

**BRITISH
ACUPUNCTURE
COUNCIL**

**CODE OF SAFE
PRACTICE**

October 2010

About this code

The Code of Safe Practice is published by the British Acupuncture Council (BAcC) to define the hygiene and safety standards relating to the practice of acupuncture. Failure to comply with the 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 procedures described in this Code, when properly carried out, provide protection against all known cross-infection, including hepatitis and AIDS/HIV.

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.

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© 2010 British Acupuncture Council
63 Jeddo Road, London W12 9HQ
tel: 020 8735 0400 fax: 020 8735 0404
www.acupuncture.org.uk
email: info@acupuncture.org.uk

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Statement of mandatory principles

Where you work

- 1 You must only carry out acupuncture in premises suitable for professional medical work of this kind.
- 2 You must have suitable hand washing facilities.
- 3 Your treatment room must allow for free movement and easy cleaning.
- 4 You must avoid possible cross-infection of treatment surfaces.
- 5 You must keep the treatment room clean.

The equipment you use

- 6 You must only use equipment which conforms with current legislation.

Your duty of care

- 7 You must ensure the health and safety of the patient.
- 8 You must ensure that your own health and personal hygiene do not endanger the health of a patient.

Your responsibility to perform acupuncture safely

- 9 You must wash your hands thoroughly before any acupuncture procedure and ensure that a clean field is established.
- 10 You must insert needles hygienically and safely.
- 11 You must remove needles hygienically and safely.
- 12 After you have finished the treatment you must ensure that equipment is properly cleaned.

Your use of ancillary techniques

- 13 You must ensure that moxibustion, cupping, guasha, tuina, the use of ear needles/retained needles and pricking/bleeding therapy are carried out in a safe manner and that you are properly trained in their use.

Your own safety if you suffer a needlestick injury

- 14 If you suffer a needlestick injury you must act promptly for your own safety.

Your disposal of equipment and clinical waste

- 15 You must dispose of used equipment and clinical waste safely.

Making home visits

- 16 If you have a mobile practice or undertake home visits, you must meet health and safety standards equivalent to working in a clinic.

Your work in drug/detox programmes or group settings

- 17 If you work in drug/detox programmes or group settings (such as multi-bed settings) you must ensure the patient's safety, confidentiality and dignity are maintained and respected.

Your notes and records

- 18 You must maintain a permanent attendance register which records all patients attending your clinic and which links to a written record of their contact details.

Your commitment to health and safety

- 19 You must comply with the requirements and provisions of current Health and Safety at Work legislation.
- 20 You must ensure that your premises are safe and your equipment is regularly inspected and maintained.

Where you work

- 1 You must only carry out acupuncture in premises suitable for professional medical work of this kind.

Your premises must be: capable of being kept clean; used solely for acupuncture practice or other similar work; have sufficient sanitary facilities for all users of the clinic/practice; and meet current fire precaution and health and safety standards.

If you work from your private home, the treatment room(s) must not be used for any ordinary domestic purposes.

- 2 You must have suitable hand washing facilities.

You must have a washbasin with a clean running hot water supply, preferably wrist, arm or foot operated and for your and other practitioners' sole use. This must be located in or in the near vicinity (ie not necessitating opening and closing of doors with your hands) of the treatment room. You must also have dispenser liquid soap; disposable paper towels; and an adequately sized bin, pedal operated if lidded, situated close to the basin.

- 3 Your treatment room must allow for free movement and easy cleaning.

You must have: sufficient space to allow free movement and establish a clean field; sufficient storage; smooth, easily cleanable surfaces on tabletops, shelves and all working surfaces; smooth impervious surfaces on treatment couches or other furniture used for treatment; smooth, impervious flooring or short pile (not looped) commercial carpeting; and adequate heating, ventilation and artificial lighting.

- 4 You must avoid possible cross-infection of treatment surfaces.

You must cover surfaces with fresh paper couch roll disposed of after treating each patient, or if covering with towels or sheets alone, only use those which are fresh for each patient and boiled or machine-washed on the 40-60 degrees setting before being reused. You must regularly clean all surfaces with an appropriate detergent, at very least at the beginning or end of every working day. If any spillage of blood or body fluids occurs during treatment, soiled items must be placed in yellow clinical waste bags at the end of the treatment session.

- 5 You must keep the treatment room clean.

You must: clean and dust at least weekly all tabletops, shelves and impervious surfaces; wash daily all impervious floor surfaces with appropriate cleansers; vacuum-clean daily and annually steam clean all carpets in the areas adjacent to treatment surfaces; and frequently launder all blankets used in treatment.

