

# International Hazard Datasheets on Occupation



## Acupuncturist

### Who is an acupuncturist?

An acupuncturist evaluates the overall physical situation of the patient and prepares treatment plans based on the Chinese Puncture technique that is supposed to rearrange the energy flow lines within the body; the treatment is performed by inserting thin needles of various lengths at specific points of the body amenable to effective treatment of well defined defects.

### What is dangerous about this job?

- Acupuncturists may suffer from cuts and punctures resulting from the use of needles, blades and other sharp tools and instruments.
- They may be exposed to various electromagnetic fields (e.g. infra-red, magnetic, laser, etc.), and to chemicals (such as organic oils, massage ointments, alcohols and disinfectants) that may cause allergies and hypersensitivity.
- They may be exposed to noxious diseases transmitted by biologic fluids, such as the patient blood in the event of bloody piercing.
- Exposure to carcinogenic, mutagenic and teratogenic substances.
- They may suffer injuries of joints and palms as a result of prolonged massaging of patients throughout many years of work.
- They may suffer musculoskeletal injuries, stemming from work posture, excessive and repetitive stresses, etc.

### Hazards related to this job

Specific preventive measures can be seen by clicking on the respective  in the third column of the table.

<b>Accident hazards</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Slips, trips and falls on wet floors</li></ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Punctures and cuts from sharp objects (in particular needle-sticks and cuts by blades)</li></ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Injuries to legs and toes by falling heavy objects, e.g., medical instruments</li></ul>	 
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Electrical shock from faulty or improperly grounded equipment, or faulty insulation</li></ul>	 
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Burns and scalds caused by hot sterilizing equipment; by contact with hot water and steam pipes; by machines supplying hot air used for drying purposes; or throughout the moxibustion treatment; or while treating patients with cupping glasses</li></ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire, stemming from the use of open flame for sterilization and/or heat treatment</li> </ul>	5
<b>Physical hazards</b>  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to non-ionizing radiations: visible light, infra-red, laser radiation, electric and magnetic fields, etc.</li> </ul>	6 7
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acupuncturists working in large rehabilitation centers are exposed to excessive noise emitted by machines, instruments and equipment</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to various environmental factors, such as extreme heat, cold or moisture</li> </ul>	8
<b>Chemical hazards</b>  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irritation of the eyes, nose and throat due to exposure to aerosols containing washing and cleaning formulations (some of them alkaline) in the air or by droplets of washing liquids</li> </ul>	9
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to organic oils, massage ointments, alcohols and disinfection agents, that may cause excessive-sensitivity to the acupuncturist</li> </ul>	9
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latex allergy caused by exposure to natural latex gloves and other medical devices</li> </ul>	10
<b>Biological hazards</b>  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to a communicable disease transmitted by biologic fluids, e.g. exposure to blood in the event of a prick or cut</li> </ul>	10 11
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to allergenic essence-of-plants, and/or to essence of wormwood plant which is a recognized allergen that is used for the preparation of the moxibustion</li> </ul>	8
<b>Ergonomic, psychosocial and organizational factors</b>  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Musculoskeletal injuries, including those connected with prolonged working in a standing posture, frequently repeated stresses, and carrying or moving heavy instruments</li> </ul>	10 12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Injury to the joints, knuckles and palms due to the carrying out of numerous massages</li> </ul>	12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical and chemical factors of suffering and inconvenience (e.g. specific smells [like those of plant-essences], poor illumination of work rooms, etc.</li> </ul>	

## Preventive measures

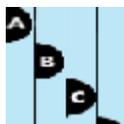
- 1 Wear protective shoes such as those used by nurses, with non-slip soles
- 2 Handle sharp objects with extreme care; use special safety receptacles to store used hypodermic needles until disposal
- 3 Keep all passages clearly visible and uncluttered
- 4 Install ground fault circuit interrupters; call qualified electrician to test and repair faulty or suspect equipment

- 5 Comply with all safety instructions on the installation and periodic inspection of electrical medical equipment and/or fire-protection regulations
- 6 It is essential to comply with all the "accepted" safety instructions for visible light, infra-red, laser radiation, electric and magnetic fields – depending on the specific type of the acupunctural treatment
- 7 Sufficient non-glare illumination should be installed in the treatment room
- 8 Install air conditioning in the treatment-room, with effective general ventilation, to alleviate heat stress, and remove smells, gases and vapors. In an air-conditioned treatment-room it is necessary to verify that the cold air flow is not directed straight towards the acupuncturist who may work in this room for long periods of time
- 9 Provide eye flushing bottles or fountain; use a respirator if necessary
- 10 Workers sensitive to natural latex must use non-latex gloves and avoid contact with other latex products
- 11 Follow established appropriate infection control precautions assuming blood, body fluids and tissue are infectious
- 12 Consult with a specialist in ergonomics regarding the correct work and standing postures throughout the treatment (especially regarding the massage) in order to prevent musculoskeletal injuries.

## Specialized information

**Synonyms** AAlternative-medicine specialist (acupuncture); Chinese-piercing specialist; Chinese-medicine specialist.

### Definitions and/or description



Administers specific therapeutic treatment of symptoms and disorders amenable to acupuncture procedures, as specifically indicated by supervising physician: Reviews patient's medical history, physical findings, and diagnosis made by physician to ascertain symptoms or disorder to be treated. Selects needles of various lengths, according to location of insertion. Inserts needles at locations of body known to be efficacious to certain disorders, utilizing knowledge of acupuncture points and their functions. Leaves needles in patient for specific length of time, according to symptom or disorder treated, and removes needles. Burns bark of mugwort tree in small strainer to administer moxibustion treatment. Covers insertion area with cloth and rubs strainer over cloth to impart heat and assist in relieving patient's symptoms [DOT].

### Related and specific occupations

Alternative-medicine therapist (including aromatherapy; Bach-flowers; biofeedback; electromagnetic fields balancing; healing; homeopathy; massage; meridian psycho-therapy treatment; naturopathy; transcended meditation; reflexology; reversing; Tai-chi; etc. ); holistic medicine practitioner; occupational therapist; orthopedist; osteopath; physiotherapist; podiatrist; etc.

### Tasks

Administering; ascertaining; assisting; attaching (cupping-glasses); burning; covering; diagnosing; evaluating; inserting (needles); learning; locating (insertion points); massaging; recommending; removing; reviewing; rubbing; selecting (treatment, needles, etc.); treating; warming (massage area – with rubbing ointments); etc.

### Primary equipment used

Chinese acupuncture/piercing equipment (e.g. various needles,...); tissue-warming equipment (Chinese ointments; cupping-glasses; diathermia; rubbing compounds; ...)

**Workplaces  
where the  
occupation  
is common**

Industrial plants; old-folk homes; private homes of patients; sanitariums; schools of medicine; sick-funds; various wards of hospitals and other health care institutions; etc.

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**References**

1. Acupuncture and moxibustion. 455 pages. AcupunctureShop.Com- Vesterbikvej 31, Sig-6800 Varde, Denmark.



2. US Dept. of Labor: Dictionary of Titles (DOT) 4th. Ed. 2 Vol. 1991.

3. Ellis, Wiseman & Boss: Fundamentals of Chinese Acupuncture revised Ed., Trade paperback book, 484 pages, 1991.

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This datasheet was authored by a group of experts headed by prof. Donagi from the Israel Institute for Occupational Safety and Hygiene

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*Updated by VM. Approved by AS. Last update: 12.06.2009.*