World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies and EUROTCM Update

By Kabba Anand, DAc, LAc, Dipl. Ac., Dipl. CH

Discussion of the development of the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies (WFCMS) has been underway for years; however, the planning formally began in April 2000. On June 26, 2002, the State Council of the People’s Republic of China endorsed the formation of WFCMS, and pledged 1.2 million yuan (approximately $145,000 U.S.) to the project.

In April 2003, a preparatory conference was held. WFCMS was officially launched at a Sept. 23-26 meeting in Beijing. Representatives from 44 countries participated (from more than 100 societies), whose combined constituents were estimated to be 100,000 practitioners worldwide.

WFCMS is an international, nongovernmental, nonprofit organization of Chinese medicine societies and individuals devoted to advancing Chinese medicine and assisting in the development of Integrative medicine in order to benefit the health of all people. The proposed activities of WFCMS include:

1. developing and promoting international educational and examination standards;
2. promoting international exchange between practitioners and societies of Chinese medicine;
3. promoting Chinese medicine internationally; and
4. advancing educational standards, including distance learning and self-assessment.

On the evening of Sept. 23, the leadership and primary planners of WFCMS gathered to review the conference agenda and procedures. Preparatory Committee Deputy Secretary-General Long Zhixian gave a welcoming speech. He spoke of the unique opportunity before us to bring the international community together to promote TCM. He encouraged us to ensure WFCMS has a diverse representation, including educators, researchers, honorary members and senior members.

On Sept. 24, participating delegates from around the world were divided into three groups. The Europeans and Australians, Asians and Africans, and North and South American delegates met separately to review the proposed constitution and official logo, and recommended candidates for seats on the council. Each group nominated Jing She as Chair of WFCMS. She is currently Vice-Minister for the Ministry of Health in the
People’s Republic of China, and Director General for the State Administration of TCM. Each group then nominated candidates for vice-chair and executive director seats from each region. There was representation from many small associations, several of which appear to have formed within the past two years. Participating groups from the U.S. included the American Association of Oriental Medicine (AAOM), the National Association of Chinese Medicine, the American Association of Chinese Medicine & Acupuncture, and the National Federation of Chinese TCM Organizations, to name a few.

On Sept. 25, the official opening ceremony was held, after which detailed review and discussion was held regarding the structure and function of WFCMS. Some discrepancies were found between the Chinese and English versions of the Constitution. For example, the Chinese-language version allowed each participating organization to have several people elected to the council, whereas the English-language version only allowed each organization to have one representative on the Council.

Each group then came forward to present to the General Assembly their feedback on issues or problems that might need to be explored further. Andreas Bayer, from Austria and representing the European group, suggested that a bylaw committee be formed to review and correct discrepancies between the Chinese and English-language versions. In addition, he recommended that the council consider adopting one of the following three options:

1. Allow only one representative from each organization on the Council.
2. Allow two representatives from organizations with larger constituencies.
3. Allow larger organizations a greater number of representatives, proportional to the size of the organization.

He also suggested that the name of the federation be modified to be World Federation of Chinese Medicine, so as not to exclude participation from individuals, educators and researchers who might not be affiliated with a professional organization.

Later in the day, delegates voted to adopt the draft of the constitution, with the understanding that corrections would be made, including edits to the translation. A banquet was held at day’s end.

On the final day, formal votes were cast by secret ballot for council seats. The persons selected to serve as Vice-Chair from North America are Steven Aung from Canada, and Xiaoming Tian, David Maloney, and Angela Tu from the U.S. The Vice-Chair from South America is Robson Campos Gutierre from Brazil.
Europe has four Vice-Chairs, including Andreas Bayer from Austria, Pedro Choy from Portugal, Zhilin Dong from the Netherlands, and Wanfang Mei from the United Kingdom. The council then convened the first official meeting of WFCMS and selected committee chairs and senior and expert advisors. That afternoon, a discussion was held regarding establishing international educational standards for Chinese medicine. Standing committees convened before the closing ceremony was held.

The executive branch of WFCMS will meet annually, and a full council meeting will occur biannually. A larger conference, including elections, will occur every four years. WFCMS hopes to become the primary organization of TCM in the world, creating higher educational standards, and recommending educational and testing standards to the World Health Organization (WHO). More information can be found at the federation’s Web site, www.wfcms.org.

EUROTCM

For the past three years, practitioners, educators and supporters of TCM from Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, Sweden, the U.K. and Belgium have worked hard to create a united vision for the development, education and standardization of TCM. In April 2003, the European Register of Organisations of Traditional Chinese Medicine (EUROTCM) was officially recognized as an international nonprofit corporation. EUROTCM and its 39-member associations from at least 14 European countries are working together to advance TCM in Europe.

From Oct. 2-5, 2003, the 3rd European International Congress of Traditional Chinese Medicine was held in Brussels, sponsored by EUROTCM. Several members of the European community gathered, including a member of parliament, as well as representatives from the State Administration of TCM in China and from NCCAOM and ACAOM in the U.S.

EUROTCM has three working groups: ECO-TCM, which focuses on education and training; PRO-TCM, which focuses on professional practice; and PEARL-TCM, which focuses on examination and accreditation. ECO-TCM evaluates and approves educational courses offered by individuals, associations and schools. Two-hundred-hour abbreviated trainings, whether for MDs or non-MDs, are not being endorsed by ECO-TCM. PRO-TCM gives a voice to all professional organizations, both medical and non-medical. PEARL-TCM is working to develop examination and accreditation equivalencies in Europe and hopes to eventually help create an international certification. It has recently developed and adopted a standardized grading scale to improve quality assurance of educational experience.
In Europe, a basic knowledge of Western medical sciences is considered an essential part of a comprehensive education, as most practitioners are MDs. However, the quality and quantity of education differs greatly between various countries and regions. EUROTCM wants to help create educational standards and a European certification process substantially equivalent to the current Chinese and U.S. standards. They have formed scientific, herbal, acupuncture, tuina and ethics sub-groups to develop a deeper understanding of the issues in each area, keep their pulse on the latest research, and draft and adopt a code of ethics.

The Congress included a wide variety of advanced educational courses including qi gong, auricular therapy, treating menopause-related symptoms in women taking tamoxifen with acupuncture, integrative medicine for the 21st century and beyond, pulse diagnosis and many more. EUROTCM now hopes to continue developing and advancing the level of professionalism within the field of TCM, inspire and guide new health policies in Europe encouraging integrative medicine, and establish standardization for the qualification of instructors and research protocols. More information can be found at www.eurotcm.org.

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