

International News

Acupuncture in the United States of America

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In the United States of America, the use of acupuncture was first reported in 1826 by Dr Franklin Bache in a lumbago case.¹ The relatively brief history of acupuncture in the US can be divided into three periods:

1. The Exploratory Period (1826–1971);
2. The Pre-regulation Period (1971–1982), marked by an increase of acupuncture popularity after President Nixon's visit to China in 1972; and
3. The Development and Regulation Period (1982–Present) marked by a growing number of states with acupuncture legislation and acupuncture schools.

Three events are considered as historic milestones in the development of acupuncture in the US. First, in 1976, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) labelled acupuncture needles as investigational devices (Class III). Devices under such a category cannot be marketed unless their effectiveness and safety have been established in clinical trials.

Second, in November 1994, the Office of Alternative Medicine at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) sponsored an NIH-FDA workshop, which led to the FDA reclassifying acupuncture needles as Class II devices in 1996. This reclassification allowed acupuncture needles for general use by registered, licensed or certified practitioners.

Third, in November 1997, the NIH held a Consensus Development Conference

on Acupuncture to evaluate its safety and efficacy.² The expert panel of the conference recognised the promising results of acupuncture research, and concluded that acupuncture was effective for adult postoperative and chemotherapy nausea and vomiting, and postoperative dental pain, and could be used as an adjunctive therapy for fibromyalgia, myofascial pain, and tennis elbow. The panel suggested future research:

1. To assess the clinical effectiveness of acupuncture;
2. To compare the effects of different types of acupuncture theory systems, such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean and French styles;
3. To investigate the existence of the energetic system; and
4. To study the impacts on public policies if acupuncture were incorporated into the healthcare system.² This consensus report has served as one of the most significant government statements, and has contributed to increased acceptance of acupuncture and Oriental medicine by the biomedical profession in the United States.

During the past ten years, this statement has impacted on government funded research, education and training, clinical usage, and third-party insurance reimbursement for acupuncture services. NIH funding for CAM, including acupuncture research, increased from US\$2 million in 1992 to US\$121.4 million in 2007. Results of these studies have significantly advanced our

knowledge of acupuncture on the clinical evidence, safety and mechanisms of action on various conditions. For example, in 2004, the Center of Integrative Medicine (CIM) at the University of Maryland published a large clinical trial that showed acupuncture was effective and safe for patients with knee osteoarthritis.³ The Center is now taking the lead in the US to further investigate the effects of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), including Chinese herbal medicine. Since 1997, education in acupuncture and TCM has grown rapidly. Over 50 acupuncture and TCM colleges in the US have been established. Acupuncture clinical services for patient care have also grown. Many hospitals now provide acupuncture services for their patients. Third-party insurance reimbursement has increased. For example, the Federal Blue Cross/Blue Shield insurance, a federal medical insurance agency, started acupuncture coverage for ten treatments in 2006 and increased it to 24 treatments in 2007.

The Society for Acupuncture Research (SAR) is a non-profit organisation founded in 1993. It participated in and assisted the 1997 NIH consensus conference. To reflect on the achievements since the NIH's 1997 report,² SAR is sponsoring The Status and Future of Acupuncture Research: 10 years post NIH Consensus Conference, which will be held on 9–11 November 2007 at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, USA. The scientific progress of acupuncture in clinical and

basic research, educational improvement and changes in policies will be presented by national and international speakers. Opportunities and challenges and future directions of acupuncture will also be examined and discussed.

The development of acupuncture in the US has benefited from the support of the profession itself, government funding and the biomedical professions that have become interested in acupuncture. Although the funding is necessary, the capacities of the former are the driving force. With an increased number of well-educated and well-trained acupuncture practitioners and researchers, the

profession is maturing and will rely on itself for the future development of acupuncture in the US.

REFERENCES

1. Bache F. Cases illustrative of the remedial effects of acupuncture. *North Am Med Surg J* 1826;1:311–21.
2. National Institutes of Health. Acupuncture: NIH Consensus Statement Online. 3–5 Nov 1997 [cited 5 May 2007]; 15(5):1–34. Available from: http://odp.od.nih.gov/consensus/cons/107/107_statement.htm.
3. Berman BM, Lao L, Langenberg P, Lee WL, Gilpin AM, Hochberg MC. Effectiveness of acupuncture as adjunctive therapy in osteoarthritis of the knee: a randomized, controlled trial. *Ann Intern Med* 2004;141(12):901–10.

Upcoming International Conferences

2007

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| 16–20 August | Hong Kong, China
International Conference and Exhibition of the Modernization of Chinese Medicine and Health Products. For more information, visit www.icmcm.com/fair_dtl/detail.htm |
| 20–22 October | Beijing, China
WFAS 2007 World Congress on Acupuncture. For more information, visit www.wfas.org.cn |
| 8–11 November | Baltimore, USA
The Status and Future of Acupuncture Research: 10 Years Post-NIH Consensus Conference
For more information, visit www.acupunctureresearch.org |
| 17–19 November | Singapore
The 4th International Congress of Traditional Medicine (WFCMS)
For more information, visit www.4thictm.com/english |
| 2–4 December | Taipei, Taiwan
14th International Congress of Oriental Medicine: The Globalization of Oriental Medicine
For more information, visit http://mail.cmu.edu.tw/~icom |

2008

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| 23–25 May | Sydney, Australia
Australasian Acupuncture & Chinese Medicine Annual Conference
For information, contact AACMA on +61 7 3324 2599 or visit www.acupuncture.org.au |
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