



ACUPUNCTURE & ACUPRESSURE

Acupuncture for Substance Abuse: Maine Pilot Project

Editorial Staff | DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE

Newly passed legislation in Maine¹ requires the state to seek authorization from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for a unique pilot project to test the viability of auricular acupuncture in the treatment of substance abuse disorders.

Specifically, according to the legislation, by Jan. 1, 2018, the Maine "Department of Health and Human Services and the department's office of substance abuse and mental health services shall apply for authorization from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to develop a pilot project ... to treat alcohol abuse disorders, substance abuse disorders and co-occurring disorders using the National Acupuncture Detoxification Association auricular acupuncture protocol."

Other requirements stipulated by the new legislation include the following:

- "The bill requires the department to consult with a statewide association representing licensed acupuncturists in the establishment of treatment standards [presumably the Maine Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine].
- "The bill requires that the treatment be provided by staff who are licensed to practice acupuncture in the State and whose licenses are in good standing.
- "The project may last no longer than 2 years and must be reimbursable as allowed under the United States Social Security Act and be cost-neutral or result in savings to the MaineCare program."
- At the conclusion of the project, the state Department of Health and Human Services and its Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services "shall submit a report on the results of the pilot project, including recommendations for continuing the project, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters at the conclusion of the pilot project."



In an article in *Integrative Practitioner* reporting on the pilot project,² John Weeks references an interview with Freeport, Maine acupuncturist Mary Beth Hassett, LAc, Dipl. OM, in which she provides insight into the next steps to be taken now that the legislation has passed. According to the article, "Hassett said that acupuncturists in the state have reached out to Robert Davis, MS, LAc, the past president of the Vermont Acupuncture Association and lead on the state's ongoing pilot project for acupuncture-based pain management, for guidance on 'how to best conduct the two-year study.' Davis is also the co-president of the global Society for Acupuncture Research (SAR), through which he developed the research protocol for his state's pilot."

References

1. LD 185: An Act to Establish a Pilot Project for Medicaid Reimbursement for Acupuncture Treatment of Substance Abuse Disorders.
2. Weeks J. "Maine to Begin National Acupuncture Detox Association Pilot Project." *Integrative Practitioner*; reported on in The Integrator Blog, Aug. 6, 2017.

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