

February 8, 2019

My name is Stewart Cohen, and I am a licensed acupuncturist here to represent the Vermont Acupuncture Association. The VTAA is a non-profit association, representing Vermont practitioners and consumers of Acupuncture, Chinese Herbal Medicine, Asian Bodywork, Tai Chi and Qi Gong. Among its goals are to improve the quality of care by educating consumers and professionals of the best clinical practices, and to protect patients' access to all forms of Oriental Medicine, and their right to receive it from a properly trained professional.

My own relationship with acupuncture began while getting my Doctoral Degree in Anatomy and Neurobiology at UVM College of Medicine. I was studying Neuroendocrine Regulation and became interested in acupuncture as a form of regulatory medicine. As there was virtually no research being conducted in the field, I realized I would need to add to my studies and so pursued a practical degree as an Acupuncture Therapist in Seattle, WA. During these years I had the opportunity to teach anatomy and physiology in various formats to medical, allied health and acupuncture students at both institutions. I also gradually realized that teaching was not really my gig.

I have been in full time practice since 1991, and in Vermont since 1995, where we have only been licensed since 1997. The legislation before us represents the most serious revision of the presentation of our scope of practice in a very long time, and I and we are here to support it. I think that much effort was made to thoughtfully craft the language to carefully describe and reflect the current practice of acupuncture in the most comprehensive and easily understood way possible. Having led the effort to do so on our association's side of the equation since last summer, I can attest that this was not so simple. Some of the terminology as well as the philosophical perspectives of this practice do not neatly fit into the niches most commonly used for medical descriptors. While one approach might to either leave out what is difficult to express, or not translate it at all, Mr. Gilman was both attentive and receptive to getting it right and squeezing it all in there. So, while I have no specifics to discuss I can express immense gratitude to Mr. Gilman and the OPR for a scope that well serves to protect our profession and provide the public with clear guidance.

On a personal note, as one of my long-term aspirations is to extend medical understanding to include additional approaches to understanding and treating human health and disease, I see these small triumphs in understanding as big achievements for us all. If there are any concerns about the language from the perspective of our profession, I would be happy to address them at this point.