

EDITORIAL

A New Partnership: The Society for Acupuncture Research and *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*

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It is a great pleasure to announce a collaboration between the Society for Acupuncture Research (SAR) and *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* (JACM). While fully maintaining its commitment to the greater complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) community, JACM will also become the new "Official Journal" of SAR. This is likely to prompt questions from many in the CAM community: "What is SAR?" and "Why has it chosen to partner with the JACM?"

SAR was created in the early 1990s, a seminal time for the emergence into health care consciousness of what would become known as CAM. This was the time of the "Eisenberg Effect," by which, similar to its subatomic sound-alike, the act of examining a phenomenon altered what was being observed. A national survey that revealed a widespread but largely covert use of "unconventional medical practices" (Eisenberg et al., 1993) triggered a remarkable overt level of practitioner, consumer, medical educator, media, and governmental interest in nonbiomedical systems of health care. Other prominent events included the U.S. Congress mandating the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to create a for-

mal structure to examine these nonbiomedical practices, and public television surveying the changing health care landscape in *Healing and the Mind* (Moyers, 1993).

Acupuncture was among the numerous health care options that benefited from this emergent interest. In particular, the Food and Drug Administration—in cooperation with the newly created NIH Office of Alternative Medicine—initiated a process that would clarify a 20-year legal gray area by removing the acupuncture needle from "investigational" status and reclassifying it as a "safe and effective" Class II medical device (FDA, 1996; Eskinazi and Jobst, 1996). This ruling set in motion preparations for the landmark NIH Consensus Development Conference on Acupuncture that concluded: "There is sufficient evidence of acupuncture's value to expand its use into conventional medicine and to encourage further studies of its physiology and clinical value" (NIH Consensus Conference, 1998).

Within this climate of increased interest in and scrutiny of nonbiomedical health care options, the Society for Acupuncture Research was formed. The major purpose of SAR has

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been to provide a forum for the presentation of research findings and the development of methodology to assess appropriately the value of this traditional medical practice. SAR views the term "acupuncture" in an expansive manner that includes the multiplicity of practice styles of acupuncture as well as the array of herbal therapies, *qi*-based energy exercises, and massage techniques that comprise the totality of traditional East Asian medicine.

For the past 10 years, SAR has hosted an annual conference where a hybrid vigor is generated from the interactions among professional acupuncturists (licensed acupuncturists and M.D.-acupuncturists), scientists, students at CAM and biomedical schools, and governmental and private-sector health care administrators, all concerned with what research can reveal about acupuncture's "physiology and clinical value." In addition, in 1999, SAR helped to launch a new journal, *Clinical Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine* (CAOM). CAOM supplemented SAR's annual conference by publishing articles addressing research design issues, reporting on observational and pilot research study results, and raising academic and clinical concerns regarding the translation and transmission of traditional East Asian medicine. While the journal served these important roles for the acupuncture community, its 5-year existence coincided with a time of mergers and acquisitions in the publishing world. In mid 2003, SAR received the news that CAOM was considered too specialized within the portfolio of the large publishing house that had acquired it; CAOM would cease its existence at year's end.

The search for a new publishing home for SAR quickly focused on JACM. Major considerations leading SAR to "the blue journal" were its outstanding reputation in the CAM research community and its MEDLINE® listing, a status seen as difficult to attain for CAOM, given its focus on fostering early-stage research and issues of academic scholarship. At a deeper level,

SAR was drawn to this decision because it shares what it perceives as JACM's core values: the importance of reaching out to clinical researchers to apply their rigorous training and creative thinking to CAM; reaching out to CAM practitioners to expand their research literacy and involvement in research; and reaching out to scientists to bring their cutting-edge technologies to bear on the mechanisms underlying CAM.

Finally, in seeking out and being welcomed by JACM into this partnership, our hope is that SAR can serve as a model for other systems of health care as they increasingly recognize the value of research for enhancing the credibility of their therapeutic traditions. It is also the hope of SAR that JACM will foster the emergence of future CAM research societies by offering to them the same publishing home and "Official Journal" designation that it has so willingly and graciously offered to SAR.

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