

Viewpoint: Acupuncture pseudoscience — Debunking Washington Post's tiresome promotion of 'legalized quackery'

Recently the *Washington Post* [ran a column](#) under the headline, "Does acupuncture work for chronic pain? Here's what the science says." (The column first appeared back in July, but the *Post*'s website promoted it again just last week.)

Before giving you the *Post*'s answer, let me give you the correct answer. No! Not "maybe" or "sometimes" or "we're not sure."

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First it puts forward the logically flawed (and non-scientific) claim that hey, the U.S. Medicare system now covers acupuncture for back pain, so it must be effective.

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I wish it were true that Medicare was purely science-driven, but both the federal and state government have been lobbied for years by acupuncturists (and other purveyors of dubious therapies) to provide public tax dollars to cover their practices.

For a deeper dive into these lobbying efforts, I recommend [the lengthy takedown by Jann Bellamy](#) explaining that acupuncture is "legalized quackery."

The *Post* article then goes on to discuss the science, for which it relies primarily on a single study, a meta-analysis published in 2019 by [Biostatistician and attending research methodologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center] Andrew Vickers.

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Vickers has published multiple meta-analyses, and if he's shown anything, it's how easy it is to cherry-pick from the (extensive) acupuncture literature and find studies that prove whatever point you want to make.

[This is an excerpt. Read the full article here](#)