



Proposed New Scope of Practice: Needling Techniques in Osteopathic Practice

May 2026

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Only those that are registered in the extended Scope of Practice: Needling Techniques in Osteopathic Practice and have maintained a current annual practising certificate may lawfully incorporate the relevant techniques or approaches into his or her practice.

Scope of Practice: Needling Techniques in Osteopathic Practice

All registrants previously registered in the Western Medical Acupuncture and Related Needling Techniques Scope of Practice will, from the date this notice takes effect, become registered in the Scope of Practice: Needling Techniques in Osteopathic Practice.

Osteopaths registered in the Scope of Practice: Needling Techniques in Osteopathic Practice are primary healthcare practitioners who hold the primary Scope of Practice: Osteopath, and who are qualified to perform needling techniques, such as 'dry-needling', intra-muscular stimulation or other skin penetrating techniques using a fine filiform needle, as part of their osteopathic practice. This scope of practice specifically excludes the practice of acupuncture as a component of traditional Chinese medicine as an osteopathic practitioner, as the Council considers this to be outside the scope of osteopathic practice.

Needling techniques used in osteopathic practice are therapeutic modalities involving the insertion of fine filiform needles. These techniques have evolved from various traditions but are now practised within a biomedical framework. Practitioners do not adhere to traditional concepts used in acupuncture, such as Yin/Yang or qi circulation. Instead, needling techniques in osteopathic practice are adjunct modalities grounded in contemporary knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pathology, and the principles of evidence-based healthcare.

Needling techniques are primarily used by osteopaths to support musculoskeletal care, including the management of myofascial trigger points, postoperative pain, and nausea. The use of needling techniques in osteopathic practice primarily relies on the practitioner's osteopathic knowledge to inform diagnosis and management decisions.

The Council regulates these techniques to mitigate risks associated with the use of needles to penetrate the skin and other risks specific to the use of needling techniques, and to ensure public safety.

Holders of the scope are bound to practise to the standards set by the Competencies for Needling Techniques in Osteopathic Practice.

Protection of Title: Those registered in the Scope of Practice: Needling Techniques in Osteopathic Practice are entitled to use the title of *Osteopathic Practitioner of Needling Techniques* or *Osteopathic Needling Technique Practitioner*. Practitioners may also include the use of specific, recognised needling techniques, where they have undertaken appropriate training in these areas (e.g. *Osteopathic Dry Needling Practitioner*). Recognised needling techniques will be published on the Council website.

Current Western Medical Acupuncture and Related Needling Techniques Scope of Practice

Only those that are registered in the extended Scope of Practice: Western Medical Acupuncture and Related Needling Techniques and have maintained a current annual practising certificate may lawfully incorporate the relevant techniques or approaches into his or her practice.

Scope of Practice: Western Medical Acupuncture and Related Needling Techniques

All registrants previously registered in the Scope of Practice for Osteopaths using Western Medical Acupuncture and Related Needling Techniques will, from the date this notice takes effect, become registered in the Western Medical Acupuncture and Related Needling Techniques Scope of Practice.

Osteopaths registered in the Scope of Practice: Western Medical Acupuncture and Related Needling Techniques are primary healthcare practitioners who hold the General Osteopathic Scope of Practice, and who are qualified to perform Western medical acupuncture and related needling techniques, such as "dry-needling", intra-muscular stimulation or other skin penetrating techniques using a fine filiform (acupuncture) needle.

Western medical acupuncture (WMA) is a therapeutic modality involving the insertion of fine needles; it evolved from traditional based acupuncture systems. Its practitioners no longer adhere to concepts such as Yin/Yang and circulation of qi, and regard acupuncture as a modality rather than a complete "alternative medical system". WMA is an evolving inter-disciplinary form of practice drawing on contemporary knowledge of anatomy, physiology and pathology, and the principles of evidence-based medicine rather than traditional systems of knowledge. It is mainly used to treat musculoskeletal pain (including myofascial trigger point pain), postoperative pain and nausea.

Holders of the scope are bound to practise according to the Code of Practice for Osteopaths using Western Medical Acupuncture and Related Needling Techniques.

Protection of Title: Those registered in the Scope of Practice Western Medical Acupuncture and Related Needling Techniques are entitled to use the title of *Osteopathic - Western Medical Acupuncture Practitioner*.