

**Fulcrum Health, Inc.**

<b>Medical Policy Title:</b>	<b>Licensed Acupuncture Policy</b>		
<b>Policy Number:</b>	ACUM100	<b>Effective Date:</b>	9/1/2020
		<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	9/1/2020
		<b>Last Review Date:</b>	9/1/2020
<b>Responsible Area/Individual:</b>	UM Department/Clinical Director of AcuNet		
<b>Department(s) Affected:</b>	Coding, Claims, Network Management, Utilization Management		
<b>Purpose:</b>	Policy was written to provide overview, a consistent determination of medical necessity in the review and management of covered conditions by licensed acupuncturists.		
<b>Regulation/Reference (if applicable):</b>	UM004 Adoption of Clinical Guidelines UM006 Data Elements for UM Coverage Decisions CLINUM116 Definition and Application of Complicating Factors in the Utilization Management Process <a href="#">MN Statute Chapter 147</a> <a href="#">Minnesota Statute Chapter 148</a> <a href="#">MN Medicaid Provider Manual</a> <a href="#">Medicare Coverage Database NCD</a>		

**PRODUCT APPLICATION:**

- € MN Medicaid
- € Medicare Advantage
- € Commercial

**Please contact the Health plan to obtain eligibility and health plan benefits. To the extent there is any inconsistency between this policy and the terms of the member’s benefit plan or certificate of coverage, the terms of the member’s benefit plan document will govern.**

**Purpose**

The intent of this policy is to show treatment support and medical necessity guidelines for acupuncture practice.

**Overview**

The practice of acupuncture using Oriental medical theory is a comprehensive system of alternative and complementary health care practiced for many centuries. Traditional acupuncture uses the insertion of acupuncture needles at specific locations through the skin, with the goal of relieving pain or treating disease. The practice of acupuncture is predicated upon several fundamental underlying principles. These are the existence of a series of meridians that course through the body with discrete points corresponding to specific organs and can have a particular clinical significance. A vital energy, “Qi” flows through the meridians and the acupuncture points regulating bodily functions. It is the disruption of this flow of energy that therapeutic acupuncture is said to address.

Acupuncture typically utilizes unique diagnostic procedures to evaluate the meridian system and /or the Qi of the body. Acupuncturists will ask whether the patient has been examined by a licensed physician or

other professional with regard to the patient's illness or injury. This includes an evaluation of the patient's chief complaint and related health status through standardized diagnostic interviewing and examination techniques. Interviews are based on the traditional Ten Questions and examinations include, but are not limited to, evaluation of meridians, points, general vitality and behavior, the radial pulses and the tongue. Based upon the patient's complaints and the findings of these diagnostic procedures, individualized treatment regimens are developed that specify treatment variables such as the acupuncture points to be utilized, needle placement, and type of needle stimulation.

### **Eligible Providers include:**

- A. A masters or doctoral level degree in acupuncture or Oriental Medicine from a school accredited by the Accreditation Commission on Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM); and National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) accreditation.
- B. A current, full, active, and unrestricted license to practice acupuncture in a State where care is being rendered.

### **Discussion of Treatment Effect:**

Acupuncture is one of the oldest, most commonly used medical procedures in the world. Acupuncture has become a very popular form of complementary and alternative therapy in the United States (U.S.).

The core procedure in acupuncture involves stimulation of specific points on the body, acupoints, by insertion of fine needles. Typical treatments involve insertion of 5 to 20 disposable needles at various depths. Traditional acupuncturists judge the effectiveness of their insertion by looking for a physiologic reaction called "de qi." This is perceived as an aching or throbbing by the recipient and by a tightening of tissue around the needle point felt by the therapist. Needles are typically left in for less than 1 hour. Acupuncturists may increase the stimulation by manipulating the needles (periodically twirling the needles) or by applying heat or electrical stimulation to the needles.

