

Two Meetings, One Message

Recently, two important traditional Chinese medicine conferences took place, each held half a world apart, but both championing similar causes: the spread of traditional Chinese medicine throughout the world and the need for regulation, recognition and licensing of practitioners. One of the conferences was held in Paris. The organization holding the conference was the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies, with representatives from approximately 80 societies from numerous countries in attendance. The other conference, sponsored by the American Association of Oriental Medicine, was held in Chicago, with more than 500 attendees from across the U.S. and surrounding countries.

Lixing Huang, president of the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (and also president of the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine in San Francisco), presented a paper at the Paris conference regarding educational requirements and standards in the U.S. David Molony, vice president and United States delegate to the WFCMS, spoke about the progress of the doctoral program in American acupuncture schools, and about the future of acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

The AAOM conference was equally exciting and full of valuable information. A variety of issues were addressed, ranging from storage and contamination of herbal products, to the impact of the new CPT codes on insurance billing, to individual case studies and poster presentations. Shane Burras, LAc, from California, was named the AAOM's "Acupuncturist of the Year." He also accepted a position on the association's board of directors. Congratulations, Shane, on all of your hard work on behalf of the profession.

As I have traveled the world these past few months, I have learned many things. One of the things I have learned is that we are indeed a community, no matter our country of residence or native language. Our ideas and desires seem to be moving in similar directions. Oriental medicine doctors in South Korea want to spread Oriental medicine throughout the world, as do Chinese practitioners. Acupuncturists in other countries also are looking for basic licensure and regulation.

Providers in the U.S., meanwhile, have a similar goal. They want to spread the message about Oriental medicine to every state in order to achieve recognition for our profession on a national level. In addition, acupuncturists here are striving for standards of care and more sources of reimbursement. Specifically, there are issues in our country regarding Medicare reimbursement, the procurement of a federal loan forgiveness program, and reimbursement for the treatment of veterans. In the United States, the largest group of people using Oriental medicine as a treatment modality seems to be the Baby Boomer population. Many of these people are currently able to pay for their treatments in cash, but as this group ages, the need for Medicare coverage of acupuncture and Oriental medicine will naturally increase.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine (or simply "Asian medicine" as it is now called in California, per recently passed legislation) is moving around the globe rapidly, and is truly moving toward becoming a

type of "world" medicine. Because it is largely consumer-driven, however, legislators and regulators are sometimes caught playing catch-up in order to meet the needs of the entire population. Fortunately, there is a movement among Oriental medicine practitioners to champion these causes throughout the world.

I am so proud of what our profession has accomplished in the past year. This profession has experienced growing pains in the past. It's continuing to do so, but it is maturing nicely.

Before I say goodbye to you for 2005, I want to make sure to say Happy Holidays and thank you to three groups of people.

First, I would like to thank the vendors, suppliers and other organizations that advertise in *Acupuncture Today*. The products and services you provide help our profession function on a daily basis. And when you decide to advertise in *AT*, you're doing more than showcasing a product or service; you're helping to keep our publication going strong as well. Without you, chances are there wouldn't be an *Acupuncture Today*. Thank you so much for all that you do.

Second, I would like to thank our readers. You help guide the direction of *Acupuncture Today*. Your comments, questions and feedback are extremely important to us, and help to shape what the publication looks like. We appreciate your ideas and efforts, and we will always do our best to serve your (and the profession's) best interests.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank our columnists and contributing writers; Michael Devitt, *AT*'s managing editor; and everyone else at MPA Media, *AT*'s publisher. You make the publication what it is. You provide an incredible service to the acupuncture and Oriental medicine profession, and I'm honored to work with such a talented group of individuals.

The new year will soon be upon us. Great things lay ahead for the AOM profession. Let's all work together to make our profession not only grow, but flourish in 2006.

Happy Holidays!

DECEMBER 2005