Dear

I am a patient of insert acupuncturist’s name, a practising member of The British Acupuncture Council, the regulating body for many of your constituents who are acupuncturists.

Delete one of the following sentences as appropriate:

Acupuncturists in Scotland are no longer permitted to open their clinics during the current lockdown.

There is lack of clarity whether acupuncturists in Scotland are permitted to open their clinics during the current lockdown.

At the same time, acupuncturists in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are permitted to practise for those with urgent medical conditions. BAcC practitioners are providers of professional medical services and the requirement to close will add an extra load to an already overstretched heath service in Scotland.

**Institutional recognition of BAcC members as providers of healthcare**

The British Acupuncture Council is the lead voluntary regulator of accredited acupuncture in the UK, the only accredited acupuncture member of the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) <https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/check-practitioners/practitioner/acupuncturist>. In the *National Health Service Reform and Health Care Professions Act 2002 (as amended 2012)* it is specified in law that they are providers of health and social care. As a consequence of their high standards and membership of the PSA, the General Medical Council has explicitly authorized general practitioners to refer to ‘registers accredited by the PSA’ <https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/delegation-and-referral/delegation-and-referral>. This recognition of their professional status in the national delivery of health and social care puts them directly alongside statutorily regulated professions such as physiotherapy and osteopathy, the practitioners of which have been entitled to be in practice for the duration of all lockdowns.

Acupuncture is an evidence-based medicine with recommendations from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence as a treatment for headache and migraine (and for chronic pain in the draft) and from the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network for chronic pain.

**Safe practice and Infection Protection Control**

BAcC members operate safely and lawfully and follow the safety measures outlined by the British Acupuncture Council and the Scottish Government. They complete a comprehensive risk assessment and follow detailed guidelines that meet NHS standards of Infection Protection Control. Patients are pre-screened and treatment room contact times kept to a minimum.

**Right to practise in England and Wales**

Wales, as with Scotland, has tended towards more stringent measures than England, yet current legislation {[Health Protection (Coronvirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020](https://gov.wales/health-protection-coronavirus-restrictions-no-5-wales-regulations-2020-amended)) explicitly groups acupuncture with the regulated healthcare professions, and hence gives it exemption from business closure during lockdown. For England, the Department of Health and Social Care,have confirmed through the PSA directly to BAcC accredited acupuncturists that they are seen as healthcare professionals providing medical and health services under [Schedule 2 Part 3 of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020.](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/350/contents/made)

As such, BAcC accredited acupuncturists in England and Wales are not only permitted to see patients with urgent conditions but they are also considered as frontline healthcare workers in relation to vaccination priority.

**Practising in Scotland**

Scottish regulations state that ‘complementary and alternative medicine services requiring physical contact or close physical proximity between persons must close, **but not if they are ‘ancillary to medical, health, or social care services**’**.** As detailed above, BAcC acupuncturists are indeed ‘ancillary to medical, health, or social care services’, and hence have been allowed to remain open by their professional body.

This understanding of the Government regulations was accepted by the City of Edinburgh Council, whose environmental health team confirmed that acupuncture is deemed ‘essential medical’.

I am asking that my practitioner can continue to work and I can continue to have my acupuncture treatment. I ask this also on behalf of other patients like myself, many of whom exhibit a high level of urgency or need in their care. Data from acupuncture practice during the pandemic shows that, like me, 99% of patients had defined medical conditions. More than half were suffering from anxiety and 22% from depression. In addition, almost a quarter of patients were key workers.

At a time when the NHS is under such pressure, I believe that denying us acupuncture treatment for our urgent medical needs, not to mention those with mental health conditions, will further drain NHS resources.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter, and I urge you to lobby on behalf of patients and members.

Yours sincerely