

Position Statement

11 August 2026

This document is current as of the publication date shown above. Please refer to the [website](#) for the latest version.

Eligibility of blood donors undergoing acupuncture

Background

The [Blood Safety and Quality Regulations 2005 \(as amended\)](#) (BSQR) state that individuals undergoing acupuncture should be deferred for “6 months, or 4 months provided a nucleic acid test (NAT) for hepatitis C is negative” unless acupuncture has been performed by “a qualified practitioner and with sterile single-use needles”.

Until now, the definition of a ‘qualified practitioner’ was anyone who was registered as a Qualified Health Care Professional (HCP), i.e. registered with a professional body that is subject to statutory provisions. A full list of Qualified HCPs is given in the current [Complementary and alternative medicine \(CAM\)](#) entry in the Whole Blood and Component Donor Selection Guidelines.

Acupuncture practitioners outside this definition have challenged the restrictions it imposes.

The Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBTO) made recommendations in its [Blood, tissue and cell donor selection criteria report: 2017](#) that there should be no deferral for acupuncture carried out in licensed commercial premises in the UK, but these recommendations were not immediately implemented.

JPAC has now reviewed its definition of a ‘qualified practitioner’, with a remit to reconsider the SaBTO recommendations, recognising the registration and/or licensing of acupuncture services in the UK.

For the purposes of donor selection only, it has now been agreed that an acupuncturist fulfils the BSQR definition of a ‘qualified practitioner’ if acupuncture has been:

1. Performed within the NHS, or
2. Performed by a Qualified Health Care Professional, or
3. Performed in one of the four UK nations by a practitioner acting in accordance with the legislation applying to licensing/registration in that nation.

Registration and licensing

Where an acupuncturist is not a Qualified HCP as defined in the JPAC guidelines, a donor can still be accepted if the procedure was performed in a setting which is appropriately registered/licensed/approved for acupuncture by a registered/licensed practitioner. In effect, an acupuncturist operating in full compliance with the legislation in that jurisdiction can be considered a 'qualified practitioner' under the provisions of BSQR.

The legislative requirements for each nation are given below. A non-HCP acupuncturist who satisfies the following criteria can be added to the list of qualified practitioners for acupuncture:

England

- i. Working in commercial premises licensed under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 for acupuncture and practicing under a business licensed with the Local Authority to perform acupuncture.

Scotland

- i. Practising in Scotland under a licence granted under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Skin Piercing and Tattooing) Order 2006 for skin piercing (which covers acupuncture).

Wales

- i. Licensed by a Local Authority in Wales under the requirements of the Special Procedures Licensing Scheme for Wales and operating from premises or a vehicle 'approved' by a Local Authority in Wales under the requirements of the Special Procedures Licensing Scheme for Wales or within an independent healthcare facility as defined in the relevant regulations or in a client's dwelling place.

OR

- ii. Exempt from the requirement to be licensed to perform acupuncture in Wales under the exemptions provided within the Special Procedures Licensing Scheme for Wales on the basis of their profession and statutory regulation by specified professional bodies and the status of the premises from which they work as a regulated independent healthcare facility as defined in the relevant regulations.
- iii. Holding both an exemption from licensing and a licence to perform acupuncture if the practitioner provides both NHS and non-NHS treatment, depending upon whether the premises is regulated or not.
- iv. Acupuncture performed by an NHS employee as part of NHS treatment is not included in the scheme, so is unaffected.
- v. Please note, the definition of 'acupuncture' in Welsh legislation includes dry needling, so this procedure is subject to the requirements of the licensing scheme. Nevertheless, for the purposes of blood donor selection, the provisions of this Position Statement apply to **acupuncture only** and not to dry needling.

Northern Ireland

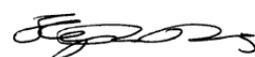
- i. A person who is registered to carry on the practice of acupuncture with the council for the district under Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 in a premises registered under Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

Practitioners offering acupuncture in the UK are expected to operate in compliance with the licensing and registration requirements within each nation. The UK Blood and Tissue Services do not have to confirm the status of an acupuncture service through documentation. Donors should be asked if they are satisfied that the acupuncture practitioner was licensed and that the premises were approved (where required). They should also be satisfied that sterile single-use needles were used. If there is doubt about the status of an acupuncture practitioner, the donor should be deferred for 4 months.



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