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Safety In Acupuncture #2

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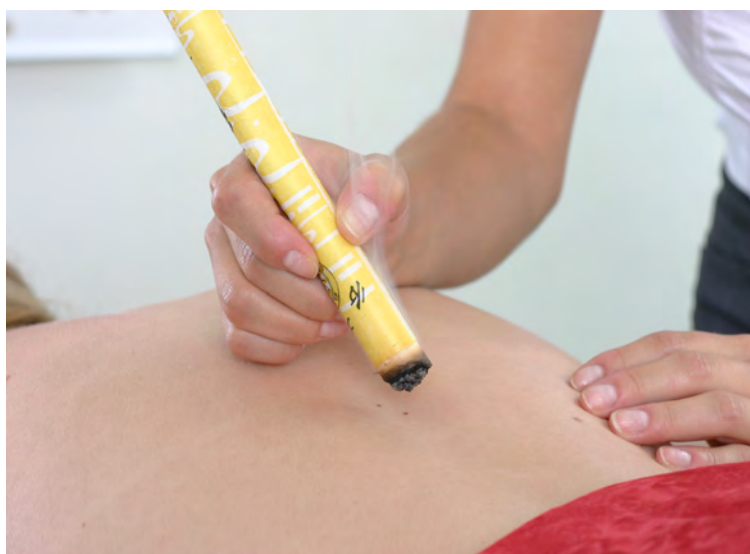
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Moxibustion

The use of moxa has basic guidelines to help prevent medical errors. Non-scarring moxibustion is often used in conjunction with moxa sticks, moxa on an acupuncture needle handle, small moxa cones that are extinguished before reaching the surface of the skin, and moxa burner devices. Moxa is also commonly placed on salt, garlic, ginger, mud plasters, white pepper mixed with flour and spread over a point in a layer approximately 0.1” thick, and aconite (Fu Zi).

- Moxibustion is contraindicated for the treatment of excess heat and febrile diseases.
- Moxibustion is contraindicated for use in delicate areas including UB1 near the eye and ST9 located beside a major artery. In general, avoid sensory organs and mucous membranes.
- Many texts forbid the use of moxa at ST17 whether direct or indirect. Acupuncture needling and direct moxa are uniformly forbidden across numerous sources.
- Moxibustion is contraindicated for use on the abdominal and lumbosacral areas of pregnant women.



The moxa stick first appeared during the Ming Dynasty.

Direct Scarring Moxibustion

This type of moxibustion has been traditionally applied for the treatment of cold and deficient or damp-cold conditions. Some applications of direct moxa to the skin involve a small piece of moxa no larger than the size of a tiny seed, however, pieces may be significantly larger. A blister forms after this type of moxibustion and it may take several weeks for the skin to heal. In some cases, there is permanent scarring.

- Direct scarring moxibustion is not legal in all states and countries.
- Some malpractice insurance carriers forbid the use of scarring moxibustion.
- Scarring moxibustion is contraindicated for the head, prominent tendons, large skin creases, face and near blood vessels.
- Direct scarring moxibustion is not applied to CV8 at the umbilicus but moxa on a mound of salt is acceptable and in common use.



It is strongly recommended to use a heat shield surrounding the area where the needle penetrates the skin in order to protect the skin. Here, the skin is seen unprotected and this may lead to burns.

Cupping

Cupping is usually applied with a cup made of glass, bamboo or porcelain. Suction is created by traditional fire cupping. Suction devices are sometimes used in conjunction with plastic cups.

- Cupping is contraindicated for use on pregnant women on the breast, abdomen, and lumbosacral areas.
- Cupping is inappropriate in cases of fainting and when there are seizures.
- Cupping is contraindicated for use on skin ulcerations, edema or on large blood vessels. Avoid all areas of skin disease including tumors and swollen lymph glands.
- Cupping is contraindicated for patients with a high fever with convulsions.
- Patients with excess bleeding disorders should not receive cupping.
- Cupping is to be avoided over prior cupping marks that have not completely resolved.
- Cupping is to be avoided over the area of the heart.