The equipment you use

6 You must only use equipment which conforms with current legislation.

You must only use:

- single-use pre-sterilised disposable solid needles which, if in multi-packs of five, ten or more needles, must not be used or stored for use after the session in which the seal on the package is broken. Any needle with damaged packaging seal must not be used.
- guide tubes which must be pre-sterilised and come packaged with each individual needle or set of needles. They must not be used or stored for use beyond the treatment session in which the seal on the package is broken.

You may also use:

- plum blossom needles ('seven star hammers') which, whether plastic or stainless steel, must be pre-sterilised and single-use only
- glass or plastic cups, derma rollers and other reusable clinical equipment which have been properly washed and/or sterilised
- single-use paper tissues, paper towels, and couch roll
- disinfectants: for skin disinfection pre-packed 70 per cent isopropyl alcohol swabs with or without 0.5-2.0 per cent chlorhexidine must be used; for impervious room surfaces any reliable branded product is adequate.
- sterile cotton wool and non-sterile cotton wool/buds
- disposable surgical gloves
- sharps box conforming to BS 7320:1990 and clearly marked 'Danger - Contaminated Needles - To Be Incinerated'
- a first aid kit complying with current Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations.

Your duty of care

7 You must ensure the health and safety of the patient.

You must ensure that: you take full account of the patient's known medical history and potential allergic reactions; the part of the body to be treated is clean and free of any cuts or wounds; any paper or other material used as a covering, and any towel, cloth or other article which is

applied to the patient's skin should be clean, and should not have been used in connection with any other patient unless thoroughly disinfected before use.

If you leave patients unattended you must advise them not to move in any way which might cause them injury through bending or damaging a needle and ensure that they can call your attention immediately at any time.

In the event that your patient has, or is suspected of having, a notifiable infectious disease or serious pre-existing medical condition you must ensure that it is safe to treat that patient by contacting their GP if necessary. Although you may offer treatment, you should advise the patient not to view acupuncture as a substitute for any treatment for a notifiable disease that a doctor has prescribed.

- 8 You must ensure that your own health and personal hygiene do not endanger the health of a patient.

You must: cover any cuts and wounds with a waterproof dressing; keep your nails short and clean; wear suitable clean clothing; not wear large, loose or dangling jewellery or rings; and avoid giving treatment when suffering from an infectious or contagious condition which may be transmitted to the patient.

You should inform your general practitioner 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.

Your responsibility to perform acupuncture safely

- 9 You must wash your hands thoroughly before any acupuncture procedure and ensure that a clean field is established.

You must: wash your hands thoroughly with liquid soap and warm water immediately before the acupuncture treatment takes place; and dry your hands with a clean disposable towel. Alcohol hand-rub gels or foam are not a substitute for hand washing at this stage of the treatment.

- 10 You must insert needles hygienically and safely.

You must ensure that: the skin at the needle site is clean; any areas of the body where moisture or exudates may collect are swabbed clean with an alcohol swab before needling; you open all single-use pre-sterilised needles and instruments in the patient's presence immediately before use; you use a fresh needle for every point needled during a treatment (the few exceptions to this rule are outlined in the Guide); when inserting the needle the shaft of the needle is never touched with bare fingers or with non-sterile materials.

You must not place a needle on an intermediate surface before use.

You must use only sterile material to support the shaft of the needle once it has been inserted or if it is inserted without a guide tube.

You must ensure that hands are properly cleansed again if at any time during treatment they are contaminated by contact with clothing, pens, clinic furniture, etc between separate needle insertions.

You must wear well-fitting disposable surgical gloves if:

- the patient is bleeding profusely
- blood or body fluid is spilled which must be cleaned up promptly with detergent and followed up by disinfectant solution
- the patient has open lesions or is known to have a contagious disease
- you have cuts or wounds on your hands which cannot be covered adequately by a waterproof dressing or have a skin infection
- you are handling blood-soiled items, body fluids, excretions, and secretions, as well as surfaces, materials, and objects exposed to them.

11 You must remove needles hygienically and safely.

You must wash your hands immediately prior to the removal of needles, and place each needle immediately into the sharps container.

If you draw blood, you should apply light pressure with clean cotton wool or a clean swab, avoiding contact with the patient's body fluids, and dispose of the cotton wool or swab 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 cleansed by hand washing or by the use of alcohol gel.

