

News in Brief

Editorial Staff

South Africa Legalizes TCM

In April, the South African government passed legislation recognizing traditional Chinese medicine, making it one of the first countries on the African continent to legalize TCM. Fifty doctors already practicing in South Africa have been given two-year licenses, while the government has begun setting up a registration system for other practitioners.

According to Dr. Sun Qingpei, director of the South Africa Traditional Chinese Medicine Clinic, traditional Chinese medicine has been growing in popularity for several years, with many doctors having petitioned the South African government for legal recognition of traditional Chinese medicine since the 1960s. In addition to TCM, the legislation also provides for the legal recognition of African and Hindu medicines.

New Faculty at ACAOM

Three new faculty members have joined the staff of American College of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, bringing the total number of instructors at the school to 21. The new faculty are:

- Tao Ma, MD, PhD. Dr. Ma received her MD and PhD degrees in traditional Chinese medicine at Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Sichuan, China, serving as a resident in the department of orthopedics and traumatology. She has also received advanced training in nephropathy at the Sichuan Provincial Hospital, and is considered an expert in Chinese herbal medicine.
 - Hasen Xue, MD. Currently a research associate at the University of Texas Health Science Center's division of pediatric surgery, Dr. Xue received his MD degree at Harbin Medical University. He has been employed as a research associate, research fellow, surgeon and instructor, and has been an author or contributor to more than 15 publications on pediatric health issues.
 - Yaping Zhang, PhD. Dr. Zhang has produced several papers and publications on gynecology, obstetrics and the use of herbal medications throughout her career. She received her PhD at Heilongjiang University of Traditional Chinese Medicine in China. Prior to joining ACAOM, she served as a chief physician at the department of obstetrics and gynecology in the Affiliated Hospital of Heilongjiang.
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Alternative Medicine Gaining Acceptance in Israel

Acupuncture and other forms of alternative care have made great strides at the Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center in Jerusalem, Israel. After spending the better part of a decade in a downtown facility miles from the center, Hadassah's complementary medicine department has been relocated within the hospital, giving patients and practitioners a chance to experience the best of Eastern and Western medicine in the same location.

"Complementary medicine techniques add therapeutic tools to the doctor's arsenal, often giving patients very great benefit at very low risk," said Dr. Martine Toledano, who heads complementary medicine at Hadassah.

The initial invitation for complementary medicine practitioners to be relocated into the hospital came from a group of oncology physicians some 22 months ago. Since that time, neurological, orthopedic and patients have also been referred for care. More than 800 patients a month now seek a variety of complementary treatments at Hadassah, including acupuncture, biofeedback, *tai chi*, reflexology and aromatherapy. Toledano is hopeful that in the future, patients with other conditions will be referred to the department.

"We should be moving to a time when patients from all departments can get complementary treatment," Toledano said.

According to Hadassah officials, bringing acupuncture and similar forms of complementary care to the center has had a positive effect on the patient population. Having a complementary medicine department inside the hospital saves patients from having to travel and makes them far less likely to be treated by an unskilled practitioner. It also helps ease some of the anxiety that may occur during the conversation between patient and provider.

"Patients are often embarrassed to admit to their physicians that they are taking alternative drugs or treatments," Toledano added. "There needs to be coordination between conventional and complementary medicine. With complementary medicine in the hospital, there's less embarrassment talking about it."

Study Questions Quality of Ginseng Products

A report published in the June issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* has found a wide discrepancy in the potency and quality of ginseng supplements. The report comes at a time when more patients have begun to raise concerns about the safety and effectiveness of dietary supplements and question claims made by manufacturers about their products.

In the study, researchers from the University of California, Davis examined 25 commercial ginseng supplements purchased from a local health food store. Of the 25 samples, only 11 were labeled as containing a specific concentration of ginsenosides and eleutherosides, compounds believed to give ginseng its healing properties. Under analysis, five of those products were found to contain more than the amount indicated on the product label; the other six contained less.

On the positive side, none of the products were found to have been polluted or tainted; in addition, every product contain the ingredients listed on the label. While this shows that ginseng products can be considered relatively safe, the variability in the concentration of the compounds nevertheless "suggests a need for standardization" of a higher quality than current regulations.

New Rebate Program for State Associations

The Supply Center, a California-based Oriental medicine supplier, has instituted a new program designed to benefit licensed acupuncturists, doctors of Oriental medicine and the state associations that serve them. Whenever a member of a state association purchases TCM products from The Supply Center, the supplier will rebate a portion of that purchase to that buyer's association. (If the acupuncturist's association is not part of the program, rebates will go to the American Association

of Oriental Medicine instead.) The more a member purchases, the more rebates the association will receive.

"Oriental medicine has made tremendous gains in licensure and scope of practice," said Dr. Kevin McNamee, a licensed acupuncturist and The Supply Center's president. "However, the profession has much more to accomplish. These rebates will go a long way to help the state associations continue their growth and development."

The program began June 1 and runs through February 2002. To see if your association is a member of the rebate program, or for more information, contact Karen Musilek at (800) 549-5993.

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