

AAOM Forms Herbal Medicine Coalition

NEW GROUP WILL PROMOTE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE USE OF CHINESE HERBS

Editorial Staff

In the past few months, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has taken action against several Chinese herbal suppliers, due to alleged concerns that some herbal products being imported into the country may be tainted or may not contain all of the ingredients listed on a product label.

In response to these actions, the American Association of Oriental Medicine has announced the formation of the Chinese Herbal Medicine Coalition (CHMC). The Council, which was officially created in late February, will represent Chinese herbal manufacturers, distributors and practitioners and will work with the federal government to see that the interests of practitioners, patients and suppliers of herbal medicine are properly protected.

"Our new coalition will work to affirm the integrity of Chinese herbal medicine and to articulate guidelines for their production and use," remarked Robbee Fian, LAc, Dipl.Ac., AAOM's president. "We look forward to forging a collaborative relationship with the FDA to implement the best practices for Chinese herbal medicine."

The idea for the CHMC resulted from at an emergency meeting called by AAOM in Los Angeles in January. At the meeting, association leaders met with several dozen representatives from Chinese herb companies, professional Oriental medicine organizations, researchers, practitioners and advocates of herbal medicine. Following the meeting, it was decided that the association should create a representative organization that would work with the FDA to develop guidelines for the safe production and usage of Chinese herbal medicine, which led to the formation of the Coalition.

"These herbs have been safely recommended and used in the U.S. for decades," added Fian. "It is important for practitioners and purveyors of traditional Chinese medicine to clearly present our position and concerns in light of recent FDA actions."

The mission of the CHMC, according to a recent association press release, is to promote the safe, effective, and responsible use of Chinese herbs in the United States. The best way these objectives can be achieved, the Coalition believes, is through self-regulation and certification.

Under the Coalition's guidance, manufacturers of herbal products will work to promote good manufacturing standards, including proper identification of raw products; improved cleanliness at facilities; freedom from product contamination; and other standards that apply to the manufacturing process. Members of the professional Chinese herbal medicine community, meanwhile, will work to promote certification standards and develop educational materials for the safe and effective use of herbal products.

More information on the Chinese Herbal Medicine Coalition and the AAOM's recent actions can be found on the Association's website (www.aaom.org).

