



## Know Your Acupuncturist

Practitioners whose graduate education is in Acupuncture & Herbal Medicine receive approximately 80% of their education exclusively in this field and undergo extensive clinical training averaging 3-4 years. Other healthcare practitioners may only use acupuncture as a technique in their primary practice. A philosophical distinction of Acupuncture & Herbal Medicine is its whole person approach of mind, body, and spirit in a comprehensive energetic healthcare system that includes acupuncture, herbs, Asian bodywork (e.g. acupressure, tui na, shiatsu), nutrition, tai chi, qi gong, and meditation.

This chart is designed to illustrate the varying levels of education undertaken by healthcare professionals in acupuncture only and not in related curriculum, such as in the biosciences. **Acupuncture should only be administered by a practitioner who has specific education in this field due to risk of improper needling, inadequate understanding of medical diagnostic procedures, transmission of disease, imbalancing of energy, or ethical violations.** Confirm your practitioner's education to ensure that you are receiving the most professional acupuncture care available for your optimal health and wellness.

| Contact Hours in Acupuncture Education   | Practitioner Title   | Application  |
|--|--|--|
| 3-4 years (1500 - 2000 hours in acupuncture)*  | Typically a Licensed Acupuncturist (LAc)** who has obtained a degree/diploma from an ACAOM-accredited college and has passed the national certification exams administered by the NCCAOM.***   | A broad range of health issues, including chronic disease, pain, internal medicine, rehabilitation, and prevention |
| 300 hours or less in acupuncture   | Typically a medical doctor, osteopath, naturopath, or chiropractor who uses acupuncture as an adjunctive technique. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that medical doctors using acupuncture have at least 200 hours of training, with the amount of training for other health personnel being variable according to the specific application. For a full course of training, WHO recommends 1,500 hours of training in acupuncture for physicians. | Pain, basic ailments   |
| 100 hours or less in acupuncture   | Typically a detox/auricular acupuncture technician or chiropractor (detox techs are generally limited to 5 points on the ear)  | Addiction & pain   |
| Continuing education seminars provide approximately 40-50 contact hours in "dry needling." | Typically a physical therapist who uses an acupuncture needle to perform dry needling in the treatment of muscle trigger points  | Muscularskeletal pain  |

\*ACAOM's total curriculum requirement for an acupuncture-only training program is 1905 hours and ranges between 1950-2600 hours for ACAOM-accredited and candidate acupuncture only training programs, with a minimum of 450 hours in the biomedical clinical sciences. \*\*Some states also designate the licensing title (non-degree) as DOM or DAC, or Acupuncture Physician. Licensed Acupuncturists may have also obtained an OMD, PhD, or DAC for non-extensive post-graduate training. Thus, it is important to ask where such a title was received. \*\*\*ACAOM (Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine, [www.acaom.org](http://www.acaom.org)); NCCAOM (National Commission for the Certification of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine, [www.nccaom.org](http://www.nccaom.org)). Produced by the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture & Herbal Medicine (CCAHM). For reprint information contact 410-464-6040 or [support@ccahm.org](mailto:support@ccahm.org).