

## **ACUPUNCTURE**

### **What is acupuncture?**

Acupuncture is defined<sup>1</sup> under Washington law as a “health care service based on an Oriental system of medical theory utilizing Oriental diagnosis and treatment to promote health and treat organic or functional disorders by treating specific acupuncture points or meridians.”

### **Are acupuncturists regulated in Washington?**

Yes<sup>2</sup>. East Asian medicine practitioners (formerly termed acupuncturists) must be licensed by the state and are subject to state regulation.

### **Who can be an East Asian medicine practitioner?**

To be licensed<sup>3</sup> as an East Asian medicine practitioner in Washington, a person must be fluent in English,<sup>4</sup> must successfully complete an approved course of East Asian medicine study,<sup>5</sup> must pass a written examination, which may include a practical examination,<sup>6</sup> and must pay an annual registration fee.<sup>7</sup>

### **Are East Asian medicine practitioners required to make any special disclosures to patients?**

Yes. An East Asian medicine practitioner must inform the patient in writing, before or at the time of the initial visit, of the East Asian medicine practitioner’s qualifications, scope of practice, and the possible side effects of proposed treatments.<sup>8</sup> The form must also specifically include the East Asian medicine practitioner’s license information, and a description of what is included in the practice of East Asian medicine in Washington.<sup>9</sup>

### **What is the physician’s role with regard to East Asian medicine practitioners?**

An East Asian medicine practitioner must have a written plan for consultation, emergency transfer, and referral to other health care practitioners.<sup>10</sup>

For patients with potentially serious conditions, the acupuncturist must immediately obtain a consultation or recent written diagnosis from a physician before initiating or continuing treatment. “Potentially serious conditions” include:<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> WAC 246-918-310 (Physician assistants); WAC 246-855 (Osteopathic physicians’ acupuncture assistants).

<sup>2</sup> RCW 18.06 subjects the practice of acupuncture to state regulation.

<sup>3</sup> RCW 18.06.020( 2012 c 286§3) makes the practice without license unlawful.

<sup>4</sup> RCW 18.06.090.

<sup>5</sup> RCW 18.06.050.

<sup>6</sup> RCW 18.06.080; WAC 246-803-240.

<sup>7</sup> WAC 246-803-990.

<sup>8</sup> RCW 18.06.130; RCW 18.06.140; WAC 246-803-300.

<sup>9</sup> WAC 246-803-300.

<sup>10</sup> RCW § 18.06.140 (2010 c 286 § 9) requires the consultation and referral to other health care practitioners.

- Cardiac conditions, including uncontrolled hypertension.
- Acute abdominal symptoms.
- Acute undiagnosed neurological changes.
- Unexplained weight loss or gain in excess of 15 percent body weight within a three-month period.
- Suspected fracture or dislocation.
- Suspected systemic infection.
- Any serious undiagnosed hemorrhagic disorder.
- Acute respiratory distress without previous history or diagnosis.

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<sup>11</sup> WAC 246-803-310(2).