

# Maryland Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine Closes

Editorial Staff

BETHESDA, Md. -- On Dec. 18, 2002, the Maryland Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine (MITCM) shut its doors for good after having its accreditation revoked by the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine and being cited for numerous violations by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). Students enrolled at the school may continue their studies via a teach-out agreement with the Tai Sophia Institute in Laurel.

MITCM began instruction in February 1992 with a three-year professional master's level program in acupuncture. It quickly rose among the ranks of the nation's acupuncture schools, gaining candidate status from the Accreditation Commission in 1994 and becoming fully accredited in May, 1998. In a description of the school on the NaturalHealers.com Web site, MITCM was noted for the quality of its education; an excerpt said that the chairs of the acupuncture, clinical training and herbology departments were all "top graduates of their classes ... and are dedicated and highly motivated teachers."<sup>1</sup>

But the institute existed less than five years before internal conflicts began to take their toll. The first real hint of any trouble came last fall, when the school received a "Notice of Deficiencies" from the higher education commission. In the notice, MITCM was served with a broad number of violations, including citations for:

- admissions violations;
- program delivery violations;
- failure to maintain sufficient faculty to provide an adequate education for students;
- failure to maintain sufficient staff to serve student needs; and
- excessive staff turnover.

In particular, the MHEC found the institute had violated its own admission standards by enrolling students who lacked sufficient skills in English and had not completed prerequisite courses in anatomy and physiology. The situation took a turn for the worse in October 2002, when most of the school's instructors resigned in a show of protest against the school's leadership.

The MHEC wasn't the only agency to take issue with the institute's affairs. On Nov. 18, 2002, the Accreditation Commission revoked MITCM's accreditation, based on findings that the school did not meet several essential requirements or criteria to remain accredited.

"The program does not possess either the governance or administrative leadership to conduct a program which meets ACAOM's accreditation standards," the Accreditation Commission wrote in a report of its findings. "Nor does the program have sufficient qualified staff and faculty to conduct a viable acupuncture program consistent with ACAOM's requirements."

The Accreditation Commission added that the failure of MITCM's administration to govern the institution created "an environment that is not conducive to learning, that has disrupted the ability of students to receive a proper education, and that has resulted in the program's inability to meet

many critical ACAOM accreditation standards."<sup>2</sup>

MITCM considered the option of appealing the Notice of Deficiencies and requesting that ACAOM reconsider the withdrawal of its accreditation. Faced with the possibility of having to close in the middle of the spring 2003 semester because of insufficient faculty, staff and funding, however, the board of directors chose to close the school in mid-December.

"The decision to close the MITCM was a difficult one for their board to make," said Judy Hendrickson, the MHEC's director of academic affairs. "Ultimately, the MITCM board came to the realization that this was best for students, clearing the way for the students to transfer to other schools to complete their training."<sup>3</sup>

In the wake of the institute's decision, officials from the higher education commission, MITCM and the Tai Sophia Institute have reached a "teach-out" agreement that allows students to complete their training. Tai Sophia will manage MITCM's acupuncture and Chinese herb programs, but students will be taught by MITCM faculty, and receive the MITCM certificate upon successful completion of their classes. To help administer the teach-out, Tai Sophia has hired Susan Testa, former academic dean at MITCM.

"We sincerely thank Tai Sophia Institute for providing this enormous community service to the students of MITCM," said Karen Johnson, the MHEC's secretary of higher education. "If Tai Sophia had not offered this possibility to MITCM's students, many of them would have been forced to transfer to the nearest comparable programs in North Carolina or New Jersey."<sup>4</sup>

"We are very pleased to have this opportunity to serve the MITCM students and the higher education community," added Mary Ellen Petrisko, academic vice president at Tai Sophia. "We know that this has been a difficult situation for the MITCM community, and hope that we may work together to enable these students to move forward."<sup>3</sup>

MITCM is the second ACAOM-accredited school to cease operations in the past year. Last summer, financial difficulties forced the Northwest Institute of Acupuncture Oriental Medicine to close (*editor's note: see [www.acupuncturetoday.com/archives2002/sep/09northwest.html](http://www.acupuncturetoday.com/archives2002/sep/09northwest.html)*). A third school, the Florida Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine, also had its accreditation withdrawn by ACAOM on Nov. 18, but was still operational at press time.

### References

1. Maryland Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine - fact sheet. <http://schools.naturalhealers.com/mitcm>.
2. *Maryland Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine: Withdrawal of Accreditation*. ACAOM, November 2002.
3. MD Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine to shut its doors. Maryland Higher Education Commission press release, Dec. 18, 2002.
4. Students of MD Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine to resume training as part of "teach out" agreement. Maryland Higher Education Commission press release, Jan. 17, 2003.

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