



BILLING / FEES / INSURANCE

## One Tree, Many Branches: A Review of the 2004 AAOM International Conference & Exposition

Editorial Staff

An important presidential election was held this fall, but it had nothing to do with George W. Bush or John Kerry. In October, Will Morris, LAc, OMD, MSED, the dean of educational advancement at Emperor's College of Traditional Oriental Medicine and a member of the American Association of Oriental Medicine's board of directors, was elected as the association's new president at the AAOM's annual meeting in Las Vegas. Dr. Morris will serve a one-year term as president, replacing Dr. Gene Bruno, who served from 2002 to 2004.

The election of Dr. Morris was just one of several important events that took place at the AAOM meeting. Nearly three dozen workshops and discussions were held during the conference, offering attendees the chance to learn from some of the country's most respected practitioners and accumulate much-needed continuing medical education units. The conference also featured meetings of several of the profession's accrediting, educational and regulatory agencies, providing those in attendance a glimpse into the inner workings of these agencies.

Conference Highlights



Dr. Will Morris is the new president of the American Association of Oriental Medicine.

The AAOM's annual meeting began on Friday, Oct. 22, with a one-day master's class on the treatment of abdominal pain and constitutional problems. The class was moderated by Kiiko Matsumoto, LAc, a master acupuncturist and teacher renowned for her work on the interpretation of classical Chinese texts.

Later that evening, a dinner was held for presidents of the country's acupuncture and Oriental medicine colleges. More than 30 school representatives attended the function. The dinner was held in a comfortably large room and with no formal agenda, allowing executives to discuss issues in a more relaxed atmosphere.

Also on Friday, the Visioning Search Task Force (VSTF) held an open meeting to provide information on the task force to interested parties, and to discuss future plans. Approximately 20 people attended the meeting, the focus of which was to design a process for assessing a future vision for Oriental medicine according to the stakeholders of the profession. The VSTF has published a nomination form and a pledge form for people interested in becoming part of the Vision Search process.

#### Awards Banquet

Each year, the AAOM holds an awards banquet during its annual meeting to honor practitioners and advocates who have helped make a positive difference in the profession. The 2004 awards banquet was held on Saturday, Oct. 23. A dozen awards were handed out at the banquet, including:

- Lifetime Achievement Award - Miki Shima, OMD, LAc
- Patient of the Year - Craig Lewis
- Student of the Year - Brendan Armm, a third-year student at Emperor's College
- Legislator of the Year - Assemblywoman Judy Chu (D-CA), who was instrumental in the passage of Assembly Bill 1943. Michelle Lau, LAc, PhD, accepted the award for Dr. Chu.
- Educator of the Year - Shen Ping Liang, LAc, PhD
- Acupuncturists of the Year - Awards were given to Lam Kong, PhD, OMD, LAc; Doreen Chen MD, OMD; Claudette Baker, LAc, Dipl. Ac., CH, AAOM president from 1996 to 1998; and Jae Bok Chong, OMD.



Doreen Chen, MD, OMD, receives one of the AAOM's "Acupuncturist of the Year" awards from outgoing president Gene Bruno, LAc, OMD.

In addition, Tad Szytkowski, DAc, MD, was given an Acupuncturist of the Year award for 2003, which he had been unable to receive previously. Penelope Ward, a former executive with the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, received a special recognition award for her efforts in acupuncture education and development of educational programs. Near the end of the banquet, the AAOM Board of Directors presented outgoing president Gene Bruno with a special award in the shape of a gavel, honoring him for his years of service to the association.

The awards banquet also featured a presentation by Robbie Ventura, a cyclist who has ridden with Lance Armstrong in the Tour de France. After Dr. Bruno received his award, the AAOM held an auction featuring autographed items from Mr. Ventura and others, the purpose of which was to raise funds for the AAOM Research Foundation. Deborah Lincoln, LAc, presided over the auction, which helped raise over \$4,000.

#### Board Elections/General Session Recap

In addition to the presidential election, several AAOM officers were elected at the annual meeting for terms of one year. Also elected were Cynthia O'Donnell, AP, as vice president, Kelly Welch, LAc, Dipl. Ac., CH, as treasurer, and Atara Noiade, MS, LAc, DOM, as secretary.



Jennifer Blahnik, LAc, OMD, proudly displays a Tour de France jersey purchased during an auction to benefit the AAOM Research Foundation. With Dr. Blahnik are Tour de France cyclist Robbie Ventura and Deborah Lincoln, LAc.

