

Acupuncture education – review of state of affairs in NZ, Germany, UK, USA and Australia

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The Purpose of this Study

- Demand for acupuncture as a modality of treatment that either is used on its own or as complementary to Western medicine is growing. As the demand for the service grows, the demand for skilled practitioners increases as well.

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The Purpose of this Study

- As the demand for acupuncture grows, the demand for skilled practitioners increases as well.
- As education is seen as one of the endorsements for a practitioner's competence, understanding how education has developed and where it stands in various countries is of importance to policy makers and education providers.

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The state of acupuncture education development in 5 countries

- In this study, we outline the state of development of acupuncture education 5 countries.
- Those countries include:
 - New Zealand, Germany, UK, USA and Australia

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Introduction and Background

- ▶ The use of complementary and alternative medicine (TCM) as one of its forms is becoming wide-spread (Lewith et al., 2003) and is increasing in the Western world (Xue, Zhang, Lin, et al., 2007).
- ▶ Some authors are inclined to suggest that the movement in the 1960s that emphasized “getting back to nature” was the main trigger (Bear, Jen, Tanassi, et al. ,1998, p.533).

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Introduction and Background

The two forms of TCM that have been most frequently referred to, and practiced are:

- Chinese herbal medicine
- Acupuncture

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Introduction and Background

Definition of acupuncture:

Acupuncture is a traditional treatment method where needles are inserted into specific points on the body for the purpose of achieving therapeutic effects (Chon, & Lee, 2013).

Although the practice has been used for thousands of years in China, it faced much scepticism and pessimism in the West until very recently (Parekh, Liu, & Wei, 2009).



Introduction and Background

- What is the reason behind the skepticism?

The reason was recognised very early on as a lack of credible scientific evidence and scientists have since produced evidence that opposes (Cristian, Katz, Cutrone, et al., 2005; Derry, Derry, McQuay, et al., 2006), supports (Vickers et al., 2004) or is undecided (Cherkin, Sherman, Avins, et al., 2009) about the value of acupuncture as a treatment method.

Introduction and Background

As in some states in Australia, where acupuncture has begun integrating into mainstream healthcare (Xue, Zhang, Yang, et al., 2009), acupuncture in New Zealand is slowly finding its use within the contemporary healthcare system.

- ▶ Evidence of this integration is the endorsement of acupuncture as a practice legitimate for use in treatment of certain medical conditions by some high-profile government agencies (ACC, INZ) (Duke, 2005). These need to be in full the first time you use them: “(Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), Immigration New Zealand (INZ))”) (Duke, 2005).



Introduction and Background

- As a result of this acceptance, acupuncture is currently practiced at close to 500 practices (Acupuncture NZ, 2016a).
- This study will compare the state of acupuncture education in New Zealand with education in Germany, UK, USA, and Australia.
- We believe that the study is warranted by the need for regulation of the practice of acupuncture that certainly will include setting government standards for the education of acupuncture practitioners.

Research Methods

- The research was desk based research comprising of analysis of existing literature relevant to the topic of education of acupuncture practitioners in New Zealand and selected countries. Past tense - this is a completed piece of work, not a prospective study.
- The literature was summarised, evaluated, synthesized and interpreted before being presented to the reader. A diverse range of sources were used in the process.
- Material includes: scientific papers, conference proceedings, government reports, consultation papers, magazines, newspapers articles



State of affairs

Acupuncture Education in Europe

- Acupuncture reached Europe in the early 16th century (World Health Organization, 1999).
- However, public and professional awareness of acupuncture began only in the 17th century stimulated by the increasing availability of written information sources produced by Portuguese, French, Dutch and Danish missionaries, traders and some of the physicians who authored some of the original Chinese texts.



State of affairs

Acupuncture Education in Europe

- Since the early 1970's, the demand for acupuncture education programmes in Europe has increased significantly.
- The result of that is that some form of acupuncture education is available in as many as 28 European countries.

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Acupuncture Education in Europe

Germany

- Acupuncture practice is among the most commonly used of the alternative therapies in German family practices.
- In 2003, approximately 20,000 German physicians belonged to one of the five acupuncturists associations (Stollberg, 2007).
- The practice of acupuncture is approved by German statutory health insurance, but practicing parties are reimbursed for treating only a limited number of conditions, namely knee pain and lumbar pain (Joos, Musselmann, & Szecsenyi, 2011).

