



● Acupuncture Medicine
in New Mexico: Access
and Utilization

Presented to:
The New Mexico Legislative Health
and Human Services Committee
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1

Brief History of Acupuncture Licensing in NM

- 1981 – Governor Bruce King signs into law one of the most comprehensive scope of practice acts in the country licensing acupuncturists in NM
- 1989 - Title change from licensed acupuncturists to Doctors of Oriental Medicine (DOM).
- Summary of SCOPE OF PRACTICE: “...the practice of oriental medicine in New Mexico is a distinct system of primary health care with the goal of prevention, cure, or correction of any disease, illness, injury, pain or other physical or mental condition by controlling and regulating the flow and balance of energy, form and function to restore and maintain health.”

2

Doctors of Oriental Medicine:

- Analyze a patient's medical history and formulate an appropriate differential diagnosis based on oriental and western medical paradigms.
- Use a patient-centered model of care in assessing patients to develop customized treatment plans: utilizing acupuncture, manual therapy and other modalities.
- Recommend herbal and other natural and nutritional supplements.
- Provide comprehensive care: educating patients on healthy lifestyle changes including nutrition, exercise, sleep hygiene, stress management, weight management, posture, and mind body breathing and exercise techniques.
- Specially licensed DOMs can administer injections.

3

DOMs Provide Access to Healthcare

- Acupuncturists are often the only healthcare providers that some New Mexicans seek. DOMs present direct access to primary healthcare for these individuals.
- Many DOMs have made potentially lifesaving referrals to urgent care centers and hospitals for a number of conditions, including: blood clots, stroke risk, concussions and internal injuries sustained in falls.
- DOMs celebrate 40 years of licensure in NM due to forward thinking legislators, acupuncturists and stakeholders!
- Tens of thousands of New Mexicans have benefitted from acupuncture medicine.
- The Sunset of this Practice Act is July 1, 2024.

4

What is Acupuncture Medicine?

Acupuncture involves the stimulation of specific points along the body using solid thin needles and can be used with the application of heat, pressure, or laser light to these points. Acupuncture stimulates local blood flow, normalizes the nervous system, improves emotional wellbeing (affects endorphins, serotonin, and dopamine), and lessens pain sensitivity.

Acupuncture can help reduce the use of prescribed and over the counter pain medications and anti-inflammatory drugs and their harmful side effects.

5

Acupuncture is effective according to evidence-based study published by NIH PubMed (2018)

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

EVIDENCE-BASED NONPHARMACOLOGIC STRATEGIES
FOR COMPREHENSIVE PAIN CARE:
THE CONSORTIUM PAIN TASK FORCE WHITE PAPER

Heather Tick, MD^{1*} Arya Nielsen, PhD^{2,3*} Kenneth R. Pelletier, PhD, MD³ Robert Bonakdar, MD⁴
Samantha Simmons, MPH¹ Ronald Glick, MD⁵ Emily Rattner, MD⁶ Russell L. Lemmon, MD⁷ Peter Wayne, PhD⁸
and Veronica Zador, BSc¹⁰ The Pain Task Force of the Academic Consortium for Integrative Medicine and Health

ABSTRACT
Medical pain management is in crisis, from the pervasiveness of pain to inadequate pain treatment, from the escalation of prescription opioids to an epidemic in addiction, diversion and overdose deaths. The rising costs of pain care and managing adverse effects of that care have prompted action from state and federal agencies including the DOJ, FDA, NIH, FDA and CDC.
There is pressure for pain medicine to shift away from reliance on opioids, ineffective procedures and surgeries toward comprehensive pain management that includes evidence-based nonpharmacologic options. This White Paper details the historical context and magnitude of the current pain problem including individual, social and economic impacts as well as the challenges of pain management for patients and a healthcare workforce engaging prevalent strategies not entirely based in current evidence. Detailed here is the evidence-base for nonpharmacologic therapies effective in postsurgical pain with opioid sparing, acute non-surgical pain, cancer pain and chronic pain. Therapies reviewed include acupuncture therapy, massage therapy, osteopathic and chiropractic manipulation, meditative movement therapies Tai chi and yoga, mind body behavioral interventions, dietary components and self-care/self-efficacy strategies.

Transforming the system of pain care to a responsive comprehensive model necessitates that options for treatment and collaborative care must be evidence-based and include effective nonpharmacologic strategies that have the advantage of reduced risks of adverse events and addiction liability.
The evidence demands a call to action to increase awareness of effective nonpharmacologic treatments for pain, to train health-care practitioners and administrators in the evidence base of effective nonpharmacologic practice, to advocate for policy initiatives that remedy system and reimbursement barriers to evidence-informed comprehensive pain care, and to promote ongoing research and dissemination of the role of effective nonpharmacologic treatments in pain, focused on the short- and long-term therapeutic and economic impact of comprehensive care practices.

