

Secretary,
Health Panel,
Legislative Council, HK Government, SAR

7 March 2000

Dear Sir/Madam,

Practice of Acupuncture by Occupational Therapists in Hong Kong

On behalf of the Occupational Therapy Profession in Hong Kong, we write to respond to the Chinese Medicine Bill (Draft) concerning acupuncture practice.

As there are getting more local occupational therapists trained or training in acupuncture and practicing acupuncture as an integral part of occupational therapy services, we therefore do not agree the practice of acupuncture will be restricted to 2 types of health care practitioners as stated in the Draft Bill.

We therefore enclose a paper titled "The Practice of Acupuncture by Occupational Therapists in Hong Kong" to give you more information on the position of our profession on the captioned issue.

We would be most grateful if you could consider the issue again and would be pleased to explain it further in the coming meeting in the Health Panel on 10 March 2000.

Yours sincerely,

Hong Kong Occupational Therapy Association (HKOTA)
Working Group on the Practice of Acupuncture, HKOTA
Concern Group on Acupuncture Practice, Subvented Organization & Private Practice

Chairlady, Hong Kong Occupational Therapy Association

Convenor, Working Group on the Practice of Acupuncture,
Hong Kong Occupational Therapy Association

Convenor, Concern Group on Acupuncture Practice,
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The Practice of Acupuncture by Occupational Therapists in Hong Kong

Introduction

With the increasing recognition of acupuncture in improving the effectiveness and outcome of health care services, the application of acupuncture becomes more popular not only in medicine, but also in rehabilitation. The purpose of this paper is therefore to introduce the application of acupuncture in Occupational Therapy in Hong Kong - its current situation, training as well as the accreditation and monitoring mechanism for practice of acupuncture within the Occupational Therapy Profession.

Background

Occupational Therapy is one of the disciplines in rehabilitation. The aim of our service is to maintain, restore and develop the patients'/client's functional abilities and skills that are lost because of illness, trauma or congenital defect. We provide a wide range of services for musculoskeletal disorders, neurological disorders, pulmonary disorders, mental disorders and developmental disorders.

Through the treatment media of purposeful activity, psychoeducational techniques, environmental/task adaptation and facilitative techniques, we increase our clients' functions in self-care, work and leisure so as to achieve maximum independence in daily life and to enhance their quality of life as well.

Current facilitative techniques being used are sensory integration, neuromuscular facilitation, movement therapy, neurodevelopmental treatment, and proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation. Other facilitative techniques, which are getting more attention, consist of acupressure, acupuncture and tui-na.

The ancient belief that disease is resulted from the imbalances of the meridians (經) and collaterals (絡) has been well received by the Chinese. Stimulating acupoints is one possible way to restore the body's normal balance. It is believed that by needling acupoints, natural healing and even the person's overall functioning could be improved.

Researches conducted in both China and western countries showed that acupuncture stimulates the nervous system to release chemicals in the muscle, spinal cord and brain. This helps to normalise the body's own internal regulating system.

The application of Acupuncture in Occupational Therapy

Being one of the major members of the rehabilitation teams, the Occupational Therapist helps to facilitate patients/clients to maximize their functional capabilities in self-care, work and leisure.

Through recent clinical application of acupuncture in Occupational Therapy, colleagues found promising results that help patients/clients to achieve independence in their daily life and also to enhance their quality of life as well. The evidence

strengthens our belief that acupuncture is one of the important catalysts in rehabilitation, which finally benefits our patients/clients.

There are also other clinical evidence showing that acupuncture is effective in normalizing muscle tone of hemiplegia which helps to facilitate control of limbs and independence in daily living tasks; improving attention span of demented clients; reducing dyspnoea for patients/clients suffering from chronic obstructive airway disease; reducing depressive symptoms for people with mental disorders; improving mental developments in intelligence quotient and social adaptation behaviour of the mentally retarded children.

In addition, occupational therapists practicing acupuncture could be found in countries like USA, Australia, and Canada etc. This could further enhance the exchange of experience in the practice of acupuncture.

Training in Acupuncture for Occupational Therapists in Hong Kong

The basic training for occupational therapists in Hong Kong consists of a three year BSc(Hon) Degree Occupational Therapy (OT) Programme offered by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University which is a recognized training institution by the World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT).

The course content that are related to training in acupuncture includes:

Subject Title	Contact Hours
Anatomy and kinesiology	70 hrs
Physiology	60 hrs
Developmental dysfunction	30 hrs
Physical dysfunction	45 hrs
Ageing process	30 hrs
OT for physical dysfunction	130 hrs
OT for developmental dysfunction	65 hrs
OT for geriatric	50 hrs
Psychology	55 hrs
OT for psychosocial dysfunction	120 hrs
Clinical practice	1040 hrs

The post-graduate acupuncture courses attended by occupational therapists in the last few years are:

- Certificate Course in Acupuncture - by the School of Professional and Continuing Education, Hong Kong University
- Diploma Course in Clinical Acupuncture - by the School of Professional and Continuing Education, Hong Kong University
- Advance Course in Acupuncture - by the Chinese Acupuncture Research Institute
- Certificate in Traditional Chinese Medicine for Practitioners - by the School of Professional and Continuing Education, Hong Kong University
- Postgraduate Module of "Acupuncture Theory and Practice" - in the MSc (Health Care) of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University

According to our estimate, there are about 5% of practicing occupational therapists (about 30 occupational therapists) had received training in acupuncture through the above programmes. There are also about a total of 10% of occupational therapists in Hong Kong who are attending or intending to receive training in acupuncture so as to improve the quality and outcome of occupational therapy services to patients/clients in one of the following institutes:

- School of Professional and Continuing Education, Hong Kong University
- Baptist University

We are also planning to collaborate with the Hong Kong University and Guangzhou University of Traditional Chinese Medicine to organize acupuncture training courses for occupational therapists in Hong Kong.

Accreditation & Monitoring Mechanism for Practice of Acupuncture by Occupational Therapists in Hong Kong

To protect the public interest, all occupational therapists practicing independently in Hong Kong must be registered under Part 1 of the Register of Occupational Therapist, Occupational Therapist Board Hong Kong. A practicing certificate, which has to be renewed annually, must be obtained by qualified occupational therapists working in Hong Kong.

Regarding the practice of acupuncture, we suggest to be monitored by the OT Profession if a central monitoring mechanism is not feasible. The most effective way to monitor is through the OT Board.

The working group on the application of acupuncture was set up under the Hong Kong Occupational Therapy Association in 1999. At present, the working group are:

- Working on the standard of practice of acupuncture in occupational therapy in Hong Kong.
- Having liaison with the OT Board to establish the accreditation, registration and monitoring mechanism,
- Promoting the training and practice of acupuncture, and
- Establishing links with local, Mainland China, and overseas on the practice and exchange of experience on acupuncture.

Conclusion

In view of the impact of acupuncture on the outcome of rehabilitation services, it is necessary to include acupuncture as one of the essential facilitative techniques used by occupational therapists in Hong Kong so that they can provide quality and effective services to help patients/clients to maximize their independence in daily life of self-care, work and leisure.

As many occupational therapists either had received or receiving or intending to receive training in acupuncture, they are keen to consider the protection of public interest by ensuring the public the use of acupuncture in a safe manner. Therefore, we suggest that acupuncture should be practiced by qualified professional including occupational therapists in Hong Kong.