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Acupuncture Education in Germany

- ▶ To be reimbursed by statutory health insurance, registered physicians practicing acupuncture need to have 1,500 hours of acupuncture study in addition to a minimum of 1000 hours of clinical practice.
- ▶ Currently, the only acupuncture-specific education program in Germany is offered by the Technische Universität München and is at master degree level (Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences, Technical University of Munich, 2016).
- ▶ However, the course is offered only offered to Western medical degree graduates.



Acupuncture Education in UK

- In the UK, acupuncture practice is not regulated by government statute.
- However, the field itself is perceived to be sufficiently regulated, with officials going so far as to claim that the field is “robustly self-regulated” (British Acupuncture Council [BAcC], 2016b).
- It has been estimated that approximately 5,000 traditional Chinese acupuncturists operate under several independent accreditation bodies (Wheeler, 2015).
- Other groups that are recorded using acupuncture are medical practitioners, physiotherapists, dentists and nurses totalling approximately another 5,000.



Acupuncture Education in UK

- ▶ Due to the profession's status as an officially unregulated activity, individuals wanting to practice acupuncture do not face many impediments to providing the service to the public.
- ▶ The only prerequisite for practicing acupuncture is the “Special Treatments Licence” that is issued by local authorities and regulates provision of treatments, including beauty treatment, massage, manicure, acupuncture, tattooing, cosmetic piercing etc. There are no other statutory regulations restricting the use of acupuncture in the UK (National Health Service, United Kingdom, 2015).



Acupuncture Education in UK

- ▶ This implies that not much more than market forces can prevent a person from claiming the status of an acupuncture practitioner in the UK.
- ▶ However, individual accreditation standards imposed by the independent accreditation bodies include education as one of the important items in an acupuncture practitioner's competency portfolio.
- ▶ For example, the BAaC accepts degree-level education as a minimum level for achieving membership status (BAaC, 2016a).

Acupuncture Education in UK

- It appears that the BAacC has higher education requirements than other two accreditation bodies:
 - The Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine
 - Acupuncture UK (ATCM) (<http://www.atcm.co.uk/>) and The Acupuncture Society (AS) (<http://www.acupuncturesociety.org.uk/>).
- ATCM imposes “a university, college or other equal recognized professional qualification in Chinese medicine” as a requirement.

Acupuncture Education in UK

- AS is the only organisation that lists continuing professional development (CPD) as a requirement.
- They also accept membership of a healthcare professional who attends a yearly CPD course and they impose no other education requirement on this group of professionals.
- The British Academy of Western Medical Acupuncture (BAWMA) is an organisation whose membership is limited to Western-style acupuncture practitioners.
- They offer 2 courses, one on acupuncture and another on facial acupuncture.

Acupuncture Education in UK

- Similarly, The British Medical Acupuncture Society (BMAS) has limitations on who can be a member and complete their courses. They limit their membership to doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives, health visitors, physiotherapists, osteopaths, chiropractors, and podiatrists (British Medical Acupuncture Society, 2016).
- Another register that has education requirements imposed onto acupuncture practitioners is the Complementary & Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC).
- They act as a voluntary register for not just acupuncturists, but other practitioners of complementary medicine as well.

Acupuncture Education in UK

- Their (CNHC) National Occupational Standards comprise of two core standards applicable to all practitioners of any form of complementary medicine and they have an acupuncture standard called “CNH24 Provide microsystems acupuncture to clients”.
- Despite the fact that acupuncture education is not essential for one to claim acupuncture professional status, acupuncture education options in the UK are plentiful.
- A range of achievements, including professional certificates, diplomas, bachelor and master degrees are available as the outcomes from courses that vary in length from a few months to several years.
- Organisations providing acupuncture education range from small and private to the large and publicly-owned universities.



Acupuncture Education in North America USA

- Acupuncture started its development in the USA in the early 1970s, after the New York Times reporter James Reston wrote an article about his experience with acupuncture in recovery from appendectomy in China.
- The first acupuncture school in the U.S. was established in 1975.
- 6 states currently have no acupuncture practice regulations in place; those are Alabama, Kansas, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Wyoming.
- However, the debate on how to bring about acupuncture regulations in those 6 states is intensifying and some legislative efforts are on the way (Duran, 2014)

