

# Licensing and education systems of acupuncturists and moxibustionists in Japan

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## **I. Development of licensing and education systems for acupuncturists and moxibustionists**

The business licensing and education system of Japanese acupuncturists (and moxibustionists) began approximately 95 years ago in 1911. At that time, training began in school and led to an appointment by the local director to an apprentice system. After 1911, licensed schools were established, but for a time both the licensed schools and apprentice system existed simultaneously. The law of license for practicing acupuncture began in 1947. In 1947, following World War II, the law was revised and has persisted until the present day. The major revisions were as follows:

1. Anma therapists were allowed to practice massage and finger pressure (shiatsu), and the name of their license was changed from anma therapist to anma-massage-shiatsu therapist.
2. Judotherapists became independent from the rules governing anma therapists and acupuncturists.
3. Authority for licensing was given to the Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare instead of the governor of the prefecture.
4. The skill test and written test were eliminated from the national examination, and a computer-scored test was adopted.
5. Requirements for graduation increased from two and a half years to three years following graduation from high school.
6. An outlined system was established whereby the general curriculum of the schools was outlined by the government with precise curriculums determined by individual schools. In addition, the curriculum changed from a time system to a credit unit system with the possibility of compatible credit units.

## **II. Two recent important turning points in the field of education of acupuncture and moxibustion**

A recent turning point in the education system included the addition of a three-year junior college program in 1978 and a four-year university program in 1983. Previously, the only source of formal acupuncture education was at vocational schools. In 1994, a graduate school program was also added, awarding doctorates in acupuncture and moxibustion (Ph.D.). As a result of these changes, research in the field developed dramatically.

Vocational schools for acupuncture and moxibustion for people with no visual impairment increased from 24 to 76 schools by approval of a judgement in Fukuoka in 1998, and new enrollment increased from 1,558 to 5,923. One fear resulting from this increase is the possibility of a decline in the quality of education.

## **III. Activity of the Oriental Medicine College Association**

As of 2006, 40 of the 76 vocational schools for acupuncture for people with no visual impairments became members of the Oriental Medicine College Association. The activity of the association is manifold, and includes holding seminars for instructors, performance of the academic congress, publication of textbooks, and issuance of bulletins promoting acupuncture and moxibustion education.

## **IV. Proposal of refinements to the licensing and education system in the field of Japanese acupuncture and moxibustion**

For acupuncturists, a discussion of the refinements to the licensing and education system is necessary to gain even more trust from society. It is essential that this discussion include the academic congress (The Japan Society of Acupuncture and Moxibustion) and occupational group (Japan Acupuncture and Moxibustion Association), according to results of a research survey conducted by the Oriental Medicine College Association and other information

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