



# College of Massage Therapists of Ontario

## Standard of Practice for Acupuncture

Effective: January 1, 2018

### Introduction

Acupuncture is a controlled act in the Province of Ontario under the *Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA), 1991*<sup>1</sup> as it is “a procedure performed on tissue below the dermis.” Registrants of the College of Massage Therapists of Ontario (CMTO) are one of several regulated health professionals in Ontario that are exempt from the prohibition against performing the controlled act of acupuncture.<sup>2</sup> CMTO supports the use of acupuncture as a modality if performed within the Massage Therapy Scope of Practice and in accordance with this Standard of Practice. However, registrants/Registered Massage Therapists (“RMTs” or “MTs”) must first be authorized by CMTO in order to perform acupuncture.

When RMTs perform the controlled act of acupuncture, it is important that they keep within the requirements of the law and the Standards of Practice and scope of the profession. The purpose of this document is to ensure that RMTs and educational programs are aware of CMTO’s acupuncture authorization process, and the Standards of Practice and minimum expectations for performing acupuncture, including:

1. CMTO’s Acupuncture Requirements
  - 1.1 Definition of Acupuncture
  - 1.2 Scope of Practice
  - 1.3 Requirements of Educational Programs
  - 1.4 Authorization Process for Registrants
  - 1.5 Annual Declaration and Currency Requirement

### 2. Technique Standards of Practice

In addition to having the appropriate knowledge, skill and judgement to practise acupuncture, registrants must ensure they understand how CMTO’s rules and regulations apply to acupuncture and ensure they are acting within the Scope of Practice of Massage Therapy. Acting within the Scope of Practice of Massage Therapy is a condition of relying upon the controlled act exemption.

These Standards of Practice are subject to review and revision and RMTs are reminded that it is their obligation to ensure that they are in compliance with the version in effect at the relevant time

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<sup>1</sup> See subsection 27(2).

<sup>2</sup> See Ontario Regulation 107/96, Controlled Acts.

## 1. CMTO's Acupuncture Requirements

Controlled acts are activities where risk of harm to the client from the performance of the act is perceived to be significant. The concept of controlled acts authorized to designated professions is linked to the *RHPA's* central goal of protecting the public by restricting the performance of potentially harmful or high-risk acts.

To regulate the performance of the controlled act of acupuncture, CMTO has adopted an approach where both registrants and acupuncture educational programs must formally "declare" (or confirm) to CMTO their understanding of and compliance with a number of CMTO requirements. For example, registrants declare that they have the adequate background training, knowledge and skill to perform acupuncture safely and effectively, that they will practise within the Massage Therapy Scope of Practice, and are familiar with the Standard of Practice on Acupuncture and other obligations of RMTs practising acupuncture.

Educational programs confirm to CMTO that they teach all of CMTO's [Acupuncture Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators \(APC/Pis\)](#); that their instructors are authorized to practise acupuncture in Ontario; and that registrants are rigorously assessed prior to completing the program. Educational programs that confirm with CMTO that they meet the College's requirements are considered to be "Confirmed Acupuncture Education Programs."

If a registrant has successfully completed a Confirmed Acupuncture Education Program, and wants to use acupuncture within the Scope of Practice of Massage Therapy, they must first apply to the College to become authorized. The acupuncture authorization process is outlined below.

Registrants who are authorized to perform acupuncture by CMTO will be listed in the College's public register. A search function in CMTO's public register allows the public to search specifically for registrants who are authorized to perform acupuncture. CMTO calls the complete list of RMTs authorized to practise acupuncture its "acupuncture roster."

### 1.1 Definition of Acupuncture

Acupuncture refers only to pricking the skin or tissues with needles (solid, filiform needles) for the purpose of treating and preventing physical dysfunction and pain of the soft tissues and joints within the Massage Therapy Scope of Practice. This definition augments O. Reg. 107/96, Controlled Acts, under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*, which refers to performing a procedure on tissue below the dermis.

CMTO's definition of acupuncture does not include the use of hollow needles. The use of hollow needles is not within the scope of Massage Therapy. The practises of cupping or moxibustion are not considered to be acupuncture and are simply considered modalities to be used in the general practice of Massage Therapy.

## 1.2 Scope of Practice

### Scope of Practice Statement for Massage Therapy<sup>3</sup>

The practice of Massage Therapy is the assessment of the soft tissues and joints of the body and the treatment and prevention of physical dysfunction and pain of the soft tissues and joints by manipulation to develop, maintain, rehabilitate or augment physical function or relieve pain.

