



# EUROPEAN TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE ASSOCIATION

## Codes of Safe Practice

**ETCMA**  
EUROPEAN TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE ASSOCIATION

This Code of Safe Practice is published by the **European Traditional Chinese Medicine Association** to define standards for the safe and hygienic practice of acupuncture/TCM.

June 2020

## Content

1. CODE OF SAFE PRACTICE.....	2
2. Statement of Mandatory Principles.....	3
YOUR WORKPLACE .....	3
YOUR EQUIPMENT .....	3
YOUR DUTY OF CARE .....	3
YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PERFORM ACUPUNCTURE SAFELY.....	4
YOUR SAFE DISPOSAL OF EQUIPMENT AND CLINICAL WASTE.....	4
YOUR COMMITMENT TO HEALTH AND SAFETY.....	4
3. Your Workplace.....	5
4. Your Equipment.....	7
5. Your Duty of Care.....	8
6. Your Commitment to Health and Safety.....	13

# 1. CODE OF SAFE PRACTICE

This Code of Safe Practice is published by the European Traditional Chinese Medicine Association (ETCMA) to define standards for the safe and hygienic practice of acupuncture/TCM.

Where local or national government regulations have been enacted which set higher standards than those set out in this Code, then these should be referred to as the definitive document for legal purposes. Where no local or government regulations have been enacted or where regulations require standards lower than those in the Code, you **must** always comply with the standards set by this Code.

Failure to comply with this Code is a breach of the ETCMA's Code of Professional Conduct.

This Code is designed to protect both the practitioner and public. It reflects the primary aim of ensuring the safety of the general public.

The principles outlined in this Code, when properly observed, provide protection against known cross-infection, including blood-borne viruses.

Throughout this document, where the term '**must**' is used, you are required to comply. Failure to comply with the Code is a breach of the ETCMA's Code of Professional Conduct, and in areas like registration, licensing and hazardous waste removal may also constitute a criminal offence.

The term '**should**' is used in this guidance to indicate best practice and the use of your professional judgement where, for example, there may be factors outside your control that affect how you comply with the mandatory principles.

June 2020

The ETCMA Codes of Safe Practice 2020 for the member organizations, is based on the Code of Safe Practice (2016) of the British Acupuncture Council (BAC).

## 2. Statement of Mandatory Principles

### YOUR WORKPLACE

1. You **must** only perform acupuncture/TCM in premises suitable for professional medical work
2. You **must** ensure that both you and any premises in which you work are properly registered or licensed for the practice of acupuncture/TCM
3. You **must** have suitable hand washing and sanitary facilities
4. You **must** keep the treatment room clean
5. You **must** avoid possible cross-infection from treatment surfaces

### YOUR EQUIPMENT

1. You **must** only use equipment which is CE-marked and conforms to current legislation

### YOUR DUTY OF CARE

1. You **must** ensure the health and safety of your patient
2. You **must** ensure that your own health and personal hygiene do not put the patient at risk

June 2020

## **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PERFORM ACUPUNCTURE SAFELY**

1. You **must** establish and maintain a clean field at all times
2. You **must** maintain high levels of hand hygiene
3. You **must** insert and remove needles hygienically and safely
4. You **must** use well-fitting single use disposable surgical gloves for blood or body fluid spills

## **YOUR SAFE DISPOSAL OF EQUIPMENT AND CLINICAL WASTE**

1. You **must** dispose of used equipment and clinical waste legally, safely and in accordance with current legislation

## **YOUR COMMITMENT TO HEALTH AND SAFETY**

1. You **must** comply with the requirements and provisions of current health and safety at work legislation, especially hazardous waste and fire regulations.

### 3. Your Workplace

You **must** only perform acupuncture/TCM in premises suitable for professional medical work.

- The premises **should** be used solely for the practice of acupuncture/TCM or other similar medical work. When working from home the treatment room(s) **must not** be used for any ordinary domestic use.