Fire Cupping

Pregnancy

During pregnancy, avoid strong needle stimulation to acupuncture points known to induce uterine contractions. The following acupuncture points are generally contraindicated:

- SP6
- LI4
- GB21
- UB60 (BL60)
- UB67 (BL67)

Exceptions

There are specific instances when these points are used but these are intentional circumstances such as labor induction and turning a breech baby. For example, BL67 is a powerful point used to treat delayed labor and difficult labor. It is also effective in correcting the malposition of the fetus, often in conjunction with moxibustion. After delivery, BL67 may be applied to treat retention of the placenta.

Timing

For women who have been pregnant for less than three months, needling the lower abdomen and lumbosacral regions is contraindicated. For women who have been pregnant for greater than three months, both the upper abdomen and lumbosacral regions are contraindicated. Needling UB 31 - 34 (BL 31 - 34) is contraindicated in the first and second trimesters of pregnancy.

Labor

Do not connect electroacupuncture to LI4 and SP6 unless intentionally inducing labor. Both of these points are forbidden points during pregnancy with the exception of labor induction. Electroacupuncture to these points is applied when there is premature rupture of the membrane or when the patient has passed their due date.

The following labor induction procedure has a high efficacy rate and is therefore contraindicated unless specifically used for labor induction. LI4 (Hegu) and SP6 (Sanyinjiao) are ipsilaterally needled. Note that this is only on one side of the body and does not cross the heart. Crossing the path of the heart is contraindicated during electroacupuncture. Electroacupuncture is applied for 6 - 8 hours at approximately 3 Hz. Electroacupuncture is set to a mild level such that the patient is comfortable. The procedure is applied for three days consecutively and the side of the body that is needled is alternated each day.

It is contraindicated to apply moxibustion or cupping on the abdomen or lumbosacral regions of pregnant women.



Infants

Do not needle the vertex of infants because the fontanel has not closed. As a safety precaution, do not retain needles in infants due to compliance issues.

Acupuncture Precautions

Avoid puncturing major blood vessels, internal organs and pneumothorax by not needling deeply over the local regions of major anatomical structures. Injury to local blood vessels may lead to a hematoma. This may be due to needling or acupressure. Local discoloration, swelling, pain and distention indicate a possible hematoma. Mild hematomas are treated with local pressure, gentle massage and moxibustion.

The following lists common acupuncture needling contraindications and cautions. Note that needling depth and angle of insertion instructions vary across classical and modern acupuncture literature. There is also variance in acupuncture point locations.

