



## NCCAOM Advocacy Update - August 2021

By Molly Giammarco, Senior Manager, Policy & Government Relations



The NCCAOM® Advocacy team is dedicated in working with other national and state associations in providing information on national standards to promote acupuncture services to state and federal policymakers to include the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), as well as other government agencies and regulators.

### Advocacy News

*Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act (H.R. 4803) Introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives*

The NCCAOM is pleased to collaborate with ASA to announce that U.S. Congressional Representative Judy Chu (D-California) introduced [H.R. 4803, the Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act](#) on July 29. H.R. 4803 would authorize Medicare to recognize qualified acupuncturists as Medicare providers. This would enable eligible acupuncturists to provide covered acupuncture services to Medicare beneficiaries (those 65+) without supervision.

Medicare currently covers acupuncture services for chronic lower back pain, but acupuncturists cannot provide this service to Medicare patients without supervision. Medicare provider status for acupuncturists would enable eligible acupuncturists to provide covered services to Medicare beneficiaries without supervision and allow acupuncturists to bill Medicare (acupuncturists currently must bill the service or incident to the supervising practitioner for any Medicare services they provide).

The NCCAOM supports H.R. 4803, which would increase access to qualified acupuncturists, enable acupuncturists to provide covered acupuncture services to Medicare beneficiaries, and help grow the profession. The NCCAOM is working with the ASA to advocate for H.R. 4803 and is doing strategic outreach to select Congressional offices at this time. In the coming months, you will be provided with more information on how you can help support H.R. 4803 and get involved in the NCCAOM and ASA's grassroots efforts.

Please see the [NCCAOM's and the ASA's Fact Sheet](#) and [Press Release](#) for more information about H.R. 4803.



### *Acupuncture Today Articles*

The NCCAOM and the ASA advocacy team will publish an article in *Acupuncture Today* about H.R. 4803 and further explain how the bill's passage would benefit acupuncturists and the acupuncture profession. Look for the article in *Acupuncture Today* soon.

In June, the NCCAOM Advocacy team worked with American Society of Acupuncturists (ASA) leaders to draft an article, [Recognizing Acupuncturists in Medicare](#), for *Acupuncture Today*, which is about the effect CMS (Medicare) recognition would have on the acupuncture profession and the legislative pathway toward obtaining this recognition.

### **Medicare-Recognition Background**

Obtaining provider status under Medicare would enable acupuncturists to directly bill Medicare for the covered services that they provide to Medicare beneficiaries (generally those 65 and older). This recognition is critical to advancing the acupuncture profession as it would grant more individuals who would benefit from acupuncture services access to qualified acupuncturists—and more qualified acupuncturists access to more populations. Medicare recognition would also help the profession collect and generate data on the acupuncture benefits, particularly with regard to quality and cost.

As many of you know, CMS covers acupuncture services for chronic lower back pain (CLBP) but does not recognize acupuncturists as providers. This lack of recognition prevents a significant number of the profession from readily providing CLBP services to Medicare beneficiaries. This barrier prevents those with the most expertise and training in acupuncture from providing these services. A key part of the NCCAOM advocacy strategy is to obtain Medicare provider status for qualified acupuncturists.

The NCCAOM and ASA continue to maintain a series of resources to help educate the profession on Medicare recognition and the [steps required for Medicare provider status](#). Read more about how Medicare provider status would affect the profession by visiting the [NCCAOM's Advocacy Page](#).

Stay tuned for more updates on next steps for obtaining Medicare recognition. If you have any questions, you can contact the NCCAOM Advocacy team with any Medicare-related questions at [advocacy@thenccaom.org](mailto:advocacy@thenccaom.org).

### *AHRQ Integrated Pain-Management SER Comments*

In June, the NCCAOM [responded to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#) (AHRQ) request for comment on its Integrated Pain-Management Systematic Evidence Review. In its comments to AHRQ, the NCCAOM recommended that AHRQ address limitations in how it scored evidence and note that it did not evaluate acupuncture as a standalone service. The NCCAOM also recommended that AHRQ identify and pursue ways to capture and assess new and alternative service-delivery models.



Read more about the NCCAOM's advocacy efforts at the [NCCAOM Advocacy Page](#). Please contact the [NCCAOM Advocacy team](#) with any questions regarding the NCCAOM's Advocacy efforts and ways to get involved.