

American Association of Oriental Medicine Announces \$1 Million Sponsorship Agreement

Editorial Staff

Historic Deal Stuns Some Observers On Oct. 24, 2004, the American Acupuncture Council (AAC) and the American Association of Oriental Medicine (AAOM) announced the largest sponsorship agreement in the acupuncture profession's history at the AAOM's annual meeting in Las Vegas. The surprise announcement of the 10-year, \$1 million-plus commitment is the result of months of meetings and discussions between the AAC and the AAOM. While the AAC has consistently supported the profession in the past, its commitment of more than \$1 million over the next 10 years will have a tremendous impact on the future of acupuncture and Oriental medicine in the United States.

The distribution of funds will be targeted to various portions of the AAOM's purpose as seed funds. Twenty percent of the funding will be dedicated to lobbying efforts to assist state organizations achieve licensure in all 50 states and help assure a complete scope of practice language, including Chinese pharmacopoeia and the protection of access to a federal level. A significant amount will be used to finance a seed-research benefactor fund from which schools and individuals may receive grants. Part of the funds will be used to develop electronic infrastructure so as to better serve the membership in terms of communications and grassroots efforts. Funds are also allocated for public relations efforts; these funds will form the basis for these activities and future fundraising activities.

"For the last 18 years, we have had a policy of strict political neutrality in the profession," said Philip C. Stump, president of the American Acupuncture Council. "We have not taken sides in legislative battles, and have absolutely done everything that we could to avoid even the appearance of preferring one acupuncture group or association over another. We finally felt that in order to assist the profession in moving forward and to gain wider acceptance in the United States, we had to sit down and work with an association toward research advancements and political goals. The AAOM was the natural choice."

Gene Bruno, immediate past president of the AAOM, led the discussions and negotiations with the AAC over the past year. Dr. Bruno was the person who first suggested a broad alliance to address the need to support acupuncture research.

"I could not be more pleased by this," Dr. Bruno said. "The money for research can be the catalyst we need to let acupuncture research grow to the point where we can receive federal and state research grants."

"The AAC's direct support for the promotion of the acupuncture and Oriental medicine profession will advance the profession's political goals and thus become invaluable to all acupuncturists," Dr. Bruno added. "We invite every acupuncturist in the country to join with us to move the acupuncture profession forward."

More Details of Accord Revealed

In some ways, the behind-the-scenes discussions and developments that led to the agreement between the AAC and the AAOM are as interesting and as important as the final agreement. According to Dr. Bruno, "At the time that these discussions started, we were only focusing on problem-solving that had come up in the malpractice insurance program that we had endorsed. The leaders at AAOM and AAC got to know each other through this process, and we realized that we had a very broad shared vision as to where the profession needed to go in order to continue to grow and prosper. AAC and AAOM believed that four pillars for the growth of the acupuncture profession would be research, insurance equality, full practice rights in all 50 states, and public education."

"When we found out that this was the AAOM's vision for the future, we felt that we needed to abandon a longstanding neutrality with respect to associations, and we decided to join in a partnership with the AAOM to move the profession forward," added Mr. Stump.

Discussions took place over a one-year period, including numerous telephone conversations and a pivotal meeting in Los Angeles, where the idea of a \$1 million commitment was first raised by Dr. Bruno. Mr. Stump, upon hearing the suggestion, believed it was something the AAC was willing to commit to, provided the resources were channeled in the above areas.

"I felt like this was a once in a lifetime opportunity to support positive changes in the acupuncture profession, and I did not want to miss it," said Stump.

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