

The Current Practice of Physiotherapists in the Utilization of Acupuncture Technique

A. Basic Training of Physiotherapist

This is a 3-year BSc (Hon.) Degree course held in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The core modules which are relevant to acupuncture includes,

Subject Title	Contact Hours
1. Human Anatomy	84 hrs.
2. Physiology	92 hrs.
3. Physiotherapy Diagnosis & Management of Musculo-skeletal conditions	196 hrs.
Cardiopulmonary conditions	112 hrs.
Neurological conditions	120 hrs.
4. Neuroscience & Clinical Neurology	56 hrs.
5. Psychology	42 hrs.
6. Clinical Practice	1120 hrs.
7. Fundamentals of Acupuncture in Physiotherapy (elective)	80 hrs.

B. Post-Graduate Acupuncture Courses attended by physiotherapists in the last few years

1. Diploma Course in Acupuncture for Physiotherapists
Co-organized by the Hong Kong Physiotherapy Association and the School of Continuing Education, Baptist University.
2. Certificate Course in Acupuncture
By School of Professional And Continuing Education, Hong Kong University
3. Diploma Course in Clinical Acupuncture
By School of Professional And Continuing Education, Hong Kong University
4. A subject of "Acupuncture Theory and Practice in Physiotherapy" in the MSc. (Health Care) of Hong Kong Polytechnic University

C. Accreditation & Monitoring Mechanism for Acupuncture Practice

1. "Standards of Practice of Acupuncture for Physiotherapists in Hong Kong" by the Hong Kong Physiotherapy Association Limited.
2. Accreditation Board for registered physiotherapists practicing acupuncture in Hong Kong under the Hong Kong Physiotherapy Association Limited.
3. Acupuncture Consultative Group for Physiotherapists helps to facilitate and to advise the practice of acupuncture by physiotherapists.

4. Patients received physiotherapy are referred by doctors with clinical diagnosis, hence, patient's pathology is well communicated.

D. Background

1. The practice of acupuncture by physiotherapists in Hong Kong started in the 1980'ss when some trained physiotherapists used acupuncture as a kind of treatment modality for patients suffering from musculo-skeletal, cardiopulmonary and neurological conditions.
2. With the rapid advancement in science and technology, physiotherapists are getting more in-depth post-graduate learning in acupuncture so as to enable the practice to become more effective on patient treatment.
3. The practice of acupuncture is also getting more evidence-based after various clinical studies and researches conducted in different hospitals and clinical settings.

E. The International Link

1. In view of the increasing demand for acupuncture application to patients attending physiotherapy clinics, physiotherapists with acupuncture training gathered to form a Acupuncture sub-group which was endorsed by the Hong Kong Physiotherapy Association Limited (HKPA Ltd.) in the year 1996. The aim of this group is to promote standards, training, research and the use of acupuncture by physiotherapists.
2. In November, 1997, the Hong Kong Physiotherapy Association was the founding member of the International Acupuncture Association of Physiotherapist (IAAPT) which has been endorsed as a formal sub-group in the 14th general meeting held on the 28th May 1999 of the World Confederation of Physiotherapists (WCPT) --- a member organization of the World Health Organization (WHO).

F. Present Situation

Local

1. There are over 1000 registered physiotherapists in Hong Kong. About 80 of them had completed recognized acupuncture courses which enable them to practice acupuncture as a clinical modality.
2. Increasing numbers of patients are benefited by the application of acupuncture as an effective treatment method to their specific conditions when attending physiotherapy.
3. In order to enhance the quality of service to the public, increasing number of registered physiotherapists are attending acupuncture courses organized by different tertiary institutions.

International

Physiotherapists practicing acupuncture is commonly found in countries like United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden. These nations are also members of IAAPT. This networking do enhance the communication and skill exchange among Hong Kong and the member countries.

G. Future Perspectives

1. It is crucial to maintain acupuncture as one of the treatment modalities to patients come for physiotherapy. Patients who attend physiotherapy should not be deprived of having acupuncture from qualified physiotherapists who may incorporate acupuncture as one of the effective means for the recovery of the illnesses.
2. Being trained as a health care professional, physiotherapists in Hong Kong are the most suitable personnel to incorporate acupuncture as a treatment skill into the current physiotherapy practice to maintain a quality service to the public.
3. According to the Basic Law, after the change of sovereignty in Hong Kong, professional organizations are allowed to maintain its professional autonomy and representation in both local and international scene. The physiotherapy profession in Hong Kong has gained good reputation in both quality of clinical services and technological advancement on the international platform for the last few years. Hopefully, the continuous physiotherapy practice of acupuncture will further enhance our international image in amalgamating part of the eastern and the western medical services.

H. Conclusion

We therefore, propose that acupuncture should be practiced by qualified professionals including physiotherapists.