



British
Acupuncture
Council



The Code of Safe Practice for Acupuncture

2016



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About this Code

This Code of Safe Practice is published by the British Acupuncture Council (BACc) to define standards for the safe and hygienic practice of acupuncture. Failure to comply with this Code is a breach of the British Acupuncture Council's Code of Professional Conduct.

This Code is designed to protect both practitioner and public alike and reflects the BACc's primary aim of ensuring the safety of the general public. The Code should be read in conjunction with the Guide to Safe Practice where further detailed guidance can be found.

The principles outlined in this Code, when properly observed, provide protection against all known cross-infection, including blood-borne viruses.

Where local authority byelaws have been enacted which set higher standards than those in this Code, these should be referred to as the definitive document for legal purposes. Where no byelaws have been enacted, or where byelaws require standards lower than those in the Code, you must always comply with the standards set by this Code.

Must

Throughout this document, where the term 'must' is used, you are required to comply. Failure to comply with the Code is a breach of the British Acupuncture Council's Code of Professional Conduct, and in areas like registration, licensing and hazardous waste removal may also constitute a criminal offence.

Should

The term 'should' is used in this guidance to indicate best practice and the use of your professional judgement where, for example, there may be factors outside your control that affect how you comply with the mandatory principles.

Statement of mandatory principles

Your workplace

- 1 You **must** only perform acupuncture in premises suitable for professional medical work
- 2 You **must** ensure that both you and any premises in which you work are properly registered or licensed for the practice of acupuncture
- 3 You **must** have suitable hand washing and sanitary facilities
- 4 You **must** keep the treatment room clean
- 5 You must avoid possible cross-infection from the treatment surfaces

Your equipment

- 6 You **must** only use equipment which is CE-marked and conforms to current legislation

Your duty of care

- 7 You must ensure the health and safety of your patient
- 8 You **must** ensure that your own health and personal hygiene do not put the patient at risk

Your responsibility to perform acupuncture safely

- 9 You **must** establish and maintain a clean field at all times
- 10 You **must** maintain high levels of hand hygiene
- 11 You **must** insert and remove needles hygienically and safely
- 12 You **must** use well-fitting single-use disposable surgical gloves for blood or fluid spills

Your safe disposal of equipment and clinical waste

- 13 You **must** dispose of used equipment and clinical waste legally, safely and in accordance with current legislation

Your commitment to health and safety

- 14 You must comply with the requirements and provisions of current health and safety at work legislation, especially hazardous waste, and fire regulations

Your workplace

You must only perform acupuncture in premises suitable for professional medical work

- The premises **should** be used solely for the practice of acupuncture or other similar medical work. When working from home the treatment room(s) **must** not be used for any ordinary domestic purposes.

You must ensure that both you and any premises in which you work are properly registered or licensed for the practice of acupuncture

- If you practise outside Greater London, you must be registered under the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1982 for all of the practices in which you work. Under the terms of this Act registration applies to each person for every practice unless a recognised and specific group practice arrangement is in place.
- If you practise within Greater London (with the exception of the City of London for which special licensing arrangements apply) you must contact your local environmental health department to advise them of your presence and to inform them of your exemption from licensing under the London Local Authorities Act 1991.
- If you practise in Scotland, you must be licensed under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 for all of the practices in which you work.

You must have suitable hand washing and sanitary facilities

- You must ensure that there is a wash-hand basin with supply of clean hot running water located in the treatment room or in the near vicinity (ie not necessitating opening and closing of doors by hand) and solely for use by you and other practitioners.
- Wash-hand basin taps should be wrist, arm or foot operated.
- You must ensure the provision of antibacterial liquid soap in a suitable dispenser, disposable paper towels and an adequately sized bin which should be foot pedal operated if lidded and placed close to the basin.

You must keep the treatment room clean

- You **must** ensure that tabletops, shelves and all working surfaces including couches and chairs are smooth, impervious and easily cleanable.
- Flooring **must** be smooth and impervious or short pile (not looped) commercial carpeting.

