

## **The Osteopathic International Alliance: Unification of the Osteopathic Profession**

**By: Dr. Larry Wickless, Chair,  
Osteopathic International Alliance Steering Committee**

The Osteopathic International Alliance (OIA) is a newly formed organization of organizations. It was incorporated in Illinois, United States of America, on 20 December 2004 as a not-for-profit organization that will unify osteopathic physicians and non-physician osteopaths around the world. The mission of the Osteopathic International Alliance is to advance the philosophy and practice of osteopathic medicine and osteopathy throughout the world. The Osteopathic International Alliance has several goals, including collecting and disseminating accurate and targeted information about the state of the osteopathic profession worldwide; promoting excellence in osteopathic education, research, and health care delivery; conducting consultative partnerships with international associates and organizations to advocate for the osteopathic profession; sponsorship and delivery of educational forums; and participation in jointly sponsored research and health care related activities.

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) saw a need for an international association to represent the osteopathic profession; in June 2003 the AOA hosted the 1<sup>st</sup> Invitational Conference to Organize an International Osteopathic Association.

### 20-22 June 2003, Chicago, Illinois, USA, Organizational Conference

In June 2003, 34 individuals representing 10 countries (Australia, Canada, Columbia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Japan, United Kingdom, and the United States) and 17 international organizations traveled to Chicago, Illinois, USA, to attend the AOA's 1<sup>st</sup> Invitational Conference to Organize an International Osteopathic Association.

Those in attendance exchanged information about the state of osteopathic medicine and osteopathy in their home countries and decided that it was important to unite the osteopathic profession globally. To accomplish this goal, the attendees were asked to agree on a tentative mission statement, organizational goals, a viable organizational structure, and possible sources of funding for the new organization. The group drafted a mission statement and goals, and approved the formation of a steering committee to develop this new organization. The OIA steering committee revised the work of the conference attendees into the mission and goals mentioned above.

At the June 2003 conference, it was determined that the Osteopathic International Alliance (as it was named and approved by those in attendance) was a viable and important organization to pursue. Following the June 2003 conference, the American Osteopathic Association agreed to financially support the creation of the Osteopathic International Alliance. A steering committee was created and the members now include: Dr. Larry Wickless, DO, Chair (United States); Dr. Peter Adler-Michaelson, DO (Germany); Mr. Simon Fielding, DO (Great Britain); Dr. Ted Findlay, DO (Canada); Dr.

Daniel Marazon, DO (United States); Dr. Debra Smith, DO (United States); and Mr. Clive Standen, DO (New Zealand).

#### 5-6 June 2004, Toronto, Canada, OIA Organizational Conference

In June 2004, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Invitational Conference for the Osteopathic International Alliance was held in Toronto, Canada. There were nearly thirty attendees representing countries including Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States, as well as many different international organizations such as DOCare International, the International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities (IAMRA), Federation of State Medical Boards of the United States (FSMB), International Federation of Manual Medicine (FIMM), General Osteopathic Council of the UK (GOsC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

During this conference, attendees presented reports on the history and current state of the osteopathic profession in their respective countries. Representatives spoke about osteopathic medicine in Canada and Germany, while osteopathy in France and New Zealand was also discussed. The keynote speaker of the June 2004 conference was Dr. Xiaorui Zhang, Coordinator, Traditional Medicine, Department of Essential Drugs and Medicines Policy, World Health Organization. Dr. Zhang's presentation was titled "WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy and Cooperation with the Osteopathic International Alliance." She discussed the "WHO Guidelines on Basic Training and Safety in Osteopathic Medicine and Osteopathy," and the growth of the relationship between the WHO and the OIA.

The June 2004 Conference was held to report on the progress the Steering Committee had made since the 2003 Conference; discuss the recommendations that the Steering Committee had developed to that point; and to provide direction for the future establishment of the Alliance. The recommendations put forth by the Steering Committee included focusing on information dissemination through the Clearinghouse Web site and establishing criteria for membership categories. There was also discussion of membership categories, OIA future activities, planning mechanisms, governance, and financing of the OIA. Essentially, the conference was held to steer the direction of the formation of the OIA.

#### OIA Clearinghouse

The Osteopathic International Alliance (OIA) manages a clearinghouse of information about osteopathic medicine and osteopathy, which can be found at [www.oialliance.org](http://www.oialliance.org). This Clearinghouse works to obtain, review and distribute the most accurate information currently available regarding the osteopathic profession internationally. In countries where standards have already been established, the Clearinghouse provides a summary of osteopathic medicine and osteopathy, educational and organizational contact information, as well as practice and licensure/registration requirements and contacts. The OIA clearinghouse serves as a credible, reliable source of information for the use of participating organizations as well as interested governmental, regulatory, and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) bodies that are advancing the interests of osteopathy and promoting health care globally.

The Clearinghouse delineates information on osteopathic medicine and osteopathy for the following countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, New Zealand, and the United States. As the OIA database expands to additional countries, the OIA Clearinghouse will update its Web site to keep its members updated and informed. The information will be protected under United States copyright laws.

#### OIA Membership Categories

The OIA Steering Committee is currently working on its membership structure. The membership of the OIA will include groups such as nationally recognized osteopathic physician and non-physician osteopath organizations; osteopathic groups that are currently working towards national recognition; and other groups that contribute to the osteopathic profession, such as educational institutions, foundations, and regulatory bodies, among others. At the present time, the OIA Steering Committee has prepared these categories for presentation and approval at the OIA's Inaugural Conference on 29-31 July 2005.

#### 29-31 July 2005, Inaugural Conference of the Osteopathic International Alliance

The OIA Steering Committee has worked diligently to prepare the Osteopathic International Alliance for its unveiling as a not-for-profit organization with viable and functioning membership categories, dues structure and mission and goals. The Inaugural Conference of the Osteopathic International Alliance (OIA) will be held 29-31 July 2005, in Washington, DC, at the Capital Hilton Hotel. At this meeting the attendees will officially approve the development that has taken place since the first Invitational Conference, in June 2003. At this Inaugural Conference, members of the OIA will also vote to approve the recommendations that have been made over the last two years by the Steering Committee.

#### Looking Forward

Over the next several years, the OIA aims to become the prime source of information collection and dissemination for osteopathic research, education, licensure and registration, as well as association and organization contacts. The OIA also looks forward to hosting educational forums that help to strengthen the knowledge of members and others in the osteopathic profession, and that will facilitate the understanding of the differences among the osteopathic profession as it is practiced globally. The Alliance will become a communication network for the osteopathic profession, facilitating student rotation exchange programs and joint research projects for the osteopathic profession around the world.