

*A Letter to My Patients, Past, Present & Future:*

During this time starting March 2, 2020 onward, certain **policies** and **procedures** have changed for this clinic (Leslie Suggett, L.Ac. located at 652 SW 150th St, Burien WA 98166). In an effort to keep all people safe from infection of SARS-CoV-2, including the practitioner, best practices have been identified, considered, and implemented as much as possible. They are written here with the associated sources cited. This document may be used as reference for decision-making for patients who can decide for themselves the risk involved with a visit to the clinic. I welcome comments, questions, and discussion of the procedures as it is an opportunity to learn on everyone's part- including myself as a practitioner and business owner.

It is my opinion that most people will benefit from acupuncture treatments, even as we are limiting our time in the 'outside world'. It is important to *treat* pain and other kinds of bodily suffering as delayed care has consequences too. Research shows that chronic pain and insomnia is associated with a diminished immune response<sup>1</sup>. Engagement with the medical system, in particular with an acupuncturist, not only will address health problems but also provides an opportunity to discuss coping strategies, debrief on our current situation, and gain support.

On May 20, 2020 the Governor sent guidelines to medical practices so that they may resume their important work. This proclamation<sup>4</sup> includes practical policy and procedure recommendations but also new perspectives that clinics must keep in mind moving forward. The new perspective is that a medical practice *expands and contracts* in response to the needs of the community, in particular the capacity of hospitals should we experience a significant rise in Covid-19 cases. I think we are well versed in what we are doing and why, but here is the breakdown of clinic states of care:

- **Conventional Care Phase:** any and all, with precautions
- **Contingency Care Phase:** any and all, watching and waiting
- **Crisis Care Phase:** urgent needs only

Right now, we are in the **Conventional Care Phase** (which is NOT related to the *Safe Start Phases* for our state). That means anyone who would *like acupuncture* may receive it, with both of us following the guidelines as listed below.

Should King County and/or Burien experience an uptick in numbers of cases and hospitalizations then I will move the clinic to **Contingency Care Phase**- which basically means that I will be watching the cases closely and being ready to act. **There will be no change in care for you.**

If our numbers surge, more people are hospitalized, and we are still experiencing limited PPE then I will move the clinic to **Crisis Care phase**. At this point I will limit care to those who are most urgent, *but I will not close the clinic*. Anyone who *needs* care can may receive it, with both of us following the guidelines as listed below. On a hopeful note, our County and State Hospital capacity is doing well and we are recovering from shortages of PPE. **I do not think I will need to limit acupuncture services as we move through the progression and eventual elimination of this virus.** The limiting factor is really our own health: God willing that we remain well in the coming months so that we can continue to support each other, experience life fully, and be our best in a difficult circumstance.

I thank you all for your kindness and trust,

Leslie Suggett, L.Ac., MPH candidate 2021

The following 5 pages are the new Policies and Procedures for the Clinic

## **POLICIES:**

**Cancellations:** At this time there will be no Late Cancellation Fees imposed to patients who cancel due to health reasons. This includes up to the time of appointment. Every effort will be made to reschedule an appointment as soon as the patient is feeling well and shown that their illness is not Covid-19 through testing or identified the cause of their discomfort as to not be contagious (allergies, food poisoning, stress). *Cancellation fees will still apply at the business owner's discretion for reasons other than illness.*

## **Communication:**

- New and established policies regarding covid-19 shall be available upon request.
- General announcements regarding clinic updates shall be communicated via email to patients active within 1 year to the clinic.
- Health signs and symptom checklist will be posted on scheduling webpage (<https://lesliesuggett.genbook.com/?bookingSourceId=1>)
- County provided infographics regarding health and safety shall be posted in the clinic.

## PROCEDURES:

### Cleaning & Sanitation Procedures:

**Weekly:** Clinic is professionally cleaned, wiping all high touch surfaces in the waiting area and bathroom with natural surface cleaner. All floors are mopped and vacuumed.

#### Daily:

**Start of day:** All high touch areas are cleaned with antiviral surface cleaner including doorknobs, area around doorknob on door, waiting room table, treatment room chair and patient side table, light switches, thermostats, and sound system hardware.

**Between appts:** Doorknobs and guest area (chair, side table) will be cleaned.

**End of Day:** All high touch surfaces mentioned above and also acupuncture work station, computer keyboard and mouse will be wiped with a hospital-grade sanitizing wipes and allowed to dry undisturbed.<sup>2</sup>

### Practitioner Procedures:

**Mask:** A clean, cotton or KN95 mask is to be worn at all times in the treatment and clinic common areas.

**Hands:** Hands are washed upon arrival at the clinic. Hands will be sanitized upon entry into the treatment room, before exiting the treatment room and after taking patient pulse /before initiating acupuncture (protects the clean field and work area).

*Take care to not unnecessarily touch surfaces- doors, walls, furniture when moving about the clinic.*

**Charting:** Charting has transitioned to an Electronic Health Record (EHR). Charting will occur in the practitioner's private office during the patient treatment time or afterward.

**Treatment Room Policies & Procedures:**

**Needles:** Practitioner will only use needles that have been freshly opened from their packaging for each patient.

**Linens:** a clean sheet will be provided for every patient visit.

**Sanitizing:** Patient Chair, patient side table, and treatment room door handles will be sprayed with 80% alcohol after every treatment.

**Air & Ventilation:** Purifier runs on low 24 hours/day. Filter changed every 6 mo. Room will be ventilated (open window) for as much time as possible during and between appointments. *This is one reason it is critical to wear a mask in common areas and treatment room as it is not possible to ventilate the room per medical guidelines.*

## **Patient Procedures:**

### **Screening:**

Patients will *self-screen* using this list of signs and symptoms:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Or at least **two** of these symptoms:
  - Fever
  - Chills
  - Repeated shaking with chills
  - Muscle pain
  - Headache
  - Sore throat
  - New loss of taste or smell<sup>3</sup>

If the answer is YES to any of these questions, their appointment should be canceled and rescheduled when the patient is well. See above Cancellation Policy.

**Face Coverings/masks:** Patients are required to wear a face covering of their choosing and comfort level at all times during their visit in the clinic. Mask may be briefly lowered to observe the tongue. Patients who cannot wear a face covering/mask for a medical reason will be given consideration and can discuss this matter with Leslie directly.

**Hands:** Patients will sanitize their hands upon entry into the clinic (sanitizer will be provided or they may wash their hands). Patients must wash their hands after using the bathroom.

**Safe Storage of Belongings:** Patients are asked to use the clothing hooks, the guest chair and side table to their personal items as all of these areas are clean for your use.

**Payment methods:** Cash, check or credit card accepted. At this time if the patient prefers ‘touchless’ transaction, this is only available with cash or check. Using a credit card will require touching a sanitized screen on a mobile device for signature.

Sources:

1. Chapman, C. R., Tuckett, R. P., & Song, C. W. (2008). Pain and stress in a systems perspective: reciprocal neural, endocrine, and immune interactions. *The Journal of Pain*, 9(2), 122-145.
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html>
3. <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/Employervisitorscreeningguidance.pdf>
4. <https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/proclamations/20-24.1%20-%20COVID-19%20Non-Urgent%20Medical%20Procedures%20Ext%20%28tmp%29.pdf>

Also: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/coronavirus/workplace>