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BMAS Education Policy

Aims
The aims of education provided by the BMAS are set out in the BMAS mission statement:

The BMAS is a registered charity established to stimulate and promote the use and scientific understanding of acupuncture as part of the practice of medicine for the public benefit. It seeks to enhance the education and training of suitably qualified practitioners, and to promote high standards of working practices in acupuncture among such practitioners, by means of tests, examinations, and accreditation procedures.¹

The educational focus is on Western Medical Acupuncture (WMA) as defined by White A in ‘Western medical acupuncture: a definition’.² Traditional Chinese Acupuncture (TA) is also discussed in order to understand traditional concepts and to appreciate the differences between TA and WMA but there is no expectation that delegates will be able to practice TA as a result of BMAS training.

Delegates
BMAS education is available to health professionals in the UK who are either -

- subject to statutory regulation or
- members of the British Acupuncture Council or
- subject to voluntary regulation which is overseen by the Professional Standards Authority and have undergone degree level training in a patient-facing healthcare discipline that includes clinical touch, with no regional anatomic restrictions

Health professionals from overseas may also apply for BMAS courses and will need to provide details of the regulatory body in the country in which they practice. All practitioners applying for courses which involve practical needling must provide proof of hepatitis B immunisation showing antibody levels
greater than 10mIU/mL or provide results of a recent blood screen for Hepatitis B antigens. See appendix 1 regarding Hepatitis B requirements.

Delegates are expected to work within their scope of practice – ie using an appropriate assessment process to reach a conventional diagnosis and to use acupuncture as an additional option within the usual range of treatments available in their practice. Delegates should have professional indemnity which covers their acupuncture practice. Acupuncture should be provided with the agreement of their employer or line manager and with adequate clinical governance arrangements in place. These aspects of practice are highlighted on the courses but it is the responsibility of the individual practitioner to ensure that they follow these recommendations.

**Types of education**

The following types of courses and meetings are available. The list is not exhaustive and additional types of courses may be arranged from time to time

- **Foundation Courses (FCs)** – usually 2 weekends or 4 weekdays. These are introductory courses which cover the basic concepts of WMA. Safe needling of selected points is covered in lectures and practical sessions. Clinical application is covered in small group discussions of point selection exercises.
- **Foundation refresher course** – this is designed to refresh and develop skills learnt on the Foundation Course
- **Points practicals** – this is a rolling programme of four days, focusing on practical needling of particular regions of the body. The four days cover the core skills training for the Diploma of Medical Acupuncture (DipMedAc)
- **Supplementary days** eg Palliative Care, Electroacupuncture, Women’s health, Back pain, Headache, Anatomy for acupuncture, Musculoskeletal Medicine, Acupuncture in Pregnancy & Childbirth, Self-Acupuncture
- **Spring Conference and Autumn Scientific Meeting** – these focus on the science and evidence base relevant to acupuncture with invited
international speakers and opportunity for poster presentations by delegates

- Teaching Clinics – BMAS members may book to attend a teaching clinic to observe or to treat patients under supervision. This may be particularly useful for members who have recently attended a Foundation Course.
- Regional Groups – these are local groups which provide a forum for discussion and for continuing development of acupuncture skills.

**Process**

BMAS education incorporates a number of elements, some or all of which may be included in courses and study days:

- Lectures cover practical and academic aspects of the subject. The evidence base for use of acupuncture and scientific understanding of mechanisms of acupuncture are presented where relevant.
- Detailed notes are provided to delegates.
- Further study is encouraged.
- Useful resources are highlighted for delegates to access.
- Needling and examination techniques are demonstrated and practised by delegates under supervision in small groups.
- Small group discussion eg point selection exercises are used to apply information learned to clinical scenarios.
- Groups have a maximum of 12 delegates and each has an individual lecturer as group leader.

**Safety**

There is an emphasis on safe needling on all Foundation Courses. This is highlighted by the use of a Safety Questionnaire and delegates are strongly encouraged to apply for the Certificate of Medical Acupuncture (CMA), which is designed to demonstrate the use of safe acupuncture in practice. Practical needling on courses is in small groups and only under supervision. Sharps boxes are available for disposal of needles and delegates are given specific instructions regarding needle-handling and disposal of sharps in the practical.
sessions. The procedure for needlestick injury is set out in the BMAS Needlestick Policy. The BMAS is insured for personal injury to delegates and third party injury in courses.

