

Becoming an Ancestor

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The [Random House dictionary](#) defines the word *ancestor* as "a person who serves as an influence of model for another; one from whom mental, artistic, traditional and spiritual ideas, information and values descent is claimed." In Asian medicine, this bears truth. Ancestry is most important. A big plus of traditional medicine is that it is thousands of years old. There are many ancestors down through the centuries who have contributed to the growth of this medicine. Will you be part of it?

The time period for a generation is usually thought to be approximately 50 years. If we consider Asian medicine to be 2,500 years old, then it has been around for 50 generations. Generation after generation has contributed to the medicine. It has also survived down through all these generations.

Asian medicine in the United States could be either in its first or second generation, depending on how you choose to view it. The first generation was when the [Chinese immigrants](#) brought their style of medicine to the United States when they helped build the [Transcontinental Railroad](#) in the 19th century. They boiled their herbal teas and practiced *tui na*. The result was that they were sick less often and could work longer hours. Would it be applicable to use the two newly popular terms of *prevention* and *wellness* to describe these ancient practices?

The second generation of Asian medicine in the United States was when President Richard M. Nixon sent [Secretary of State Henry Kissinger](#) to negotiate with the Chinese government in the early 1970s. The Pulitzer-Prize winning *New York Times* reporter [James Reston](#), who was covering the negotiations, had to have emergency surgery and his doctors used acupuncture needles for pain and anesthesia. He then [wrote about his experience](#), thus introducing our medicine to a whole new generation of Americans.

Asian medicine, especially acupuncture, is better positioned than at any other time in the United States. There are 43 states where the practice of acupuncture and Oriental medicine is legal. The remaining states are an area for the profession to gain ground and secure legal status for the medicine. What are you doing to become an ancestor?

There are numerous challenges currently facing the Oriental medicine profession in the United States. With the election of a new national leadership there seems to be some openings in the system for additions and changes. The AAAOM, the national professional association, is looking to raise money to support efforts to become recognized in the national health care system. This effort needs volunteers to participate. What are you doing to become an ancestor?

I was invited to attend a forum sponsored by the California Endowment's [Center for Healthy Communities](#). The panel reviewed the new stimulus plan in the light of health and health care. I was interested to learn that the plan included [\\$10 billion for the National Institutes of Health](#) and [\\$1 billion for wellness and prevention](#). It would seem that there are some openings for the profession to make inroads for our medicine. One thing you can do on your path to becoming an ancestor, is to evaluate the people and patients you know and find out if any of them are connected

to anyone who knows someone, who knows someone, who is in any position that could help make connections to the White House and the NIH. There are almost 20,000 licensed acupuncturists practicing in the country; somewhere and somehow, someone is connected. This could be a very valuable way to ensure rights for the profession.

An ancestor has the responsibility to influence others and to share their knowledge. In this current generation, we have the burden of obligation to ensure that future generations of practitioners have the right to practice this medicine and that the citizens of the United States have the right to choose this medicine among their health care choices.

I guess you might say that this is a call to action.

ANCESTOR:

A is for accountable and answerable to future generations.

N is for not keeping this medicine to ourselves and in secrecy.

C is for contributing your ideas, time, energy and money to ensure a place for future generations.

E is for educating students and patients about the healing benefits of acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

S is for securing a place for the medicine for future generations.

T is for tithing (giving) a portion of your incomes to keep this medicine in the hands of fully educated and trained practitioners.

O is for offering our help to ensure this medicine is available to everyone, both now and in the future.

R is for being responsible to share this medicine with everyone we meet.

Now is the time to think and plan to be a contributing ancestor for generations to come.

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