Competencies of Licensed Acupuncturists for Practice in Hospitals, Integrative Centers
A Survey of MDs/Administrators of Integrative Clinics
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Introduction
- The number of licensed acupuncture and Oriental medicine (AOM) practitioners working along side or under medical doctors continues to increase annually.
- Optimization of complementary and alternative care in integrated practice settings is an evolving challenge.
- Specific competencies to support optimal participation by acupuncturists in integrated settings may be unknown or underdeveloped.
- Educators wishing to design curricula to teach the knowledge, skills and abilities to optimize acupuncturist delivery of care in integrated settings needs further elucidation.
- This project (1) followed a separate, parallel survey of 26 licensed AOM practitioners about their experiences in these facilities; (2) Some of the data collected in that survey is shared here for comparison purposes.

Study Goals
- This survey was developed to learn what competencies medical doctors or administrators of integrative clinics perceive as important to deliver optimal care in an integrative care setting.
- To identify types of competencies and tools which help prepare AOM professionals for integrated care opportunities.

Methods
- A survey instrument, developed from a previous study of acupuncturists, perceived competencies needed to most effectively deliver optimal care in integrated practice settings, was given to leaders of integrated health environments in which acupuncture and oriental medicine practitioners delivered care.
- The integrated health care leaders who were sent the paper survey instrument. Half of the leaders were from members institutions of the Consortium of Academic Health Centers for Integrative Medicine.
- The survey instrument collected data on the following areas:
  - Respondent background
  - Specialized training of the respondents
  - Importance of a set of competencies
  - Within two weeks of completing the survey, the principal investigator followed with survey respondents by telephone for the purpose of gathering additional qualitative information.
- The interviews took 20 to 75 minutes each.

Findings

Part I: Background of the Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N=10 (9 MDs &amp; 1 RN)</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>MD (%)</th>
<th>LAc (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Did the clinic/hospital provide any training to prepare LAc for role?
- Yes (9) (90%)
- No (1) (10%)

Reading and/or CIDHO
- Yes (9) (90%)
- No (1) (10%)

Was there a reasonable amount of help or support to help you meet these competencies?
- Yes (9) (90%)
- No (1) (10%)

Was there any problem you encountered that you feel has been particularly useful to you, or which you have since discovered?
- Yes (5) (50%)
- No (5) (50%)

Part II: Specialized Training and Useful Resources

The table below shows the type of training materials that were found to be helpful to prepare to work effectively in an integrative care setting.
- Use of readings, CIDHPs, or Web-based resources for training were noted to be absent.
- Other resources cited for improving the delivery of care were team meetings and mentorships provided by MDs.

Part III: Key Themes in an Optimal Training

This section asked for ranking (Likert scale: 3.5, “very important” to 2.5 “important”) of 25 topics for an educational session to prepare AOM practitioners for practice in an integrated care environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics in Optimal Training</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>LAc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication with MDs and nurses</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies/skills for developing relationships with MDs</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills in articulating to the MDs the value I offer patients</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for multi-disciplinary collaborations</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills needed for multi-disciplinary collaboration</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part IV: Findings from the Interviews

- Basic questions addressed:
  - General perceptions of the value of the survey.
  - Is there value in special training in this area?
  - What content (i.e. what topics) would you recommend including?

- Selecting the Right AOM Professional
  - Attraction at as many levels as possible:
    - Recognition of high priority acute management clinical presentation (red flag)
    - Skills needed for multi-disciplinary collaboration
    - Skills needed for multi-disciplinary collaboration

- Conclusions

- This project suggests most LAc’s were not utilized by a set of knowledge, skills and competencies to allow them to create an optimal place for AOM practice in these environments.
- This project also suggests that there is value from investment in curricular materials and programs for licensed acupuncturists to acquire the competencies most valued by MD administrators.
- The benefit of developing resources for acupuncturists who wish to practice in a healthcare facility most likely would extend to other complementary and alternative medicine practitioners who desire to work effectively in a health care facility.
- The acquisition of the most significant core competencies identified in this study can be anticipated to flow into the systems in which CAM practitioners work, and ultimately to the patients they serve.

Summary and Discussion
- Topics prioritized by MDs/Administrators typically aligned with those highlighted by LAc’s (e.g. preferences were visible in a few areas).
  - A licensed acupuncturist “leadership skills” were not viewed as being as necessary by the MDs (40% vs. 70%).
  - Ability of LAc to assess and order a conventional medical record (50% vs. 60%).
- The five competencies indicated by all the MDs as “very important” or “important”:
  - Communication with MDs, nurses and other providers
  - Recognition of high priority acute care management – red flags
  - Skills in multi-disciplinary communications
  - Strategies and skills to develop relationships with MDs and nurses to enhance referrals
- The MDs/Administrators ranked a few areas as more important than the LAc’s. Among these were:
  - “Quality assurance and improvement processes (50% vs. 73%).
  - “Outcomes studies and documentation” (80% vs. 61%).
- The MDs were clear that acupuncturists in the integrated setting needed to be able to at least, or be patient with the demands of the healthcare institution and its conventional medical ethic.
- Although a set of very specific competencies have been identified in this study and the previous licensed acupuncturist study conducted earlier by the same investigators, there does appear to be a body of identifiable reference material to form the knowledge, and identify the skills and abilities needed to gain these competencies.

Conclusions:
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References:
2. brclark@nccaom.org, Common Ground (NED) - National Certification for Acupuncturists on Competencies for Practice in Hospitals, Integrated Centers and Other Conventional Healthcare Settings.
3. www.common-ground.org

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Sponsors:
- National Educational Dialogue to Advance Integrated Healthcare: Creating Common Ground (NED)
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- National Certification Commission for Acupuncturists and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM)