



Fact sheet: Acupuncture

June 2012

Endorsement for acupuncture for physiotherapists

Background

This fact sheet has been developed to inform physiotherapists about their obligations in relation to acupuncture.

Physiotherapists are regulated by the Physiotherapy Board of Australia and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

The National Law limits the use of certain titles. The protected titles for physiotherapy are *physiotherapist* and *physical therapist* (see s.113 of the National Law). Other than restricted dental acts, prescription of optical appliances and manipulation of the cervical spine,¹ as defined in the National Law, the National Law does not specify the activities that require registration as a physiotherapist.

Acupuncture is already a protected title in Victoria. *Acupuncture* is also one of the protected titles for Chinese Medicine under the National Law, when it joins the registration and accreditation scheme from 1 July 2012.

From 1 July 2012, the National Law will limit the use of the title *acupuncturist* nationally. From this date only registered Chinese medicine practitioners, or practitioners whose registration has been endorsed as being qualified to practice acupuncture, may hold themselves out as being acupuncturists.

While there are provisions under the National Law for endorsements, the Physiotherapy Board of Australia is still establishing its requirements for an acupuncture endorsement for physiotherapists. In the meantime, this fact sheet explains how the restrictions on the use of the title acupuncture apply to physiotherapists and the current pathways to an acupuncture endorsement.

Endorsement of registration for physiotherapists

Until the Physiotherapy Board of Australia establishes its requirements for an acupuncture endorsement, a pathway exists for physiotherapists to take on the title of *acupuncturist* through the grandparenting arrangements in place with the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia, which will be the responsible authority for registering Chinese medicine practitioners, including acupuncturists, from **1 July 2012**.

As with other protected titles under the National Law, the law does not specify which activities require registration as an acupuncturist, only that the title itself is protected.

¹ Part 7, Division 10, Sub-division 2

What this means for physiotherapists

It is important that physiotherapists are aware of their obligations relating to acupuncture and be careful not to breach the requirements of the National Law.

Until 30 June 2012

- **In Victoria:** it is currently an offence for physiotherapists to use the title *acupuncturist* or hold out as being registered or endorsed to practise acupuncture if they are not registered with the Chinese Medicine Registration Board of Victoria.
- **In states and territories other than Victoria:** it is not currently an offence for physiotherapists to use the title *acupuncturist*, however it will become an offence to do so from 1 July 2012 if they are not registered with the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (until the Physiotherapy Board of Australia has finalised its endorsement standards).

From 1 July 2012

When the Physiotherapy Board has developed, consulted on, then finalised, the necessary standards to be able to process applications for endorsement for acupuncture, this will be an additional pathway for physiotherapists to legally use the protected title of *acupuncturist*.

Until then, the other pathway for legally using the title *acupuncturist* is to be registered by the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia.

From 1 July 2012, it will be an offence for physiotherapists in any part of Australia to take or use the title *acupuncturist* if they are not registered by the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia or have their registration endorsed by the relevant Board.

The commencement of the national restriction on the use of the title *acupuncturist* from 1 July 2012 means that physiotherapists may not advertise or hold themselves out to be an acupuncturist without registration with the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia, as the standards necessary for holding an endorsement for acupuncture from the Physiotherapy Board of Australia are not yet available.

As outlined above, the National Law does not restrict treatment activities or methods relating to acupuncture, only the use of the protected title *acupuncturist*. Physiotherapists undertaking acupuncture or dry needling are therefore not restricted in this practice, as long as they do not call themselves an acupuncturist, or hold out to be a registered acupuncturist.

When will endorsement for acupuncture for physiotherapy be available?

The Physiotherapy Board of Australia will begin their in-depth consideration of the requirements for endorsement later this year. The Board will, as part of developing the necessary standards, undertake wide public consultation when developing the relevant registration standards. This will include considering grandparenting provisions to operate over a set time period to allow practitioners who have been practising acupuncture to qualify under a developed standard.

For more information

- Visit www.chinesemedicineboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/FAQ.aspx for more information about registering with the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia
- Visit www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au under *Contact us* to lodge an online enquiry form
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 8708 9001 (overseas callers)