

# **Policy statement on acupuncture and other practices that pierce the skin**

***Effective date: January 1, 2023***

## **Introduction**

To maintain standards associated with public safety, MTANS will exclude acupuncture, dry needling, intramuscular stimulation, or any other modality that punctures or pierces the skin from the scope of massage therapy practice regardless of the reason for its use in treatment. This decision is effective January 1, 2023.

## **Background**

Historically, the inclusion of practices that puncture the skin within the scope of massage therapy has been a generally accepted practice in keeping with standards of practice followed by the College of Massage Therapists of Ontario (CMTO). CMTO has a strict standard of practice specific to acupuncture, including processes that require members to submit curriculum for approval and to ensure adequate maintenance of standards.

After a review of CMTO's approval process, and in the absence of regulation and a separate college of massage therapy in Nova Scotia to uphold such a process, MTANS is not able to adequately assess all available curriculums or to monitor these practices to ensure standards for public safety.

There are several issues associated with the inclusion of acupuncture as a modality under the scope of massage therapy, including:

- Confusion among members of the public as to whether an MTANS member is doing acupuncture or massage therapy and the qualifications for doing either;
- Difficulties assessing the appropriateness of training and safety standards in acupuncture curriculums. There are varying types of acupuncture programs — from weekend courses to extensive multi-year courses offering diplomas in acupuncture as a stand-alone healthcare profession;
- Insufficiencies in standards of safety for the public or knowledge on how to maintain practice within the scope of massage therapy, particularly because many courses promote practices that fall outside the scope of massage therapy.

## **Implications for members**

### **Practicing**

- Any MTANS member providing acupuncture, dry needling, intramuscular stimulation, or any other modality that punctures/pierces the skin are **NOT** to provide these services in the context of a massage therapy treatment plan effective January 1, 2023. Instead, they will be required to practice under a relevant scope of practice other than massage therapy.
- Members will also be subject to provisions set forth in a policy for dual professional designation (to be released Summer-Fall 2022). Those provisions include:
  - Ensuring that the public and insurance providers are fully aware of the profession members are practicing at any given time and also to which college or association the practitioner is responsible. For example, MTANS's Professional General Liability Insurance will only cover modalities the therapist is trained in under the scope of massage therapy. Other sources of insurance coverage vary and often exclude acupuncture under scope of practice;
  - Scheduling appointments and billing for such services separately from a massage therapy appointment. When booking an appointment, the appointment record must clearly indicate the professional service being provided;
  - Issuing separate receipts for treatments provided for other health services according to that profession's receipt requirements.

### **Professional development**

- Any acupuncture, dry needling, or intramuscular stimulation courses, or any other course that teaches a modality that punctures the skin and may have been previously considered to be under the scope of massage therapy, will not be considered eligible for CE credits effective January 1, 2023. These will be removed from the list of primary professional modalities at that time.
- Members who have taken acupuncture courses eligible for professional development continuing education (CE) credits will receive CE credits for courses taken prior to this change in policy position.
- If a member has registered and paid for any such course, CE credits are also still eligible unless they are able to receive full reimbursement and doing so will not negatively impact their current CE cycle.

### **Links to other relevant documents**

- Standards of Practice
- Dual professional designation policy

### **For more information**

- If members have questions or concerns in regard to this shift in position, please contact the Pathfinder office at [info@mtans.ca](mailto:info@mtans.ca)