Keywords: Non Surgical Pain Management, Public Health, Evidence-Based Practice in Health Care System, Acute Pain Management, Integrative Medicine, Chronic Pain Management
(Explore 2018; 14:177-211 © 2018 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.)

- Primary authors are H. Tick, MD and A. Nielson, PhD (2018)
- Supports utilization of Acupuncture before opioids
- Supports acupuncture as a multi-modality treatment to address: Pain, PTSD/anxiety, Nausea **and** Addiction.

6

Evidenced-based Studies Demonstrate Efficacy

- **Acupuncture has been shown to be effective for treating various types of pain, with the strongest evidence emerging for back pain, neck pain, shoulder pain, chronic headache, and osteoarthritis.**
- In fact, the American College of Physicians (2017) has recommended acupuncture as a first-line treatment for lower back pain.
- Acupuncture can be used alone or as an adjunct to other treatment therapies and modalities.

7

Is Acupuncture **Safe**?

Acupuncture is safe. According to the NIH Consensus Statement on Acupuncture (1988), 'the incidence of adverse effects is substantially lower than that of many drugs or other accepted procedures for the same conditions.'

It is important to emphasize that ***more recent systematic reviews have clarified*** that acupuncture is safe when performed by appropriately trained practitioners.

Acupuncture is also safely used in treating pediatric patients and pregnant women.

8

NM Licensing requirements to Perform *Safe* Acupuncture

Candidates for licensure are required to have a professional master's or doctorate degree in acupuncture or Oriental Medicine accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM), the accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

Below is a summary of the course curriculum requirements by the NM Board of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine:

- 2400 clock hours with of minimum of 1,100 hours of didactic education and a minimum of 900 hours of supervised clinical practice, instruction, and observation.
- 450 hours of education in herbal medicine.
- 900 hours of clinical training that includes a minimum of 400 hours in which the student is required to perform complete treatments under supervision by a licensed practitioner.

9

Licensing Requirements for *Safe* Acupuncture Continued

The NMBAOM requires that successful candidates be nationally board certified by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM). This involves the successful completion of the following written examinations:

- (1) Foundations of Oriental Medicine
- (2) Chinese Herbology
- (3) Biomedicine
- (4) Point Location

- Additionally, successful candidates must complete an NCCAOM approved Clean Needle Technique Course and the NM Jurisprudence Examination.
- The NM Board of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine (NMBAOM) also requires successful completion of a Clinical Skills Exam, testing competencies in Western and Oriental Medicine.

10

Acupuncture is Cost Effective

- Repeated findings demonstrate that acupuncture is a cost effective therapy for the treatment of pain when used as a complement to standard care. (NICM, 2010; AMI Group 2016; Mahrer, Gold, Luu & Herman, 2018)
- An increasing number of medical institutions recognize acupuncture and Chinese herbology as effective treatments and have integrated acupuncturists into their healthcare teams. Some of these reputable hospital and medical institutions include: UNM Center for Life, Christus St. Vincent Cancer Center, Cleveland Clinic, MD Anderson Cancer Center, Cancer Treatment Centers of America and the Veterans Administration.

11

Research Supports Cost Savings

Research on the implementation of acupuncture in an interdisciplinary clinic for pain management has demonstrated reduced per member per year total average:

- medical costs by 27%,
- decreased ER visits by 61%,
- reduced opioid prescriptions by 86%.
- Every \$1 spent on complementary services, including acupuncture, yielded \$2.41 of medical expense savings. (AMI Group 2016)

12

Cost Savings in Using Acupuncture for Pediatric Chronic Pain

In pediatric populations with chronic pain, the patients who participated in interdisciplinary clinic care (including physician services, medication, acupuncture, massage, biofeedback) demonstrated:

- a cost-savings to the hospital of \$36,228 per patient per year,
- and a direct cost-savings of \$11,482 to the insurance companies. (Mahrer, Gold, Luu & Herman, 2018)

13

Does insurance cover acupuncture?

- Most, if not all, commercial insurance plans have some type of acupuncture benefit in NM.
- In NM, acupuncture is considered an essential health benefit.
- Veterans Administration
- Medicare – Since January of 2020, Medicare has limited coverage for acupuncture. Barriers to coverage are that Medicare covers only lower back pain and covers only acupuncture services that are performed by MDs or under an MD's supervision. This is a great barrier to accessing acupuncture for a number of New Mexicans since there are not enough MDs that are trained or acupuncturists working alongside MDs.

