



ASA / NCCAOM Town Hall V Q&A

June 3, 2020, 5pm PDT/8pm EDT

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ACUPUNCTURE IN THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Question: I have applied 5 separate times for positions as an acupuncturist at the VA. I have a doctorate and acupuncture administrator experience but have never even received an interview. What can we do differently to get to the interview stage?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: Acupuncture positions are highly competitive. There are many providers who are well qualified. Having experience with treating Veterans, experience treating mental health conditions and working in interdisciplinary teams are areas to expand your experience.

Question: Can the patient come to private clinics and use their veteran's insurance?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: If a patient has other insurance that covers acupuncture they can use that for acupuncture.

Question: Do you need to have a DAOM to be hired or is LAc ok?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: The minimum qualification is the Master's level degree.

Question: How do you overcome the state licensing restrictions across borders?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: You must be licensed in a state to work in the VA, but you do not need to be licensed in the state in which you will be practicing at the VA.

Question: Why is the level so low, GS11 is pretty low grade ?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: Acupuncture positions vary between GS 9 to GS 13. This was determined by the minimum education level to become a licensed acupuncturist.

Question: I have been providing acupuncture services to veterans for nearly two years. Just recently the fee schedule has apparently changed, and I am being paid less than half of what I was previously paid. Can you explain why?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: The VA contracts with OPTUM and TriWest are based on the Medicare Fee schedule. Now that acupuncture is on the Medicare Fee schedule they are using that to determine price.

Question: Is it possible to work part-time for the VA?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: If a VA facility were looking for a part time provider they would advertise the position that way. Most of the time they are looking for a full-time provider, but it is possible that a PT position could come up in the future.

Question: I was told VA we cannot perform moxa or cupping

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: Cupping and other modalities are permitted.

Question: Are acupuncturists in the VA allowed to prescribe Herbs?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: At this time herbal prescriptions are not allowed.

Question: I am wondering if the codes that were accepted were wrong, 97913 & 97914 instead of 97813 & 97814.

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: I do not really understand this? We are using the proper acupuncture codes.

Question: What is Juli's title at the VA?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: National Lead, VA.

Question: TriWest does not answer any requests to contract through them to treat vets. It is frustrating. Do you have suggestions for getting them to respond?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: For TriWest I recommend applying online:
<https://ccn.triwest.com/Forms/AddProvider.aspx>

Question: So, are they ignoring L.Ac's without doctorates?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: The VA has hired many Master's level degree acupuncture providers in the VA. However, in a competitive market a higher level of degree is preferred.

Question: Does a LAc with a DAc. doctoral degree get paid more in the VA hospital?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: Many things go into the pricing decision for the VA. The most important item is the job description and what the facility wants the provider to do in their role.

Question: Why is there a high turnover rate with LAc at VA clinics. I heard that many acupuncturists find it difficult with many patients to treat but not enough time.

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: When looking at all the acupuncture providers hired in the VA in the last two years we have a low turnover rate.

Question: Can Juli be available for Q and A later through emails as a consultant? I am willing to pay her since I treated many VA patients but now TriWest is not paying.

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: I am not available for consulting about the payment function of community care decisions.

Question: Do you know if VA hospital or outpatient jobs offer national student loan forgiveness?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: Yes

Question: How is the billing accomplished and what is the fee schedule? Can you incorporate VA patients into your existing practice?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: For more information about becoming a community care provider and fee schedules for your area see:

https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/providers/Community_Care_Network.asp

Question: What are the requirements to work for the VA? Is there a specific NCCAOM VA certification, or may one be hired by the VA simply by virtue of being an NCCAOM acupuncture diplomate?

Answered by ASA on June 7, 2020: The VA requires licensure in a state, Current NCCAOM Diplomate, minimum masters level degree. Additionally, the ASA and NCCAOM are working together to create a program to help train those who may not be familiar with the VA and Dept of Defense systems. More information about this course will be available in the coming year, but it is not completed at this time.

Question: So, I can have a license in one state, and work at a VA located in another state?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: Yes

Question: Are there any VA centers utilizing inpatient acupuncture yet?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: Yes, many are using inpatient acupuncture.

Question: Where do I find out if my local VA hospital (in Kansas) is hiring?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: USAJOBS.gov

Question: Has the VA considered providing acupuncture in a community acupuncture setting?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: Yes, many sites are using community acupuncture services, auricular acupuncture groups like NADA and BFA are also common.

Question: How will the VA deal with forms 10-7080 which expired during the lockdown? Will VA extend the expiration dates, or will the Veteran have to go back for another consult?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: I am not familiar with this form.

Question: Can you please address Medicare and low back pain and veterans as this has changed recently?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: Please be more specific regarding. We are not understanding this question.

Question: Is there a timeline for opening Acupuncture jobs at VA hospitals on the west coast?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: Every VA medical center makes their own hiring decisions and timelines.

Question: Is payment more reliable now? I stayed away from the Choice program because many colleagues have had difficulty with being reimbursed.

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: The current contract is a three-year contract so we hope that the consistency over a longer period of time will help with easy payment.

Question: As a community acupuncturist for the VA, how often will you send in a bill? for BWC you wait until the end, is this the same for the VA?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: You could send the bill after each date of service.

Question: Do we need to be set up with taking Insurance to take VA patients? If we are not, how do we bill?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: Yes, you need to contract with either OPTUM or TriWest which are third party administrators (insurance companies) depending on your location.
https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/providers/Community_Care_Network.asp

Question: My local VA has only asked for first and last visit notes. There is a constant issue with their fax system not working. They are also typically issuing an SEOC of 12 visits in 30 days and ignoring requests for additional authorization regardless of documentation. How much are local offices allowed to "interpret the SEOC" from the VA and who would I contact to address the issues at our local area?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: See if you can send them notes by mail.

Question: Does the VA provide employee benefits for staff acupuncturists who only 20 hours/week? Are acupuncturists designated as clinicians or as medical support staff?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: A part time employee receives benefits at a reduced rate. Acupuncturists are clinicians.

Question: Do you have to be a US citizen to work at the VA?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: You do not have to be a US citizen, but a non-US citizen is only hired if they cannot find a US citizen to do the work.

Question: Will Vet Admin pay acupuncturists who are not NCCAOM member?

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020: You do not qualify to be hired if you are not a current NCCAOM diplomate

Question: Are the handouts (acupressure) available to practitioners outside the VA system?

Thanks. And awesome work!!!

Answered by J. Olson on June 5, 2020:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sSuGWBv0Rq3JDF0bRCPEv3etVo0SN8Ny/view?usp=sharing>



Question: We need schools to teach SOAP notes. Does NCCAOM approve any PDA courses that teach SOAP notes?

Answered by NCCAOM PDA Team on June 15, 2020: The NCCAOM PDA Department posts all approved courses in the NCCAOM PDA Search Engine. Currently, there are no approved courses that deal specifically with SOAP Notes, however there are courses addressing charting in the medical records. A course topic of how to write SOAP Notes would definitely be appropriate and applicable for practitioners and, therefore, approved for PDA points.