



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION of
ACUPUNCTURE *and* ORIENTAL MEDICINE

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December 24, 2008

President-Elect Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President-Elect Obama:

On behalf of the more than 25,000 professional acupuncturists and practitioners of Oriental medicine (AOM) and 8075 AOM students in the United States, the American Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (AAAOM) offers congratulations to you on your successful election to the White House. Our organization shares in both your concerns and optimism for our nation's future and stands ready and able to assist your administration in its efforts to reform the ailing health care system.

The profession of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (AOM) offers one effective solution for this nation's ailing healthcare economy. This effectiveness has been long demonstrated in the healthcare system of China and further established here in the United States since its introduction. With our unsteady economy overburdened by spiraling healthcare costs, our licensed AOM providers—who are trained and tested via nationally certified standards—offer excellent and safe primary and first line care utilizing low tech methods that are lower cost at the point of delivery.

With few, if any, side effects, AOM can help people avoid expensive hospital stays and live more productive and healthier lives.¹⁻³ The report from a Consensus Development Conference on Acupuncture, held at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 1997, states that acupuncture is being "widely" practiced—by thousands of physicians, dentists, acupuncturists, and other practitioners—for relief or prevention of pain and for various other health conditions; specifically, an estimated 8.2 million U.S. adults have used acupuncture. Through its track record of safety, efficacy, affordability, and preventative care AOM has been able to greatly expand its patient base in the US despite limited access opportunities offered in the reimbursement marketplace.

The AAAOM was founded upon a commitment to the highest standards of education, safety, certification, research and ethics. Accordingly, we hereby respectfully submit to you the following recommendations for improving the US healthcare system in a cost effective manner:

- 1) Implement the recommendation of the White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy (WHCCAMP) to create an office to coordinate federal CAM activities and to facilitate the integration into the nation's health care system those complementary and alternative health care practices and products that are determined to be safe and effective.
 - a. As noted in the report, the office should be established at the highest and most appropriate level in the Department of Health and Human Services and should be given sufficient staff and budget to meet its responsibilities.
 - b. The office's responsibilities should include, but not be limited to, coordinating federal CAM activities; serving as a federal CAM policy liaison with conventional health care and CAM professionals, organizations, institutions, and commercial ventures; planning, facilitating, and convening conferences, workshops, and advisory groups; acting as a centralized federal point of contact regarding CAM for the public, CAM practitioners, conventional health care providers, and the media; facilitating implementation of the Commission's recommendations and actions; and exploring additional and emerging topics not considered by the Commission;
- 2) Implement the recommendation of the WHCCAMP to evaluate current barriers to consumer access to qualified licensed practitioners of safe and effective CAM practices and to develop strategies for removing those barriers in order to increase access and ensure accountability;
- 3) Assure that any federal program that ensures medical care to the public include the AOM profession as a strategy for cutting costs, such as Medicare, include professional licensed acupuncturists as Medicare providers eligible for reimbursement. We further propose that qualified practitioners have the opportunity to serve in the National Health Service Corps, so people in underserved areas may have fair access to these highly qualified providers.

It is our position that the profession of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine offers your administration a unique opportunity to readily tap into a preventative primary care model that will improve public health in the US while reducing both short and long term healthcare costs. It is through this promise that the AAAOM welcomes the opportunity to further share with your administration additional research as well as our expertise, resources and safety initiatives to assist you in your healthcare reform efforts. We can be reached through our Executive Director, Rebekah Christensen, at 866-455-7999.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations and offer of assistance. It is with the highest confidence and support that I wish you and your team the best of luck on meeting our nation's historic health care challenges.

Sincerely yours,



Deborah Lincoln, RN, MSN, RAc, NCCAOM
AAAOM President
President



Jolene Habeck BS, CNA
AAAOM Student Organization

cc: Secretary Designate, Tom Daschle, Department of Health and Human Services

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2. Eisenberg DM, Kessler RC, Foster C, Norlock FE, Calkins DR, Delbanco TL. Unconventional Medicine in the United States -- Prevalence, Costs, and Patterns of Use. N Engl J Med 1993;328:246-52.
3. Eisenberg DM, Davis RB, Ettner SL, et al. Trends in alternative medicine use in the United States, 1990-1997: results of a follow-up national survey. JAMA 1998;280:1569-75