The exact mechanism by which acupuncture works is unknown. Traditional Chinese acupuncture theory is based on the premise that a form of energy called "qi" travels along prescribed pathways or meridians within the body. This theory proposes that qi is responsible for maintaining good health by providing homeostatic regulation of vital body function. Excess or deficiency in the flow of qi is thought to result in disease. Stimulation of specific acupoints along the body's meridians can restore balance in the qi and return the individual to health.

Scientists have studied acupuncture for decades and have proposed other theories more in keeping with biomedical concepts. Studies in the 1970s and 1980s suggest that acupuncture may work by modifying nerve function at the spinal and supraspinal levels. Roles have been suggested for cytokines, endorphins, and neurotransmitters but the physiologic mechanism of action is not known. It has also been proposed that acupuncture stimulates a variety of central and peripheral physiological effects, although the relationship between these mechanisms and the observed responses are not understood at this time (Zia, 2017).

## Conditions for Acupuncture Coverage:

### A. Strong Research Evidence

- Anxiety
- Bell's Palsy
- Carpal Tunnel
- Depression
- Headaches including migraine and tension
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Neuromusculoskeletal spinal, joint and soft tissue pain (e.g. hip, knee, spine)
- Osteoarthritis of knee or hip
- Low back pain (Acute and Chronic)
- Neck pain (Acute and Chronic)
- Rhinitis/Sinusitis
- Shoulder Pain/Rotator Cuff Disorders (Chronic and Acute)
- Knee Pain
- Nausea
  - Associated with pregnancy
  - Post-surgical
  - Associate with Chemotherapy

### B. Medium Research Evidence:

- Schizophrenia (duration)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Insomnia
- Smoking cessation
- Restless legs syndrome
- Menstrual disorders
- Xerostomia (dry mouth) associated with:
  - Sjogren's syndrome
  - Radiation therapy

### C. Conditions Excluded:

- Allergies
- Asthma
- Weight Loss
- Fatigue
- Acne
- High Blood Pressure
- Cold/Influenza
- Infertility/Sexual Dysfunction
- Drug and alcohol dependence

### D. Other Exclusions: (Not an all-inclusive list)

- Ongoing treatment that is considered maintenance in nature

- Insufficient progress being made to justify further treatment
- Acupressure, Massage, Herbal Supplements
- Ear acupuncture alone

## Treatment Guidelines

Up to 12 initial acupuncture visits may be considered medically necessary care

A. When **ALL** the following criteria are met:

- Pain or condition is refractory to standard medication therapy or the member has contraindications or side effects to medications; **AND**
- Pain or condition has resulted in impaired activities of daily living; **AND** validated outcomes assessments (OATs) show impairment
- There is reasonable expectation that treatment will result in significant improvement over a clearly defined period of time; **AND**
- Provider has documented whether an evaluation has been completed by a primary care physician, neurologist, rheumatologist or pain management specialist.

### Criteria for Medical Necessity of Continuation of Acupuncture Treatment:

Additional acupuncture visits may be considered medically necessary if the member demonstrates meaningful improvement in symptoms for the approved conditions noted above.

A. For acute or subacute conditions < 90 days

- Initial and ongoing Outcome Assessment Tool (OAT) where
  - 3 pt. change in pain assessment score is  $\geq 5/10$  OR
  - 2 pt. change in pain assessment score when score is  $\leq 4/10$  AND
  - Overall progress has improved by least 40% (e.g., clinical findings) OR
  - OAT with 20% raw score improvement

B. For chronic conditions > 12 weeks

- Initial and ongoing OAT where
  - 2 pt. change in pain assessment score is  $\geq 5/10$  OR
  - 1 pt. change in pain assessment score when score is  $\leq 4/10$  AND
  - Overall progress has improved by least 30% (e.g., clinical findings) OR
  - OAT with 10% raw score improvement

### Definitions:

**Acute Pain:** Less than 90 days duration

**Acupressure:** the application of pressure to acupuncture points.

**Acupuncture practice:** means a comprehensive system of health care using Oriental medical theory and its unique methods of diagnosis and treatment. Its treatment techniques include the insertion of acupuncture needles through the skin and the use of other biophysical methods of acupuncture point stimulation, including the use of heat, Oriental massage techniques, electrical stimulation, herbal supplemental therapies, dietary guidelines, breathing techniques, and exercise based on Oriental medical principles.

