



Combination therapy, acupuncture shown effective in curbing cocaine cravings

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Yale investigators have found that combining a drug used to treat alcoholism with an experimental drug to treat heroin addiction can help users abstain from using cocaine as well. Another study showed that acupuncture in combination with a heroin drug treatment regimen may also effectively diminish the desire for cocaine.

Past studies had shown that buprenorphine, an experimental alternative to methadone for treating opiate addiction, is effective in reducing heroin use, but no currently used medication treatment is effective in reducing an addict's concurrent cocaine use. When buprenorphine was combined with disulfiram—a drug for treating alcoholism marketed as Antabuse—the combination worked better than buprenorphine alone in promoting three weeks of abstinence from cocaine use in persons with dual heroin and cocaine addictions. The early-stage study of 20 addicts appeared in the Spring 2000 issue of *Biological Psychiatry*. Tony P. George, M.D., assistant professor of psychiatry and an investigator for the study, said, "Addiction to heroin along with cocaine abuse is a horrible problem. Disulfiram can actually reduce cocaine use in these patients."

Principal investigator Richard S. Schottenfeld, M.D. '76, a professor of psychiatry, is now directing a trial of the drugs with a larger group of

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acupuncture to date, insofar as it compared the experimental treatment to two relatively 'active' control groups. However, further research is needed to replicate these findings, as well as to understand the mechanism of acupuncture in this application." The study was published in the August issue of *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

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