



Council of Colleges of
Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine
Committed to Excellence in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Education



Know Your Acupuncturist

Practitioners whose graduate education is in Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine (AOM) receive approximately 80% of their education exclusively in this field and undergo extensive clinical training averaging 3-4 years. Other healthcare practitioners may only use acupuncture, which is one of the many therapies of Oriental Medicine, as a technique in their primary practice.

A philosophical distinction of Oriental Medicine is its whole person approach of mind, body, and spirit in a comprehensive energetic healthcare system that includes acupuncture, herbs, Asian bodywork (e.g. acupressure, tui na, shiatsu), nutrition, tai chi, qi gong, and meditation.

This chart is designed to illustrate the varying levels of education undertaken by healthcare professionals in acupuncture only and not in related curriculum, such as in the biosciences. Acupuncture should only be administered by a practitioner who has specific education in this field due to risk of improper needling, inadequate understanding of Oriental medical diagnostic procedures, transmission of disease, imbalancing of energy, or ethical violations. Ask your practitioner about his or her education in order to ensure that you receive the most professional acupuncture care available for your optimal health and wellness.

www.ccaom.org

Contact Hours in Acupuncture Education	Practitioner Title	Application
3-4 years (1500 - 2000 hours in acupuncture)*	Typically a Licensed Acupuncturist (LAc)** who has obtained a degree/diploma from an ACAOM-accredited college and has passed the national certification exams administered by the NCCAOM.***	A broad range of health issues, including chronic disease, pain, internal medicine, rehabilitation, and prevention
300 hours or less in acupuncture	Typically a medical doctor, osteopath, naturopath, or chiropractor who uses acupuncture as an adjunctive technique. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that medical doctors who wish to use acupuncture as a technique in their clinical work have a minimum of 200 hours of training, with the amount of training for other health personnel being variable according to the specific application. For a full course of training, WHO recommends 1,500 hours of training in acupuncture for physicians.	Pain, basic ailments
100 hours or less in acupuncture	Typically a detox/auricular acupuncture technician or chiropractor (detox techs are generally limited to 5 points on the ear)	Addiction & pain
Continuing education seminars provide approximately 40-50 contact hours in "dry needling."	Typically a physical therapist who uses an acupuncture needle to perform dry needling in the treatment of muscle trigger points	Muscular-skeletal pain

*ACAOM's total curriculum requirement for an acupuncture-only training program is 1905 hours and ranges between 1950-2600 hours for ACAOM-accredited and candidate acupuncture only training programs, with a minimum of 450 hours in the biomedical clinical sciences.

**Some states also designate the licensing title (non-degree) as DOM or DAC, or Acupuncture Physician. Licensed Acupuncturists may have also obtained an OMD, PhD, or DAC for non-extensive post-graduate training. Thus, it is important to ask where such a title was received.

***ACAOM (Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine, www.acaom.org); NCCAOM (National Commission for the Certification of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine, www.nccaom.org)