**Acupuncture needle:** a needle designed exclusively for acupuncture purposes. It has a solid core, with a tapered point, and is 0.12 mm to 0.45 mm in thickness. It is constructed of stainless steel, gold, silver, or other board-approved materials as long as the materials can be sterilized according to recommendations of the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**Acupuncture points:** specific anatomically described locations as defined by the recognized acupuncture reference texts. These texts are listed in the study guide to the examination for the NCCAOM certification exam.

**Chronic Pain:** Greater than 12 weeks duration. (exception Medicare: chronic pain is defined as > 6 months)

- nonspecific, in that it has no identifiable systemic cause (i.e., not associated with metastatic, inflammatory, infectious disease etc...)
- not associated with surgery
- not associated with pregnancy

**Cupping:** a therapy in which a jar-shaped instrument is attached to the skin and negative pressure is created by using suction to move Qi and decrease stagnation

**Electrical Stimulation on Needle:** Use of an electrical device for stimulating acupuncture points to promote moving of Qi.

**Meridians:** meridians are invisible energy pathways, or channels, that run through the body. Vital life energy, called *qi* or *chi*, is thought to flow along these meridians, and anything that disrupts and/or stagnates the smooth flow of qi can create dysfunction. There are 12 regular meridians and 20 in total.

**Moxibustion (moxa treatment):** TCM practice that performed by burning small cones of dried leaves (mugwort) on certain designated points of the body, generally the same points as those used in acupuncture. Adding heat and energy to the body

**NCCAOM:** The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, a not-for-profit corporation organized under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code

**Outcome Assessment Tool (OAT):** Standardized self-reported patient questionnaires used to show patient status and progress towards treatment goal. (PROMIS 10, Neck Disability Index, Revised Oswestry Disability Index, Visual Analogue Scale)

**Pulse and Tongue:** TCM examination to confirm/identify pattern diagnosis

**Recurrent Pain:** Pain that is present on less than half the days in a 12-month period occurring in multiple episodes. A recurrence is characterized by pain-related difficulty in performing activities of daily living.

**10 Questions:** TCM history questions used to make a pattern diagnosis and treatment strategy

**TCM:** Traditional Chinese Medicine (Oriental or Eastern approaches to health care conditions)

**Treatment Strategy and TCM Diagnoses:** Treatment strategy to treat a TCM pattern diagnosis

## Coverage Considerations

- A. MN Medicaid Coverage: ([MN Medicaid Provider Manual](#))

B. Medicare Coverage Guidelines for Acupuncture for Chronic Low Back Pain (cLBP): Medicare Coverage Database NCD

**Diagnosis Codes**

Providers are required to indicate the most applicable ICD diagnosis codes when billing acupuncture services.

**Procedure Codes**

The following codes for treatments and procedures applicable to this document are included below for informational purposes. Inclusion or exclusion of a procedure, diagnosis or device code(s) does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement.

Codes	Description
97810	Acupuncture, 1 or more needles; without electrical stimulation, initial 15 minutes of personal one-to- one contact with patient
97811	Without electrical stimulation, each additional 15 minutes of personal one-to-one contact with patient, with re-insertion of needle(s) (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)
97813	With electrical stimulation, initial 15 minutes of personal one-to-one contact with the patient
97814	With electrical stimulation, each additional 15 minutes of personal one-to-one contact with the patient, with re-insertion of needles(s) (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)

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**Document History:**

Date	Update
8/7/2020	New Document
8/27/2020	Approved by Clinical Policy Committee
9/1/2020	Affirmed by Utilization Management Committee