You **must** make sure that both you and the premises in which you work are properly registered or licensed for the practice of acupuncture

- You and your premises **must** be registered with the relevant regional or national authority for the practice of acupuncture

You **must** have suitable hand washing and sanitary facilities

- You **must** ensure that there is a wash-hand basin with a supply of hot running water in the treatment room or in the vicinity (i.e. not necessitating opening and closing of doors by hand) and solely for use by you and other practitioners.
- Wash-hand basin taps **should** be wrist, arm or foot operated
- You **must** ensure the provision of antibacterial liquid soap in a suitable dispenser, disposable paper towels and an adequately sized bin which **should** be foot pedal operated if lidded and placed close to the basin.

You **must** keep the treatment room clean.

- You **must** ensure that tabletops, shelves and all working surfaces including

June 2020

couches and chairs are smooth, impervious and easily cleanable.

- Flooring **must** be smooth and impervious or short pile (not looped) commercial carpeting.

You **must** avoid possible cross-infection from treatment surfaces

- You **must** ensure the couch surface is clean for each patient by one of the following three methods:
  - a) cleaning the couch surface before treating each new patient
  - b) covering the couch surface with paper couch roll, fresh for each patient and disposed of immediately after the treatment
  - c) covering the couch surface with towels or sheets alone, fresh for each patient and boiled or machine-washed on a 40-60 degrees setting before reuse.
- You **should** regularly clean all surfaces with an appropriate detergent or disinfectant, and you **must** always do so at the beginning and end of every working day.

## 4. Your Equipment

You **must** only use equipment which is CE-marked and conforms to current legislation

- You **must** use, single-use, pre sterilised disposable needles packed in a box marked with a lot number, CE mark, method of sterilisation, the word 'sterile', an expiry date and the wording 'for single use only' or 'do not reuse'.
- You **must** dispose of any needles beyond their expiry date immediately, except for 'expired' needles for training purposes (i.e., used on a needle cushion) which **must** be labelled clearly and stored in a distinctly separate area, preferably under lock and key.
- Unused needles from open multipacks **must** not be used after a patient session if there is any risk that they have been contaminated once the seal on the package has been broken.
- Any needle(s) in an unopened package with a damaged seal **must** not be used.
- Guide tubes **must** be pre-sterilised and come packaged with each individual needle or set of needles: they **must** not be used or stored for use after the session in which the seal on the package is broken.



## 5. Your Duty of Care

You **must** ensure the health and safety of your patient.

- You **must** take a thorough medical history of each new patient and ensure that acupuncture/TCM is an appropriate treatment for them.
- You **must** comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and do the necessary changes to comply with the legal requirements.
- If a patient has, or is suspected of having, a notifiable infectious disease or has a serious pre-existing medical condition, you **should** ensure that it is safe to treat them, if necessary by contacting their MD.
- You **must** ensure that any part of the body to be treated is clean, free from wounds and cuts, and clear of any clothing.
- If you leave a patient unattended: you **must** first obtain their consent; you **must** advise them not to move in any which might bend or damage a needle and cause them injury; you **must** make them aware of how to call for your immediate attention at any time.
- You **must** not leave a patient unattended when using moxa, cupping or any other form of treatment where a patient may suffer from physical injury.
- You **should** be able to recognise adverse reactions to acupuncture treatment and know what action to take, including referral to another acupuncturist or other health professional if appropriate.

You **must** ensure that your own health and personal hygiene do not put the patient at risk

- You **must** cover any cuts and wounds with a waterproof dressing.
- You **must** keep your nails short and clean. You **must** not wear artificial nails or use nail polish that could compromise hand hygiene.

June 2020

- You **should** dress in an appropriate and clean manner which befits the professional/medical nature of your role.
- You **should** avoid giving treatment when suffering from an infectious or contagious condition which may be transmitted to the patient
- You **should** inform your MD as soon as possible if you suspect that you are suffering from, or have been in contact with someone suffering from, a notifiable infectious disease.
- You **should** not treat a patient if your performance may be affected by prescribed or over-the-counter medication.
- You **should** make changes to your practice or cease practicing if your physical or mental health could adversely affect your performance or judgement or otherwise put your patient at risk.

Your responsibility to perform acupuncture safely.

You **must** establish and maintain a clean field at all times.

- You **must** establish a clean field area on a flat, smooth, cleanable surface in the treatment room.
- All treatment equipment **must** be placed on the clean field, including trays, packets of needles, packets of sterile cotton wool and sterile alcohol swabs.
- You **must** not place on the clean field any container used for the disposal of needles and/or contaminated waste.

