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Clinton Appoints 13-Member White House Commission on CAM Policy

Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Garner Three Representatives

By Editorial Staff

On July 13, President Clinton announced his first set of appointments to the White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy.

The commission, established by the Fiscal Year 1999 omnibus appropriations bill, is assigned the task of making legislative and administrative recommendations to the president regarding research, training and certification of CAM practitioners; insurance coverage; and other issues related to complementary and alternative care.

The commission is chaired by Dr. James Gordon, a Harvard-educated physician with a private practice in Washington, D.C. Dr. Gordon previously chaired the program advisory council at the National Institutes of Health's Office of Alternative Medicine and has been a clinical professor at the Georgetown University School of Medicine since 1980. He is a member of the NIH's cancer advisory panel and was the director of a special study of alternative services for the President Clinton's Commission on Mental Health. He has written extensively on the subjects of psychiatry and alternative/holistic care, and currently serves on the editorial boards of *Alternative and Complementary Therapies* and *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*.

While a majority of the commission is made up of medical doctors, nearly a third of its members have strong ties to the acupuncture and Oriental medicine profession. Two acupuncture practitioners and the president of one of the largest acupuncture HMOs in the nation have also been named to the commission, giving Oriental medicine a much-needed voice in determining health care policy in the U.S.

The representatives to the commission are:

Sister Charlotte R. Kerr, MAc, Dipl.Ac., RSM, BSN, RN, MPH. Ms. Kerr has more than 30 years of experience in the health care arena, having served as a primary care nurse practitioner and assistant professor of nursing at the University of Maryland School of Nursing (UMSN), a consultant in public health and, since 1977, a senior faculty member at the Traditional Acupuncture Institute in Baltimore, Maryland. She received her BSN from the University of Maryland School of Nursing and also holds master's degrees in acupuncture and public health.

Sister Kerr is currently a member of the advisory council of the National Institutes of Health's Alternative Medicine Program, and is on the scientific board of the Centre for Alternative Medicine Pain Research and Evaluation at the University of Maryland. She has also served on the governor's Acupuncture Advisory Council for the state of Maryland and the Center for Women's Health and Medicine at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore.

Effie Poy Yew Chow, LAc, Dipl.Ac., PhD. Dr. Chow is the founder of the East West Academy of Healing Arts, the Qigong Institute, the American Qigong Association and the World Qigong Federation. Dr. Chow received her training in traditional Chinese medicine and *qigong* in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Canada, and the U.S. She has a PhD in higher education, and is also a registered public health and psychiatric nurse.

Dr. Chow has been the only *qigong* grandmaster and acupuncturist to be involved in the development of national health policies within the Department of Health and Human Services, having served as a consultant to DHHS for more than a quarter century. She was part of the first ad hoc advisory panel of the National Institutes of Health's Office of Alternative Medicine. She has received dozens of awards for her contributions to the field of Oriental medicine, including an "Outstanding Service Award" from the National Acupuncture Association and the "President's Citation Award" from the American Association for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

George DeVries, BA. Mr. DeVries is the president and CEO of American Specialty Health, one of the largest managed care organizations in California. In his position, he manages complementary and alternative health care benefits, networks and services for more than 60 health plans covering more than 25 million Americans. He has published several articles and delivered lectures on the role of alternative health care in managed care and third-party reimbursement.

In addition to Kerr, Chow, DeVries and Gordon, nine other members have already been named to the commission:

- George M. Bernier Jr., MD (Galveston, TX);
- William R. Fair, MD (Long Boat Key, FL);
- Joseph J. Fins, MD (New York, NY);
- Wayne B. Jonas, MD (Alexandria, VA);
- Dean Ornish, MD (Sausalito, CA);
- Conchita M. Paz, MD (Las Cruces, NM);
- Buford L. Rolin (Atmore, AL);
- Julia Scott (Washington, D.C.);
- Thomas Chappell, BA (Kennebunk, ME)

Ramifications for the Profession

The formation of the CAM commission signals another important step in the integration of complementary and alternative care into the American health system. The appointments of Chow, DeVries and Kerr to the commission, meanwhile, could have a great influence on the future of acupuncture and Oriental medicine as it is perceived in the United States. By working so closely with the president and DHHS, they will play a vital role in deciding where and how research into complementary care will be conducted and how the information gleaned from that research will benefit the American public.

Performing rigorous scientific studies that prove the efficacy of acupuncture and Oriental medicine, for example, could lead to increased insurance coverage and better reimbursement rates for practitioners. Favorable large-scale clinical trials would also provide more legitimacy for the profession and help increase the chances of acupuncture licensing laws being passed in states where such regulations don't yet exist.

"As we enter the 21st century, we need to get better information to ensure American families have access to the best and most cost-effective health care," said President Clinton. "I know I join the Congress, the policy makers, and the American public in saying how much we look forward to the results of the commission's work."

The commission's first objective will be to provide a report to the president through Donna Shalala, the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, on legislative and administrative

recommendations for assuring that public policy maximizes the benefits of complementary care. The commission is also expected to expand to a total of 20 members by the end of the year.



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