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*Acupuncture
Chinese Herbology
Nutritional & Lifestyle Counseling*

LICENSED VS. CERTIFIED ACUPUNCTURISTS

Edited by Kath Bartlett, MS, LAc

Your doctor, chiropractor, physician's assistant or even physical therapist may say to you, "I do acupuncture". What they really mean is that they do neuromodulation (referring to the technique's reputed ability to modulate, enhance or diminish, the effect of neurotransmitters) or trigger point needling (needling local points of nerve pain in muscles). Often these practitioners will call what they do "medical acupuncture".

These practitioners have between 100-300 hours of training in acupuncture (often completed at UCLA seminar). They get a brief overview about acupuncture meridians, learn a few acupuncture points, and receive instruction about how to insert an acupuncture needle. While trigger point needling may have some benefit in pain relief, these practitioners have no training in, nor are they practicing Oriental medicine. They are using neuromodulation as an adjunctive therapy to their primary practice.

Licensed Acupuncturists (LAc), whose educational focus is in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, receive approximately 80% of their training exclusively in this field, and undergo an extensive clinical internship in Oriental medicine averaging three years. ¹

COMPARISON OF LICENSED VS. CERTIFIED ACUPUNCTURISTS

THE FACTS

Certified/Physician Acupuncturist

Certified physician, chiropractor or dentist [medical] acupuncturists (CAc) with 100 - 300 hours of training
Training which is often comprised of home study and video-taped lectures
Minimal clinical experience in acupuncture or no actual patient treatments before certification
Not required to complete the national certification examination to prove competency in acupuncture
Not required to regularly complete continuing education courses

Licensed Acupuncturist

Licensed acupuncturists (LAc) with an average of 2,700 hours of master's-level training
Master's level, on-site training at a nationally accredited school or college of acupuncture
Hundreds of hours of clinical experience and at least 250 actual patient treatments before licensure
Required to pass the national certification exam in acupuncture in order to become licensed (NCCAOM board certification)
Required to do regular continuing education to maintain national certification

Amount of Training in Acupuncture	Type of healthcare practitioner
<p>1905-2000 hours in Acupuncture 2625-3500 hours in Oriental Medicine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Licensed Acupuncturist</i> • <i>Traditional Chinese Medicine Comprehensively-trained Acupuncturist</i> • <i>Oriental Medicine Practitioner</i> • <i>Oriental Medical Acupuncture</i> <p>Many Acupuncture and Oriental schools exceed 2000 hours. Colleges in California must meet a minimum required 3,000 hours in Oriental Medicine.</p> <p>Oriental medicine includes acupuncture, Chinese herbology and dietary therapy, tui na massage, tai qi and qi gong meditative exercises.</p>	<p>Typically a Licensed Acupuncturist (LAc) or Registered Acupuncturist whose primary training is in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, and has:</p> <p>[a] Obtained a 3-4 year master's level degree or diploma from a school approved by ACAOM (Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine)*, and</p> <p>[b] Has been board certified in Acupuncture or Oriental Medicine (Diplomate: Dipl Ac or Dipl OM) upon successful examination by the NCCAOM (National Commission for the Certification of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine), the national standard for licensing in most states.</p> <p>Uses diagnosis and treatment techniques based on Oriental medical theory to treat a broad range of health conditions, including chronic disease, internal medicine, pain, and disease prevention.</p>
<p>300 hours or less</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Medical Acupuncture</i> • <i>Neuromodulation</i> • <i>Meridian Balancing/Therapy</i> • <i>Chiropractic Acupuncture</i> • <i>Naturopathic Acupuncture</i> 	<p>Typically a medical doctor, osteopath, naturopath or chiropractor who uses acupuncture as an adjunctive therapy.</p> <p>The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that medical doctors have 200 hours of training to know when to refer to a more fully-trained Acupuncturist or Oriental Medicine practitioner.**</p> <p>Commonly used for pain management</p>
<p>100 hours of less</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Medical Acupuncture</i> • <i>Chiropractic Acupuncture</i> • <i>Detox Tech</i> 	<p>Typically a chiropractor or detoxification technician</p> <p>Detox Techs must be under the supervision of a Licensed Acupuncturist (LAc) and are limited to 5 point on the ear.</p> <p>Used for pain management or addiction & detoxification through auricular acupuncture.</p>

