



## AAOM Position Paper – Expanding Chiropractic Scope in Acupuncture: 6/21/06

**The American Association of Oriental Medicine (AAOM)** represents and advocates on behalf of the professional Oriental Medicine provider in order to ensure that the well being of the public is protected by educating legislators, regulators, health care interests and the public regarding Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine. Our mission is to *promote integrity and excellence in the professional practice of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.*

**Problem Statement:** The legislative campaigns for expanding chiropractic scope of practice into acupuncture with insufficient training present a substantial public health risk. These risks include:

1. Adverse events that can be as serious as nerve paralysis or organ puncture.
2. Well meaning chiropractors may 'over utilize' acupuncture services because of ineffective treatments. Over utilization damages the public, the third party payer, and the health care providers by increasing medical costs and ultimately damaging the reputation of the individual provider and the medicine as a whole.
3. Inadequate training also misleads the unsuspecting chiropractor into believing that he or she may have knowledge, skills, and ability that they do not have.

Educational standards governing the practice of acupuncture have been institutionalized in the U. S. for 24-years. Legislative efforts underway in many states across the nation advocate expanding chiropractors' scope at educational standards that fall 85% to 90% below the educational requirements of our profession. ***Is this magnitude of sub-standard training and public health risk exposure you choose to legislate for the constituencies you serve?***

### **Educational Standards:**

**1982: Founded in 1982, The Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM)** is the sole accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to accredit professional master's degree and master's level programs in the field of Oriental Medicine. ACAOM program requirements are as follows: Acupuncture: 3 Academic Years/1905 Hours, and Oriental Medicine: 4 Academic Years/2625 Hours. ACAOM accredited Colleges meeting these standards nationwide total 54, and 9 additional colleges are in candidate status.

**1982: The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM)** is a non-profit organization established in 1982. *Through the use of standardized examinations, its mission is to establish, assess, and promote recognized standards of competence and safety in acupuncture and Oriental medicine for the protection and benefit of the public.* Today the NCCAOM offers certification examinations in Acupuncture (includes clean needle technique point location), Chinese Herbology, and Asian Bodywork Therapy. Forty-one states use the NCCAOM examinations and applicants must meet ACAOM's hourly requirements in effect at the time their application is submitted. (There are 8 remaining states without a practice act in statute.) **Note:** <sup>1</sup>*A summary of state-by-state licensure requirements are provided, as well as a <sup>2</sup>US map depicting states utilizing NCCAOM Exams.*

<sup>3</sup>**National Institute of Health (NIH)**, is part of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services and is the primary Federal agency for conducting and supporting medical research. In their guidance document for consumer selection of Alternative Medicine Practitioners, a key guideline is to ascertain if the practitioner's

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<sup>1</sup> National Acupuncture Foundation, Acupuncture Laws and Regulations; 2005

<sup>2</sup> National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, Website; 2006

<sup>3</sup> National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Get the FACTS; 2003; Amended 2004



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qualifications meet the minimum standards for training and licensing for the profession.

**International Standards:**

<sup>4</sup>**1948: World Health Organization (WHO):** WHO is the United Nations specialized agency for health. It was established on 7th April 1948. WHO's constitutional objective is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. WHO maintains 2500 hours as minimal safety training standard for the practice of Acupuncture by professionals who are not MDs. The WHO standards also indicate that Western Medical Doctors should attain 1500 minimal training hours in Acupuncture to practice safely. While chiropractors imply a similarity with MDs, however, MDs have open and unlimited scopes of practice, and chiropractors do not.

<sup>5</sup>**2003: United Kingdom – House of Lords' Report:** *"We recommend that if CAM is to be practiced by any conventional healthcare practitioners, they should be trained to the standards comparable to those set out for that particular therapy by the appropriate (single) CAM regulatory body."* (Paragraph 5.83)

**Note:** *The American Chiropractic Association arbitrarily established a self-regulated program labeling it the College of Chiropractic Acupuncture or the "ACA CCA." Defined as "Certification", this was formulated without the application of established standards. AAOM would be happy to assist the chiropractic profession in the development of educational programs and standards that truly meet the needs of the public and the interest of chiropractors wishing to practice acupuncture.*

**Summary:** In closing, Chiropractors with substandard training, representing themselves as "chiropractors certified in acupuncture," mislead the public. As legislative policy continues to define the future of this Acupuncture and OM in this country, let us uphold and expand upon the 24-year lineage of institutionalized U. S. standards (and beyond that, the documented international standards) that ensure the efficacy of this medicine today, and guarantee its integral sustainability in the public health system into the future. ***Through our State Associations, AAOM is committed to monitor and advocate on behalf of the legislative activities of each state, to assure these standards are upheld and the public, your voting constituencies, are informed.***

Sincerely,

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President

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Legislative Chair

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization, Guidelines on basic training and safety in Acupuncture. Geneva: World Health Organization; 1999.

<sup>5</sup> United Kingdom - The Statutory Regulation of the Acupuncture Profession, commissioned by The Department of Health, et al; 2003