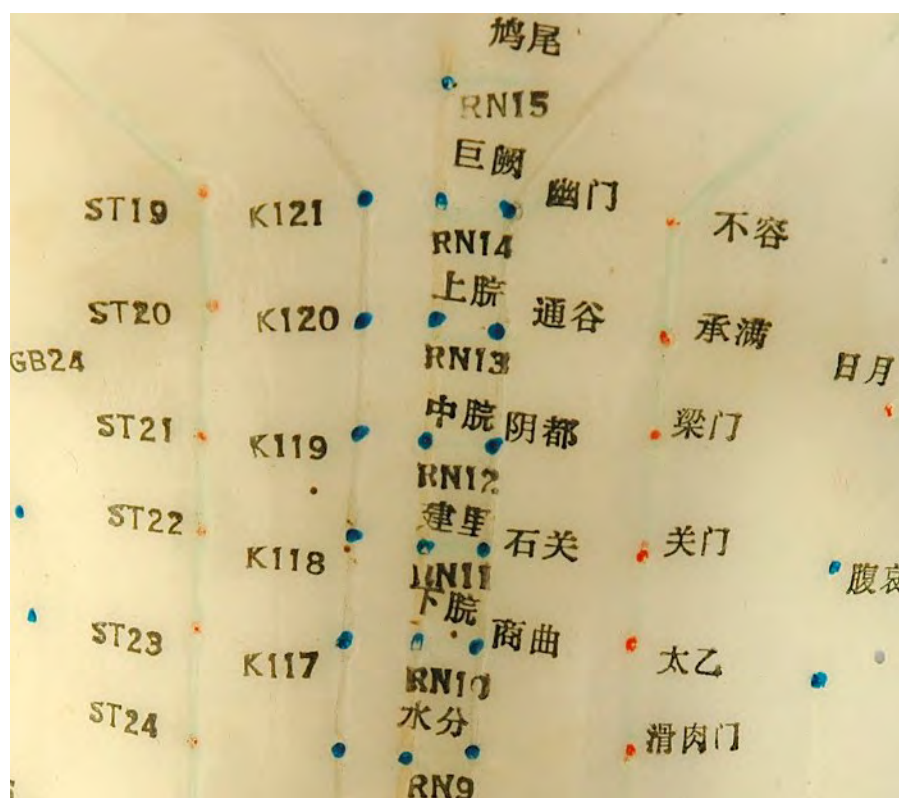
GB20

GB20 is an acupuncture point that is widely used. The main concern is to avoid puncturing the medulla oblongata. GB20 is an intersection point of the Yang Linking and Triple Burner (Sanjiao) channels. GB20 disperses wind, expels heat and benefits hearing and vision. GB20 is indicated for the treatment of headaches, eye disorders, vertigo, tinnitus, insomnia, febrile diseases including the common cold, seizures including infantile seizures, epilepsy, sinusitis and rhinorrhea.

GB20 is located in the depression below the occiput between the upper portion of the sternocleidomastoideus and trapezius muscles, level with GV16. This point is needled 0.5 to 0.8 inches towards the tip of the nose. Deep needling may injure the spinal cord or damage the brain. Locally, there are branches of the occipital artery and vein in this region and also a branch of the lesser occipital nerve.

CV12

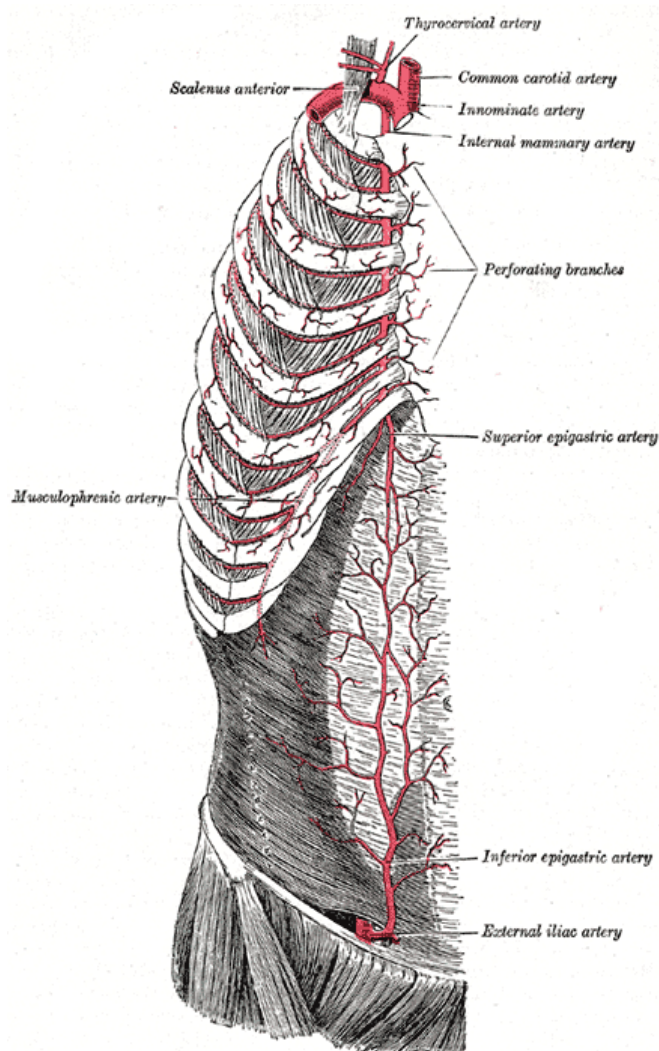
This acupuncture point is located 4 cun above the umbilicus on the midline of the abdomen. This acupuncture point is halfway between the umbilicus and the sternocostal angle. CV12 is representative of similar points in the region in that care must be taken to avoid puncturing the peritoneal cavity. As a result, deep insertion is contraindicated. Acupuncture needling is applied at a perpendicular angle from 0.5 to 1.2 inches. The superior epigastric artery and vein are located at this point as is a cutaneous branch of the 7th intercostal nerve. This point is common due to its importance in clinical practice. Avoid becoming forgetful or complacent with the regulation of needle depth due to repetitive use in the workplace.



