

Acupuncture - Code of practice 5

Purpose

The purpose of this code of practice (COP) is to support the policy decisions and conditions of licence adopted by the council in respect of special treatments establishments.

Scope

This COP details specific requirements for acupuncture activities in addition to those laid down in the regulations prescribing standard conditions applicable to all special treatment licensed premises.

Definitions

Acupuncture

- For the purposes of this code of practice acupuncture refers to the insertion of a solid needle into points on the surface of the body for disease prevention or therapy. Techniques in which any substance is injected through a hollow needle are not considered to be acupuncture, nor are treatments that do not pierce the skin.

Electro acupuncture

- This involves electrical stimulation of the needles during acupuncture.

Moxibustion

- This is a process of applying heat during acupuncture, moxa.

Cleaning

- This is a physical process which removes soil e.g. dust, dirt and organic matter, along with a large proportion of germs. Cleaning with hot water and detergent breaks up grease and dirt on floors and surfaces. Cleaning is also essential prior to disinfection and sterilisation of instruments and equipment.

Disinfection

- For the purposes of these treatments a high-level disinfectant relates to disinfectants capable of reducing the number of viable bacteria and blood borne viruses including Hepatitis B and C and HIV but which may not necessarily inactivate some viruses and bacterial spores. Where the disinfectant requires dilution, this must be carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions using clean potable water. Once diluted the disinfectant must be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Immersion must be in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Sterilisation

- Refers to a treatment cycle that renders equipment free from viable micro-organisms, e.g. capable of killing bacteria, fungi, viruses and bacterial spores. In most instances for the purposes of this COP sterilisation will be unnecessary as all essential equipment will be pre-sterilised and disposable.

Client consultation

A full client consultation must be carried out at the time of a first visit. This includes the following:

- medical history
- skin conditions e.g. psoriasis
- haemophilia
- heart disease/pace maker
- high blood pressure
- diabetes
- seizures e.g. epilepsy
- immunocompromised conditions
- concurrent drug treatments, such as antihistamines, which often have a depressant effect on the brain, steroids and aspirin
- implants, as a result of surgery/artificial joints
- psychiatric disorders
- allergies e.g. plasters
- taking blood thinning medication, e.g. aspirin
- contra indications noted
- areas to be treated
- treatment plan i.e. duration of sessions, no of sessions and expected results

Potential risk and reactions to the treatment should be discussed, as should the possibility that treatment may exacerbate some symptoms.

- This record should be signed by the client as a declaration of agreement to treatment having understood all the associated risks.
- A record of subsequent treatments must be kept and client consultations must be re-evaluated at any significant change.
- Consultation records must be held on the premises and be available for inspection by an authorised officer and copies of aftercare advice must be available for inspection.

Qualifications

- Any person carrying out acupuncture must be suitably qualified. This means a qualification awarded by any teaching institution that has undergone the accreditation process of the British Acupuncture Accreditation Board (BAAB) this will include a period of at least three years training in traditional acupuncture and western medical sciences appropriate to the practice of acupuncture.
- Any foreign qualifications must be compared to an equivalent UK qualification by a comparability organisation such as UK Naric.
- The acupuncturist must be a full member of a recommended acupuncture professional body.
- Acupuncture procedures must not be carried out by persons under the age of 18 years.

Standard infection control procedures

Practitioner health

- All practitioners must be vaccinated against Hepatitis B.
- Where gloves are not worn hand hygiene is of the utmost importance. Hands should be washed with liquid soap and an alcohol hand rub applied immediately prior to carrying out a treatment and during the treatment where necessary i.e. after palpating the skin.

Blood spillage

Where any blood spillage occurs it shall be cleaned up as soon as possible using the procedure stated below:

- put on disposable gloves and apron
- place disposable paper towels on blood spillage

- pour bleach on top of paper towels and leave for two minutes
- use paper towels to mop up spillage and then place then into clinical waste yellow bags
- discard gloves into yellow plastic bag
- wash and dry hands thoroughly
- any contaminated clothes should be handled as little as possible and then only with gloves on.
- they should be pre-washed then washed on a hot cycle of 64 Celsius for 15mins or 70 Celsius for in excess of three minutes or alternately discarded as clinical waste.
- this procedure must be documented and made available for all staff in the case of such an event

Sharps injury

The licensee shall provide a written needle stick injury procedure. The procedure shall include the following:

- what action to take in the event of such an injury
- encourage bleeding by squeezing gently
- do not suck wounds
- wash well with soap and warm running water
- cover with a dry dressing
- seek medical advice as soon as possible at the local accident and emergency department
- recording of any puncture wound or contamination of broken skin, mouth or eyes and report the incident to the employer where necessary
- if an infection occurs as a result of the incident, it should be reported to the local authority by telephone

Protective clothing

- The acupuncturist should wear a clean coat, overall or single use apron.
- Hot wash with detergent is sufficient for cleaning work clothes.
- Single use disposable gloves should be worn where appropriate.

General infection control

- A new alcohol wipe should be used for each separate area.
- If the skin is marked needling should not take place through the ink marks.

