

Highlights From the AOM Alliance Annual Conference

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Acupuncturists from nearly every state in the U.S. and throughout Canada descended on Hollywood, Calif., from April 30 to May 4 for the 11th annual conference of the Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Alliance. By all accounts, it was an extraordinary event. Participants gave the conference especially high marks on everything from venue, to the quality of the speakers and sessions, to the exhibit hall, with its strong stable of vendors.

The conference, located in the Renaissance Hollywood Hotel, focused on the theme, "Treasuring Tradition, Embracing Change." This theme reverberated through the conference, from David Matteson's keynote address in the opening general session, through the nearly 40 different classes and workshops, to the banquet, with its touching video tributes to Christina Herlihy and J.R. Worsley. Other highlights included a number of related meetings, such as the Vision Search Task Force Information Session, the Student Caucus, a meeting of the Council of State Association Presidents, and a number of exciting field trips. The sessions included several important meetings about regulatory issues, notably a gathering to discuss and respond to the FDA's recent decision-making process with respect to herbs and herbal products. Another unexpected highlight came as an invitation from Dr. Elizabeth Ohm to any participants to take a complimentary visit to her clinic and acupuncture museum while enjoying a buffet of sushi and other delectables.

Several important issues came to the forefront during the conference. One of the key issues was the current regulatory environment for acupuncture and Oriental medicine at both the federal and state levels. Mr. Matteson's keynote address offered a sweeping vision of the new mood to codify issues for complementary and alternative medicine in Washington, D.C. He urged everyone to become active in the process. A last-minute addition to the schedule featured Michael McGuffin of the American Herbal Products Association, who spoke about his organization's efforts to affect the FDA's decision-making process. The issue was also reflected in presentations by Loren Israelson and others, who emphasized this critical issue and the many developments that are still unfolding. Leading players in our field are gathering resources to craft a new strategy. An announcement about their efforts is expected soon.

The information session sponsored by the Vision Search Task Force provided an important update on this effort as it moves toward fruition. Conference participants learned how the task force will move toward crafting a vision through a representative retreat of leaders in the field. The task force identified both a timeline and the procedure through which the process will move forward.

Another highlight of the conference was delivered by Dr. Tran Viet Dzung. Newspapers, television and magazines all over the country have blared the news about rising obesity levels in Western countries, leading publications such as even the venerated *Journal of the American Medical Association* to chime in. It was therefore quite timely that Dr. Tran returned to the conference this year, with highly topical information on the treatment of obesity.

With his usual insight, Dr. Tran took a current health topic and brought the wisdom of ancient texts

to bear with knowledge and understanding of the condition from its etiologies to effective treatments. Dr. Tran has spent the past 30 years translating an entire collection of 2,000-year old texts, rising at 5 a.m. each morning to continue his work, and is still in the process of finishing the translation. His eloquent teaching style brought Western scientific knowledge and the insights of the ancient texts together into one cogent understanding of the human body and how to best interact for the body's benefit.

Attendees learned of the basic etiologies and physiopathologies that lead to obesity from both Western and energetic perspectives. Always a welcome and enlightening speaker, Dr. Tran demonstrated how each system describes and supports the other. From there, he delineated the treatment strategies for each etiology. Dr. Tran's ability to offer detailed descriptions of the internal channel pathways and functions gave participants a deeper understanding of the digestive system, and revealed some of the most effective treatment strategies. We look forward to delving deeper into this medicine when Dr. Tran return's for the next Alliance conference in Rhode Island.

In addition to the individual seminars such as those delivered by Dr. Tran, several national organizations held regularly scheduled administrative meetings at the AOM Alliance conference. Among the groups meeting this year were the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (CCAOM), the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM), the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM), the National Acupuncture Foundation (NAF), and the Federation of AOM Regulatory Agencies (FAOMRA). The presence of leaders of these national organizations enabled participants just beginning their careers and seasoned practitioners alike to mingle and exchange views, concerns, and information. A number of these meetings were open to the public to encourage participation by conference attendees.

The measure of any conference cannot rest solely on the events placed on its calendar. This conference, with its congenial location and diverse mix of participants, will remain in the memory of the attendees because of the many impromptu encounters, quiet networking meals and lively social gatherings. Outstanding seminars and workshops, an exceptional exhibit hall, and a memorable location provided the perfect backdrop for networking, sharing of information and ideas, and creative fervor, which are the most important elements of any gathering.

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