compared acupuncture plus enhanced self-care versus enhanced self-care alone in women with breast cancer showed the effectiveness of acupuncture in the improvement of climacteric symptoms and quality of life. Acupuncture plus enhanced self-care was associated with a significantly greater reduction in hot flash scores than enhanced self-care at the end of treatment. This finding was maintained at 3- and 6-month follow-up visits. AcClimat is the basis of MED.IO.RER study: a project for the integration of acupuncture within the care path of women after breast tumors. The main objective of MED.IO.RER is to evaluate the integration of acupuncture to manage climacteric syndromes in women with breast cancer, in the oncological settings of the local health authorities of Emilia-Romagna. The secondary objectives are assessing the acceptability and satisfaction of patients and health care staff; exploration of enablers and barriers for integrating the treatment within the clinical pathway.

Methods:

Seven cancer centers are participating in this study. During a one-year running phase, focus groups will be conducted to explore needs and expectations of patients and staff and to identify enablers and barriers for integration. Courses and information campaigns targeted to clinicians, patients, GPs and other health staff will be provided; consulting rooms and treatment personnel will be identified and the referral system organised. Patients meeting inclusion criteria will then be recruited to receive acupuncture treatment. The following outcomes will be analysed: referral frequency; patients' compliance with treatment; patients and staff satisfaction; adequacy of the new treatment with infrastructure; organization.

Quantitative parameters will be collected and qualitative methods (e.g. focus groups, in-depth interviews) will be used with patients and personnel.

Results:

NA

Conclusion:

Med.IO.RER will provide information to clinicians, policy makers and managers about the feasibility of integrating CAM in oncological pathways and about cultural and organisational aspects needed to implement integrative medicine within oncological settings.

This project continues the work initiated by the ACCLIMAT multi-center randomized study whose results have been published. The project is a feasibility study proposal for a network of integrated medical centers in oncology in the Emilia Romagna region, so results are not yet available.