You **must** maintain high levels of hand hygiene

- You **must** wash your hands thoroughly with antibacterial soap if they are visibly

June 2020

soiled or physically dirty.

- You **must** wash your hands with antibacterial soap before and after every treatment.
- You **must** sanitise your hands with alcohol gel before removing any needles.
- You **must** sanitise your hands with alcohol gel before touching your patient if your hands have become contaminated by handling anything which could transfer infection from patient to patient.
- You **must** wash your hands after dealing with blood and body fluids regardless of whether you wear gloves.

You **must** insert and remove needles hygienically and safely

- You **must** ensure that the skin at the needle site is clean and clear of clothing.
- You **must** clean any areas of the body where moisture or exudates may collect with an alcohol swab and allow it to dry before needling.
- You **must** wash any dirty skin with soap and water before swabbing and needling.
- You **must** thoroughly clean any skin that has been previously treated with creams or oils with 70% alcohol and allow to dry before needling.
- You **must** use a fresh needle for every point needled during a treatment and you **must** never reinsert a needle that you have already used.
- When inserting the needle, you **must** never touch the shaft with bare fingers or not-sterile materials.
- You **should** only use sterile material when supporting the shaft of the needle after insertion and **must** specifically do so if either increasing needle depth or if inserting without a guide tube.
- You **must** not place a needle on an intermediate surface before or after use.
- You **must** ensure that you note the location and the number of needles you

June 2020

insert during treatment.

- You **must** place each needle used in the sharps box immediately on removal.
- If you draw blood when removing needles, you **should** apply light pressure using sterile cotton wool, avoiding contact with the patient's body fluids. You **must** dispose of the cotton wool immediately in a Sharps container or a clinic waste bag.
- Once you have needled a point, you **must** not re-palpate the point with your bare finger during a treatment session unless fingertips have been cleaned by hand washing or alcohol based hand rub gel.

You **must** use well-fitting single-use disposable surgical gloves for blood or body fluid spills

- If the patient is bleeding profusely
- If blood or body fluid is spilled; and you **must** ensure that any spillage is cleaned up promptly using appropriate cleaning agents.
- If the patient has open lesions.
- If the patient has a contagious disease.
- If you have cuts or wounds on your hands which cannot be covered adequately with a waterproof dressing.
- If you have a skin infection.
- When handling any blood-soiled items, body fluids, excretions or secretions, or touching any contaminated surfaces, materials, or objects.

Your safe disposal of equipment and clinical waste

You **must** dispose of used equipment and clinical waste legally, safely and in accordance with current legislation

June 2020

- You **must** place all sharps - needles, plum blossom needles (seven-star hammers) and dermal needles (press studs), etc -immediately after use into a sharps disposal bin.
- You **must** dispose of sealed sharps containers via a licensed agent.
- You **must** place all clinical waste contaminated with spillage of body fluids - blood, open-wound abrasions, mucous membranes, etc - into clinical waste bags which **must** be sealed and stored securely for collection by a licensed agent.
- You **must** retain all contracts and receipts for clinical waste collection for the period of time determined by the regulations of your country.
- You **should** dispose of any waste which has not come into contact with body fluids or spillages - needle wrappings, single-use tubes, etc - via commercial or domestic was, provided that it is carefully bagged.
- Your sharps box **must** conform to ISO 23907:2012 requirements and be clearly marked with the words `danger - contaminated needles - to be incinerated`.

## 6. Your Commitment to Health and Safety

You **must** comply with the requirements and provisions of the current health and safety regulation legislation in your country, especially hazardous waste and fire regulations

- You **should** be aware that your duty of care extends not only to patients and employees but also to any member of the public visiting your premises.
- You **must** ensure that your premises are safe and that all equipment and machinery on the premises is regularly inspected and maintained.
- You **must** ensure that all electrical and gas appliances are subject to regular examination and certification.
- You **must** carry out an audit in line with current fire safety regulations and legislation.
- You **should** assess your premises for disability access in line with Equality legislation requirements in your country.
- You **must** ensure that you have appropriate equipment and procedures in place in the event of an emergency.