Acupuncture Education in USA

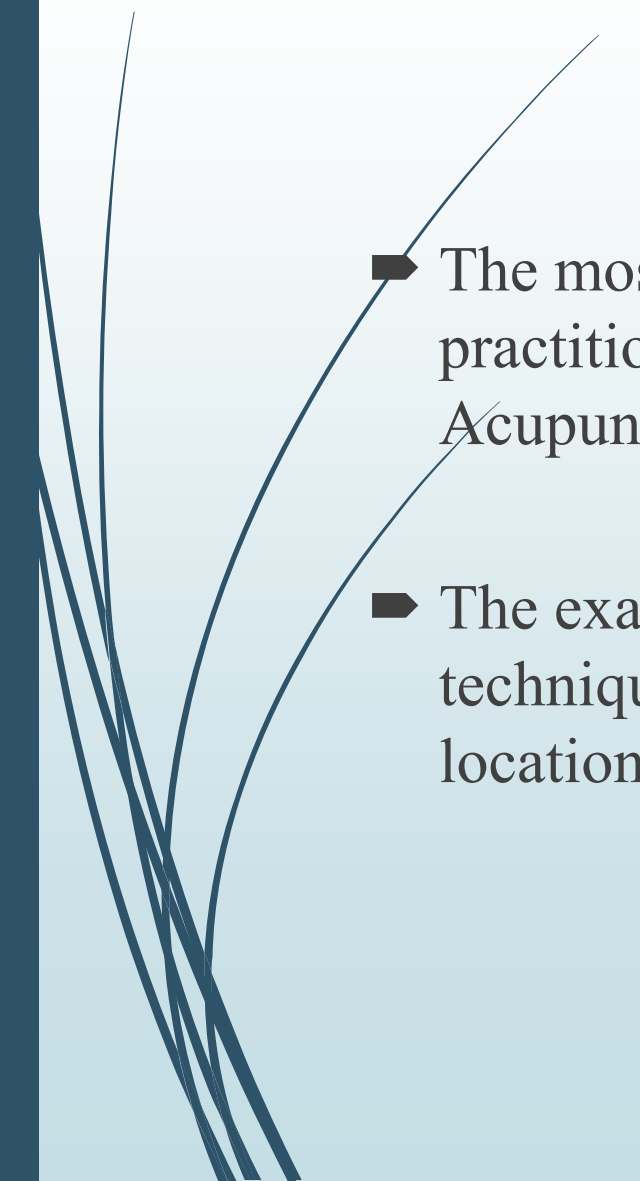
- In the states other than those 6 where acupuncture practice is unregulated, licensing of acupuncture practitioners is a requirement.

If the practitioner is a physician:

- They practice acupuncture under their own physician's license and have options of shorter training provided by universities
- State-nominated licensing boards that prescribe conditions for licensing and examinations used in the process. .



Acupuncture Education in USA

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- The most prestigious examination used in licensing acupuncture practitioners is prescribed by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM).
 - The examinations required for licensed status are for clean needle technique, foundations of Oriental medicine, acupuncture with point location and biomedicine.



Acupuncture Education in USA

- However, to become eligible for certification by NCCAOM, the future registered acupuncturist has to have either completed a course of acupuncture education, completed an apprenticeship or a combination of both (NCCAOM, 2016a).
- At the time of writing this report, approximately 63 schools that offer 74 acupuncture related programmes either had an accreditation issued by ACAOM or were current candidates for accreditation.



Acupuncture Education in Australasia

New Zealand

- ▶ Acupuncture is widely accepted in New Zealand.
- ▶ Over 700 acupuncture practices operate in New Zealand and it is estimated that over 1500 practitioners actively practice acupuncture. Compare the figure used in the introduction. What's the source for this different figure and the practitioners figure here?

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Acupuncture Education in New Zealand

- Acupuncture education in New Zealand moved from short, vocational courses provided by individual practitioners during the early 1980s to 1-4 year long courses that are offered by tertiary education providers accredited by the New Zealand Qualification Authority.
- The level of the courses offered currently, ranges from Bachelor's to postgraduate degrees and are offered by universities and private education providers.



Acupuncture Education in New Zealand

- ▶ Two distinct modalities of acupuncture practice have emerged as a result of doctrines embraced by the practitioners.
- ▶ The first modality is practiced by parties that espouse traditional Chinese philosophy that embodies concepts such as yin/yang and circulation of qi and is referred to as traditional Chinese acupuncture.
- ▶ The second modality is mainly practiced as a complement to conventional medicine and is referred to as Western medical acupuncture (White, 2009).



