

Acupuncture relieves hay fever

RMIT

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A recent study has found hay fever sufferers may have an alternative safe and effective treatment in acupuncture.

The study conducted by RMIT University researchers was published in the latest Medical Journal of Australia, found acupuncture was effective in relieving the symptoms of inflammatory nasal allergies.

Professor Charlie Xue of RMIT's World Health Organisation Centre for Traditional Medicine, who headed the study, said that persistent allergic rhinitis (PAR) affected 16 per cent of Australians.

The condition involved an inflammatory response to allergens, such as house dust mite and pet dander, and the symptoms included sneezing, blocked nose, nasal itch and a runny nose, he said.

Professor Xue and colleagues, including Professor David Story, from RMIT's School of Health Sciences, and Professor Frank Thien, Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, treated 80 patients with PAR with real or sham acupuncture.

After eight weeks of treatment, they found a greater relief from symptoms for those patients treated with real acupuncture. These patients also experienced a lasting reduction in symptoms 12 weeks after treatment, said Professor Xue.

"Although PAR was not life-threatening, it affected quality of life and had substantial economic and social impact," said Professor Xue.

Professor Xue said pharmacotherapy provided symptomatic relief of PAR, however, most medications had side effects.

"We found acupuncture was well tolerated, with only minor and minimal adverse events, none of which were serious enough to result in participant withdrawal from the trial.

"We concluded acupuncture may provide a safe and effective option for the symptomatic treatment of PAR," said Professor Xue.