CV12 (RN12), CV14, CV15

CV12 is the front Mu point of the Stomach, influential point of all yang organs and an intersection point of the Small Intestine, Triple Burner and

Stomach channels. CV12 regulates Stomach qi and transforms and suppresses rebellious qi. Common indications for the use of CV12 include stomachache, hyperemesis, nausea, abdominal distention, diarrhea, indigestion, jaundice, gastric ulcers, acid reflux, mental illness affecting the stomach, mania and insomnia.



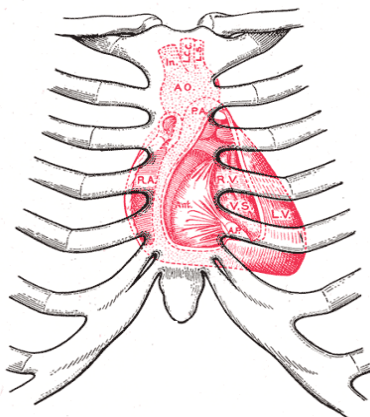
CV14

CV14 is located on the midline of the abdomen, 6 cun above the umbilicus. CV14 is the front Mu point of the Heart. This point calms the shen (spirit), regulates qi, regulates the heartbeat, pacifies the stomach and benefits the diaphragm. CV14 is indicated for the treatment of mental disorders, angina, palpitations, seizures, acid reflux, epilepsy and hyperemesis. This acupuncture point is needled 0.3 to 0.8 inches perpendicularly. Deep insertion is contraindicated in order to avoid the liver and heart and extra caution must be used in cases of hepatomegaly and cardiomegaly.

CV15

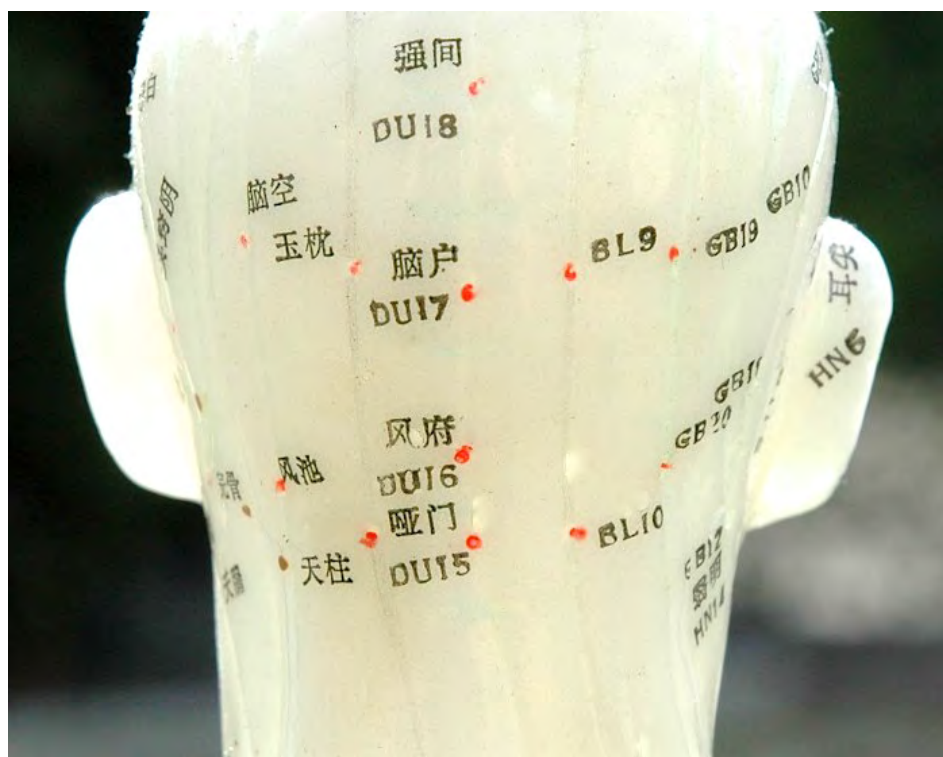
CV15 is located below the xiphoid process, 7 cun above the umbilicus. This point is located in the supine position with the arms uplifted. This acupuncture point is commonly used in acupuncture clinics along as is its adjacent point CV14, the front Mu point of the Heart. The lower aspect of the heart may be located in this region if there is cardiomegaly. As a result, this point and neighboring acupuncture points including ST19, KI21 and CV14 are contraindicated for deep needling in order to avoid puncturing the heart. Deep insertion is also contraindicated because the liver may be located in this region if there is hepatomegaly.

