

## Fighting for Our Professional Existence

As summer begins to roll away, so do the days of sunny beaches, picnics, long bike rides ... and vacations. Patients are taking advantage of that precious remaining summer time to enjoy the long, bright days and balmy evenings. The lazy days of summer are bringing both final vacations and the reminder of an ever-present danger, the American Medical Association and its continuing campaign against acupuncture and Oriental medicine and other complementary and alternative medicine professions.

By now, you are probably aware that the AMA's House of Delegates has adopted a resolution (House Resolution 814) that calls for a study into the qualifications, education and academic requirements of limited-licensure health care providers. The next step in its campaign against alternative medicine was to introduce HR 5688, a bill on the federal level, i.e., the United States Congress, which directs the Federal Trade Commission to look into the education and licensing requirements of Oriental medicine providers and other alternative health care practitioners. For our profession, it also means the FTC will be able to evaluate any and all claims as to what can be said about conditions that are treated by Oriental medicine providers.

The chiropractic profession has been down this road before, about 30 years ago. The profession united and contributed millions of dollars to defeat the AMA. Is this just another version of the same issue? This profession must continue (must begin to) join forces with one another against an even larger opposing force.

Oriental medicine is the fastest growing form of CAM in the United States. This is a result of many factors, including time spent with patients and positive results from treatments. Oriental medicine practitioners are in competition for the same health care dollars as all other providers, and as inflation affects the economy, money gets tighter. You know this information and so does the American Medical Association. It is looking for the same or an even larger market share than what it already has.

After carefully evaluating the latest AMA's actions (for the latest, please read "Stonewalling Patient Choice: AMA Expands Campaign Against Alternative Health Care" on page 1 of this issue), the Oriental medicine profession must stand firm and defeat H.R.5688. Where do we begin? The students at Samra University of Oriental Medicine in Los Angeles are researching the names of their federal representatives and their positions concerning AOM. Meeting and talking with a congressperson must be done in the local/home districts of each representative. As you read this article, you might say to yourself, "I don't know who my congressperson is" or "They won't listen to what I have to say" or "Someone else will do it." These are the very reasons we could lose this battle.

This is an ideal time for you to meet your congressperson - after all, elections will be held this November. The incumbents want to be returned to Washington, D.C., and the challengers want to win their races. Your responsibility is to meet them both. Meet them, treat them and share Oriental medicine with them and their staffers (the people who work in their offices, both at home and at the Capitol).

I have been working for and helping in this profession for over 20 years. I have been teaching at Oriental medicine schools for over 16 years. I lived through the chiropractic battle with the AMA and know all too well what it cost the chiropractors. We have no time to waste. The AMA has declared war and we must respond immediately.

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