

Taking the Time To Give Back

AAAOM Staff

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When it comes to the AAAOM, it is very important to have a strong, unified membership base. Without the support and involvement of the practitioners that our organization represents, our voice is very limited. Legislators in particular have been known to say, "if your own members are not interested in what you have to say, they why should we?" That makes a lot of sense; a professional organization can only be as effective and active as its membership.

With this in mind, the AAAOM wants to show its appreciation to its most valuable resource, its members, through a new Member-Refer-A-Member Program. Each year, members will be rewarded for referring their colleagues who join the AAAOM. Beginning May 1, 2010, for every five new members that a AAAOM member refers, they will receive one year of free AAAOM membership. There is no limit to how many free memberships that can be accrued. On Dec. 31, whoever has referred the most new members will also receive a free registration to the 2011 World Conference on AOM and Integrative Medicine, to be held next spring at the University of Maryland. Additionally, that person will be recognized during the Annual Awards Banquet held during the conference. There's so much that an AAAOM membership can do. Below are just a few things you can point to as benefits for your colleagues to join the AAAOM.

A national professional organization unites practitioners from across the country. It also regularly meets with other professional organizations. For the AAAOM, this means meeting with and working with state associations via the President's Council, the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM), the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (CCAOM), the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM), the Federation of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Regulatory Agencies (FAOMRA), and other interested parties such as the Society of Acupuncture Research (SAR) and the American Board of Oriental Reproductive Medicine (ABORM). The AAAOM is also involved internationally due to its strong relationship with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Congress of Oriental Medicine.

In the health care field, professional organizations are responsible for advocating on both state and national levels to ensure protection of professional scope of practice, which includes the use of herbal medicine. The AAAOM's National Government Affairs (NGA) committee works tirelessly to aid states in creating and promoting bills, proposals, and amendments, as well as providing in-person and written testimony. Also, the AAAOM has hired the profession's only national lobbyists, Sam Brunelli and Beth Clay of Team Builders, Inc., to advocate nationally for all AOM practitioners.

National organizations are the media voice and respond to both positive and negative press about a profession. AOM is in the news more and more frequently these days. The AAAOM spends a lot of

time responding to the media on various issues. The AAAOM also strives to consistently inform its members on news and other events.

Access to research is another important role of professional organizations. Practitioners need to know the latest research to best treat patients. *The American Acupuncturist*, the quarterly professional research journal of the AAAOM is one place to read about the latest AOM research. Members receive bound issues and they also have access to research from other sources via the members- only section of the AAAOM Web site.

Business referrals and discounts help your business succeed is another function of professional organizations. The AAAOM offers both of these. Potential patients need to be able to find practitioners easily. The AAAOM provides a referral service suggesting members in their geographic areas available to the public. Also, maintaining membership in a professional organization builds credibility in consumer's eyes.

Business-to-business discounts decrease the overhead costs of one business while increasing sales for other businesses. The AAAOM is working to increase the amount and type of discounts its members can receive from other businesses. It is worth noting here that most businesses are not willing to grant discounts to organizations with a relatively small membership count. Compared to other very large national organizations, the AAAOM, looks relatively small. However, as the AAAOM membership increases, these discounts will be able to increase.

Professional organizations provide continuing education opportunities for members. Continuing to learn and enhance skills and knowledge is necessary for a practitioner's professional growth, as well as a requirement to maintain licensure and certification. In 2011, the AAAOM will be holding its first World Conference on AOM and Integrative Medicine, in collaboration with the University of Maryland, Center for Integrative Medicine, May 13-15. This is an historical venture for the advancement of AOM. It is learning opportunities like this that keep the AAAOM at the forefront of high-quality, unique continuing education.

Last, but certainly not least, national professional organizations like the AAAOM provide a place to meet and interact with other practitioners. Nothing is more energizing professionally and personally than connecting with like-minded professionals.

As we look ahead in 2010, we are asking for your participation. Refer members, donate, volunteer, speak out and help us raise AOM to a new horizon. You are our foundation. To participate and refer members, have them sign up on the AAAOM Web site. Tell them to enter your name in the referral comment box to receive your credit. Remember, there is no limit to the amount of referrals. Note: Referrals are for new members only.

For more on what the AAAOM has done for the profession and what it can do for you, please see our new Web site at www.aaaomonline.org.

JUNE 2010