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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

### **B.C. TO ADD ACUPUNCTURE AS A SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT**

VICTORIA – Acupuncture treatments will be included for the first time in Canada as a supplementary benefit for Medical Services Plan (MSP) premium assistance recipients by April 2008, Health Minister George Abbott announced today.

“Acupuncture treatment is one way of preventing illness and managing existing health conditions,” said Abbott at an acupuncture demonstration in Vancouver’s S.U.C.C.E.S.S centre. “We are making it easier for patients to access a treatment option that they might otherwise be unable to afford.”

MSP also provides partial funding to premium assistance patients for selected services of physiotherapists, naturopaths, chiropractors, massage therapists and non-surgical podiatrists.

Premium assistance patients – eligible B.C. residents with a combined family income of \$28,000 or below – will receive \$23 per visit for a maximum combined 10 visits of supplementary benefits. Patients are only covered for visits with practitioners registered by the College of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncturists of British Columbia and treatment must be for a diagnosed condition.

“The inclusion of acupuncture as a supplementary Medical Services Plan benefit is an excellent example of the Province’s commitment to ensure that all British Columbians have access to a wide range of health-care treatment options,” said Burnaby North MLA Richard T. Lee. “Acupuncture has a long and respected history worldwide and today is a landmark day for premium assistance recipients and for British Columbia’s traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture community.”

A typical acupuncture treatment involves the stimulation of acupuncture points through the penetration of a patient’s skin with thin metal needles that are manually or electrically stimulated. Acupuncture is effective in stabilizing or treating a variety of conditions including: migraine headaches, osteoarthritis of the knee or hip, pain caused by dental disorders and nausea and vomiting associated with pregnancy or chemotherapy.

“We are extremely pleased with the inclusion of acupuncture as a supplementary benefit under MSP,” said Dr. Harvey Hu, president of the BC Qualified Acupuncturists & Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Association. “We hope that this move will encourage more British Columbians to recognize acupuncture as a safe and effective treatment option for a variety of medical conditions.”

The acupuncture profession has been regulated under the Health Professions Act of B.C. since 1996. There are approximately 1,300 practitioners registered with CTCMA, the regulatory body for acupuncturists in B.C.

British Columbians requiring assistance in locating a registered acupuncturist can contact CTCMA at 604-783-7100 or via the web at [www.ctcma.bc.ca](http://www.ctcma.bc.ca).

In 2005, government changed the provincial Medical Services Plan premium assistance program by increasing the income threshold to \$28,000 for British Columbians to qualify for coverage. It was estimated that this would reduce or eliminate monthly premiums for an estimated 215,000 British Columbians.

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