



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION of
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**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) can protect families' financial health.

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 again to traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), now commonly referred to as acupuncture and Oriental medicine (AOM). The U.S. 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 on AOM for healthcare, which is one reason 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 is derived from the production of herbs used for medicinal remedies. These remedies are much safer and less expensive than pharmaceutical drugs, and, in many cases, are more effective.

For example, when cancer patients undergo chemotherapy, their white blood cell counts often decline. Some are given Neulasta injections (produced by Amgen) 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 (also produced by Amgen for building white blood cells), totaling \$1.04 billion for this one class of drug, which causes serious bone pain and fatigue in 24-31% of all patients.

Compare that to Oriental medicine's use of a formula that, since 1080AD, has literally undergone a 929 year clinical trial 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 typically in 5 to 14 days, preventing the patient from having to skip subsequent chemo treatments due to low blood count. Shih Chuan Da Bu Tang costs an average of \$40 per week, 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 to perhaps avoid raising the ire and concerns of the pharmaceutical industry. But truth be told, AOM *does* work and is dramatically cost-effective. It has saved and does save 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 (times the number of chemo sessions during their treatment) 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 by emphasizing patient education, preventive care and by teaching patients how to take personal responsibility for their health.

An example of the cost-effectiveness and significant cost-savings of AOM is a 1999 Carpal Tunnel Syndrome study which shows the average cost to treat CTS with Western medicine in California was \$5,000 without surgery and \$21,000 with surgery, averaging \$12,000 per case. Using laser acupuncture (plus microamps TENS), the cost would have been approximately \$1,000 when treated by a licensed acupuncturist, with 88-90% success rate for patients having mild-moderate CTS (the majority of cases). (Naeser MA, Hahn K-A K, Lieberman BE, Branco KF. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Pain Treated with Low-Level Laser and Microamps TENS, A Controlled Study. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 2002; 83:978-988) Thus the cost-savings is about \$11,000 per CTS case. There were 1 million cases of CTS in 1999, **with a savings of \$11 billion** for this one condition alone if treated with laser acupuncture. Imagine the savings for our nation and our insurance companies if treatment for migraines, back pain, cancer treatment side effects, etc. were included.

3. AOM supports the aim for universality.

When the costs of health care are decreased, more Americans will be able to afford health insurance coverage and it will cost the government less to cover its citizens under the proposed universal health care plan.

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

With passage of HR 646 and its inclusion into HR 676, members of the American Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (AAAOM) and their patients will rally to support this principle. If AOM were utilized, portability would not be an issue due to 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. Most insurance plans currently do not give the option to choose one of the safest, most effective, and inexpensive forms of medical care, which 1.3 billion Chinese can access and find benefit from in their country. When American medical consumers are given the opportunity to choose this less

expensive and safer kind of health care in the form of AOM, the data will confirm this point. 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. Not coincidentally, **the Federal health care cost for Asian Americans is the lowest for any ethnic group in America.** This is because Asian Americans have relied upon this medicine and its ethos of preventive health care since the first indentured Asians came to the U.S. to build the railroads in the 1840s. The greatest gift Asia can give to America is the wisdom of AOM.

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 inspires the care that licensed acupuncturists provide today. Because today the majority of AOM care is paid out-of-pocket, patients do not seek further treatment if they don't recover quickly.

Over the last 30 years, it has been a struggle for LAc's to gain the legal right to practice in some states, and most are not reimbursed by health insurance plans. The AOM profession has been scrutinized more than any other form of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), with numerous surveys indicating that in the medical community, acupuncture has the most credibility of any CAM therapy (as noted in our "AOM in the U.S." article located at www.aaaomonline.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. (MacPherson H. et al. [2001] The York acupuncture safety study: prospective survey of 34,000 treatments by traditional acupuncturists. *British Medical Journal*, 323 [7311]; 486) Conversely, *The Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that more than 200,000 patients die from Western medical care per year (*JAMA*. 2000; 284: 483-485).

8. AOM helps maintain long-term fiscal sustainability.

Do the math: based on the above information, more taxpayer dollars will NOT be needed under a health care plan that includes HR 646.

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