Acupuncture Education in New Zealand

- ▶ Although this division is not clear cut and many practitioners report practicing within the frameworks of both modalities (Dale, 1997) , the divergence is obvious considering the education options available to students of acupuncture in New Zealand.
- ▶ Out of 4 tertiary providers, two are universities and two are private education institutions.
- ▶ The universities that provide training in acupuncture are Auckland University of Technology and OTAGO.



Acupuncture Education in New Zealand

- Both universities offer training for the Western acupuncture modality and deliver their courses at the postgraduate level.
- University of Otago offers acupuncture as an endorsement in the Postgraduate Certificate in Physiotherapy, Postgraduate Diploma in Physiotherapy and Master of Physiotherapy

Acupuncture Education in New Zealand

- Auckland University of Technology (AUT) offered the first postgraduate certificate in Western acupuncture in 1999 (Kohut et al., 2013) .
- Currently, they offer a total of six courses related to acupuncture— Postgraduate Certificate in Health Science in Acupuncture, Postgraduate Diploma in Health Science in Acupuncture, Master of Health Practice in Acupuncture, Master of Health Science, Doctor of Health Science and Doctor of Philosophy (Auckland University of Technology, 2016).



Acupuncture Education in New Zealand

- The two institutions providing a bachelor's degree are New Zealand College of Chinese Medicine (NZCCM) and New Zealand School of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (NZSATCM).
- They both offer traditional Chinese acupuncture.
- Degrees provided by NZCCM are Bachelor of Health Science (Acupuncture) and Bachelor of Health Science (Chinese Medicine—Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine).

Acupuncture Education in New Zealand

- The former is completed by attending the course for either three years full time or up to six consecutive years part time.
- The latter is completed as either a four-year full time course or as a part time course attended over no longer than eight consecutive years.
- The other private provider, NZSATCM, being both NZQA registered and New Zealand government crown entity , was established in 1989 and is probably the earliest provider of this kind in New Zealand.

Acupuncture Education in New Zealand

- ▶ NZSATCM offers the following courses:
 - Master of Health Science (Chinese Medicine): 1.5-year full-time study or 3-year part-time study. The delivery of this course is block teaching combined with online learning support
 - Bachelor of Health Science (Acupuncture): 4-year full-time study
 - Diploma of Chinese Herbal Medicine: 3-year full-time study



Acupuncture Education in Australia

- ▶ Practice of acupuncture in Australia can be traced back to the 1850s (Loh, 1985) when early settlers came from China to work in Australian mines. During its long history in the country, the field has progressed through several stages, the most recent being related to standard-setting and regulation of the field.
- ▶ The latest major change occurred in 2012 when the field was fully regulated on the national level under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) established by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).



Acupuncture Education in Australia

➤ The four largest of these associations are:

- Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association (AACMA)
- Federation of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture Australia
- Australian Natural Therapists' Association,
- Australian Traditional Medicine Society



Acupuncture Education in Australia

- As of Oct. 2013, 9 existing bachelor programmes have been approved in Australia:
- 2 programmes from the Endeavour College of Natural Health,
- 3 double-bachelor degree programmes from the RMIT University,
- 1 from the Southern School of Natural Therapy in Melbourne,
- 1 from the Sydney College of TCM, and 2 from the University of Technology in Sydney).

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Acupuncture Education in Australia

At the postgraduate level:

- RMIT University offers 2 master degree programmes,
- University of Western Sydney offers 1 bachelor degree programme leading to a master's degree.

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Discussion and Conclusion

- The information above shows a clear connection between the regulation of the field and the number of education providers.
- Countries like the UK, the USA and Australia, where the field of acupuncture is regulated, show higher numbers of education providers offering acupuncture-related courses than countries like Germany (1 provider) and New Zealand.
- It appears that the countries that regulate the field of acupuncture, fairly quickly regulate the field of acupuncture education as well.



Discussion and Conclusion

- ▶ The 3 countries that regulated the field of acupuncture have also introduced a degree of regulation in their acupuncture education, mostly by prescribing the standard of courses that, if completed, make one eligible for registration.
- ▶ An interesting point is that in the UK, even without the official regulation in place, the field is seen as regulated. It appears that the status of a recognised practitioner provides an advantage in the market for the status holder.

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Discussion and Conclusion

However, acceptance of acupuncture appears to be not dependant on the level of regulation of the acupuncture field. The examples are Germany and New Zealand, where even with the unregulated acupuncture fields, both countries still have a high level of acceptance of acupuncture. That implies that other factors than regulation are to be sought, by surveying what affects the attitudes of potential users towards the use of acupuncture.