Awards
BMAS Accreditation is a two-stage process starting with the Certificate of Medical Acupuncture (CMA), followed by the Diploma in Medical Acupuncture (DipMedAc). Details of the requirements for the CMA and DipMedAc are set out in separate documents\textsuperscript{3,4}. Competence is not formally assessed on FCs although selected points with safety issues are observed and evidence of this is a requirement for the CMA. Individual practitioners are encouraged to use their professional judgment regarding their own competencies.

On-line resources
A number of educational resources are available on-line:

- Points resource (BMAS members only) - a series of video demonstrations of examination and needling techniques presented together with diagrams and explanatory notes
- Webcasts of Scientific Meetings (available to delegates or for a fee to non-delegate members or academic associates)
- BMASclips on YouTube – eg Thomas Lundeberg’s lecture about the neurophysiological model underpinning Western Medical Acupuncture
  www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBWmzXfyGHs
- Useful BMAS documents (available free) – eg Consent form, patient information leaflet, body diagrams, symptom diary template, case record sheet
- Forums (BMAS members) – for on-line discussion and peer support
- Acupuncture in Medicine – Journal (available free to members)

Details of academic associateship can be found on-line at
Equality and access
This is dealt with in the Equality and Diversity policy in relation to delegates attending Foundation Courses

Practical group sessions
Delegates attending Foundation Courses and other courses with a practical element need to be prepared to participate in needling and to be needled. If this is not possible for any reason they may bring a friend to act as a ‘needling partner’ for the practical sessions. Delegates are needled with their consent and may withdraw consent at any time, for instance if they are experiencing unpleasant pain due to needling. If this occurs, group leaders will advise delegates regarding needling technique in order to enable practical sessions to continue.

Pregnancy
There is no evidence that acupuncture is harmful in pregnancy. It is recommended to delegates who are or suspect they may be pregnant, that they should bring this to the attention of the teaching staff as it may affect how much needling they receive in the practical sessions.

Lecturers
BMAS members are eligible to join the team of lecturers for Foundation Courses. Lecturers must fulfill the criteria set out in the BMAS Lecturing Terms policy and provide evidence of Hepatitis B immunisation. Lecturing teams are made up of experienced medical acupuncturists. The performance of lecturers and group leaders is critically assessed to maintain a high standard. Feedback is obtained from delegates attending educational courses, which is fed back to course organisers and to individual lecturers where relevant. There is opportunity for lecturers to receive peer feedback from colleagues during teaching and a proforma is available for use. Lecturers are invited to reflect on their teaching experiences and record this in the
Lecturers’ Portfolio, which may then be discussed further at their annual appraisal.

**Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**
Certificates of attendance are provided for all courses and study days.

**Students**
Undergraduate students in their final year from the UK and Republic of Ireland who are in a profession eligible for BMAS membership, are able to attend Foundation Courses. Students in other disciplines may be admitted to FCs in the future as determined by the BMAS Council. A student discount is applied to the course fee. Discounted places for students on the foundation course are available to students undertaking their first degree only, and are not be available to anyone who is already a regulated health professional in a profession relevant to acupuncture. It is expected that students should have access to patients in order to practice acupuncture following the course and should provide evidence that they have the agreement of their clinical supervisor for this to take place.

**Related Policies**
BMAS Needlestick Policy
BMAS Equality and Diversity Policy
BMAS Lecturing Terms Policy
BMAS Hepatitis B requirement

**References**

Appendix 1

BMAS Hepatitis B requirement

It is a requirement that all participants of practical courses **MUST** either:

- PROVIDE PROOF OF HEPATITIS B IMMUNISATION SHOWING ANTIBODY LEVELS >10 mIU/mL

  This implies you are unlikely to be a carrier of Hepatitis B, however it does not necessarily confirm adequate immunity for protection if exposed to body fluids of carriers. If you demonstrate that you have had a level of immunity of ≥100mIU/ml at any time in the past then further immunisation is not required for participation on practical courses run by the BMAS.

OR

- PROVIDE PROOF THAT YOU ARE NOT A CARRIER OF HEPATITIS B

  You are required to provide the results of a recent blood screen for Hepatitis B surface and/or core antigens, taken within a month prior to the start date of the course you will be attending.

  For those who have either not completed the course of immunisation or have insufficiently raised antibody levels. A negative result for surface and/or core antigens will allow attendance on a course. A positive result does not necessarily preclude a participant from attending a course but special advice and/or precaution may be required.

The BMAS highly recommends that all course participants have hepatitis B immunisation

Please note: it can take up to 6 months to complete a course of vaccinations