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It's Time to Be Recognized

Marilyn Allen, Editor at Large

Did you know that acupuncture and Oriental medicine does not have its own designation as a profession? According to the U.S. government, AOM is not a "profession." If you look up "acupuncture" with the Bureau of Labor and Statistics in the U.S. Department of Labor, you will only find it listed as a form of treatment under "Chiropractors" and "Registered Nurses."

The time has come. It is necessary that we be recognized as not only a profession, but also as professionals working toward a greater good in this country. If we all work together, we will succeed.

Much of the problem is the lack of knowledge of AOM among the general public and those working in other professions. Along these same lines, we each need to ask ourselves: "How good is my knowledge?" Do you know about all the associations and groups within our profession that can help you succeed at what you do? Becoming a knowledgeable practitioner is one of the greatest gifts you can give to yourself, your practice and your patients.

The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) was established in 1982 and carries out a mission to "establish, assess, and promote recognized standards of competence and safety in acupuncture and Oriental medicine for the protection and benefit of the public." They have certified thousands in the field of acupuncture and Chinese herbology. The NCCAOM certification is used as the basis for your licensure in more than 90 percent of the states that have set standards of practice for acupuncture.

The Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM) was established in June 1982 by the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. This commission establishes accreditation criteria, as well as grants accreditation, to those sites that fit the criteria. More goes into the process of accreditation than you might think. The process requires each program to examine their goals, activities and the outcomes once their goals are achieved. Then the site must consider the criticism and suggestions of the visiting commission team and find ways to incorporate these ideas into their program. After accreditation, the site must maintain continuous self-study and improvement.

The Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (CCAOM) was formed in 1982 for the purpose of advancing the status of acupuncture and Oriental medicine in the United States. The early founders and members of this council were educators. By assuring educational excellence within the field, they felt confident in their ability to promote the acceptance of acupuncture and Oriental medicine in the United States.

Membership in the CCAOM is open to all acupuncture and Oriental medicine schools that meet the fundamental requirements. Such requirements include conducting residential programs of at least three academic years.

Your job as an acupuncturist is to use these organizations, as well as the many others available to you, to help better your practice and to help better you as an acupuncturist. When you use the "alphabet" after your name, you can make this practice of medicine we all know and believe in a nationally recognized profession. By using the resources we have been given, the benefits for everyone will be endless. As you become a more experienced and knowledgeable practitioner, your patients will gain trust and you will see your practice grow.

Once acupuncture is properly recognized in America, the protection of Chinese herbs and formulas will be easier and consumer awareness will be raised worldwide. More importantly, recognition brings patients to you, rather than you having to go out and find them, as I am sure many of you feel you do too often.

This is our future. Let's take a stand together and use the opportunity to make it a brighter one.

AUGUST 2008