For a list of approved schools and colleges, contact the US Dept of Education or:
www.ccaom.org www.nccaom.org www.acaom.org

*Beginning in 2005, Acupuncture/Oriental Medical practitioners are able to obtain a DAOM doctoral degree from an ACAOM approved clinical doctoral program. Some state also designate the licensing title (non-degree) as DOM or DAc, or Acupuncture Physician. Licensed Acupuncturists (LAc) may have also obtained an OMD, PhD or DAc for non-extensive, post-graduate training (from unaccredited programs). ²

If your Licensed Acupuncturist displays a doctorate title or degree, ask where it was received. As in most states, North Carolina acupuncture licensing law grants the title of Licensed Acupuncturist to acupuncture practitioners. North Carolina law only allows licensees to use the Dr. title if s/he holds a doctorate degree in the field of medicine (it is illegal to parlay a PhD degree earned in another field of study, or a doctor title granted through acupuncture licensure in another state to one's acupuncture practice in North Carolina).

**Some medical doctors and chiropractors are trained and licensed in both western and Oriental medical acupuncture. Ask you physician about her/his credentials. *Only the NCCAOM board certification (Diplomate) in Acupuncture or Oriental medicine certifies 2000-3000+ hours of training at an accredited acupuncture or Oriental medical college and ensures competency through successful examination. Only practitioners with this level or training are eligible for state licensure as acupuncturists (LAc).* ⁴

Many states allow physicians, chiropractors, physician's assistants, physical therapists and dentists to practice acupuncture with only 300 hours of training. This is a relic of 1974, when little was known about acupuncture practice and education. The 300-hour course for MD's was designed to give medical researchers the appropriate background necessary to develop and interpret studies on acupuncture. The Medical Acupuncture certification was not designed to meet the educational requirements and training necessary to treat patients.

Thirty years later, minimum, entry-level standards of competence for acupuncture have evolved, producing fully-trained, effective acupuncturists. Why haven't educational standards for physicians and dentists been updated to reflect current requirements? And why would anyone want to extend the same inadequate, outdated 300-hour requirement to other health professionals? If someone, anyone, wishes to practice acupuncture or any other form of healthcare, they should be properly trained and prove their competency before treating the public. Acupuncturists could not hope to practice podiatry or chiropractic with 300 hours of training and no standards of competency. Why would the reverse be different? ⁵

^{1,2,3,4} *Know Your Acupuncturist.* The Council of Colleges of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine (CCAOM) www.CCAOM.com

⁵ Acupuncture Society of New York, <http://www.asny.org/land153003.asp>

Chiropractic Community Attempts to Expand Scope of Practice

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As you may or may not be aware, across the U. S., the Chiropractic Community is attempting to expand Chiropractic Scope of Practice with legislative campaigns for 300 hour programs. Following, please find AAOM's position paper on this matter. Once you have read this position, we request you forward this to your legislative representative.

AAOM Position Paper:

Expanding Chiropractic Scope in Acupuncture

6/21/06

The American Association of Oriental Medicine (AAOM) represents and advocates on behalf of the professional Oriental Medicine provider in order to ensure that the well being of the public is protected by educating legislators, regulators, health care interests and the public regarding Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine. Our mission is to promote integrity and excellence in the professional practice of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

Problem Statement: The legislative campaigns for expanding chiropractic scope of practice into acupuncture with insufficient training present a substantial public health risk. These risks include:

1. Adverse events that can be as serious as nerve paralysis or organ puncture.
2. Well meaning chiropractors may 'over utilize' acupuncture services because of ineffective treatments. Over utilization damages the public, the third party payer, and the health care providers by increasing medical costs and ultimately damaging the reputation of the individual provider and the medicine as a whole.
3. Inadequate training also misleads the unsuspecting chiropractor into believing that he or she may have knowledge, skills, and ability that they do not have.

Educational standards governing the practice of acupuncture have been institutionalized in the U. S. for 24 years. Legislative efforts underway in many states across the nation advocate expanding chiropractors' scope at educational standards that fall 85% to 90% below the educational requirements of our profession. Is this magnitude of sub-standard training and public health risk exposure you choose to legislate for the constituencies you serve?