The AAOM also held elections to fill slots on its board of directors. Dr. Morris, along with William Burton Pettis, MS, CCHM, DOM, and Bill Prensky, OMD, were named to the board during the AAOM's general session. Drs. Morris and Pettis will serve three-year terms that expire in 2007, while Dr. Prensky will serve a two-year term that expires in 2006. The board members were elected via a vote of the AAOM's House of Delegates.

Two alternates were also named to the board: Martin Herbkersman, DAC, from South Carolina, and Thomas Lee from California. Both members will serve one-year terms, and were elected by a floor vote.

Following the elections, Roger Brooks, Dipl. Ac., AP, chair of the AAOM's Insurance Committee, announced that after several months of discussions with the American Medical Association's Current Procedure Terminology Editorial Panel, four new acupuncture codes for acupuncture have been created, which will be implemented into the Current Procedure Terminology Codebook for 2005 and help acupuncturists who bill insurance companies for their services. Two of the codes cover acupuncture with electrical stimulation; the other two cover acupuncture without electrical stimulation. All four codes now divide treatment into 15-minute intervals, not including evaluation and management.

Dr. Brooks added that several practitioners have achieved some level of success in obtaining

reimbursement via the ABC codes, which were created by Alternative Link and have started to gain acceptance in the insurance industry. *Acupuncture Today* is in the process of obtaining an article from the AAOM that explains the new CPT codes and the ABC codes in more detail.

AAOM Treasurer Kelly Welch delivered a brief presentation on the association's economic standing. The organization's move from Maryland to California has created significant cost-savings that will allow it to operate more efficiently in the future. As a result, the AAOM's assets are significantly higher compared to the same time last year. Overall membership is on the rise, and dues payments from members have increased significantly in the 2004 calendar year. There is also an increase in the number of AAOM members who have expressed an interest in attending the annual meeting.

During the general session, it was also announced that the American Acupuncture Council has sponsored a joint-development program with the AAOM designed to help the AAOM offer new benefits to its members and support the goals of acupuncture in the United States. The program is scheduled to run for 10 years, and will include more than \$1 million in support, including direct cash contributions, a legislative development program, a technology program, an education program and a promotional program.

#### Student Caucus

On Sunday, Oct. 24, the AAOM held a student caucus so that students could share their concerns about important matters at the state and national levels. Facilitated by Drs. Morris and O'Donnell, topics discussed at the caucus included the NCCAOM certification process; scope of practice issues; and the Little Hoover Commission's report on the state of the profession in California.

#### Presidents Roundtable

Another highlight of the annual conference took place on Sunday evening, when the AAOM held a Presidents Roundtable. Representatives from all 50 states were invited to the event; approximately 50 people participated in an interactive survey conducted during the roundtable. The survey quizzed the participants on demographic and professional background information, along with identification of professional concerns. Participants were asked to rate 15 concerns in order of importance to the profession, then rate how well they thought the AAOM was addressing those concerns. Issues of most importance to the attendees included legislative representation on the national level; marketing and public relations in promoting public awareness; promoting, protecting and redefining the practice of herbal medicine. A full report of the roundtable discussion, with accompanying charts and graphs, can be obtained by contacting the AAOM directly.

#### Other Events

Typically, the AAOM's annual conference (along with that of the Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Alliance) serves as the stage for meetings of other acupuncture and Oriental medicine organizations. This year's conference was no different, as the Federation of Acupuncture and Oriental Medical Regulatory Agencies (FAOMRA) met to discuss the creation of acupuncture and Oriental medicine laws and acts in various states. Meanwhile, the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (CCAOM) held a meeting to discuss issues relevant to acupuncture and Oriental medicine education, and the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM) held several meetings related to the review and accreditation of acupuncture institutions across the country.

## Workshops and Seminars

Not to be overlooked, the AAOM conference featured approximately 35 workshops, seminars and classes. Workshops were broken down into five tracks, with separate tracks on acupuncture, herbs, integrative/eclectic medicine, and business and research. A separate Chinese track was offered, with classes conducted completely in Chinese.

## 2005 Conference on the Horizon

The AAOM's 2005 conference will be held at the Westin O'Hare in Chicago, Ill. The convention will be held October 21-23, with additional pre-conference and post-conference activities planned. For more information, visit the AAOM's Web site ([www.aaom.org](http://www.aaom.org)).

JANUARY 2005