



NEWS / PROFESSION

## Q&A With the New Chair of the NCCAOM

*Editor's Note:* The NCCAOM submitted the following Q&A with Janet Zand, OMD, Dipl. Ac., CH, OM, LAc, CCN, new board chair, in response to a request from *Acupuncture Today*.

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*What do you believe is the biggest challenge (and biggest opportunity) for the acupuncture and herbal medicine profession?* We are in a unique time as we move to a post-COVID environment where long COVID, mental health, and the opioid epidemic are increasing demands on our current health care system. This is a significant opportunity for us to showcase our medicine as a solution to these issues.

Our challenge is for us to make sure that our medicine is accessible to anyone who needs it. This includes making sure that acupuncturists are being included in the U.S. health care system, with insurance payors, Medicare, and other programs.

It also means that we need to be working together to advance our profession, and that includes collaborating with other health care practitioners to educate them about the qualifications and skill set of acupuncturists.

*You have a rich and extensive background as a health care practitioner. How will your experience and background benefit your position as chair of the NCCAOM Board of Commissioners and the profession as a whole?* During the last 30 years, I have had the opportunity to work in a variety of settings in integrative medicine, including private practice experience in acupuncture, herbal medicine, functional medicine, and nutrition. My training and background have allowed me to represent every aspect of the profession, from Chinese herbal medicine to diet and conventional bloodwork. I have also taught and lectured to physicians, acupuncturists, chiropractors, and nurses for more than 25 years.

I have been promoting herbal medicine for many years, from when I was the co-founder and chairman of the board of Zand Herbal Formulas, Inc., for over 20 years. In 2011, I was the lead researcher of a unique nitric oxide research project and the ultimate co-formulator with the

University of Texas of NEO40, by Humann. These diverse experiences will be an asset to lead the NCCAOM and represent our 21,000 NCCAOM board-certified diplomates.

*What would you like to accomplish within your first year (as the board chair) at the NCCAOM?* I have already worked closely with our CEO, Mina Larson, and staff, as well as ASA leaders, to promote and advance our Medicare bill through Congress. This has resulted in the reintroduction of H.R. 3133, co-sponsored by Congresswoman Judy Chu, (D-Calif.) and Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.).

We are working together with our federal lobbyists to promote this bill and gain additional co-sponsors behind the scenes to ensure that it has even more bipartisan support. It is imperative that acupuncturists are included in Medicare so that we can have access to the 50 million seniors living in the U.S.

And, by the way, if any of you reading this happen to have any connection to a Republican Congressman or woman who may be interested in joining us in supporting this bill – please let us know.

The NCCAOM will also be undertaking our next job analysis, which will start this year. The job analysis is conducted every five years to update the NCCAOM exams content outlines to reflect current, entry-level acupuncture and herbal medicine practices. This survey is crucial, as it is the only national survey of the profession, and the NCCAOM can establish a practice profile of licensed acupuncturists by surveying practitioners for job-related data.

You can read more about our job analysis via our [\[March 2021\]](#) article in *Acupuncture Today*.

*How important do you think it is for acupuncture practitioners to get involved with the profession? What are three specific reasons?* This is such an important question, as without the involvement of practitioners, our profession will not continue to grow. Most importantly, practitioners should be involved with our advocacy campaign with ASA to promote our federal bill and Medicare recognition initiative. We have many opportunities to get involved through our advocacy campaign by emailing the NCCAOM ([advocacy@thenncaom.org](mailto:advocacy@thenncaom.org)) or the ASA ([advocacy@asacu.org](mailto:advocacy@asacu.org)).

Acupuncturists need to be at the table to discuss important issues plaguing health care in the U.S., such as management of pain, mental health and the opioid epidemic. Right now, the opioid epidemic is a high priority for Congress, and as acupuncturists, we have the ability to help those suffering from pain and addiction without the side effects of addictive and dangerous opioids.

We must use this opportunity to get recognition based on evidence of our medicine and our qualifications. This is where the NCCAOM plays a big part in showcasing the national credentials of our NCCAOM board-certified acupuncturists to policymakers, the media and employers as qualified acupuncturists and the practitioners [with] the most training and education.

*Are you planning to increase job opportunities for NCCAOM diplomates? If yes, how? This has been a priority of mine from the day I started as an NCCAOM commissioner. I believe there are ways that we can increase employer interest in hiring acupuncturists, as the consumer demand for acupuncture and herbal medicine has increased in the last several years, especially as there is more and more evidence demonstrating acupuncture and herbal medicine's efficacy for conditions that have a difficult Western medicine treatment outcome.*

I hope to work with the NCCAOM Board on creating jobs for acupuncturists in hospitals and clinical settings so that we can be part of the patient-centered team approach. The cost effectiveness and efficacy of our medicine is evident, and we have to help hospital and clinic

administrators to hire NCCAOM board-certified acupuncturists to be able to provide in-patient and out-patient care.

*Anything else you'd like to add?* Our medicine is remarkable in that it inherently activates the natural self-healing abilities of the body. We have all seen improvement of patients' immune function, pain relief, minimization of stress and anxiety; and the resolution of many health-related disorders. My wish is that some of the magic of our medicine gets communicated to the general public and we become more integrated into the U.S. health system.

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