

NCCAOM Advocacy Update December 2020

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The NCCAOM® Advocacy team represents NCCAOM certification, Diplomates, and stakeholders by providing information to promote acupuncture services to state and federal policymakers, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), as well as other stakeholder groups.

COVID-19 Response and Advocacy

The NCCAOM continues to monitor policy related to the pandemic and inform its Diplomates about COVID-19-related relief available to the profession. Monitored issues include the CARES Act extensions, federal COVID-19 stimulus packages, the Small Business Administration the Economic Injury Disaster Loan and Paycheck Protection Program opportunities and protocol, and state and federal pandemic unemployment insurance.

The NCCAOM continues to update its [COVID-19 Resource Page](#), which provides Diplomates information about available resources, state and federal initiatives, and guidance for seeking small-business support. In continuing to monitor COVID-19-relief measures, the NCCAOM GR team developed, "[Continued Guidance for COVID-19 Economic Relief for Acupuncturists](#)" to update Diplomates on available COVID-19-relief options and help Diplomates navigate loan-forgiveness options.

CMS Recognition – Developments and Next Steps for Advocacy

As the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and other government agencies begin to expand acupuncture service offerings, the NCCAOM continues to advocate for Medicare provider recognition for qualified acupuncturists. Until CMS recognizes the acupuncture profession as a provider group, acupuncturists cannot readily provide approved services for CMS-approved acupuncture procedures (cLBP).

Medicare provider status would enable acupuncturists to directly bill Medicare for services rendered to Medicare beneficiaries, expand access to acupuncturists, increase opportunities

for student-loan forgiveness, and enable data collection to show acupuncture's effectiveness as a treatment and a wellness option.

Obtaining Medicare recognition requires an act of Congress to instruct CMS to add acupuncturists as a recognized provider. The NCCAOM continues to work with the American Society of Acupuncturists (ASA) to develop a strategy for pursuing this recognition via the U.S. Congress.

To help educate the profession on the meaning of Medicare recognition and the steps toward obtaining Medicare provider status, the NCCAOM, in collaboration with the ASA, developed the following resource documents:

- ["ASA-NCCAOM Medicare Communication"](#)
- ["Acupuncture Medicare-Recognition Communication"](#)
- [Acupuncture Today article on Medicare-Recognition for Acupuncturists.](#)

In the upcoming post-2020 election period, the U.S. Congress will begin preparing for the upcoming 117th Congress (2021-2022), which begins in January 2021. The NCCAOM, in collaboration with the ASA, will look for opportunities to pursue legislation that would establish acupuncturists as Medicare providers. Stay tuned for more updates on next steps for obtaining Medicare recognition. Contact the NCCAOM Government Relations team with any Medicare-related questions: advocacy@thenccaom.org.

Voices for Non-Opioid Choices Coalition and Advocacy

The NCCAOM continues to participate in the Voices for Non-Opioid Choices, a multi-stakeholder coalition that helps combat opioid overuse through its advocacy for alternative pain-management options such as acupuncture.

In late 2019, the NCCAOM endorsed [H.R. 5172/S. 3067, the NOPAIN Act](#) (Non-Opioids Prevent Addiction In the Nation Act), which would incentivize practitioners to use non-opioid and non-pharmaceutical post-surgery pain-treatment options. The NCCAOM continues to provide advocacy support to the Coalition, which promotes policy that increases access to non-opioid pain-management options. Read more about the [Coalition](#).

CMS (Medicare) 2021 Physician Fee Schedule Acupuncture Coding Valuation

In October, the NCCAOM submitted [comments](#) to CMS regarding the proposed changes to work relative value units for four acupuncture codes. The NCCAOM opposed this proposed valuation and cited the codes' complexities compared to other procedure codes. The NCCAOM GR team will continue to monitor this proposal and similar valuation efforts to ensure the NCCAOM has a voice in these matters.

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.