### Scope of Practice Limitations Pertaining Specifically to Acupuncture

RMTs can only practise acupuncture within their Scope of Practice. They cannot use it for anything other than the treatment and prevention of physical dysfunction and pain of the soft tissues and joints as to do so would be outside of their Scope of Practice, e.g., addiction cessation or communicating a diagnosis is outside of the Scope of Practice of Massage Therapy. Some educational programs teach acupuncture for conditions that exceed the Massage Therapy Scope of Practice. An RMT who wishes to provide acupuncture care beyond the Scope of Practice of Massage Therapy must register with the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario and practise as an Acupuncturist.

## 1.3 Requirements of Educational Programs

The practice of acupuncture as a Massage Therapy modality requires specialized training of a significant nature. RMTs may only become authorized to perform acupuncture by CMTO if they have graduated from an educational program that has confirmed in writing to CMTO that its teachings, evaluation process, and instructor qualifications meet the College's requirements. CMTO calls the programs that confirm that they have met these thresholds "Confirmed Acupuncture Education Programs."

The competencies required to practise acupuncture at an entry-to-practice level are articulated in CMTO's [Acupuncture Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators](#)<sup>4</sup> (APC/PIs). The APC/PIs were approved by CMTO's Council in February 2013. They define entry-level acupuncture practice for RMTs and delineate the learning outcomes that are to be provided by educational programs to enable their inclusion by CMTO in the list of "Confirmed Acupuncture Education Programs."

In order to become a "Confirmed Acupuncture Education Program," CMTO requires programs to submit a true and accurate formal declaration that:

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<sup>3</sup> From the *Massage Therapy Act, 1991*, Section 3.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.cmto.com/assets/Introduction-to-competency-indicator-grid.pdf>.

- a) The program teaches to all of the APC/PIs as articulated and published by CMTO;<sup>5</sup>
- b) All of the program's acupuncture instructors are authorized (regulated appropriately in Ontario, in good standing,<sup>6</sup> and not currently under investigation);
- c) Their acupuncture program includes comprehensive practical and theoretical evaluation/examination of students for both the theoretical and practical components of the curriculum [and students must pass the evaluation(s) and/or examination(s) in order to graduate from the program].

Confirmed Acupuncture Education Programs are listed on CMTO's website, and registrants are able to select their program when applying (on-line) to be authorized to perform acupuncture.

All acupuncture programs will be asked to complete a declaration every three years (see Attachment 1: Educational Program Declaration), even those programs previously on the CMTO approved list. Programs are able to confirm their compliance with the above requirements retroactively to February 2013 (when the APCs/PIs were originally approved by Council).

CMTO is entitled to refuse to include a program on the list (or remove from the list) of Confirmed Acupuncture Education Programs if CMTO is aware that, despite confirmation by the program, the program does not meet one or more of the minimum requirements for inclusion.

## **1.4 Authorization Process for Registrants**

Registrants already authorized to practise using acupuncture will maintain that authorization and do not need to complete the new declaration process. They are effectively grand-parented under CMTO's new acupuncture policy.

Registrants practising acupuncture must meet CMTO's Acupuncture Standard of Practice. As part of the Acupuncture Standard of Practice, registrants wishing to be added to the acupuncture roster must first complete an acupuncture program that provides them with the entry-level acupuncture practice competencies as set out in CMTO's [Acupuncture Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators \(APC/PIs\)](#)<sup>7</sup>. The APC/PIs delineate the learning outcomes that are to be provided by acupuncture education programs to enable their inclusion by CMTO in the list of "Confirmed Acupuncture Education Programs."

The registrant (unless they have been grand-parented as mentioned above) must have successfully completed their Confirmed Acupuncture Education Program no more than three years before applying for authorization to perform acupuncture. Once the registrant has successfully completed the

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<sup>5</sup> Programs are able to confirm their compliance with teaching the API/PIs retroactively to February 2013 (when the APCs/PIs were approved by Council).

<sup>6</sup> To be in good standing with their health regulatory college, the instructor must not be in default of payment of any prescribed fees; their Certificate of Registration must not be subject to a term, condition or limitation other than one prescribed by regulation; they must not be the subject of any disciplinary or incapacity proceedings; and their registration must not be revoked pursuant to any order that was issued by the Discipline Committee.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.cmtto.com/assets/Introduction-to-competency-indicator-grid.pdf>

Confirmed Acupuncture Education Program, they must then arrange for the program to submit documentation directly to CMTO confirming their successful completion of the program. In addition, the registrant must complete the online application and declaration process, attesting that they:

- a) Will practise acupuncture within the Scope of Practice of Massage Therapy;
- b) Have read, understood and will practise in accordance with Standards of Practice, Standard of Practice for Acupuncture, APCs/PIs and all regulations;
- c) Have the knowledge, skill and judgment to safely perform acupuncture;
- d) Completed their Confirmed Acupuncture Education Program no more than three years earlier;  
and
- e) Possess the professional liability insurance required to perform acupuncture.

