

Obama Positive Toward Acupuncture

Editorial Staff

During a recent Q&A session of a Presidential Town Hall meeting in St. Louis, one licensed acupuncturist and massage therapist in Florissant, Mo., got to ask President Barack Obama what must certainly be one of the most important questions in the minds of all alternative health practitioners. Below is a transcript of the question and President Obama's answer, which does appear to be positive toward the inclusion of alternative therapies into health care reform.

Q: I'm a licensed acupuncturist and licensed massage therapist in Florissant. And so...

President Obama: I could use one right now. (Laughter.) My back is stiff. I've been working hard.

Q: I'll be happy to help you. (Laughter.) And this kind of fits into what you were just talking about as far as health care. I'm wondering, as a practitioner of Oriental medicine, knowing that the [National Institutes of Health](#) and the [World Health Organization](#) have discovered through their studies that alternative medicine often is more cost-effective and very effective, how will alternative medicine fit in your new health care program?

President Obama: Well, look, my attitude is that we should - we should do what works. So I think it is pretty well documented through scientific studies that acupuncture, for example, can be very helpful in relieving certain things like migraines and other ailments -- or are at least as effective as more intrusive interventions.

I will let the science guide me. We just swore in an outstanding new Secretary of Health and Human Services, [Kathleen Sebelius](#), former governor of Kansas. (Applause.) It's good to see that a [Jayhawk](#) got applause on this side of the border here. (Laughter.) But she's going to do an outstanding job. And my charge to her is, as we're going through health care reform, let's find out what works.

I think one basic principle that we know is that the more we do on the prevention side, the more we can obtain serious savings down the road. So giving children early checkups, making sure that they get immunized, making sure that they are diagnosed if they've got eyesight problems, making sure that they're taught proper nutrition to avoid a life of obesity - those are all issues that we have some control over. And if we're making those investments, we will save huge amounts of money in the long-term.

Unfortunately, the hardest thing to do in politics - and certainly in health care reform - has been to get policymakers to make investments early that will have long-term payoffs. Because people - their attitude is, well, I'll be out of office by the time that kid grows up; and the fact that they're healthy, that doesn't help me. And in the private-sector insurance system, oftentimes insurers make the same calculation. Their attitude is, well, people change jobs enough for us to pay for the preventive medicine now when the problem may not crop up for another 20 years and they'll be long out of our system, so we don't want to reimburse it because it will make things more costly. That's the logic of our health care system that we're going to have to change.

The recovery package put a huge amount in prevention. We are, in our budget, calling for significant increases in prevention. And my hope is that, working in a bipartisan fashion, we are going to be able to get a health care reform bill on my desk before the end of the year that will start seeing the kinds of investments that will make everybody healthier.

A complete transcript of the April 29, 2009, Town Hall meeting may be found at <http://enduringamerica.com/2009/04/29/transcript-president-obama-at-st-louis-town-hall-meeting-29-april>. The question is at approximately the 21:09 mark on the second video.

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