You must avoid possible cross-infection from the treatment surfaces

- You **must** ensure the couch surface is clean for each patient by **one** of the following three methods:
 - a cleaning the couch surface before treating each new patient
 - b covering the couch surface with paper couch roll, fresh for each patient and disposed of immediately after the treatment

- c covering the couch surface with towels or sheets alone, fresh for each patient and boiled or machine-washed on a 40-60 degrees setting before reuse.
- You **should** regularly clean all surfaces with an appropriate detergent or disinfectant, and you **must** always do so at the beginning and end of every working day.

Your equipment

You must only use equipment which is CE-marked and conforms to current legislation

- You **must** use, single-use, pre-sterilised disposable needles packed in a box marked with a lot number, CE mark, method of sterilisation, the word 'sterile', an expiry date and the wording 'for single use only' or 'do not reuse'.
- You **must** dispose of any needles beyond their expiry date immediately, except for 'expired' needles retained for training purposes (ie used on a needle cushion) which **must** be labelled clearly and stored in a distinctly separate area, preferably under lock and key.
- Unused needles from multipacks of five, ten or more needles **must not** be used after a patient session if there is any risk that they have been contaminated after the seal on the package has been opened.
- Open unused multipack needles **must not** be stored overnight for later use.
- Any needle(s) in an unopened package with a damaged seal **must not** be used.
- Guide tubes **must** be pre-sterilised and come packaged with each individual needle or set of needles; they **must not** be used or stored for use after the session in which the seal on the package is broken.

Your duty of care

You must ensure the health and safety of your patient

- You **must** take a thorough medical history of each new patient and ensure that acupuncture is an appropriate treatment for them.
- If a patient has, or is suspected of having, a notifiable infectious disease or has a serious pre-existing medical condition, you **should** ensure that it is safe to treat them, if necessary, by contacting their GP.
- You **must** ensure that any part of the body to be treated is clean, free from wounds and cuts, and clear of any clothing.
- If you leave a patient unattended: you **must** first obtain their consent; you **must** advise them not to move in any way which might bend or damage a needle and cause them injury; you **must** make them aware of how to call for your immediate attention at any time.
- You **must not** leave a patient unattended when using moxa, cupping, or any other form of treatment where a patient may suffer from physical injury.
- You **should** be able to recognise adverse reactions to acupuncture treatment and know what action to take, including referral to another acupuncturist or other health professional if appropriate.

You must ensure that your own health and personal hygiene do not put the patient at risk

- You **must** cover any cuts and wounds with a waterproof dressing.
- You **must** keep your nails short and clean. You **must not** wear artificial nails or use nail polish that could compromise hand hygiene.
- You **should** dress in an appropriate and clean manner which befits the professional/medical nature of your role.
- You **should** avoid giving treatment when suffering from an infectious or contagious condition which may be transmitted to the patient.
- You **should** inform your GP as soon as possible if you suspect that you are suffering from, or have been in contact with someone suffering from, a notifiable infectious disease.
- You **should** not treat a patient if your performance may be affected by prescribed or over-the-counter medication.
- You **should** make changes to your practice or cease practising if your physical or mental health could adversely affect your performance or judgement or otherwise put patients at risk.

Your responsibility to perform acupuncture safely

You must establish and maintain a clean field at all times

- You **must** establish a clean field area on a flat, smooth, cleanable surface in the treatment room.
- All treatment equipment **must** be placed on the clean field, including trays, packets of needles, packets of sterile cotton wool and sterile alcohol swabs.
- You **must not** place on the clean field any container used for disposal of needles and/or contaminated waste.

