

## **Chapter 6**

# **The Potential Adverse Effects of Acupuncture Treatments**

In a systematic review, Ernest and White (1997) examined the potential life threatening adverse effects following acupuncture treatment. Although these cases are rare, they can seriously affect patients' health. In comparison, minor reactions to acupuncture treatment are more of an inconvenience than harm, and do not necessarily result in the cessation of treatment.

Often patients feel more comfortable if they were informed about the potential adverse effects of acupuncture prior to treatment. This not only upholds patient autonomy but also provides patients with the choice of pursuing acupuncture treatment or trying another alternative method, such as taking NSAIDs to reduce pain.

### **Potential Adverse Reactions**

#### **Minor:**

- Tissue trauma: Bruising, bleeding
- Vasovagal effects: Nausea, syncope
- Broken needles
- Transient worsening of symptoms

#### **Serious:**

- Infections
- Perforation of organs