CV15 is needled obliquely and inferiorly from 0.4 to 0.6 inches. Never needle superiorly as this is in the direction of the heart. CV15 is the Luo point of the Conception Vessel. This point is indicated for use in the treatment of mental disorders, angina, seizures, epilepsy and hiccups.



DU15 and DU16

Avoid deep insertion of both DU15 (GV15) and DU16 (GV16). DU15 is a sea of marrow point and is a window of sky point. DU15 is an intersection point with the Yang Linking channel and is therefore often referred to as a meeting point of the DU channel with the Yang Linking channel. DU15 clears the senses and consciousness, benefits the tongue and is indicated for the treatment of mental diseases, seizures, epilepsy, deafness, muteness, apoplexy, stiff tongue, aphasia, occipital headaches and stiff neck.



DU15 and DU16

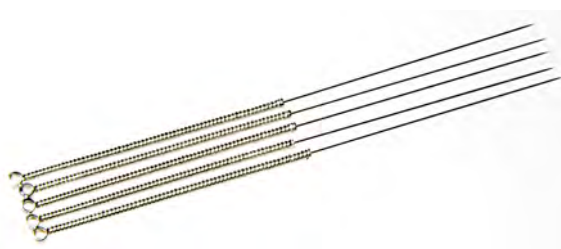
Do not angle upwards or both upwards and obliquely when needling DU15 as not to puncture the medulla oblongata. DU15 is below the spinous process of C-1 and is 0.5 cun above the posterior hairline. Ordinarily, C-1

cannot be palpated. As a result, DU15 is often located 0.5 cun below DU16 on the midline. Since the posterior hairline is 1 cun below DU15, locate DU15 at 0.5 cun above this anatomical landmark.

Recommended needling for DU15 is perpendicularly 0.5 to 0.8 inches. The needle is often angled inferiorly. Caution is used because the spinal canal is deep to this point upon perpendicular needle insertion. Upwards oblique insertion is contraindicated to avoid puncturing the medulla. The branches of the occipital artery and vein are local to this point as is the 3rd occipital nerve.

DU16 is a sea of marrow point, a window of sky point, a meeting point with the Yang Linking channel and a ghost point. DU16 eliminates wind, calms the spirit and benefits the head and neck. DU16 is indicated for the treatment of headaches, stiff neck, mental diseases, sore throat and the common cold, stroke and hemiplegia. DU16 is an important point for the treatment of both external and internal wind. DU16 is below the occipital protuberance and is 1.0 cun above the posterior hairline and in the depression between the trapezius muscles of both sides. To locate this point, run the fingers downward into the depression inferior to the occipital protuberance. Reference this location technique against measuring the point's location 1 cun above the posterior hairline.

DU16 is needled perpendicularly 0.5 to 0.8 inches. Deep needling is contraindicated to avoid penetrating the medulla oblongata. The spinal canal is deep to this point. Local vasculature includes the occipital artery and branches of the 3rd cervical nerve and occipital nerve are local to this point.



CPT & Clean Needle Technique (CNT)

97810 - Acupuncture, one or more needles, without electrical stimulation, initial 15 min.

97811 - Acupuncture, one or more needles, without electrical stimulation, each additional 15 minutes. With re-insertion.

97813 - Acupuncture, one or more needles, with electrical stimulation, initial 15 minutes.

97814 - Acupuncture, one or more needles, with electrical stimulation, each additional 15 minutes. With re-insertion.

CPT (Current Procedural Terminology) codes are the property of the American Medical Association (AMA). The CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) is the government agency that contracts the AMA to define and establish CPT codes.

The 97810 CPT billing code is for the application of manual acupuncture. Technically, it is for the application of one or more acupuncture needles during the initial phase of an acupuncture treatment wherein the acupuncturist has “personal one-on-one contact with the patient.” The next code, 97811, is for each additional 15 minutes of acupuncture during that same treatment period. However, the code stipulates that there is a “re-insertion of needles” for it to be allowed. The same holds for the electroacupuncture billing codes 97813 for the first 15 minutes of electroacupuncture and 97814 for each additional 15 minutes.

