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What is acupuncture?

* The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), a division of the National Institutes of Health, defines acupuncture as “the insertion of dry needles at specially chosen sites for the treatment or prevention of symptoms and conditions.”1 Acupuncture literally means to puncture with a needle.2 Acupuncture can be defined to include traditional body needling, electric acupuncture (electro-acupuncture), and microsystem acupuncture such as ear (auricular), face, hand and scalp acupuncture.3 Thus, Acupuncture becomes a system of medicine that utilizes needles to achieve therapeutic effect.4

Who uses acupuncture?

* Traditional acupuncture has become popular in the United States and the rest of the world in recent decades. Data released by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 2008 reported that 3.1 million American adults and 150,000 children used acupuncture in 2007. Adult use of acupuncture has increased by approximately a million people in the five years from 2002 to 2007. 5
* Generally, educated people who are proactive with their health care needs. Acupuncture is no longer considered “alternative” but is accepted within the medical profession as “integrative” health care. Mayo Clinic advises: “You may try acupuncture for symptomatic relief of a variety of diseases and conditions, including: chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting , fibromyalgia , headaches, labor pain , low back pain, menstrual cramps, migraines, osteoarthritis , dental pain ; tennis elbow.6”

Is acupuncture safe?

* The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine reports: “Relatively few complications have been reported from the use of acupuncture. However, acupuncture can cause potentially serious side effects if not delivered by a **qualified** practitioner.”7
* The World Health Organization says: *“*In **competent** hands, acupuncture is generally a safe procedure with few contraindications or complications… **There are the risks due to inadequate training of the acupuncturist***.* These include inappropriate selection of patients, errors of technique, and failure to recognize contraindications and complications, or to deal with emergencies when they arise.”8

What safe practice standards does the AOMA advocate?

* Graduation from a formal, full-time acupuncture program of at least three years duration that has been accred-ited or is in candidacy for accreditation by the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM). The ACAOM is the only accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education as the authority for quality education and training in acupuncture and Oriental medicine. ACAOM requires 1,905 hours of entry-level acupuncture education (2,175 hours if the degree is in Oriental medicine) for accreditation.
* Passage of certification examinations in Foundations of Oriental Medicine, Acupuncture, and Biomedicine. administered by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) or equivalent.
* Adherence to a code of ethics.
* Completion of separate courses in Clean Needle Technique and CPR.

Why do we need to enact legislation to regulate acupuncture practice?

* To ensure safe practice of acupuncture for the citizens of Alabama.
* 44 states and DC have regulating boards, including every southern state.

*For sources cited, please see back.*

**Sources:**

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4. "Position Paper on Dry Needling | Acupuncture Association of Colorado." *Acupuncture Association of Colorado | Acupuncture Denver | Find an Acupuncturist*. Web. 31 Dec. 2011. <http://acucol.com/2011/03/position-paper-on-dry-needling/>.

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7. "Acupuncture: An Introduction." *Home Page*. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, n.d. Web. 26 Mar. 2013. <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/acupuncture/introduction.htm>.

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