

20-20 Vision: Report on the National Visioning Search Task Force's Progress

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History

The Visioning Search Task Force (VSTF) was formed by the major acupuncture and Oriental medicine (AOM) organizations in 2002 to discuss the issues facing our profession now and through the year 2020. A listing of driving issues identified by the VSTF included the following:

- Previous attempts to bridge gaps and resolve differences within the profession have failed.
- Public battles have been waged at the state level.
- The profession is "fractured", increasing its vulnerability to influences beyond its control.
- Infighting is diverting resources and energy that could be devoted to advancing the profession.
- The average practitioner has not been well represented in shaping the future of his/her profession.

This historic coalition consists of selected members from each of the following organizations: the Accreditation Commission of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM), the Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Alliance (Alliance), the American Association of Oriental Medicine (AAOM), the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (CCAOM), and the National Commission for the Certification of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM). The design of the VSTF included biannually meetings at each of the national professional conferences held in the spring (Alliance) and fall (AAOM) of each year.

To date, the VSTF has met four times, beginning in August 2002 in San Francisco. The last meeting was conducted at the AAOM annual conference held in Orlando, Fla. in November 2003. The next VSTF meeting will be held in conjunction with the AOM Alliance annual conference in Hollywood, Calif. this April/May. The intention is to have two more meetings over the next 12 months to finalize the planning for a national visioning conference to be held, hopefully, in the summer of 2005.

Purpose

One of the first issues addressed was the recognition by the VSTF group that it was not to establish the "vision" itself, but to facilitate the visioning process within the profession as a whole. The goal at the onset was to identify and develop a comprehensive visioning process in which all stakeholders could provide input. To guide this development process, an initial set of professional concerns were identified by the VSTF as requiring discussion:

- Is there a need for a multi-tiered system of professional scopes and practices? If so, what would the scope of practice be for each?
- What are the pros and cons of OM practitioners being a part of the integrated services available

- in all inpatient and outpatient conventional settings?
- Should OM practitioners be part of the integrated services available in all inpatient and outpatient conventional settings?
- How can we foster research and education within the AOM community that will impact basic public health and education in healthcare?
- How do we foster collegial and collaborative healthcare and healthcare systems?
- How do we foster parity?
- What are the impediments, if any, to fair and equitable reimbursement?
- What areas of employment access do AOM practitioners want to have?
- What would enable AOM practitioners to be more prosperous?
- Is there a need to keep the profession's entry-level at the master's level, or should doctoral entry-level be required for this medicine?

To begin the public input process on these and other issues plaguing the profession, the VSTF designed a series of public "town hall" meetings to provide a forum for AOM professionals to share their concerns. These "town hall" meetings have generated a broad spectrum of comments, which will be used in planning future development processes to arrive at a consensus for a vision for the AOM profession.

VSTF Town Hall Meetings

The two formal VSTF Town Hall meetings have begun the stakeholder input process, with over 200 participants attending these important public meetings. The concerns identified at the VSTF Town Hall meetings by respondents were as follows:

- regulatory issues, e.g., interstate mobility, national standards for education and exams, doctorate entry level to profession;
- ethical issues;
- professional issues, e.g., clinical guidelines, interface with non-AOM practitioners, specialty practices;
- scope of practice, i.e., primary care issues;
- education, e.g., student issues, doctoral level education, i.e., DAOM, DAc, and PhD;
- research;
- consumer access;
- professional access to employment;
- compensation/reimbursement/parity; and
- collaboration and integration.

To gain a greater appreciation of the depth and breath of public/professional concerns and input, please go to the VSTF Web site for specific public comments from the two national Town Hall meetings. The next Town Hall meeting is scheduled for April 30th (Friday evening, 7-9 pm) at the AOM Alliance conference in Hollywood.

The Future: 20/20 Vision

Developing a visioning process that represents the entire AOM profession has not been an easy endeavor. It has proven to be a very complex and involved process that has slowly become a force within the profession, directed at bringing the many disparate factions within the profession to one table for meaningful discussions on the future of our profession. A secondary benefit has been that ongoing decisions within individual organizations appear to be more holistic for the profession than

has been the case in the past. Further, there seems to be less animosity among members of the professional community since the initiation of this process as witnessed at the various Town Hall meeting discussions.

The visioning search process has now reached a stage where it must become more visible to all stakeholders within the profession, not just those attending Town Hall meetings. It must be open to broader scope of ideas so the final product can become a vision that all can understand and embrace.

In order to accomplish this "openness" the VSTF has developed the aforementioned web site to help keep stakeholders abreast of the activities of the task force and to engage their input on a national level. This site provides the necessary information to help guide the planning process, which will, hopefully, culminate in a three-day national visioning conference where the appropriate individuals can come together to forge a realistic national vision for the AOM profession.

Before this can happen, however, several issues need to be flushed out. For example, there is a need to develop requests for proposals (RFPs) to identify an appropriate facilitator for the visioning process, to locate a funding source for the remaining activities, and to clarify the specifics of a national visioning conference including the identification of potential conference participants. These and other issues were addressed at the last VSTF meeting in Orlando.

Current Status

At the November 2003 Orlando meeting, the VSTF elected two co-chairs, Drs. Tom Haines (Alliance board member) and Will Morris (AAOM board member), to help guide the remaining activities of the VSTF. In addition, specific committees were formed to assist in the development of a national planning process. The committees and membership (an underlined name indicates the committee chair) include:

Proposal: Bryn Clark, Steve Given, Lixin Huang, Chris Herlihy,* Will Morris

Communication: Tom Haines, Ruth Dalphin, Carla Wilson, Will Morris

Conference: Carla Wilson, Penelope Ward, Dave Molony

Funding: Pamela Lee, Dort Bigg, Dave Molony

Each committee will be providing a status report on their progress at the national meeting in Hollywood. The specific objectives for each committee are listed in the Orlando 2003 meeting minutes provided on the VSTF Web site.

The VSTF will meet formally for the fifth time at the AOM Alliance national conference in Hollywood. At this meeting, the VSTF will conduct another public Town Hall meeting on Friday, April 30th. However, instead of inviting general comments from the public at an open forum at this meeting, the VSTF will engage a panel of experts to present an overview to the public of what a "visioning process" entails and what the remaining tasks should be to accomplish such a process for the AOM profession. At the conclusion of this presentation, the panel will address comments from the public.

We would love to hear from you and welcome any suggestion you may have to help guide the overall process. If possible, please come by on Friday night in Hollywood and become part of this historic process.

* Dr. Christine Herlihy passed away on March 23, 2004, after the original version of this article was

written and published in *Acupuncture Today*.

MAY 2004

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