

Understanding Acupuncture: Medical vs. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

Category	Medical Acupuncture (MD)	TCM Acupuncture (DACM / L.Ac.)
Training	100–300 hours Short certification programs	3,000–4,000+ hours Doctoral-level training
Philosophy	Biomedical, symptom-focused	Holistic, root-cause focused
Approach	Local points, trigger points	Distal + local points, meridian system
Conditions Treated	Pain, stress, musculoskeletal issues	Fertility, thyroid, hormones, autoimmune, digestion
Diagnostics	Labs, imaging, symptom-based	Pulse, tongue, pattern diagnosis + functional labs
Herbal Medicine	Minimal or none	Extensive herbal training and prescriptions
Goal	Symptom relief	Restore balance + prevent recurrence
Limitations	May not address root cause Limited scope for chronic/internal conditions	Requires commitment to treatment plan May take time for deeper healing