You must maintain high levels of hand hygiene

- You **must** wash your hands thoroughly with antibacterial soap if they are visibly soiled or physically dirty.
- You **must** wash your hands with antibacterial soap before and after every treatment.
- You **must** sanitise your hands with alcohol gel before removing any needles.
- You **must** sanitise your hands with alcohol gel before touching the patient if your hands have become contaminated by handling anything which could transfer infection from patient to patient.
- You **must** wash your hands after dealing with blood and body fluids regardless of whether you wear gloves.

You must insert and remove needles hygienically and safely

- You **must** ensure that the skin at the needle site is clean and clear of any clothing.
- You **must** clean any areas of the body where moisture or exudates may collect with an alcohol swab and allow to dry before needling.
- You **must** wash any dirty skin with soap and water before swabbing and needling.
- You **must** thoroughly clean any skin that has been previously treated with creams or oils with 70 per cent alcohol and allow to dry before needling.
- You **should** open all single-use pre-sterilised needles and instruments in the presence of the patient and immediately before use.
- You **must** use a fresh needle for every point needled during a treatment and you **must never** reinsert a needle that you have already used.
- When inserting the needle, you **must never** touch the shaft with bare fingers or with non-sterile materials.
- You **should** use only sterile material when supporting the shaft of the needle after insertion and **must** specifically do so if either increasing needle depth or if inserting the needle without a guide tube.
- You **must** not place a needle on an intermediate surface before or after use.
- You **must** ensure that you note the location and the number of needles you insert during treatment.

- You **must** place each needle used in the sharps box immediately on removal.
- If you draw blood when removing needles, you **should** apply light pressure using sterile cotton wool, avoiding contact with the patient's body fluids. You **must** dispose of the cotton wool immediately, in a sharps container or clinical waste bag.
- Once you have needled a point, you **must not** re-palpate the point with your bare finger during that treatment session unless the fingertips have been cleaned by hand washing or alcohol-based hand rub gel.

You must use well-fitting single-use disposable surgical gloves for blood or fluid spills

- If the patient is bleeding profusely.
- If blood or body fluid is spilled; and you **must** ensure that any spillage is cleaned up promptly with detergent, followed by disinfectant solution.
- If the patient has open lesions.
- If the patient has a contagious disease.
- If you have cuts or wounds on your hands which cannot be covered adequately with a waterproof dressing.
- If you have a skin infection.
- When handling any blood-soiled items, body fluids, excretions, or secretions, or touching any contaminated surfaces, materials, or objects.

Your safe disposal of equipment and clinical waste

You must dispose of used equipment and clinical waste legally, safely and in accordance with current legislation

- You **must** place all sharps - needles, plum blossom needles (seven star hammers) and dermal needles (press studs), etc - immediately after use into a sharps disposal bin.
- You **must** dispose of sealed sharps containers via a licensed agent.
- You **must** place all clinical waste contaminated with spillage of body fluids - blood, open-wound abrasions, mucous membranes, etc - into clinical waste bags which must be sealed and stored securely for collection by a licensed agent.
- You **must** retain all contracts and receipts for clinical waste collection for two years.
- You **should** dispose of any waste which has not come into contact with body fluids or spillages - needle wrappings, single-use guide tubes, etc - via commercial or domestic waste, provided that it is carefully bagged.
- Your sharps box **must** conform to BS EN ISO 23907:2012 requirements and be clearly marked with the words 'danger – contaminated needles – to be incinerated'.

Your commitment to health and safety

You must comply with the requirements and provisions of current health and safety at work legislation, especially hazardous waste, and fire regulations

- You **should** be aware that your duty of care extends not only to patients and employees but also to any member of the public visiting your premises.
- You **must** ensure that your premises are safe and that all equipment and machinery on the premises is regularly inspected and maintained.
- You **must** ensure that all electrical and gas appliances are subject to regular examination and certification.
- You **must** carry out an audit in line with current fire safety regulations and legislation.
- You **should** assess your premises for disability access in line with the Equality Act.
- You **must** ensure that you have appropriate equipment and procedures in place in the event of an emergency.

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