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SERVICE USER EXPERIENCE OF THE USE OF ACUPUNCTURE FOR THE TREATMENT OF SCHIZOPHRENIC SYMPTOMS

P. Ronan^{1,2,3}, M. Brinton⁴

¹*Social Work, Community & Mental Health, Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury,* ²*Ferryview Health Centre, Greenwich Primary Care Trust,* ³*Greenwich North Recovery Team, Oxleas NHS Trust, London,* ⁴*Mad Pride, Kent, UK*

Objectives: The purpose of this paper is to highlight the position of mental health patients in terms of treatment choice, advanced directives and evidence to support complementary and alternative medicines (CAM).

Methods: Here, a patient with a long-standing diagnosis of schizophrenia outlines her experience of treatment with antipsychotic medication and contrasts this with the success she has had with the use of acupuncture for her symptoms. The evidence behind CAM for mental health problems, including schizophrenia is explored, as is the reliance on antipsychotic medication for people who are acutely mentally ill, over and above any prior requests individuals may make for CAM to be included in their treatment programme.

Results: Following several unsatisfactory treatment episodes with antipsychotic and antidepressant medication, Madlin introduced acupuncture as an adjunct treatment. This enabled her to live independently in the community for over 8 years. Although she continues to be susceptible to psychosis, her experience of acupuncture is that it makes a significant improvement to her quality of life. Madlin feels that access to acupuncture for inpatients might further improve recovery rates and relationships with mental health workers.

Conclusions: Mental Health patients are increasingly asking for access to CAM and the evidence is improving. This might be a good time to for psychiatrists to consider CAM treatment possibilities where patients request them or where there is evidence to support their use.