The term “re-insertion” is an unfortunate choice since it seems to imply taking a needle out and putting it back in again. That would be a violation of clean needle technique and several state laws. A more legal interpretation and one that is consistent with clean needle technique is that reinsertion implies the addition of new sterile acupuncture needles. CPT codes are timed codes and therefore reinsertion is not required by some insurance carriers when there is additional direct time spent with the patient. This may include the application of manual acupuncture techniques and electroacupuncture.

The legal concern is to be sure that charges must be reasonable, defensible, consistent and are made public to patients. The clean needle technique concern is to always dispose of needles after one use. The exception is in states where reusable needles are allowed. In these cases, needles must be sterilized prior to reuse.

Reusable Needles

Some states and countries allow reusable needles that have been sterilized with autoclave equipment. Many states, including California, do not allow reusable needles and only disposable needles are legal. Many acupuncturist malpractice insurance and health insurance network policies forbid the use of reusable needles.

California and Florida Single Use Needles

The State of California specifically prohibits the reuse of acupuncture needles:

1399.454. Single Use Needles.

An acupuncturist shall use needles labeled for single use only that meet the requirements of federal regulations 21 CFR Part 880.5580 (61 FR 64617, December 6, 1996). It shall constitute unprofessional conduct for an acupuncturist to use a needle more than once.

This is a general trend in laws and regulations for filiform needles. The State of Florida has a similar provision:

457.1085 Infection control.—Prior to November 1, 1986, the board shall adopt rules relating to the prevention of infection, the safe disposal of any potentially infectious materials, and other requirements to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Beginning October 1, 1997, all acupuncture needles that are to be used on a patient must be sterile and disposable, and each needle may be used only once.

Scope of Practice

One of the most important clinical and legal guidelines is to engage only in activities within the defined scope of practice. This varies across countries and states. The following is a comparison of Florida and California to help get a general understanding of this parameter on a national scale.

The following is the rule for the State of Florida:

457.102 Definitions.—As used in this chapter:

(1) “Acupuncture” means a form of primary health care, based on traditional Chinese medical concepts and modern oriental medical techniques, that employs acupuncture diagnosis and treatment, as well as adjunctive therapies and diagnostic techniques, for the promotion, maintenance, and restoration of health and the prevention of disease. Acupuncture shall include, but not be limited to, the insertion of acupuncture needles and the application of moxibustion to specific areas of the human body and the use of electroacupuncture, Qi Gong, oriental massage, herbal therapy, dietary guidelines, and other adjunctive therapies, as defined by board rule.

(2) “Acupuncturist” means any person licensed as provided in this chapter to practice acupuncture as a primary health care provider.

(3) “Board” means the Board of Acupuncture.

(4) “License” means the document of authorization issued by the department for a person to engage in the practice of acupuncture.

(5) “Department” means the Department of Health.

(6) “Oriental medicine” means the use of acupuncture, electroacupuncture, Qi Gong, oriental massage, herbal therapy, dietary guidelines, and other adjunctive therapies.

(7) “Prescriptive rights” means the prescription, administration, and use of needles and devices, restricted devices, and prescription devices that are used in the practice of acupuncture and oriental medicine.

The following are from the State of California laws and regulations:

4927. As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

(a) "Board" means the Acupuncture "Board".

(b) "Person" means any individual, organization, or corporate body, except that only individuals may be licensed under this chapter.

(c) "Acupuncturist" means an individual to whom a license has been issued to practice acupuncture pursuant to this chapter, which is in effect and is not suspended or revoked.

(d) "Acupuncture" means the stimulation of a certain point or points on or near the surface of the body by the insertion of needles to prevent or modify the perception of pain or to normalize physiological functions, including pain control, for the treatment of certain diseases or dysfunctions of the body and includes the techniques of electroacupuncture, cupping, and moxibustion.

4937. An acupuncturist's license authorizes the holder thereof:

(a) To engage in the practice of acupuncture.

