



# New National Acupuncture Organization Created

AOMNC VOWS TO "ADVANCE ACUPUNCTURE AND ORIENTAL MEDICINE," OFFERS COMPLIMENTARY MEMBERSHIP

Editorial Staff

On March 6, 2003, a new national acupuncture member organization, the Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine National Coalition (AOMNC) was incorporated in the state of Florida. The coalition's founders and directors are Richard A. Freiberg, DOM, DAc, AP, of Pompano Beach, Fla. and David N. Sontag, DOM, AP, of Miami.

## About AOMNC

In a press release sent to *Acupuncture Today* on April 21, the Coalition outlined its mission and current goals:

"The AOMNC's mission is to advance acupuncture and Oriental medicine by promoting its full acceptance in every healthcare arena - private and governmental; to provide freedom of access to citizens and residents of the United States for reimbursable Oriental medicine services; to provide legislative information; and to provide resources and services for members of the acupuncture and Oriental medicine profession."

"In order to best protect the health, welfare and safety of all U. S. citizens and residents, the AOMNC recognizes the need to follow through to successful completion, both in state and federal government, and in the private sector, that statutes, regulations and business practices recognize that only those practitioners who are fully trained should be allowed to administer acupuncture and to prescribe, recommend and/or dispense Chinese herbal medicine," the release continued.

The AOMNC has pledged its support for the advancement of acupuncture and Oriental medicine practitioners as primary health care providers on state and national levels. It supports the entry-level doctor of Oriental medicine degree by the National Oriental Medicine Accreditation Agency (NOMAA) and excellence in postgraduate-level certification programs, which require additional training and testing.

In addition, the AOMNC is working to eliminate discriminatory reimbursement practices. It supports a pending class action lawsuit in Florida involving discriminatory reimbursement practices against Floridians and their primary acupuncture/Oriental medicine healthcare practitioners. The AOMNC is also working towards the inclusion of acupuncture and Oriental medicine benefits in healthcare plans, specifically for those practitioners who are well trained in acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

## Federal and Local Legislation

The Coalition is making its presence felt in legislative circles. It is actively supporting the Federal Acupuncture Coverage Act of 2003 (HR 1477), also known as the Hinchey Federal Acupuncture Bill, with the expectation that only well-trained licensees will be fully reimbursed under their state's scope of practice.

Rep. Maurice D. Hinchey (D-NY) is the sponsor of HR 1477. First introduced by Rep. Hinchey in 1993, the bill would amend the Social Security Act to provide for coverage of qualified acupuncturist services under both Medicare and the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. Although the bill has yet to be passed, it has made progress each session. The last time it was brought before the House of Representatives in the 107th Congress (2001-2002), a total of 36 representatives - both Democrats and Republicans - signed on as co-sponsors.

This year, the bill is making early progress. When it was reintroduced on March 27, 2003, the bill had 30 original co-sponsors, which is a milestone, given that this is the highest number of original co-sponsors of the bill in 10 years. At press time, the number of co-sponsors has already grown to 33. The AOMNC credits the lobbying firm of Marcus and Associates with its continuing help to increase the bill's cosponsors in this 108th Congress (2003-2004). The AOMNC will provide up-to-date information on the bill's progress on its Web site. Practitioners and others interested in lobbying their representatives, who are not already co-sponsors of HR 1477, are encouraged to contact Bob Marcus by e-mail at [marcus\\_associates@yahoo.com](mailto:marcus_associates@yahoo.com).

On Jan. 29, 2003, Dr. Freiberg was invited to testify as a member of a provider panel in which he gave testimony before the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics (NCVHS) Subcommittee on Standards and Security in Washington, D.C. NCVHS is the main public policy advisory committee to DHHS on national health information policy. Dr. Freiberg supplied joint written testimony with two distinguished medical doctors, and a past speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, along with his own live testimony before the NCVHS. All are available at the AOMNC's Web site ([www.aomnc.com](http://www.aomnc.com)).

The AOMNC is also representing the profession's interests at the state level. On March 26th, 2003, Dr. Freiberg visited legislators in Tallahassee regarding proposed health care bills that were potentially detrimental to the practice of acupuncture and Oriental medicine in Florida. Both bills have thus far failed to get out of committee.

### Membership and Benefits

The Coalition's membership is growing rapidly since its Web site became operational in early March 2003. A majority (90%+) of AOMNC members are U.S. licensed acupuncture and Oriental medicine practitioners. Professional acupuncture practitioners from Australia, Brazil, Canada, England, Israel and Spain have also joined the AOMNC. Membership categories listed on the AOMNC's website include "Acupuncture Physician"; "Licensed Acupuncturist"; "Doctor of Acupuncture/Oriental Medicine"; "Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine State Association"; "Educator"; "School"; "Patient"; and "Friend of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine."

AOMNC membership is free to all interested parties. Membership affords professional members links to the following: one of the lowest prices for HIPAA online training and CDs/forms; links to the AOMNC's negotiated discounted professional liability coverage including coverage for acupoint injection therapy; linked access to Alternative Link, Inc. to register for the DHHS two-year demonstration project for the use of ABC codes (healthcare practitioner registration has been

extended until May 29th, 2003); discounts for ABC code products and services from Alternative Link, Inc.; acupuncture and Oriental medicine news; and direct access to Marcus and Associates, the AOMNC's lobbyist for the Hinchey Federal Acupuncture Bill.

In its April 21 release, the Coalition explained the rationale behind free membership:

"The AOMNC is the only acupuncture and Oriental medicine professional organization that will never charge a membership fee. Practitioners have asked, 'How can such an organization exist and do its work?' The answer is that both founders financed the formation of the AOMNC, and the creation of the AOMNC's Web site, out of their own pockets. Other monies needed along the way for lobbying efforts, political donation funds (PAC), or public relations, will be asked for by voluntary donations from the profession. These donations will be directed to those specific organizations performing those functions such as Marcus & Associates for lobbying. In this way, there is never any accounting to AOMNC's members for any monies, since none will pass through the AOMNC's accounts for any of those functions."

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*Editor's note:* For more information on the Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine National Coalition, or to become a member, visit [www.aomnc.com](http://www.aomnc.com).

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