



Overview

The goal of this Best Practices Guide is to share best practices that members are using to empower patients to deal efficiently with their extended health care (EHC) providers. It was developed with the assistance of chiropractors with certifications and experience in providing acupuncture as an adjunctive therapy under the College of Chiropractors of Ontario (CCO) [Standard of Practice S-017: Acupuncture](#). Their insights have been supplemented with research by OCA staff members. Please help us improve the guide by submitting your own best practices to OCA@Chiropractic.on.ca or by calling **1-877-327-2273**.

As of January 2014, this guide has been updated to clarify the specific practice of many EHC providers with respect to acupuncture claims. The term “acupuncturist” became a protected title in 2013 and may now only be used by members of the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario (CTCMPAO). These acupuncturists practice traditional Chinese acupuncture, which is distinct from ‘modern’ or ‘contemporary’ acupuncture. Since that time, many insurers* have specified that ‘acupuncture’ benefits will only be paid out when the practitioner is regulated by the CTCMPAO. This has caused confusion with respect to what this means for chiropractors and other Regulated Health Professionals who are also authorized to perform acupuncture in Ontario under the regulation of their respective professions.

Chiropractors who practise acupuncture are regulated by the CCO in accordance with [Standard of Practice S-017: Acupuncture](#) and are not required to register with the CTCMPAO. Chiropractors are Regulated Health Professionals practising acupuncture as chiropractors, not ‘acupuncturists’. Since 2013, many insurers now review acupuncture claims in the following manner:

1. Patients of **Chiropractors** who perform a course of acupuncture treatment that falls within the chiropractic scope of practice as described by the CCO can submit claims under the ‘chiropractic service’ benefit of an extended health plan.
2. Patients of **Acupuncturists** who perform a course of acupuncture treatment that falls within the acupuncturist scope of practice as described by CTCMPAO can submit claims under the ‘acupuncturist’ benefit of an extended health plan.

Chiropractors may also wish to become registered with the CTCMPAO. This option is only available to members who practise traditional Chinese acupuncture, which is distinct from ‘modern’ or ‘contemporary’ acupuncture. The OCA is currently developing a guide for members wishing to pursue a Grandparented License with the CTCMPAO, to be published in January 2014. Members may also consult the CTCMPAO’s [Guide to Applicants and Grandparented Registration Form](#). Please see the CCO [Standard of Practice S-011: Members of More Than One Health Profession](#) for more information on dual registration.

**These insurers include: Claim Secure, Empire Life, Great West Life, Green Shield, Manulife, Medavie Blue Cross and Sun Life.*

OCA Advocacy on Extended Health Care

The OCA continues to work with a pan-professional group to advocate for patients who benefit from acupuncture performed by a chiropractor or other regulated health professional. The OCA’s position is that acupuncture benefits should be available to policyholders for services provided by “regulated health practitioners authorized by law to perform acupuncture.” While current practices are likely to remain in place, re-establishing



access to ‘acupuncture’ EHC coverage for patients receiving this treatment from a chiropractor is an ambitious goal of our advocacy effort. Patients in consultation with their practitioners, not insurers, should be empowered to select the acupuncture practitioner of their choice for acupuncture services.

Regulatory Requirements

Chiropractors are able to perform acupuncture as an adjunctive therapy under the regulation of the CCO once they have met certain requirements. Below are some critical components of the [Standard of Practice S-017: Acupuncture](#). Be sure to review it in detail to ensure you are in compliance:

1. **Scope of Practice.** Chiropractors are only entitled to provide acupuncture that falls within the chiropractic scope of practice as an adjunctive therapy. The scope of practice of chiropractic is defined in section 3 of the *Chiropractic Act, 1991*:

The practice of chiropractic is the assessment of conditions related to the spine, nervous system and joints and the diagnosis, prevention and treatment, primarily by adjustment, of,
 - a. dysfunctions or disorders arising from the structures or functions of the spine and the effects of those dysfunctions or disorders on the nervous system; and
 - b. dysfunctions or disorders arising from the structures or functions of the joints.
2. **Education.** Chiropractors wishing to perform acupuncture as an adjunctive therapy must have completed a training program that meets the requirements set out in the CCO [Standard of Practice S-017: Acupuncture](#). Chiropractors must have documentation of their completion of a training program which provides a minimum of 200 hours of formal training.
3. **Additional Liability Coverage.** In addition to the liability coverage required for chiropractic practice, additional liability coverage for the acupuncture component of your practice is required. The Canadian Chiropractic Protective Association (CCPA) offers this coverage. Contact the CCPA at **1-800-668-2076** for more information.
4. **Separate, Documented Informed Consent.** Prior to providing acupuncture as an adjunctive therapy, chiropractors must obtain separate, documented informed consent from their patients. The CCPA provides an informed consent template to chiropractors wishing to provide acupuncture as part of their practice. Contact the CCPA at **1-800-668-2076** for more information.

New Acupuncture Patient Communication

When a new acupuncture patient visits your clinic, or when an existing patient expresses an interest in acupuncture, determine if the patient is seeking acupuncture treatment that falls within the chiropractic scope of practice. A conversation should be sufficient to make this determination. You can also call the CCO for advice if you are not sure. If their need is not within your scope, a reciprocal referral relationship may provide an acceptable alternative. If their need does fall within your scope, be sure to obtain separate, documented informed consent prior to treatment. You will also need to document the intake of that patient and record your clinical notes in accordance with CCO requirements.



Determining Patient Coverage

The best way to help your patients avoid challenges with the reimbursement of their claims is to encourage them to communicate with their insurers prior to treatment. Here are a couple of steps to follow:

1. *Is coverage available?* The first thing that your patient needs to be clear on is whether their EHC plan covers chiropractic and/or acupuncture. They can find out this information by speaking with their human resources department, referring to their coverage manual or contacting their insurer directly.
2. *How can chiropractic acupuncture be claimed?* The final piece of the puzzle is to have your patient let you know if their plan allows chiropractors to bill for the service as a 'chiropractic service' and/or 'acupuncture'. Many insurance plans now ask chiropractors to bill for their service as a 'chiropractic service', even when these services include acupuncture. The best way to know for sure is to have your patient ask their insurer directly.

As outlined above, chiropractors may also wish to become registered with the CTCMPAO. This option is only available to members who practise traditional Chinese acupuncture, which is distinct from 'modern' or 'contemporary' acupuncture. The OCA is currently developing a guide for members wishing to pursue a Grandparented License with the CTCMPAO, to be published in January 2014. Members may also consult the CTCMPAO's [Guide to Applicants and Grandparented Registration Form](#). Please see the CCO [Standard of Practice S-011: Members of More Than One Health Profession](#) for more information on dual registration.

Documentation for Insurance Claims:

In most cases, an invoice is sufficient documentation. Different information is appropriate given the type of coverage being utilized:

1. *Claims under 'Acupuncture' coverage*
If the patient is able to claim their acupuncture treatment under their 'acupuncture' coverage, it is appropriate to list the service as an 'acupuncture' session on the invoice. Be sure to include your name, title, clinic name, address and CCO registration number on the invoice.
2. *Claims under 'Chiropractic Services' coverage*
When a claim cannot be submitted under the patient's acupuncture coverage, it is appropriate to list the service as a 'chiropractic' session. Be sure to include your name, title, clinic name, address and CCO registration number on the invoice.

Have Questions? Contact the OCA:

E-Mail: OCA@Chiropractic.on.ca
Toll free: 1-877-327-2273