- The following marking system should be used, either disposable pens such as gentian violet or marked with a clean cotton bud or such like.
- Under no circumstances must needling take place through the clothing of the client.
- To avoid causing local infection do not needle directly on or near a pimple wound or sore, treat on the unaffected side of the body only.
- Single use disposable equipment must be used where available, under no circumstances must single use disposable equipment be sterilised for reuse on another client.
- Single use disposable equipment must not be opened until the acupuncturist is ready to start the procedure and it should be opened in the presence of the client.
- Any packages with their seals not intact should be discarded into the sharps container.
- A fresh needle should be used for each point needled during a treatment except in case where a tonification technique is used (i.e. where the needle is inserted and immediately removed then inserted and reused on the equivalent bilateral point.) In this case all points in the sequence must be swabbed to reduce the risk of autogenic infection.
- The needle point must never be touched with bare fingers or any non-sterile material.
- Only sterile cotton wool or a guide tube may be used to support the shaft of the needle once it has been inserted. The needle must not be inserted through the cotton wool.
- If blood is inadvertently drawn when needling, light to moderate pressure should be applied to the area with a clean sterile swab, (never a bare finger) continue with a clean needle.
- If sealing the point afterwards, do this with a clean swab and never with a bare finger.
- Skin should be swabbed after moxa has been applied and before needling.
- When using moxa, a swab, or a cotton wool bud should be moistened with clean water to moisten the skin beforehand.
- After cleaning the point acupuncturists should not re-palpate unless the area is cleaned again afterwards.
- Once a point has been pierced, do not re-palpate with a bare finger during the treatment session.

It is now considered unnecessary to swab the skin with alcohol prior to needling with three exceptions:

1. If a client's skin is visibly dirty it should be washed with liquid detergent and warm water and dried with a clean paper towel and then swabbed with 70 percent alcohol and allowed to dry.
2. Areas of the body where moisture or exudations may collect, such as the groin and genital area, ears feet and underarms and the area below the breasts should be swabbed with alcohol before needling.
3. If the needle is to be left in place for more than one hour the area should be sprayed or swabbed with alcohol before inserting the needle.

Removal of needles and cleaning

- All used needles must be placed in the sharps container.
- All cotton swabs and other clinical waste must be placed in clinical waste yellow bags.
- Other contaminated equipment must be placed in a solid container marked 'dirty' immediately after use and then decontaminated as soon as possible afterwards in an autoclave.
- All autoclaves used at the premises shall be chosen and used in accordance with the standards laid down in the current publication of the following
 - MDA BD2002 (06) - bench-top steam sterilizers, guidance on purchase, operation and maintenance
 - MDA DB 9804 - the validation and periodic testing of bench-top vacuum steam sterilizers
- Surfaces used during the treatment e.g. couch/chair must be wiped with a suitable disinfectant after each client.
- All surfaces that come into contact with staff, equipment or clients must be cleaned at least daily with a suitable high level disinfectant. This will include areas such as door and cupboard handles and any other contact points.
- Any surfaces used during treatments must be cleaned with a suitable high-level disinfectant prior to each use.

Health and safety

- If clients are left alone during treatment with needles left in place they must be cautioned about any movement that might cause them injury through bending or damaging a needle.
- If clients are to be left alone during treatment there must be a non-verbal alarm system in the vicinity linked to a manned reception area for summoning help.

- The alarm should continue to sound until it is manually switched to the off position in order to silence it. The user must be made aware of the alert mechanism and how to use it.
- Acupuncturist must remain with their client at all times if moxibustion is being carried out to avoid the risk of burning.
- Moxibustion must never be used on broken skin, directly on the face or in sensitive areas.
- For electro acupuncture the licence holder must make sure that the equipment is checked and maintained in accordance with electricity at work regulations and guidance and records of maintenance checks kept.
- At all times that the premises are used for acupuncture, there shall be at least one person at the premises that holds an up to date certificate in emergency first aid treatment.
- It is recommended that that a chaperone is present when treatment involves intimate examination of a member of the opposite sex.

Aftercare

Clients should be given verbal and written after care advice. This should also include advice of any possible after effects such as trauma and swelling at the needling site and care of the needling site.

Age

Clients must be over the age of 18 to receive acupuncture. Anyone under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. The parent/guardian must sign a consent form at the time of the treatment.

Information/record keeping/consent

- Records kept must include steps taken to verify the age of the client e.g. photocopy of photographic proof of age where appropriate.
- Before any acupuncture takes place, the acupuncturist or other competent person shall fully explain the potential side effects and problems that can occur to the client. This informed consent must be recorded and signed by the client. For these purposes, a printed pro-forma should be used.

Further information

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[UK Naric](#)

- Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine (UK)
- Ayurvedic Medical Association UK; or
- British Medical Acupuncture Society

The following London Borough of Redbridge Guidance Notes should be consulted in conjunction with this code of practice:

- [GN1 - Hand washing](#)
- [GN2 - Decontamination](#)
- [GN3 -Use of Anaesthetics](#)
- [GN4 - Sharps Injuries](#)
- [GN5 - Bench Top Steam Sterilisers](#)