

In recent decades, Oriental Medicine has grown in popularity in the United States as a holistic approach to the management of disease as well as for the maintenance of health. Certification, accreditation and licensure structures have been established to move the profession forward. This goal has been largely achieved as reflected in the adoption of licensure laws in most states; the recognition of the field as a viable health care modality in the U.S.; and the growing number of third-party payers that offer insurance coverage for Oriental medicine treatments.

Forty-two states and the District of Columbia have recognized acupuncture and Oriental medicine. Legislation has been introduced in eight additional states. Currently, there are more than 20,000 licensed acupuncture practitioners in the country.

The U.S. Department of Education authorizes the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine to accredit three-year master's level programs in acupuncture and four-year master's level programs in acupuncture and Oriental medicine. There are more than 50 accredited or candidate colleges of acupuncture and Oriental Medicine in the U.S. today. Currently, over 7,000 students are enrolled in acupuncture and Oriental medical colleges nationwide.

In the United States, there is increasing public awareness of and demand for complementary medicine, including Oriental medicine. The World Health Organization estimates that 74% of the American population desires a more natural approach to healthcare. According to the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine, nearly one out of every 10 adults in the U.S. has tried acupuncture.

In a 2002 National Health Interview Survey, an estimated 8.2 million adults in the United States reported being treated by acupuncture, administered by acupuncturists, physicians, and dentists for relief or prevention of pain and other health conditions. In 1997 there were 385.9 million visits to mainstream primary care physicians but there were over 600 million visits to complementary medicine practitioners. As a result, the number of the nation's insurers covering acupuncture treatments almost tripled between 1992 and 2001.

Doctors, researchers, insurance companies, and patients agree that the growing field Oriental medicine has a proven track record for its effectiveness in treating illness.

As an Oriental Medicine practitioner, you can create a financially supportive career with a flexible work schedule that is rewarding on many levels. The settings in which you can work include individual and group acupuncture practices; shared practices with physicians, chiropractors, or other health professionals; affiliations with drug detoxification programs, hospitals, or integrated health clinics. Other career options include teaching, translating, publishing, research, or working with an herb or acupuncture supply company.

According to Salary.com, an acupuncturist's gross annual income in 2006 ranged from \$30,405 per year to over \$100,000 per year, depending on the practice. For example, practitioners who worked in hospitals made over \$65,000 per year, while practitioners who worked for non-profit organizations made under \$35,000 per year.

No matter what work environment you choose, a career in acupuncture and Oriental Medicine is exciting and fulfilling. Modalities such as Oriental medicine are a sensible alternative to more conventional Western medical practices and interest in acupuncture and Oriental medicine has never been higher.

As a practitioner, you will continue to enrich your skills through experience in practice. Your dedication and self-cultivation will determine your success in the field. Acupuncture school is just the beginning. Let Daoist Traditions be part of your journey.

## **Resources for Learning More about a Career in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine**

### **Education:**

#### **ACAOM – Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine**

Founded in 1982 and recognized by the US Department of Education, this is the recognized organization that accredits AOM (Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine) colleges and programs. Their established education and institutional requirements are used by many states use as a prerequisite for licensure.

[www.acaom.org](http://www.acaom.org)

#### **CCAOM- Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine**

Founded in 1982 to advance the status of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine in the US and promote educational excellence within the field.

[www.ccaom.org](http://www.ccaom.org)

### **State Licensing:**

#### **NAF - National Acupuncture Foundation**

A nonprofit founded in 1991 for the promotion of acupuncture and Oriental Medicine and its allied health modalities in the US. Their website has a list of states with links to the licensing boards and regulatory requirements for practicing in each one.

[www.nationalacupuncturefoundation.org](http://www.nationalacupuncturefoundation.org)

#### **NCALB – North Carolina Acupuncture Licensing Board**

The NCALB regulates the practice of Acupuncture within the state of North Carolina, providing state licensure to practitioners and maintaining standards in the field. For specific information about state requirements, they have an extensive website, or contact Paola Ribedeneira, the Executive Director at (919) 821-3008.

[www.ncalb.com](http://www.ncalb.com)

### **National Certification:**

#### **NCCAOM – National Certification Commission for Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine**

Established in 1982, this nonprofit provides a unified set of standards to promote competence and safety in the practice of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, for the protection and benefit of the public. They have also established the National Certification Examination which most states, including NC, require as a prerequisite for licensure.

[www.nccaom.org](http://www.nccaom.org)

### **See also:**

**TCM Student** – Resources for students

[www.tcmstudent.com](http://www.tcmstudent.com)

**Acupuncture Today** - An Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine news source

[www.acupuncturetoday.com](http://www.acupuncturetoday.com)

**Natural Healers** - a Directory of schools and information about Natural Healing techniques

[www.naturalhealers.com](http://www.naturalhealers.com)

### **Books to learn more about Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine:**

Wood becomes Water, Chinese Medicine in Everyday Life, Gail Reichstein, L.Ac., Kodansha America Inc., New York, N.Y., 1998

Between Heaven and Earth, A Guide to Chinese Medicine, Harriet Beinfield, L.Ac. and Efrem Korngold, L.Ac., O.M.D., Ballantine Books, New York, 1991.

A Brief History of Qi, Zhang Yu Huan & Ken Rose, Paradigm Publications, Brookline, MA, 2001