

WHO, Chinese Officials Developing New Traditional Medicine Organization

AAOM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PROVIDES DETAILS ON ORGANIZATION'S STATUS

Editorial Staff

In the past few months, the Chinese government has begun preliminary talks with representatives of the World Health Organization. Their intention: the formation of a new international medicine organization, which would represent the concerns of Oriental medicine practitioners around the world and look for ways of integrating different forms of healing to provide effective, affordable health care for everyone.

Although an official name has yet to be decided, the new organization is tentatively known as the World Organization of Traditional Medicine (WOTM). To find out more about the new organization, Acupuncture Today spoke with David Molony, the executive director of the American Association of Oriental Medicine, to learn about the WOTM's status and how practitioners can get involved.

AT: Please tell us about the new association and how the idea for it came into being.

DM: There is an international acupuncture organization called the World Federation of Acupuncture Societies (WFAS). The WFAS is recognized by the World Health Organization. They, in an organized fashion, work to represent acupuncture throughout the world. Over the past few years, Oriental medicine practitioners who do more than acupuncture alone, or who use acupuncture more than just as a modality of another field of medicine, have been clamoring to try and get an organization that more represented where they stood.

The WHO is a Western medical organization. Their goal is world health, and the best way to obtain world health is to use what's available in different countries in the best fashion possible to provide effective, low-cost health care. One way to do that is to use Chinese medicine. They've recognized Chinese medicine as a whole paradigm as opposed to just simply acupuncture, and the WHO and the Chinese government right now are interested in looking at Oriental medicine as a paradigm of medicine and not just as acupuncture alone. That's why they're interested in developing an Oriental medicine association.

AT: What will be the new organization's official name?

DM: From what I understand, they're looking at calling it the World Organization of Traditional Medicine. Some people say it should be traditional Chinese medicine; some feel it should be Oriental medicine. There have been all kinds of input, but it looks like the name will include traditional medicine.

In the long-term, that may mean that the organization spreads out to include ayurvedic medicine, native American healing, etc. It opens the organization up to be more inclusive. That inclusivity will consist of fields of medicine in their own right that involve a variety of therapies -- not just singly acupuncture, for instance, but a whole different way of looking at the human body and medicine, rather than just trying to define everything from a Western standpoint.

AT: Will membership in the organization be limited to just acupuncturists, or will it be open to all types of health practitioners?

DM: It will probably be open to those practitioners that meet the standards developed by the organization itself. I don't know what those standards are going to be, because the organization is just starting up. At this point, I think it will probably consist of a licensure or education that includes a variety of aspects of Oriental medicine. It may evolve into just membership in a field of medicine, or participation in more than one aspect.

In traditional Chinese medicine or Oriental medicine, you have acupuncture; herbalism; dietary and lifestyle counseling; tui na, which includes a form of manipulation √â you have a variety of things, and it's basically a way of looking at health and healing that is all-inclusive. It's a way of looking at the body and how everything works together, and it's all integrated.

That integration would make it a traditional form of health care, and that's what seems to be the organization's goal: to recognize that different societies or cultures have different forms of health care. The one form of traditional medicine that is most organized presently in the world is Oriental medicine. That will be the first form they recognize; there may be others.

AT: What about the organization's mission? What are its short-term and long-term goals?

DM: Although this is more or less implied by me based on what I've just said, it'd be pretty safe to say that the goal is to use medicines that are employed in various parts of the world to their best advantage. It had previously been figured that the best way to use any medicine was to have Western medicine look at it, tear it to pieces, and then use what parts were useful. I think we're beginning to realize that there are other aspects to these fields of medicine that make them more effective than that (being examined by Western medicine) possibly could.

AT: How do you think the association will benefit the individual practitioner?

DM: By working internationally, we'll have more access to various forms of research that focuses on what we do on more of an outcomes basis -- which works better with us -- than in double-blind studies, which really don't do any good to anybody, but which everybody seems to like. Why would you take somebody who is sick and turn them down or play games with them? Isn't it better just to give whole masses of people the same treatment and see if it's effective, rather than giving half of them a treatment that doesn't work or makes them worse?

I think the basic way alternative medicine is going to get research done in the future is by taking the best Western medicine and giving it to patients, then taking the best alternative medicine and giving it to patients. If the Western doctors say that what we do is placebo, then the question would be, why doesn't their placebo work as well?

We're indoctrinated in this society to believe MDs are going to help us. If the "scientific altar" to which they worship doesn't do it, and another form of health care does, that doesn't necessarily mean that the other form is religious.

AT: Many readers are no doubt interested in learning more about the new organization. Who would they contact to find out more information?

DM: Right now, we are in the bylaws formation phase. We're creating bylaws and a charter. We're also figuring out what will be involved in participation, who will represent the various member organizations, how much it will cost, etc.

If someone is interested, they can contact the AAOM by e-mail at aaom1@aol.com. They could also contact us by phone at (610) 266-1433, and we'll give them the information we have. We should have more information available some time this summer.

As with everything else in the volunteer field, creating the organization only works as fast as those who are volunteering have time. There's always a shortage of volunteers. Like I said, we're working on developing and enhancing the bylaws. We're using a template for the bylaws and adjusting it to what we want to see.

The goal overall is to get Oriental medicine recognized throughout the world for the benefits it does for patients. That's what it comes down to. One of our concerns we have is that some aspects of Oriental medicine will get used by people who know nothing about it; then, if it doesn't work (for them), they'll say it just doesn't work. We have to recognize those practitioners who do have the education and recognize that in order to use the medicine well, you have to know it well.

AT: Thank you for your time, sir.

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