



GENERAL ACUPUNCTURE

Coming to a Hospital Near You: Acupuncture

Editorial Staff

Revised pain management assessment and management standards¹ by The Joint Commission require accredited hospitals to "provide nonpharmacologic pain treatment modalities" as a necessary performance element. The new standard, which takes effect Jan. 1, 2018, is a clear recognition not only of the dangers of opioids and other pain medications, but also the value of conservative / nondrug care.

Acupuncture is included among the potential nondrug treatment options hospitals can utilize, as the commission's 2015 revision stipulated, when it first defined nonpharmacologic approaches:

"Both pharmacologic and nonpharmacologic strategies have a role in the management of pain ... strategies may include the following: Nonpharmacologic strategies: physical modalities (for example, acupuncture therapy, chiropractic therapy, osteopathic manipulative treatment, massage therapy, and physical therapy), relaxation therapy, and cognitive behavior therapy." [Italics added]²

Commenting on the 2017 revision, Kory Ward-Cook, PhD, CAE, chief executive officer of the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM), stated:



"As rates of addiction to, and deaths from, prescription opioids such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, and methadone continue to rise, awareness and incorporation of effective, non-pharmacological, non-invasive therapies like acupuncture is more important than ever. The NCCAOM Board Commissioners commends The Joint Commission on these timely and crucial pain management standards, which will bring greater and much needed access to qualified licensed acupuncturists to help alleviate and manage pain."³

The 2017 revised standards do not prohibit commission-accredited hospitals from pharmacologic approaches; however, the standards emphasize safe opioid and non-opioid prescribing and use, patient education on pain management plans of care and the potential side effects of treatment. The standards also make pain assessment and pain management "an organizational priority" to be adopted by hospitals.

Founded in 1951, The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits more than 21,000 health care organizations and programs throughout the U.S. To learn more about the commission, [click here](#).

References

1. "Joint Commission Enhances Pain Assessment and Management Requirements for Accredited Hospitals." Perspectives (official newsletter of The Joint Commission), July 2017;37(7).
2. Clarification of the Pain Management Standard. Joint Commission, effective Jan. 1, 2015.
3. "The Joint Commission Introduces Revised Pain Assessment and Management Standards, for Accredited Hospitals, to Include Use of Non-Pharmacologic Treatments and Strategies." NCCAOM press release, July 12, 2017.

SEPTEMBER 2017

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