

FRAMEWORK FOR MIDWIFE CERTIFICATION IN ACUPUNCTURE USE IN LABOUR AND IN THE IMMEDIATE POSTPARTUM¹

Midwives in British Columbia provide primary care to clients throughout the perinatal period under their own responsibility. The College of Midwives of BC's (CMBC) *Competencies for Registered Midwives* states that midwives must have ability to manage labour and birth, including the ability to assess the need for relief of pain and intervene using non-pharmacologic and pharmacological measures as required. They must also have knowledge of complementary therapies which may be used during the intrapartum and postpartum period².

Under sections 5 (1) (c) and 6 (2) of the *Midwives Regulation*, midwives with specialized training who are certified by CMBC may insert acupuncture needles for pain relief in labour or the postpartum period.

Acupuncture means an act of stimulation, by means of needles, of specific sites on the skin, mucous membranes or subcutaneous tissue of the human body and may be used to alleviate pain. Acupuncture requires specialized education and training.

Acupuncture therapy has a role in the management of pain and can be beneficial for clients in labour or the immediate postpartum period. A randomised controlled trial evaluating acupuncture treatment during labour has demonstrated enhanced relaxation and a significant reduction in the need for epidural analgesia (Ramnero 2002). Other clinical trials conclude that acupuncture is an effective therapeutic treatment for analgesia in labour (Budd 2006).

Specialized practice certification in this competency area may be obtained through a course or program established or approved under the authority set out in the *Bylaws* for CMBC that meets the requirements set out in this framework. The objective of the specialized practice certification is to understand the theoretical and practical knowledge in the foundation of acupuncture treatment with a special focus on learning how to appropriately use acupuncture to provide pain relief to clients in labour or during the postpartum period while implementing the highest standards of safety.

Limitations

A midwife with specialized practice certification in this competency area may **only** insert acupuncture needles during labour or in the immediate post-partum period for the purpose of pain relief³.

¹ An approved certification program is in place. For more information, please contact CMBC.

² Immediate postpartum period refers to the first 24 hours following birth.

³ Acupuncture may stimulate the release of oxytocin and thus should be used with caution when oxytocic agents are used to stimulate uterine contractions to induce or augment labour.

Certification

The process for specialized practice certification for acupuncture use in labour and postpartum includes completion of an education program taught by qualified educators using an established curriculum and program of supervised clinical practice. CMBC approves education programs through a process of consultation and collaboration with the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of BC (CTCMA). The clinical experience portion must take place under the supervision of a registrant of the CTCMA authorized to practice acupuncture, or a regulated health care practitioner authorized to perform acupuncture and experienced in using acupuncture in the intrapartum period.

CMBC currently recognizes the course [Acupuncture for Pain Management in Labour](#) offered by Westcoast Perinatal Acupuncture⁴. Where competence in this area of specialized practice has been acquired in a jurisdiction outside of British Columbia, the registrant must present proof of certification and competence to CMBC for equivalency assessment. For additional information, please contact CMBC.

Upon successful completion of the education process, proof must be submitted to CMBC. Specialized practice certification must be received by the registrant prior to independent practice in this competency area.

Specialized Practice Certification must include:

Demonstration of theoretical and practical knowledge in the foundation of acupuncture treatment in completion of an approved course of at least 50 hours of instruction, and successfully passing written and/or oral and simulated practical assessments including:

- 1) Knowledge of theory in acupuncture;
- 2) Knowledge and understanding of principles involved in acupuncture as they pertain to anatomical and physiological considerations; location and surface anatomy; proper procedure for location, depth and angle of needle insertion;
- 3) Knowledge of basic to intermediate point differentiation and of indications and contraindications;
- 4) Knowledge and understanding of safe acupuncture technique and appropriate universal precautions;
- 5) Knowledge of the indications and protocols for use of acupuncture during labour and the postpartum period;
- 6) Ability to use acupuncture for pain relief during labour and in the immediate postpartum period;
- 7) Knowledge and ability to recognize when a consult and referral to another health care practitioner is indicated;

⁴Midwifery students who take the curriculum portion of this course during their final year of studies must complete the supervised clinical portion of this course as a temporary or general registrant in order to be considered for specialized practice certification.

- 8) Knowledge and ability to manage possible complications; and
- 9) Knowledge and ability to facilitate a full informed choice discussion with a client about the nature of the acupuncture treatment being offered, its risks, benefits, indications and contraindications.

Renewal and Recertification

Registrants must maintain a contemporaneous log of acupuncture treatments they provide to clients and submit the log to CMBC at time of annual registration for renewal of specialized certification. CMBC requires recertification where the midwife has managed fewer than three acupuncture treatments over a 24 month period. Recertification may be in the form of a CMBC-approved refresher course demonstrating competency.

References

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