Educational Standards:

1982: Founded in 1982, The Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM) is the sole accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to accredit professional master's degree and master's level programs in the field of Oriental Medicine. ACAOM program requirements are as follows: Acupuncture - 3 Academic Years/1905 Hours, Oriental Medicine - 4 Academic Years/2625 Hours. ACAOM accredited colleges meeting these standards nationwide total 54, and 9 additional colleges are in candidate status.

1982: The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) is a non-profit organization established in 1982. Through the use of standardized examinations, its mission is to establish, assess, and promote recognized standards of competence and safety in acupuncture and Oriental medicine for the protection and benefit of the public. Today the NCCAOM offers certification examinations in Acupuncture (includes clean needle technique point location), Chinese Herbology, and Asian Bodywork Therapy. Forty-one states use the NCCAOM examinations and applicants must meet ACAOM's hourly requirements in effect at the time their application is submitted. (There are 8 remaining states without a practice act in statute.) Note: A summary of state-by-state licensure requirements(1) are provided, as well as a US map depicting states utilizing NCCAOM Exams(2).)

National Institute of Health(3) (NIH), is part of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services and is the primary Federal agency for conducting and supporting medical research. In their guidance document for consumer selection of Alternative Medicine Practitioners, a key guideline is to ascertain if the practitioner's qualifications meet the minimum standards for training and licensing for the profession.

International Standards:

1948: World Health Organization(4) (WHO): WHO is the United Nations specialized agency for health. It was established on 7th April 1948. WHO's constitutional objective is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. WHO maintains 2500 hours as minimal safety training standard for the practice of Acupuncture by professionals who are not MDs. The WHO standards also indicate that Western Medical Doctors should attain 1500 minimal training hours in Acupuncture to practice safely. While chiropractors imply a similarity with MDs, however, MDs have open and unlimited scopes of practice, and chiropractors do not.

2003: United Kingdom – House of Lords’ Report(5): “We recommend that if CAM is to be practiced by any conventional healthcare practitioners, they should be trained to the standards comparable to those set out for that particular therapy by the appropriate (single) CAM regulatory body.” (Paragraph 5.83)

Note: The American Chiropractic Association arbitrarily established a self-regulated program labeling it the College of Chiropractic Acupuncture or the “ACA CCA.” Defined as “Certification”, this was formulated without the application of established standards. AAOM would be happy to assist the chiropractic profession in the development of educational programs and standards that truly meet the needs of the public and the interest of chiropractors wishing to practice acupuncture.

Summary: In closing, Chiropractors with substandard training, representing themselves as “chiropractors certified in acupuncture,” mislead the public. As legislative policy continues to define the future of this Acupuncture and OM in this country, let us uphold and expand upon the 24-year lineage of institutionalized U. S. standards (and beyond that, the documented international standards) that ensure the efficacy of this medicine today, and guarantee its integral sustainability in the public health system into the future. Through our State Associations, AAOM is committed to monitor and advocate on behalf of the legislative activities of each state, to assure these standards are upheld and the public, your voting constituencies, are informed.

Sincerely,

William R. Morris, OMD, MSED, LAc
President

Martin Herbkersman, DAc, MTOM
Vice President, State Affairs

Lloyd Wright, DNBAO, LAc
Legislative Chair

(1) National Acupuncture Foundation, Acupuncture Laws and Regulations; 2005
http://www.aaom.info/docs/edu_stand_state.pdf

(2) National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, Website; 2006
http://www.aaom.info/docs/nccaom_map.pdf

(3) National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Get the FACTS; 2003; Amended 2004
http://www.aaom.info/docs/nih_sel_prov.pdf

(4) World Health Organization, Guidelines on basic training and safety in Acupuncture. Geneva: World Health Organization; 1999.
http://www.aaom.info/docs/who_edm_trm_99.pdf

(5) United Kingdom - The Statutory Regulation of the Acupuncture Profession, commissioned by The Department of Health, et al; 2003 http://www.aaom.info/docs/uk_stat_reg_acup.pdf

AAOM's position paper as a separate document
http://www.aaom.info/docs/aaom_chiro_position_paper.pdf

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