



YOUR PRACTICE / BUSINESS

## Think Beyond Your Clinic: The Advantages of Industry Involvement for Acupuncturists

Nell Smircina, DAOM, LAc, Dipl. OM

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- We often work as sole proprietors or operate as small corporations, which can limit our exposure to peer-to-peer interaction or even the resources available to us to make our lives easier.
- By leveraging the resources available to us, we can feel empowered to succeed in practice, provide high-quality care to patients, and contribute to the growth and recognition of acupuncture on a national level.

As acupuncturists, we generally find ourselves engrossed in the day-to-day operations of our private practices, focusing on providing quality care to our patients. While jobs for acupuncturists seem to be more in demand, the grand majority of practitioners are still small-business owners, and it can be easy to get a tunnel-vision focus on our clinic.

It's not always top of mind to see what is going on in our industry; and even if we realize it's something we "should" do, we don't necessarily see the value or leverage it meaningfully.

Let's take this opportunity to discuss the significance of industry involvement for acupuncturists and highlight some key organizations that can assist us in navigating the evolving landscape.

#### 1. Access to Cutting-Edge Research & Best Practices

One of the primary advantages of industry involvement is the access to the latest research and best practices. By actively engaging with professional organizations such as the Society for Acupuncture Research (SAR), we can stay updated on advancements in acupuncture techniques, evidence-based practices, and clinical studies. This knowledge empowers practitioners to refine

their skills, enhance treatment outcome and provide the most effective care to their patients. It also provides you with information as a foundation for discussion with patients.

## 2. Opportunities for Networking & Collaboration

We often work as sole proprietors or operate as small corporations, which can limit our exposure to peer-to-peer interaction or even the resources available to us to make our lives easier. However, industry involvement opens up avenues for networking and collaboration with other professionals in the field. (Don't let the *networking* word scare you off; check out my previous articles, which will make the idea of networking a lot more palatable.)

Organizations like the NCCAOM provide tons of resources on their websites for things like upcoming PDA courses, educational one-pagers you can use for marketing, and more. The Council of Colleges for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine (CCAHM) provides a platform for educators within the acupuncture educational system to connect, exchange ideas and learn from experienced professionals.

Engaging in these networks fosters professional growth, opens doors for referrals and promotes a sense of community for us in the acupuncture profession.

## 3. Advocacy and Professional Support

Acupuncturists face unique challenges in their practices, ranging from legal and regulatory issues to insurance reimbursement. By getting involved with organizations like the American Society of Acupuncturists and your state association, practitioners gain access to advocacy initiatives, resources, and support in the form of member benefits and opportunities for collaboration.

These organizations work tirelessly to promote our interests as a profession, advocating for fair policies and ensuring the recognition and integration of acupuncture to improve patient access to care.

## 4. Continuing Education & Professional Development

Most of us love the clinical trainings out there, but getting into continuing education also helps us build meaningful relationships with other providers and increase trust with our patients. Not only can we network at different events, but this also helps foster additional trust and improved results with our patients.

Many of the options for continuing education are organized by associations, and by supporting this type of education, you also help fund important advocacy initiatives. Double bonus!

### Take a Broader Perspective

In a profession predominantly composed of sole proprietors and small corporations, it is easy for us to become isolated from industry developments. However, staying informed and actively involved in the broader acupuncture community is critical.

By leveraging the resources available to us, we can feel empowered to succeed in practice, provide high-quality care to patients, and contribute to the growth and recognition of acupuncture on a national level.

