

## Guidelines and Standards

# A summary of acupuncture standardization in Australia, Korea, Japan and the USA\*

## 澳大利亚、韩国、日本和美国针灸标准概况\*

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective** By comparing the focus of acupuncture standards, management modes of acupuncture in certain areas are summarized to provide a reference for institutions and regions when formulating suitable standards for local acupuncture services. **Methods** Japan, South Korea, the USA and Australia were selected as the representative countries. The standards language were limited to English, Japanese and South Korean. The websites of the national standards bodies and the official websites for the acupuncture association/institute of these four countries were searched systematically. The laws of acupuncture were included in the study. **Results** Technical standards made up the most of the standard system for acupuncture in Japan, basic standards accounted for the most of the system in South Korea, while management standards accounted for the largest proportion of acupuncture standard systems in the USA and Australia. **Conclusion** Japan and South Korea, which use acupuncture mainly due to cultural and historical influences, place emphasis on establishing technical and basic standards. The USA and Australia, which use acupuncture as a complementary therapy, place emphasis on establishing management standards of acupuncture.

**KEY WORDS:** acupuncture; standard; legislation; Australia; South Korea; Japan; USA

### INTRODUCTION

As acupuncture has been promoted<sup>[1]</sup>, the contribution of acupuncture standards cannot be ignored in terms of safety and quality. Most notably, the assessment of products and services, qualification of practitioners, methodology, and criteria for evaluating efficacy<sup>[2]</sup>. Management styles and standards vary

from country to country. In this study, countries were divided according to the reasons for using acupuncture. Several representative countries were selected. A comparison of the focus of their standard systems and management modes of acupuncture are summarized. This study attempted to provide a reference for institutions and regions when formulating suitable standards for local acupuncture services.

## METHODS

Traditional Chinese medicine is used for the following three main reasons: (1) As one of the primary sources of health care, (2) Due to cultural and historical influences, and (3) As a complementary therapy<sup>[1]</sup>. In addition to mainland China, Australia, South Africa and South Korea include acupuncture as a part of Chinese medicine in the national legislation. Chinese medicine in these countries enjoy the same status as western medicine. As Chinese medicine practitioners and acupuncture practitioners, they have the same rights as Western medicine practitioners, and acupuncture in these areas is one of the main therapies for healthcare<sup>[3-5]</sup>. Japan and South Korea, which have a long history of cultural and historical exchanges with mainland China, are still influenced by these exchanges. Most western countries such as the USA tend to use acupuncture as adjuvant therapy, which is recognized as an effective complementary therapy<sup>[6-7]</sup>.

The National standards bodies were searched systematically. One author (*Yang F.M.*) independently extracted data from <http://www.acaom.org>, <http://www.nccaom.org>, <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov>, <http://www.ccaom.org>, and <http://theacupunctureobserver.com>. Another author (*Yang Y.*) independently extracted data from <http://www.chinesemedicineboard.gov.au>, <http://www.acupuncture.org.au>, and <http://www.fcma.org.au>. Another author (*Watanabe D.S.*) independently extracted data from <http://law.e-gov.go.jp>, <http://www.lawdata.org> and <http://tao.main.jp>. Two authors (*Kim K.W.* and *Yang Y.*) independently extracted data from <http://www.kats.go.kr>, <http://www.kfda.go.kr>, <http://www.soojichim.com>, and <http://www.standard.go.kr>. The searched documents's language were limited to English, Japanese and South Korean. A systematic search was conducted using the search terms "acupuncture" or "electroacupuncture" or "auriculotherapy" from their inception to January 2017.

All norms for the fundamentals of discipline, scientific research, education provision, qualification and certification, practice, and equipment were regarded as the local acupuncture standards. The National Policy on Traditional Medicine and Regulation of Herbal Medicines provided the following definition: "a law on traditional medicine was defined as the first stage of legislative procedure. It is the rule of conduct imposed by the authority... may cover various areas in the TM/CAM field, including education of professionals, licensing of

practitioners and manufacturers, manufacture of products used in TM/CAM, sales practices, etc."<sup>[8]</sup>. Thus, we regarded acupuncture legislation as part of the standards of acupuncture and included them into this study. As there are some standards containing moxibustion in Japan and South Korea, moxibustion standards were also included in this study. Enterprise standards were not within the scope of this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Overview of acupuncture standards

#### (1) Australia

In Australia, acupuncture was introduced into the system of national medical management as a part of traditional Chinese medicine. In May 2000, Victoria passed the Chinese Medicine Registration Act (2000). From July 1, 2012, acupuncturists and other Chinese medicine practitioners were ordered to register under the national registration and accreditation scheme with the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (CMBA) and meet the Board's Registration Standards (Table 1A).

Australian regulations for acupuncturists have benefited from association autonomy. Acupuncturists have to comply with the standards and guidelines of their associations. Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association Ltd. (AACMA) and the Federation of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture Societies of Australia Ltd. (FCMA) are representative Chinese medicine associations. Standards set by the two associations are shown in Table 1B. Complementary to the *Chinese Medicine Registration Act (2000)* and national registration standards, these standards cover ethics, operating specifications, and education.

#### (2) South Korea

In October 1951, the South Korean government issued the National Medicine Act, which stipulates that Eastern and Western medicine have the same status<sup>[9]</sup>. South Korea attaches great importance to the standardization of acupuncture and traditional medicine, with the hope of standardizing south Korean medicine for the international market. Of these four countries, South Korea is the only one which has promulgated scientific research standards. In addition to a standard location of "ST36" in rats, there are scientific research standards of moxibustion (Table 2 A, 2B).

#### (3) Japan

Acupuncture has been a part of Chinese medicine since AD 562. It has been introduced to Japan and still

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