

China, World Health Organization to Host Traditional Medicine Congress

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While the World Health Organization (WHO) celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, it also acknowledges the 30th anniversary of the Alma-Ata Declaration, which called on WHO member states to include traditional medicine in their primary health systems and to recognize complementary and alternative practitioners within these systems. To mark these significant events, the WHO is holding a Congress on Traditional Medicine Nov. 7-9, 2008 in Beijing.

In conjunction with the WHO, the Ministry of Health of China and the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (SATCM) of China will host a Symposium on Acupuncture and Human Health, organized by the World Federation of Acupuncture-Moxibustion Societies (WFAS), and an Exhibition on Traditional Chinese Medicine, organized by the SATCM. There also are parallel symposia covering manual methods of health care including chiropractic, massage and self-care. According to the WHO Web site dedicated to the event, congress objectives include:

- reviewing the role of TM/CAM and the associated providers in primary health care, as outlined by the Alma-Ata Declaration;
- reviewing the progress of member states in the field of TM/CAM;
- sharing information and experience pertaining to the integration of TM/CAM into health care delivery systems;
- sharing information relating to research, education and the practice of TM/CAM; and
- promoting the proper use of TM/CAM by the population.

The WHO has already held two working group meetings in preparation for the congress, one in May 2007 and the other in January 2008. According to the WHO Web site, "Starting in the early 21st century, it was requested of national health authorities to consider ways to integrate TM/CAM into their health care delivery systems. After four years of implementation of the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy (2002-2005), significant progress is evident."

Topics of scheduled presentations include the role of TM/CAM and associated practitioners in health care systems including the role of primary health care providers; national policy on TM/CAM; national regulation of TM/CAM and herbal medicines; national regulation/registration of TM/CAM practice and practitioners; approaches to integration of TM/CAM into health care delivery systems; research and development of TM/CAM for the establishment of standards; preservation and protection of TM/CAM knowledge; and education/training for practitioners and the public/consumers.

The Opening Ceremony will be held at the People's Great Hall in Tiananmen Square and hotel accommodations will be provided by the Jiuhua Spa and Resort, Chang Ping Xiao Tang Mountain in Beijing (www.jiuhua.com.cn).

According to the WFAS Web site, "WFAS will undertake [a] seminar and internal acupuncture

industry exhibition. Based on [our] 2007 achievement, we will enlarge communication and cooperation in the world acupuncture field, promote close cooperation among international acupuncture organizations and corporations, introduce the development of acupuncture facilities, treatment, health care, education and training, and enhance union between organizations and corporations. Officials of [the] Ministry of Health are welcome to visit and guide; meanwhile, through the media, we will send message to organizations and corporations and welcome [them]."

For more information including speakers, topics and background on the Alma-Ata Declaration, visit www.who.int/entity/medicines/areas/traditional/congress/en/index.html.

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