

New York State Working Toward Herbal Legislation

By Stephanie Chow

Patients often wonder what is so inspiring about the healing benefits and therapy that acupuncturists provide their patients. It's a combination of *qi*, the practitioner's determination, the patient's recovery and the theory which forms the basis of traditional Chinese medicine. However, another important aspect to remember is the high quality of care provided by acupuncturists. In New York about one-and-a-half years ago, a handful of well-respected practitioners convened to advocate legislative change for licensed acupuncturists practicing in the state of New York.

The motivation behind forming this group, presently called the New York State Acupuncture Coalition (NYSAC), was supported by a unified hope to incorporate the practice and art of formulating Chinese herbal remedies into the legal scope of practice for acupuncturists. Although practicing herbal medicine currently is covered by the American Acupuncture Council, the profession's longest-standing malpractice insurance company, it's essential to realize how including herbal practices within the scope of an acupuncture license will affect practitioners living and working in New York. The benefits include legal protection, preserving the integrity of the profession, and working toward creating a replicable model that more states can follow. The change will appropriately reflect the tremendous herbal education students receive and will provide safer boundaries for practitioners.

During its existence, NYSAC has consistently acted to make inroads pursuing this important legislative change. Professional bill-writers were consulted to draft the language of the bill based on the history of New York and research on other states. A lobbyist from NE Government Consulting was recruited to attain sponsorship and guide the direct interaction with legislative figures. Several town hall meetings have been conducted to keep the profession's members informed and to seek input. Michael Taromina, Esq., among other dedicated individuals, is donating proceeds from his continuing-education courses to the cause. His class, titled "Ethics and Liability in AOM," has become unequivocally popular in his area of expertise.

Best of all, NYSAC has received tremendous support from herb companies such as Crane, Kamwo, Golden Flower and Blue Light, and from schools such as Pacific College of Oriental Medicine, which makes a monthly financial contribution to NYSAC. State professional organizations (the Acupuncture Society of New York and the American Traditional Chinese Medicine Society), national professional organizations (the NCCAOM and the AAAOM), licensed acupuncturists and students have all come together to support the cause. Student volunteers and groups that have formed at Touro College, the School of AOM at New York Chiropractic College, and Pacific College of Oriental Medicine provide vital contributions of their own time and energy to the cause.

The positive reception and growth of acupuncture as a holistic therapy is increasingly placing pressure on the profession to grow at a pace which will be held in high esteem and regard. NYSAC is well-regarded in its pursuits to do just this. Michael Jabbour, MS, LAc, Dipl. OM, a member of the steering committee, stated, "This is one of the most concentrated political efforts to date in New York State."

Due to the unified response to this issue, NYSAC has established the 50 Club for friends of NYSAC who are willing to contribute \$50 per month until the initiative has been passed. To join the 50 Club or read about the initiative, news and events, go to: [Web Site](#).

NYSAC's lobbyist has recently been effective in pursuing bill sponsorship and anticipates the legislative change will require approximately one to two years.

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