



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF MEDICAL ACUPUNCTURE®

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AAMA Position Paper

The AAMA Board of Directors approved the following statement regarding the Academy's mission and goals in the development of medical acupuncture and its integration with conventional treatment:

Acupuncture is rapidly evolving as an effective therapeutic modality within the framework of modern American medicine. The United States has seen an increase in popular interest since President Nixon's trip to China in 1972, and this has led to scientific investigation of acupuncture's physiologic impact on pain management as well as its integration into contemporary medical practice.

Medical acupuncture is the clinical discipline of acupuncture as practiced by a physician who is also trained and licensed in Western biomedicine. Founded on medical texts of ancient China, the interpretation and application of acupuncture within the context of contemporary medicine is an extension of the physician's biomedical training. The medical acupuncture physician uniquely offers a comprehensive approach to healthcare, which combines classic and modern forms of acupuncture with conventional biomedicine.

Medical acupuncturists treat a wide variety of medical and pain problems by aiming to restore physiologic balance and normal function within the body, and with the environment. The patient is treated with the goal of restoring health, not to simply ameliorate or disguise symptoms. Acupuncture may be combined effectively with conventional medical or surgical interventions when acupuncture alone is not sufficient or appropriate to effectively treat the patient.

The AAMA represents more than 1,300 medical acupuncture physicians. The Academy is the sole physician-only acupuncture professional society in North America and is the leading proponent of the highest standards of training, continuing education and practice of medical acupuncture. The membership of AAMA embodies all the disciplines of medicine.

The training and practice requirements for membership in AAMA are based on international standards, and serve as a model for state oversight of medical acupuncture physicians, hospital practice privileges, liability coverage and third party reimbursement. The AAMA has helped establish the American Board of Medical Acupuncture to offer an examination and other standards for Board Certification of medical acupuncturists.

The medical acupuncturist's private practice rights are currently threatened by the restructuring of healthcare delivery and reimbursement. The AAMA seeks protection of the medical acupuncturist's rights, appropriate endorsement by the conventional medical establishment and recognition by healthcare providers of medical acupuncture physicians who practice uniquely different from non-physician acupuncture practitioners, as well as their other medical colleagues. The AAMA is committed to the pursuit of excellence in this field of medicine, and will continue to maintain this ideal as its highest priority.

Definition of Medical Acupuncture and Physician Rights

Acupuncture practiced by physicians is the practice of medicine. Medical acupuncture specifically represents the use of acupuncture by fully trained and licensed physicians. The medical acupuncturist or physician acupuncturist fills a unique and critical role by virtue of practicing medicine from both western and eastern paradigms. Diagnostic and therapeutic criteria are aimed at restoring balance or homeostasis within the body and restoring health, rather than disguising or ameliorating symptoms.

The AAMA firmly contends that the rights and privileges of appropriately trained physicians shall not be abridged with respect to the use of acupuncture in the practice of medicine. Further, the AAMA contends that it is appropriate for regulation of physicians practicing acupuncture to come only from medical boards, as is the case with any other medical specialty, and with appropriate participation of physician acupuncturists.

Acupuncture Qualifications for Physicians*

AAMA requirements for full membership category for US and Canadian licensed physicians include 220 hours consisting of 120 hours of didactic and 100 hours of clinical acupuncture training in a program acceptable to the Board of Directors.

These requirements are consistent with those presented by the World Health Organization and the World Federation of Acupuncture & Moxibustion Societies for Western trained physicians.

The American Board of Medical Acupuncture offers Board Certification to recognize those physicians who have obtained 300 hours of medical acupuncture training, successfully passed an examination and have two or more years of clinical acupuncture experience.

Non-Physician Practitioners of Acupuncture

The AAMA supports the use of current state medical licensing boards for the supervision of non-physician acupuncture providers, if no non-physician acupuncture state licensing board exists.

Needles and Devices

AAMA recognizes the importance of acupuncture needles and other tools in the practice of acupuncture. AAMA emphasizes the necessity of aseptic, sterile or clean technique as would be appropriate for any other tool or device used in the practice of medicine.

The AAMA recognizes that the use of needles by appropriately trained personnel should present a real, although very infrequent, risk to the patient with respect to tissue or visceral trauma or infection. Appropriate training is essential to provide the public with practitioners who may provide competent care with minimal risk to the patient.

The use of acupuncture needles has included millions of needle placements with a remarkably low incidence of risk to patients and practitioners. As such, the AAMA commends the FDA's reclassification of acupuncture needles to Class II medical devices for use by appropriately trained practitioners.

**The number of training hour requirements was updated in 2014 and reflected in this statement.*