

AAOM and The Alliance Decide to Merge

Editorial Staff

After 14 years, the two major U.S. acupuncture membership organizations are again operating as the American Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (AAAOM).



As reported in a Jan. 15, 2007 "breaking news" update posted on acupuncturetoday.com, the Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Alliance (AOM Alliance) and the American Association of Oriental Medicine (AAOM) have merged following three days of negotiations in Dallas. Leslie McGee, former Alliance president, will serve as president of the new organization, known as the American Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (AAAOM), with former AAOM president Will Morris serving as the association's president emeritus.

In an official joint statement, Morris and McGee explained the rationale for the merger, stating that reuniting the two membership organizations after 14 years "is the best way to move the profession forward. We are thrilled that our differences have been bridged to that extent that it no longer makes sense to have two competing organizations. The vast majority of the acupuncture and Oriental medicine community have been asking this to happen for several years, and the time was right to make this happen."

By taking the name of the organization that split 14 years ago, leaders of the AAAOM "hope to signal that events of the past that led to the split have been resolved, and that a new era in acupuncture and Oriental medicine leadership has arrived." According to a "Q & A" document posted on both the Alliance and AAOM Web sites, "there was general agreement that the differences between the two organizations no longer justified having two organizations vying for the same membership. Addressing the complex needs of our profession with one voice will enable us to more effectively serve the profession."

The merger agreement between the AAOM and the Alliance was mediated by Mike Schroeder, vice president of the American Acupuncture Council (AAC); in addition to serving as mediator, the ACC also paid for the entire cost of the negotiations.

Alliance and AAOM board members discussed the composition of the new board of directors and agreed that the Alliance would provide the first president and secretary, while the AAOM would provide the vice president and treasurer.

Consequently, joining Morris and McGee on the AAAOM board are:

- Martin Herbkersman, vice president;
- Shane Burras, treasurer; and
- Corrine Axelrod, secretary.

These officers will serve until October, when new elections will take place as part of the inaugural AAAOM International Conference and Exposition (date and location to be determined).

Rounding out the board is a blend of Alliance and AAOM members, including the following:

- Travis Buckmaster
- Christine Chang
- Scott Cormier
- Cynthia O'Donnell
- Tom Haines
- Deborah Lincoln
- Bill Reddy
- Jeannette Rockers
- Rachel Toomim
- Lloyd Wright

Board alternates are Floyd Herdrich, Karen Reynolds, Jim Turner, Regina Walsh and Douglas Wang. As board terms expire, elections for vacant positions will be held at annual AAAOM meetings.

All members of either former organization automatically become members of the AAAOM. Because the infrastructures of two organizations will be combined into one, the new organization will be able to provide enhanced membership benefits. These added benefits will be announced in the next few months.

While there is no current mechanism in place to address membership refunds (for example, if an Alliance or AAOM member does not want to be a member of the new organization), as of press time, questions and concerns can be directed to (866) 455-7999 or aaaomreunite@aaom.org. Database consolidation is expected to be completed by Feb. 19, 2007.

"[Reunification] is the first step in building a 10,000 member-strong association that will represent and advocate for the AOM profession," said McGee and Morris. "We will work to assure that the

interests of the AOM profession are well-represented."

While the location and dates of the first annual AAAOM International Conference and Exposition have not yet been announced, the AAAOM's first public event will be the "Rebuilding the Future" Conference, scheduled for May 9-13 in New Orleans. The AAAOM encourages the entire acupuncture and Oriental medicine profession to attend and show their support for the new organization.

We contacted both Leslie McGee, interim AAAOM president, and Will Morris, AAAOM president emeritus, by e-mail and phone to find out more about the merger and what the organization hopes to accomplish for its members, and for the acupuncture and Oriental medicine profession, in 2007 and beyond. While we received no response as of press time, look for an interview with one or both parties in an upcoming issue of *Acupuncture Today*. It will be interesting to see how the leadership of two distinct organizations operates as a single entity for the benefit of its membership and the profession.

Resources

1. "National Acupuncture Organizations Reunite." Press release received Jan. 15, 2007.
2. "Questions and Answers Regarding the New AAAOM." Posted on both the AOM Alliance and AAOM Web sites; accessed Feb. 5, 2007.

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