You must wash your hands thoroughly at the end of the treatment to reduce the risk of cross-infection with your following patient.

12 After you have finished the treatment you must ensure that equipment is properly cleaned.

You must: replace any blankets or pillow cases which have come into contact with body fluids; wash cups and any other acupuncture equipment used on unbroken skin with hot water and detergent after each use; and autoclave or send to external sterilisation services cups or any other reusable acupuncture equipment that have been used on broken skin. Cups and any other reusable acupuncture equipment that have been used on unbroken skin should be frequently washed, preferably in a dishwasher.

Your use of ancillary techniques

13 You must ensure that moxibustion, cupping, guasha, tuina, the use of ear needles/retained needles and pricking/bleeding therapy are carried out in a safe manner and that you are properly trained in their use.

You should never use moxibustion on broken skin, directly on the face or on sensitive areas, and you should not leave your patient unattended at any stage during the procedure. You must only use water applied with a swab to help the moxa adhere to the skin surface. If you needle after using moxa, you must swab the skin.

If you give moxa to a patient for self-treatment at home, you must explain the procedure and demonstrate it to the patient. The patient must then demonstrate their competence in the use of moxa and should sign a copy of the form provided in the Guide to Safe Practice.

If you use ear needles/retained needles you must ensure that both you and your patient are properly informed of best practice for their use and offer appropriate aftercare advice.

Your own safety if you suffer a needlestick injury

- 14 If you suffer a needlestick injury you must act promptly for your own safety.

You must: encourage free bleeding from the site; wash thoroughly with soap and water but without scrubbing; and seek medical advice immediately (preferably within one hour).

Your disposal of equipment and clinical waste

- 15 You must dispose of used equipment and clinical waste safely.

You must place all needles, plum blossom needles ('seven star hammers') and dermal needles ('press-studs') immediately after use in appropriate sharps disposal containers and dispose of the containers in accordance with local environmental health department guidelines.

You must dispose of all clinical waste which has been contaminated with spillage of body fluids such as blood, open wound abrasions or mucous membranes in sealed clinical waste bags collected by a licensed agent. You must retain all contracts and receipts for clinical waste collection.

You may dispose of all other waste which has not come into contact with body fluids or spillages, including needle wrappings and single-use guide tubes, as commercial or domestic waste provided that it is carefully double-bagged daily.

Making home visits

- 16 If you have a mobile practice or undertake home visits, you must meet health and safety standards equivalent to working in a clinic.

You must have a defined base of at least one room within your home or business premises containing adequate facilities for the disinfection of equipment (if appropriate), the storage of clean equipment and the temporary storage of soiled equipment, clinical waste and sharps containers.

If you transport equipment you must ensure that containers used for this purpose are of sufficient size, are designed to allow for separate storage of sterile and soiled equipment, and are lockable and tightly sealed when shut.

If you carry out treatment at a patient's home you must: ensure that, as far as possible, the treatment is carried out in a well lit, clean room with ready access to a clean washhand basin; take with you appropriate cleaning agents, hand disinfectants, and a hygienic means of hand drying; take clean couch rolls and paper towels for covering work surfaces in the home and ensure that the bed/couch is covered by a clean cover; and in all cases ensure a clean field is established.

After treatment is completed you must ensure that: used needles are discarded immediately after use in a portable sharps container; any soiled or contaminated non-sharps items are disposed of in the appropriate manner; other waste products are carefully bagged separately for disposal in line with local environmental health department guidelines.

You must also set aside sufficient time before leaving to ensure that the patient is experiencing no adverse reactions to treatment and is well enough for you to leave.

Your work in drug/detox programmes or group settings

- 17 If you work in drug/detox programmes or group settings (such as multi-bed settings) you must ensure the patient's safety, confidentiality and dignity are maintained and respected.

You must apply the same level of care in these settings as is outlined in this Code for all other settings.

Your notes and records

- 18 You must maintain a permanent attendance register which records all patients attending your clinic and which links to a written record of their contact details.

Your commitment to health and safety

- 19 You must comply with the requirements and provisions of current Health and Safety at Work legislation.

Your duty of care extends not only to patients and employees but also the general public and visitors to your premises.

You must report all major accidents to employees and members of the public in accordance with the provisions of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 1995.

- 20 You must ensure that your premises are safe and your equipment is regularly inspected and maintained.

You must check that: all floors, passages and stairs are kept free from obstruction; equipment and machinery is regularly inspected and maintained; and all electrical and gas appliances are subject to regular examination.