14

Does Medicaid cover acupuncture in NM?

Medicaid doesn't cover acupuncture. Acupuncturists in NM are not Medicaid providers. In a state like NM, where a great proportion of population is eligible for Medicaid, this presents a barrier to acupuncture care for the population that has less resources and tends to be in poorer health. The Medicaid population is also at higher risk for opioid abuse and addiction.

- 38% of NM population is low-income (<200% FPL) (NMDHS)
- 34% of the population is covered by Medicaid/CHIP (NMDHS)

States that currently have Medicaid coverage for acupuncture: California, Colorado (SCI waiver - expanded in 2021), Florida, Louisiana (added in 2020), Maryland (21 & younger and has additional legislation in process for adults - waiting on CBO), Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey (anesthesia), Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Wisconsin (currently planning a bill - 2021), Vermont Pilot – not yet passed, Connecticut passed legislation in 2021 - in implementation planning phase

15

Barriers to access and utilization of acupuncture medicine in NM

- Medicaid recipients are not accessing care that could reduce their pain; reduce their use of pain medications, including opioids; reduce the side effects of medications and reduce their risk for addiction to medications while improving their functionality and quality of life.
- Many Medicare recipients under the current CMS guidelines.
- New Mexicans that have health plans with high deductibles and high copays. Copays can be as high as \$60 per treatment. Many of the educators and state employees in New Mexico pay as much as \$50 per treatment. Therefore, many are unable to comply with their treatment plans for optimal results.

16

Opioids cost lives in NM – 2019 Statistics

According to the New Mexico Department of Health:

- New Mexico's **drug overdose death rate** (30.4 per 100,000 population) was about **41% higher than the US rate** (21.6 deaths per 100,000 population).
- New Mexico had the **12th HIGHEST DRUG OVERDOSE DEATH RATE IN THE US.**
- There were 605 deaths due to drug overdose in New Mexico.
- To put that in context, **ONE NEW MEXICAN DIED** from drug overdose about **EVERY 14 HOURS.**
- **PEOPLE WITH PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS ARE AT RISK OF OVERDOSE, NOT JUST NONMEDICAL USERS.**

17

August 2021 Progress Report Presented to NM Legislative Finance Committee

- New Mexico has long had some of the highest death rates from alcohol and drugs in the country and the problem continues to worsen.
- Since 1990, drug overdose deaths have increased by 572 percent.
- In that same time period, alcohol-related deaths have increased by 165 percent, with more than 43 thousand New Mexicans dying from those causes over the 30-year period.
- The deaths in a single year reached their highest point yet in 2020, with 1,770 alcohol-related deaths and 766 overdose deaths.

18

COVID-19 Complications and Implications for Care

- Health disparities revealed.
- Many went without basic healthcare, screenings and diagnostic imaging and tests.
- Despite having Telehealth, while served and continues to serve an important role, some went or are going undiagnosed. Some have no way to access the internet or phone.
- Many surgeries and other medical procedures postponed.
- Grief, anxiety, depression
- For those that have survived COVID-19: fatigue, Compromised Kidney and Lung function and many other complications about which we are still learning.
- Addiction

19

Legislative Action Needed:

- Lower copays for acupuncture to the levels for primary healthcare
- Medicaid inclusion
- Require healthcare providers to recommend nonpharmacologic alternatives for pain management before prescribing pain medications and opioids
- Inclusion of acupuncturists in rural tax credit act for healthcare providers
- Repeal the Sunset Clause in the Practice Act in 2024

20

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21

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22

Contact information

Thank you for your time today and all you do to ensure better health and quality of life for all New Mexicans.

Please contact me at drbjoylu@gmail.com office: 505.454.0003 or mobile: 505.250.8986.

Bernadette J. Lujan MPA, MSOM, Dipl. OM, LAc
 Vice President and Legislative Chair
 New Mexico Society for Acupuncture and Asian Medicine

23



New Mexico Society for Acupuncture and Asian Medicine (NMSAAM) is the largest professional organization of acupuncturists in NM dedicated to advancing access and utilization of acupuncture medicine by all New Mexicans to achieve a higher quality of life with nonpharmacological alternatives to treat pain and other medical conditions. NMSAAM is concerned about the disparities in healthcare and supports all efforts to provide comprehensive healthcare to all New Mexicans, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious or political beliefs. NMSAAM also seeks equity and parity in insurance reimbursement for DOMs practicing in New Mexico and supports that licensed DOMs be fully integrated into the healthcare delivery system.

www.NMSAAM.org

NMSAAM is a member of the American Society of Acupuncturists

www.asacu.org

24