Please note that the three-year timeframe for the completion of a Confirmed Acupuncture Education Program will be waived for a regulated health professional who completed a Confirmed Acupuncture Education Program more than three years ago if, at the time acupuncture authorization is requested from CMTO:

- The individual is a member of a profession in Ontario authorized to practise using acupuncture;
- The individual is a registrant in good standing in that profession; and
- The individual is currently authorized by that profession's regulator to practise using acupuncture.

The declaration that registrants must complete is attached. Please see Attachment 2.

## **1.5 Annual Declaration and Currency Requirement**

All RMTs authorized to perform acupuncture will be required to affirm/reaffirm their commitment to the safe and competent practise of acupuncture on an annual basis (via Attachment 2, the Registrant Declaration Form as part of CMTO's on-line annual renewal process).

In addition to completing the annual declaration form, registrants may be asked to confirm approximately how many acupuncture treatments they have performed over the past calendar year.

## 2. Technique Standards of Practice

CMTO recognizes acupuncture as a Massage Therapy technique. Two standards that apply specifically to acupuncture are outlined below.

### Introduction to the Standards for Specific Additional Massage Therapy Techniques<sup>8</sup>

There are Standards that apply in general to the performance of additional Massage Therapy techniques. These “General” Standards are to be met in the performance of all additional techniques in a Massage Therapy treatment. Not all Massage Therapists will have the training required to perform all or any of these additional techniques. Massage Therapists are responsible for ensuring that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform an additional technique safely.

#### Conditions

Given that the client’s treatment plan includes one or more additional Massage Therapy techniques

#### Task

Perform the technique(s) correctly and in such a way that they are well integrated into the treatment, and that the treatment plan is executed with the client’s consent, and all aspects of the modality in use are within the Scope of Practice.

#### Standard: Quality/Interpersonal

- So that you explain the treatment plan and receive consent in accordance with Communication/Public Health Standards [7](#) and [10](#);
- So that you do not use a technique, or continue its use, if the client indicates a preference not to use it;
- So that you make the client aware that some techniques may be painful, depending on how they are applied and the condition being treated; and
- So that you treat within the client’s pain tolerance, and you give the client the opportunity to inform you of his/her pain level within a mutually agreed upon range of acceptable pain.

#### Quality/Technical

- So that you ensure that you have the necessary knowledge, skill and judgment to use the additional Massage Therapy technique; and
- So that you do not practise the additional Massage Therapy technique if you do not have the educational qualifications, if any, required by the College.

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<sup>8</sup> Approved by CMTO’s Quality Assurance Committee on October 27, 2006

## Acupuncture Technique Standard<sup>9</sup>

### Conditions

Given that the client's treatment plan indicates that acupuncture treatment may be appropriate and the client has consented to receiving acupuncture.

### Task

Perform an acupuncture treatment

### Standard

#### Quality/Technical

- So that you are listed on the roster of RMTs qualified to perform acupuncture, meaning you are current in your qualifications to practise acupuncture including meeting minimum education requirements as required by CMTO;
- So that you do not perform an acupuncture treatment or technique in which you are not qualified to perform or which is beyond the scope of your education, training, capabilities, experience and Scope of Practice;
- So that you are aware of and comply with infection control guidelines.; and
- So that you have needlestick injury protocols.

#### Quality/Interpersonal

- So that you inform the client of the potential risks and reactions to the treatment;
- So that you make the client aware that some techniques may be painful, depending on how they are applied and the condition being treated;
- So that you inquire as to the client's comfort with regard to the acupuncture and any pain or discomfort during treatment, or experience of any signs of adverse reaction;
- So that you stop or modify treatment immediately when the client indicates an unexpected increase in pain; and
- So that you do not use a technique or continue its use if the client indicates a preference not to use it.

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<sup>9</sup> Approved by the Quality Assurance Committee on October 27, 2006 and updated by CMTO's Executive Committee on August 15, 2016.

## **Safety**

- So that you are aware of potential risks associated with needling below the dermis. Serious adverse risks of acupuncture include but are not limited to infection, excessive bleeding, puncturing injury to vital organs, damage to major vessels and nerves. Safety in acupuncture requires constant vigilance in maintaining high standards of cleanliness, skin disinfection technique, needling technique and careful anatomical considerations.
- So that the needles used for treatment are single-use, pre-packaged, pre-sterilized, unexpired, manufactured for use in acupuncture, intended for the specific kind of acupuncture being performed, and disposed of properly at the end of the treatment.
- So that the number of needles inserted into the client reconciles with the number of needles removed from the client.
- So that needle points used, length of needle, depth, direction, retention time and any stimulation or manipulation are documented in the chart.

