

2016: A Year in the Life of Acupuncture

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Happy Holidays, may you, your family and friends have peace, joy and blessings throughout this special time of year.

As 2016 comes to a close, we can look back and celebrate the many events and accomplishments for the profession of acupuncture.

The Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS), an entity of the United States Department of Labor, which serves as a principal agency of the U.S. Federal Statistical System, has voted to give national recognition to the profession of acupuncture. This designation will be listed in the health category, number 29-1291. As the BLS keeps an account of statistics and other important information for the health care professions, this is a distinct milestone. In the long run, it will be beneficial to know the statistics of different aspects of this field of medicine. Also, obtaining this recognition as a free-standing, independent profession is the first step in achieving federal loan forgiveness for students as they begin their journey into the world of health care.

The California Acupuncture Board voted to accept the NCCAOM exam. Although this will not be available until 2018, it will allow the states to become united with a standardized examination process leading up to licensure.

At this time, NCCAOM is working with the ASA and communicating with the American Medical Association to place an acupuncturist on the upcoming CPT revision code committee. Also, there are numerous regulatory bodies, hospitals, medical clinics and government agencies that are requesting standards from and for the acupuncture profession; thus, this standardized test will be helpful in creating national standards.

In mid-October, the World Health Organization/Family of International Classifications (WHO/FIC) ICD-11 Revision Conference was held in Tokyo, Japan. Margaret Chang, the director general of WHO, presented remarks at the opening ceremony. She presented the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy for 2014-2023. Key points are as follows:

- Traditional and complementary medicine (T&CM) are important and often underestimated in health care.
- There is a need for a cohesive and integrative approach that allows governments, practitioners and users to access T&CM in a safe, respectful, cost efficient and effective manner.
- A proactive policy is needed toward this important, often vibrant and expanding part of health care.

During the meeting, there was also a side session during which Chang addressed the attendees and gave encouragement for the development of the Traditional Medicine (TM) codes. There was a great deal of interest in this project and the members of various committees wanted to know more about its

development.

The International Classification of Diseases (ICD) is going into its 11th revision and will include a chapter on Traditional Medicine. The ICD has been a valuable resource for more than 100 years. ICD-1 was endorsed in 1900 and ICD-10 was endorsed in 1990. ICD has been used to simply count statistics on mortality and morbidity throughout the world.

In the U.S., we think of them as insurance codes. These codes have been periodically updated to reflect new medical and scientific knowledge to produce data and statistical information. ICD-11 and ICD-11-TM will reflect the new information and make full use of information technology, as it will be the first to be delivered electronically.

Experts from all over the globe have worked in conjunction with Topic Advisory Groups to bring into focus the revised classification. The development of the TM chapter is very important, as it will be the framework for diagnostic codes that represent the uniqueness of this medicine. The practice of acupuncture has stood the test of time and will now take its place in the sphere of global health care.

Also, for the first time an internationally agreed upon standard list of diagnostic categories, which will identify and report on TM conditions, will be provided. This chapter will be used as a coding tool for statistical data, clinical decision making, research and educational purposes, as well as communicating and comparing TM conditions. The codes will have their own chapter and will be designed to be used as a common language for counting TM conditions.

Other Memorable Events in 2016

- Cupping, an important part of Asian Medicine, drew attention from media outlets on the international stage during the Olympics in Brazil when swimmers from the U.S. had round circles on their shoulders and backs.
- Traditional Medicine will be included in the Quality of Care and Patient Safety Topical Advisory Group. This TAG will be applied to all other classifications because more than ever, safety is of prime importance.
- The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine has retained a PR firm and is working in conjunction with a committee to create education about Traditional Medicine and how it can serve the health care industry and the general public.
- Acupuncturists in Kansas worked very hard this year and were able to pass a law for practice rights.
- Pacific College of Oriental Medicine is continuing to work hard to extend its proposition that no master's program student shall be left behind, and that all students deserve the right to earn a doctorate.

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