(b) To perform or prescribe the use of Asian massage, acupressure, breathing techniques, exercise, heat, cold, magnets, nutrition, diet, herbs, plant, animal, and mineral products, and dietary supplements to promote, maintain, and restore health. Nothing in this section prohibits any person who does not possess an acupuncturist's license or another license as a healing arts practitioner from performing, or prescribing the use of any modality listed in this subdivision.

(c) For purposes of this section, a "magnet" means a mineral or metal that produces a magnetic field without the application of an electric current.

(d) For purposes of this section, "plant, animal, and mineral products" means naturally occurring substances of plant, animal, or mineral origin, except that it does not include synthetic compounds, controlled substances or dangerous drugs as defined in Sections 4021 and 4022, or a controlled substance listed in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 11053) of Division 10 of the Health and Safety Code.

(e) For purposes of this section, "dietary supplement" has the same meaning as defined in subsection (ff) of Section 321 of Title 21 of the United States Code, except that dietary supplement does not include controlled substances or dangerous drugs as defined in Section 4021 or 4022, or a controlled substance listed in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 11053) of Division 10 of the Health and Safety Code.

4938. The board shall issue a license to practice acupuncture to any person who makes an application and meets the following requirements:

(a) Is at least 18 years of age.

This last part is an interesting contrast. In California, an acupuncturist must be at least 18 years of age but in Florida the minimum age is 21. The following is the State of Florida rule:

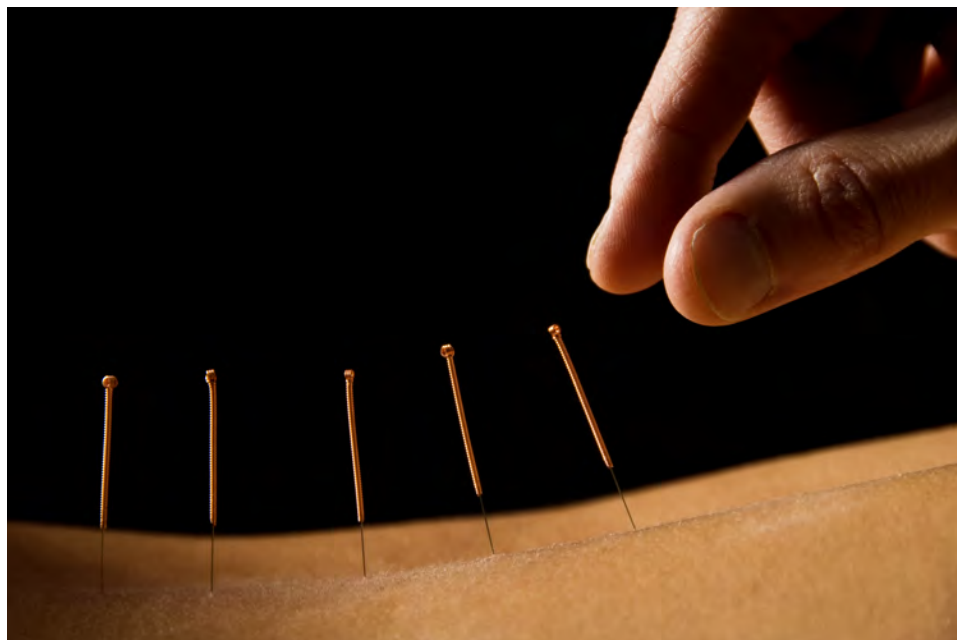
57.105 Licensure qualifications and fees.—

(1) It is unlawful for any person to practice acupuncture in this state unless such person has been licensed by the board, is in a board-approved course of study, or is otherwise exempted by this chapter.

(2) A person may become licensed to practice acupuncture if the person applies to the department and:

(a) Is 21 years of age or older, has good moral character, and has the ability to communicate in English, which is demonstrated by having passed the national written examination in English or, if such examination was passed in a foreign language, by also having passed a nationally recognized English proficiency examination;

This last section (57.105, 2, a) represents another emerging trend. English is slowly becoming a required language in the USA on a national scale. There has been a phasing out of Korean, Japanese and Chinese language acupuncture examinations for licensure nationally. This is controversial in that practitioners from China and other Asian countries may not be able to obtain acupuncture licenses in the USA without significant study of the English language. The proponents of this requirement suggest that this will reduce medical errors. In Florida, the English language requirement is written into law.



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