

# The Allied Health Professions Council of South Africa

*ensuring quality complementary and alternative healthcare of choice*

## OVERVIEW OF ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS

**Ayurveda** is a traditional healing system which began in India over 5000 years ago. “Ayurveda” is a Sanskrit word which derives from two roots: “vid” which means knowledge and “ayus” which means life cycle. Ayurveda is often referred to as the science of life and longevity. It is a complete system of medicine which advocates that all beings come from nature and are an integral part of the whole creation.

### **Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture**

Based on the philosophical approach of yin and yang, Acupuncture has been practiced and explored as a science, as well as an art of healing, for thousands of years.

Acupuncture falls within the ambit of Chinese Medicine, viewing health and sickness in terms of the human body’s harmonies and disharmonies.

In an acupuncture treatment, following a thorough consultation and diagnosis, the practitioner inserts acupuncture needles at specific points on the human body that would be appropriate for that particular condition or symptom.

Therefore, Acupuncture is a method of accessing and harmonizing the human body’s natural flow of energy (qi) in order to restore health.

**Chiropractic** is a health profession specializing in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mechanical disorders of the musculoskeletal system and the affects of these disorders on the function of the nervous system and general health.

Chiropractic practitioners essentially rely upon non-invasive treatment methods and will refer patients to medical practitioners should medication or surgery be indicated. This approach is further reinforced by chiropractors in their promotion of healthy lifestyles such as the avoidance of smoking and excess stress, proper diet and exercise.

**Homeopathy** is a complete therapeutic system of medicine developed by a German physician and chemist, Dr Samuel Hahnemann (1755 – 1843). Homeopathy is based on the observation that a substance, when taken by a healthy person, is capable of producing a particular array of symptoms. According to Homeopathic philosophy a substance so tested can be used to treat someone suffering from a disease or condition that presents with symptoms similar to those produced by that substance. This is the homeopathic Law of Similars, also expressed as “Let Likes be cured by Likes”.

**Naturopathy** is an umbrella term that encompasses many forms of complementary and natural medicine. A Naturopath is a person who practices several of these forms or “modalities” and who has also a solid grounding in the medical sciences.

At a time when modern technology, environmental pollution, poor diet, and stress play an enormous role in the degradation of health, a Naturopath's ability to apply natural methods of healing is of considerable importance. By using natural therapies he or she is able to treat both acute and chronic ailments successfully. Frequently, a Naturopath is the last resort in a

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patient's long search for health. Providing personalized care to each patient, the practitioner sees man as a holistic unity of body, mind, and spirit.

**Osteopathy** is based on the belief that most diseases are related to problems in the musculoskeletal system and that structure and function of the body are inseparable. The musculoskeletal system is comprised of the nerves, muscles, and bones—all of which are interconnected and form the body's structure.

Osteopathy was founded in 1874 by Andrew Taylor Still. Still was a Missouri physician who had become frustrated with what he viewed to be the ineffective and hazardous nature of remedies at that time. He believed that the doctor's role in combating disease was to restore proper musculoskeletal function to the body.

**Phytotherapy** is a Western herbal medicine tradition. With a history of over 5000 years, Western herbal medicine is essentially European in origin, although currently Phytotherapists around the world make use of plants from all parts of the world. Phytotherapy today is the combination of this long history of using plants, together with modern scientific research and thorough medical training.

**Therapeutic Aromatherapy** is a multifaceted, non-invasive system of treatment that uses aromatic plants extracts such as volatile essential oils and hydrosols, via a range of application modes, for therapeutic purposes, in order to facilitate the restoration of health. It is more accurate to refer to therapeutic aromatherapy as scientific aromatherapy, since it is the application of scientific principles that fundamentally differentiates and identifies the practice of the discipline. The integration of holistic health principles also forms an integral part of the philosophy of Therapeutic Aromatherapy.

**Therapeutic Massage Therapy** safely provides valuable treatment for a wide range of conditions in addition to primary health care and health maintenance.

The nature of the techniques employed by the therapeutic massage therapist allows for beneficial treatment of a diverse range of conditions as they have structural, physiological, neurological and psychological influence on the human state.

**Therapeutic Reflexology** is an ancient science and therapy, dealing with the principle that the body is mirrored through reflex areas on the feet, hands, ears and other parts of the body and these correspond to all organs, glands and parts of the body. By using the thumbs and fingers on the reflex areas the body is assisted to attain homeostasis, balance or normalisation of function and this in turn creates a change in the health and well-being of the patient. Therapeutic Reflexology is a non-invasive therapy.

**Unani-Tibb** philosophy is based on four axioms. The first, *temperament*, reflects the uniqueness of each individual. This is important in both diagnosis and treatment. Second, *physis*, is the body's innate power for self-healing. Tibb therapy supports physis, initially by lifestyle changes, then by the rational use of natural and herbal medications, and finally by

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the intensive application of regimental therapies. Third are the *humours*, an old concept, given a new perspective in Tibb, taking into account recent developments in clinical science. Finally, there are the *governing factors*. Tibb strongly believes that lifestyle diseases – from diabetes to heart disease – are often the result of imprudent or even self-destructive lifestyles. Sound practical advice is offered on lifestyle – modifying the patient's diet, for example.

