

California Oriental Medicine Update

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The Oriental medicine profession battled .500 last year with the California legislative process. While a partial herb sales tax exemption was vetoed by Governor Davis due to a huge budget shortfall, he did sign into law Senate Bill 341 (introduced by Don Perata), which helps to clarify our scope of practice in regards to our prescription of herbs and use of heat, cold and lasers. It also expands the purpose of prescription from simply to "promote health" to "promote, maintain, and restore health," which is more commonly accepted and useful terminology.

This year, the bases are loaded once again for the Oriental medicine profession, as we're taking on the following critical issues:

1. Making insurance coverage for acupuncture mandatory instead of optional;
2. Working with educators, California regulators and the AAOM to address significant weaknesses for full-scope primary health care Oriental medicine providers in the current educational curriculum;
3. Allowing licensed acupuncturists to perform disability evaluations within the workers' compensation system; and
4. Addressing the unfair negative impact of Proposition 65 on Chinese medical herbs sold in California, which is forcing some herb suppliers to put labels on their herbs stating that they may cause cancer or reproductive disorders.

CSOMA has also embarked on a collaborative research effort with UCLA to benchmark the tasks, duties, skills and professional responsibilities of licensed acupuncturists in the state. We anticipate seeing this study expanded nationwide and view it as a critical component of building the bridge between the medicines of the East and West.

We're also in the midst of planning the CSOMA Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Convention and Expo, which will be held August 9-12 at the San Francisco Airport Westin Hotel. The theme is "Oriental Medicine in a Changing World." Mark your calendars, as we promise to deliver an exceptional program.

To keep abreast of the changes happening in California, call (800) 477-4564, and be sure to visit www.csomaonline.org and www.acucouncil.org.

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