

How Passing HR 646* and Including Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (AOM) in HR 676 Support President Obama's 8 Health Principles

*(HR 646 covers the services of qualified acupuncturists under Medicare and FEHBP)

1. Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (AOM) protects families' financial health.

In the US there are vested interests that make a great deal of money treating diseases, whereas when China faced a health care crisis in 1949, with too many people to treat, too little money and too few doctors to provide care, they turned once again to traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), now commonly referred to as Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (AOM). The US presently faces a similar crisis. We have unmet health care needs, virtually no preventative care, and spiraling costs we cannot support.

Currently, China relies in great part for health care on AOM which is ~~a~~ largely why it can produce goods for export at such low prices. Their companies are not burdened with the high cost of western medicine. In fact, as an added benefit, fully one-third of all Chinese agricultural income derives from the production of herbs used for medicinal remedies in the global market that don't bear patents, are much safer and less expensive than pharmaceutical drugs, and in many cases are more effective.

For example, when cancer patients are undergoing chemotherapy, their white blood cell counts often decline, and some are given Neulasta injections after every treatment at a cost of \$3,000-\$7,000 per 6 mg. dose (depending on the supplier). In 2007, Amgen's sales were \$737 million for Neulasta and \$307 million for Neupogen, totaling \$1.04 billion for this one class of drug. These drugs cause serious bone pain and fatigue in 24-31% of all patients.

Compare that to Oriental Medicine that uses a formula that has undergone a 929-year clinical trial, since 1080 AD, in China and has been studied extensively with modern biomedical techniques. Shih Chuan Da Bu Tang (10 Flavor Tea) builds not only white but also red blood cells in a matter of 3-7 days, preventing the patient from having to skip subsequent chemo treatments because their blood counts are too low-and costs \$20 for the week. It is non-toxic, can be taken by children and pregnant women, and has no adverse side effects.

AOM could minimize the argument for its cost-effectiveness, and perhaps avoid raising the ire and concerns of the pharmaceutical industry. But the truth is, AOM does work and is dramatically cost-effective. It saves the Chinese money, and it can save Americans money. In fact it already does save both money and lives of those Americans who utilize AOM. Insurance premiums would plummet if patients didn't need to spend \$3,000-\$7,000 per injection for just one disease!-

2. AOM makes health coverage affordable.

AOM makes primary health care more affordable because it provides treatments for chronic and acute conditions at a fraction of the cost of western medicine. It differs from Western medicine in that it focuses on patient education and preventative care and teaches patients how to take personal responsibility for their health.

As an example of the cost-effectiveness of AOM, we cite a 1999 Carpal Tunnel Syndrome published study that showed a significant cost-savings: the average cost to treat CTS in California with Western medicine was \$5,000 without surgery, ~~but~~ \$21,000 with surgery, averaging \$12,000 per case. With Laser Acupuncture (plus microamps TENS), the cost would be around \$1,000 when treated by a Licensed Acupuncturist, with 88-90% success rate for patients who have mild-moderate CTS (the majority of cases). Thus, the cost-savings is about \$11,000 per CTS case, and there were 1 million cases of CTS, thus a savings of \$11 billion for one condition alone. Imagine the savings for our nation and insurance companies if you add treatment for migraines, back pain, cancer treatment side effects, etc.

3. AOM supports the aim for universality. When the costs of health care are decreased, you can more easily cover all Americans.

4. AOM makes it easier to provide portability of coverage.

With passage of HR 646 and their inclusion into HR 676, members of the American Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (AAAOM) and their patients would rally to support this principle; and again, if AOM were utilized, portability would not be an issue based on the reduced economic costs of health care.

5. AOM more fully guarantees choice.

Allowing consumers to decide in a free and open marketplace what forms of health care services they choose has been a long-standing principle in American economic history. Currently, Americans are forced to choose from among the most expensive types of health care services in the world. They are not given the option with most insurance plans to choose one of the safest, most effective, and inexpensive forms of medical care, as proven by 1.3 billion Chinese. Give American medical consumers the opportunity to choose less expensive and safer health care in the form of AOM. The data will confirm our argument. HR 646 redresses this inequity.

6. AOM is the proven way to invest in prevention and wellness.

AOM has been providing an uninterrupted system of prevention and wellness for over 5,000 years, and the proof is in the pudding: there are 1.3 billion Chinese alive today. No t coincidentally, **the Federal health care cost for Asian-Americans is the lowest for any ethnic group in America.** Why is this so? It is because Asian-Americans have relied upon their medicine and its ethos of preventative health care since the first indentured servants were brought to the US to build the railroads in the 1840's. The greatest gift Asia can give to America is the wisdom of its health care system.

7. AOM helps to improve patient safety and quality care.

In China, physicians traditionally were rewarded only when they kept their patients well. This spirit still informs the care that Licensed Acupuncturists provide. Because most AOM care is paid for out-of-pocket, patients do not return if they don't recover quickly. In addition, over the last 30 years, it has been a struggle for L. Ac.'s to gain the legal right to practice in their states, and most are not reimbursed by health insurance plans. The profession of AOM has been scrutinized more than any other form of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM), and numerous surveys show that acupuncture enjoys the most credibility in the medical community of any CAM therapy (as noted in our "AOM in the US" article which can be found at www.aaaaonline.org).

These things can be said with absolute certainty: it is extremely rare for patients of AOM to suffer even minor adverse events, even rarer for them to suffer serious adverse effects, and extremely rare for a patient of AOM to die from a treatment. Conversely, *The Journal of the American Medical Association* reported in 2006 that more than 200,000 patients die from Western Medicine per year.

8. AOM helps maintain long-term fiscal sustainability.

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Do the math: more taxes will NOT be needed under this health care plan, based on the above information.