## 4. Related Documents

Acupuncture Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators for Massage Therapy

<http://www.cmta.com/about-the-profession/acupuncture-ppis/>

Infection Control for Regulated Professionals

[http://www.cmta.com/assets/infection\\_control\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.cmta.com/assets/infection_control_guidelines.pdf)



## Attachment 1: Educational Program Declaration

The practice of acupuncture as a Massage Therapy modality requires specialized training of a significant nature. RMTs may only apply to become authorized to perform acupuncture by CMTO if they have graduated from a program that has confirmed to CMTO that its teachings, evaluation process and instructor qualifications meet CMTO's requirements. CMTO calls the programs that confirm that they have met these thresholds "Confirmed Acupuncture Education Programs."

In order to define the competencies required to practise acupuncture at an entry-to-practice level, CMTO has developed [Acupuncture Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators](#)<sup>10</sup> (APC/Pis). The APC/Pis were approved by CMTO's Council in February 2013, define entry-level acupuncture practice for RMTs and delineate the learning outcomes that must be provided by educational programs to enable their inclusion by CMTO in a list of "Confirmed Acupuncture Education Programs."

In order to become a "Confirmed Acupuncture Education Program," CMTO requires programs to declare the following:

Name of educational institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Acupuncture Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Program locations: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Pre-requisite(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Program Duration: \_\_\_\_\_

### Declaration:

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name of authorized representative, please print),  
declare that the above-noted acupuncture education program:

- a) Teaches to all of the [Acupuncture Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators](#)<sup>11</sup> as articulated and published by CMTO;

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.cmto.com/assets/Introduction-to-competency-indicator-grid.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.cmto.com/assets/Introduction-to-competency-indicator-grid.pdf>.

- b) Is taught only by acupuncture instructors who are authorized (regulated appropriately in Ontario, in good standing,<sup>12</sup> and not currently under investigation); and
- c) Includes comprehensive practical and theoretical evaluation/examination of students for both the theoretical and practical components of the curriculum [and students must pass the evaluation(s) and/or examination(s) in order to graduate from the program].

I attest that our program has been in compliance with the requirements set out above since (month and year) \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>13</sup>

I will declare any changes to the administration of the program to CMTO within 48 hours of such change.

I am aware that the program may be removed from the list of Confirmed Acupuncture Education Programs if, in the opinion of CMTO, it no longer meets one or more of the minimum requirements.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>12</sup> To be in good standing with their health regulatory college, the instructor must not be in default of payment of any prescribed fees; their certificate of registration must not be subject to a term, condition or limitation other than one prescribed by regulation; they must not be the subject of any disciplinary or incapacity proceedings; and their registration must not be revoked pursuant to any order that was issued by the Discipline Committee.

<sup>13</sup> Though programs are able to confirm their compliance retroactively to February 2013 (when the APCs/Pis were initially approved by Council), the registrant must have successfully completed their Confirmed Acupuncture Education Program no more than three years before applying for authorization to practise using acupuncture.



## Attachment 2: Registrant Declaration

This must be completed when requesting Authorization to Perform Acupuncture from CMTO.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print name) hereby declare that:

1. I have completed my acupuncture education training with a CMTO Confirmed Acupuncture Education Program no more than three years prior to the date of my application (programs which appear on CMTO’s website because the program has confirmed to CMTO that its teachings, evaluation process, and instructor qualifications meet the College’s requirements and such confirmation has been accepted by the CMTO);
2. I have read and understood the College’s Standards of Practice, including the Standard of Practice for Acupuncture, and the Acupuncture Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators, and am aware of how they would apply to my performance of acupuncture;
3. I will practise acupuncture within the Scope of Practice for Massage Therapy;
4. I have the appropriate knowledge, skill and judgment to perform the acupuncture treatment for which I am applying to be authorized and rostered;
5. I have read and understood the College’s regulations and am aware of how it would apply to my performance of acupuncture;
6. I understand that being on the roster to perform acupuncture may result in my being selected for Quality Assurance practice assessments on a more frequent basis than non-rostered persons;
7. I understand that if a practice assessment, audit or other investigation demonstrates that my knowledge, skill and judgment to perform acupuncture is unsatisfactory I may be temporarily or permanently removed from the acupuncture roster and would not be able to perform acupuncture; and
8. I declare that my professional liability insurance includes coverage of acupuncture in my Massage Therapy practice.

I hereby certify and declare that all information provided on this application form is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that making a false or misleading statement on this declaration or failing to comply with the Standards of Practice, legislative requirements, or the College’s rules and regulations may result in action being taken by the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee up to and including a referral to the Discipline Committee.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_