



October 24, 2024

Re: *Dr. Odyssey*, Episode 4 “Wellness Week”

Dear Producers and Writers of *Dr. Odyssey*,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine Coalition, representing the acupuncture profession. We are composed of the American Society of Acupuncturists (<https://asacu.org/>) the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (<https://www.nccaom.org/>), the Accreditation Commission Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine (<https://www.akahm.org/>) and the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine (<https://www.ccahm.org/>). We would like to address a portrayal of acupuncture in your recent episode entitled *Wellness Week*, which unfortunately misrepresented the profession and could lead to misconceptions among your viewers.

Acupuncture is a highly regulated and respected healthcare practice, requiring extensive education and training. To become a licensed acupuncturist, one must complete either a bachelor's degree or at least 60 undergraduate credits prior to admission into a rigorous four-year master's program in Chinese Medicine. This program includes comprehensive courses in both Traditional Chinese Medicine and biomedical sciences, ensuring that practitioners are well-prepared to identify medical concerns, provide safe treatments, and minimize risks to patients.

Upon completion of the academic program, graduates face another crucial step: passing the national board exams administered by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM)[®]. These exams thoroughly assess the candidate's knowledge, skills, and abilities in acupuncture and Herbal medicine. Only after successfully passing these exams can individuals apply for state licensure, a necessary credential to practice professionally. This ensures that all practitioners meet the highest standards of safety and expertise before they are entrusted with patient care.

In the episode, acupuncture was portrayed inaccurately when a character inserted excessively long needles—approximately 100 mm—over the lung area. Licensed acupuncturists are trained to use needles that are no longer than 30 mm in this sensitive region, as safety is of utmost importance. The portrayal of such a procedure was not only misleading but could also contribute to public

misunderstanding of the care and precision with which acupuncturists work. It's important to note that pneumothorax, a rare complication associated with acupuncture, occurs at an extremely low rate of 0.87 per 1,000,000 treatments when performed by licensed professionals, as supported by this study: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1136/acupmed-2018-011697>.

Additionally, the episode showed an acupuncturist not adhering to basic professional protocols such as communicating with the patient or cleaning the insertion sites with alcohol, both of which are standard practices in our field. Licensed acupuncturists routinely collaborate with other healthcare professionals, including physicians, and play an important role in the broader healthcare system. Many of our services are covered by private insurance, Medicaid, and Medicare, reflecting the trust and value that the medical community places in acupuncture as a legitimate medical practice.

Our concern is not about the artistic representation of acupuncture, but rather the potential public health implications of inaccurate portrayals, especially when they may lead viewers to believe that acupuncture is an unsafe or unregulated profession. We ask that in future episodes, your team take steps to ensure a more accurate and respectful depiction of our field.

We would be happy to offer our expertise and assist with any future portrayals of acupuncture to ensure the information presented is factual and in line with current standards of care. We believe that collaboration between your team and our organization could benefit both the accuracy of your content and the education of your audience.

In addition, since the episode will continue to air on your streaming platforms, we request that you consider disclaimer or correction to be featured during the scene, prior to the episode, and/or in the episode description that appears online. Alternatively, perhaps an acknowledgement or disclaimer could be released on social media channels related to this episode. Our experts would gladly help suggest some language that helps correct any inaccuracies depicted in the most positive manner.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to the possibility of working together in the future to ensure that acupuncture is portrayed in a way that reflects its true nature as a professional, evidence-based medical practice.

Sincerely,

The AHM Coalition

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Olivia Hsu Friedman', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Olivia Hsu Friedman, DACM, L.Ac. Dipl.OM
Chair, American Society of Acupuncturists
chair@asascu.org

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mina M. Larson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mina Larson
Chief Executive Officer, National Certification Commission of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark J. McKenzie, J.A.C.". The signature is cursive and includes the initials "J.A.C." at the end.

Mark McKenzie
Executive Director, Accreditation Commission of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristin Richeimer". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Kristin Richeimer
Executive Director, Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine