

TREATMENT POLICY #02

SUBJECT: Acupuncture

ISSUED: May 1, 1994, revised June 2001, March 2007, and July 2012

EFFECTIVE: November 1, 2012

PURPOSE:

To establish standards for the use of acupuncture when used as an adjunct therapy in substance use disorder treatment.

SCOPE:

The Bureau of Substance Abuse and Addiction Services will allow community grant expenditures for acupuncture as an adjunct therapy in any substance use disorder treatment setting. Acupuncture may be used to support drug-free or medication-assisted treatment (MAT).

BACKGROUND:

In 1972, the use of auricular acupuncture for acute drug withdrawal was developed in Hong Kong. Shortly thereafter, Michael Smith, M.D., a psychiatrist at Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx, New York City, started using it extensively. Dr. Smith developed a five-point auricular protocol, which has been adopted by the National Acupuncture Detoxification Association (NADA). The following ear points are used in the protocol: liver, kidney, lung, sympathetic nervous system, and shen men (spirit gate). Stimulation of these ear points reduces stress and anxiety, which allows the patient to be more receptive to counseling. It also lessens depression and insomnia, and alleviates the craving for substances, thus aiding in recovery. It should be noted that the term “detoxification” is used as an eastern or Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) concept and is based on the principle that illnesses can be caused by the accumulation of toxic substances (toxins) in the body. Eliminating existing toxins and avoiding new toxins are essential parts of the healing process. Used in this manner, detoxification principles should be implemented throughout the treatment continuum and to prevent relapse rather than only in the initial stage of treatment.

Auricular acupuncture offers a low-cost way to enhance outcomes and lower the total cost of substance abuse treatment. It has been shown to be effective in relieving the symptoms of withdrawal from alcohol, heroin, and crack cocaine; making patients more receptive to treatment; reducing or eliminating the need for MAT; and lessening the chances of relapse. Some clients experience a decrease in depression and anxiety symptoms as a result of acupuncture, which can contribute to their success in recovery. Studies have also shown success in decreasing the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in veterans in the United States and

TREATMENT POLICY #02

EFFECTIVE: November 1, 2012

Page 2 of 4 refugees abroad. Auricular acupuncture has been used successfully in treating pregnant substance abusing women and drug-exposed infants who are experiencing withdrawal.

Non-auricular acupuncture points can also be used as part of an individualized acupuncture treatment plan when performed by a registered acupuncturist.

Acupuncture may be performed as an adjunct therapy to any treatment modality in any setting. Counseling, 12-step programs, relapse prevention, referral for supportive services, and life skills training are all components of a comprehensive program that can include acupuncture. Auricular acupuncture for substance use disorder treatment appears to work best in a group setting. In keeping with the philosophy of TCM, the patient is encouraged to be actively involved in his/her own treatment and to see substance abuse holistically, as part of total emotional, physical, and spiritual health, and to recognize the relationship his/her disorder has to other people and the environment.

REQUIREMENTS:

Michigan Law

Acupuncture may be performed by the following individuals:

- a) Medical Doctor,
- b) Doctor of Osteopathy, and
- c) Registered Acupuncturist.

An individual who holds a Certificate of Training in Detoxification Acupuncture as an Acupuncture Detoxification Specialist (ADS) issued by NADA and is under the supervision of a person licensed to practice medicine in the state may use the NADA protocol for substance use disorder treatment. The supervising physician needs not be trained in acupuncture nor be present when the procedure is performed.

Disposable sterile needles must be used for all acupuncture treatments.

The following Michigan Compiled Laws, from the Public Health Code, pertain to acupuncture:

333.16215 Supervision of Acupuncture
333.16501 Definition of Acupuncturist
333.16511 Exemption from Registration

PROCEDURE:

The recommended procedure for the use of acupuncture as a substance use disorder treatment support is the protocol developed by NADA. This five point auricular protocol, which includes the liver, kidney, lung, sympathetic nervous system and shen men points, is the only procedure allowed to be performed by a NADA trained and certified ADS. Registered Acupuncturists and physicians may use their professional judgment and expertise in determining the acupuncture points to be used.

TREATMENT POLICY #02

EFFECTIVE: November 1, 2012

Page 3 of 4

Clinicians who wish to become proficient in the NADA protocols must study under a NADA Registered Trainer, usually by participating in a 30-hour classroom/didactic training course followed by 40 hours of hands-on work in a clinic. Upon completion of training, the trainee's documentation is submitted to NADA for final approval and issuance of a certificate of training completion as an ADS. Once certified and insured, the ADS is able to bill for services. More information about the NADA Protocol, how to become an ADS, and training resources may be found at www.acudetox.com.

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- TREATMENT POLICY #02
EFFECTIVE: November 1, 2012
Page 4 of 4
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