



2021-2026 Strategic Plan

The American Society of Acupuncturists (ASA) was formed in 2015 to advocate for and advance the professional and clinical practice of acupuncture and herbal medicine across the United States. As of 2021, **34** state associations are members of the ASA, representing more than **5,000** members across these state organizations.

More than **30,000**¹ credentialed practitioners hold advanced degrees in acupuncture and herbal medicine. Members benefit from our advocacy efforts to make our whole system of medicine accessible to diverse populations.

To inform the ASA's five-year strategic plan, ASA conducted market research of the acupuncture community to understand what acupuncturists expect from state and national associations. Council Members, our Board of Directors, and state association members collaborated over the course of a year to share ideas and insights to prioritize the work of the ASA and prepare this plan.

In our first decade, working independently and collaboratively, our growing profession of Licensed Acupuncturists will bring whole-person medical care to more people in the American healthcare system to make us a healthier nation.

Achieving whole-person medical care in the American healthcare system

1. Fan, Arthur & Stumpf, Steven & Faggert Alemi, Sarah & Matecki, Amy. (2018). Distribution of licensed acupuncturists and educational institutions in the United States at the start of 2018. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*. 41. 295-301. 10.1016/j.ctim.2018.10.015

Our Work Together 2021 – 2026

Mission

Advancing the professional practice of acupuncture as a whole system of medicine through advocacy, education, and research.

Vision

Acupuncturists are valued leaders and partners in the American healthcare system, and patients have equitable access to our care.

Values

We are guided by our commitment to:

Professional Excellence

Respect

Collaboration

Effectiveness

Growth and Empowerment

Advocacy &
Awareness

Access &
Integration

Education

Professionalism

Research &
Evidence



Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act of 2021

“Everyone deserves the ability to take control of their own healthcare, and that should include access to traditional Asian medicine, which has been proven successful at treating a range of health problems for thousands of years. And as Americans deal with a chronic pain and opioid epidemic, support for acupuncture as a safe alternative has been increasing over the years.

*The Affordable Care Act helped to increase access by allowing states to cover acupuncture in plans on state health exchanges, but we must do more. It is my goal to make this treatment available to all Americans, which is why I introduced the **Acupuncture for Seniors Act of 2021** to help seniors in our Medicare program access acupuncture.”*

*~ Representative Judy Chu
(CA-27), July 30, 2021*



Photo Eric Connolly, House Creative Services

Statement of Support

The Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act. H.R. 4803 is designed to instruct the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to recognize qualified acupuncturists as Medicare providers. Medicare recognition would enable eligible acupuncturists to provide covered services to Medicare beneficiaries (generally those 65+) without supervision and to bill Medicare directly for these services.

The ASA and the NCCAOM support the Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act and encourage policymakers to co-sponsor H.R. 4803.

Get our [fact sheet](#)

Patient Benefits

- Receive holistic, non-invasive, evidenced-based, non-opioid care to manage acute and chronic pain
- Benefit from personalized medical and preventive care
- Receive insurance benefits for care to improve affordable care and participate in complete treatment plans



Our Work Together 2021 – 2026



The **Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act H.R. 4803** will modernize the Medicare program and foster integrative medicine. Join us in supporting the passage of this act to:

- Increase access to acupuncture and herbal medical care for 60 million Medicare beneficiaries
- Enable qualified acupuncturists to provide covered services as Medicare providers and bill Medicare directly for services provided
- Align Medicare policy with acupuncturist scope-of-practice laws
- Establish an acupuncture-coverage model for other payers that often follow CMS coverage policy.





Advocacy & Awareness

In 2020, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced the historic decision to cover acupuncture for low back pain and indicated Licensed Acupuncturists as the key group of providers. Acupuncture and herbal medicine are a unique first-line treatments that effectively reduces pain without the use of addictive drugs.

The passage of the **Acupuncture for Seniors Act of 2021** will transform the American healthcare system as qualified Licensed Acupuncturists serve patients covered by Medicare.

With an increase of personalized care, our entire medical system will benefit more of our population. The incalculable cost and toll on lives during the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that the American healthcare system must address underlying chronic conditions with new urgency or continue to fail Americans in need.

A wide range of patients, especially in underserved populations, need more access to cost-effective, preventive, and palliative medicine. We strive to work with the medical community and insurance companies to improve collaboration and acceptance of acupuncture and its complementing modalities.

Our Values



Professional Excellence

In the modern medicine approach, acupuncturists attain credentials to practice after at least 1900 hours of education in Asian medicine, achieving Master's or Doctoral level degrees. This accredited, educational standard ensures the safe practice of this natural system of holistic healing.

Licensed Acupuncturists must pass state and nationally recognized examinations and they continue their medical education throughout their career. Specialty board certifications are available in areas of reproductive medicine, orthopedics, and oncology.

Continuing education is required to maintain professional credentials.

We uphold the code of ethics and discipline of the national board-certifying organization, the [National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine](#) and state licensing boards.



Through our advocacy and the passage of the Acupuncture for Seniors Act of 2021, we will:

1. Become an independent provider group covered under Medicare.

We work at the state and national level on legislation and policies that expand access to acupuncture and herbal medicine as part of public and private insurance and wellness programs. Our goal is to benefit more patients by increasing coverage for more conditions and expanding professional opportunities to practice in public and private healthcare settings.

2. Expand the professional practice of acupuncture and herbal medicine by improving awareness and understanding of its impact and efficacy.

We advocate for insurance reimbursement that recognizes the wide number of health conditions we can and do effectively treat as a result of the medical education, training, and certifications that Licensed Acupuncturists attain. We also advocate for regulations and standards for herbal medicine, natural products, and compounding safety to promote public confidence and safety.

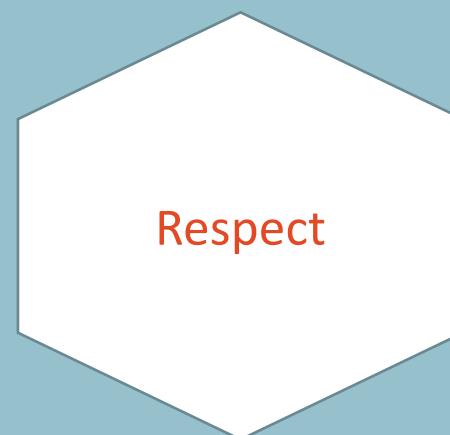
3. Make it easier for acupuncturists to practice.

We will work to establish practice acts for all 50 states and the District of Columbia and seek to establish “essential” status to Licensed Acupuncturists in all states. We will help acupuncturists navigate licensure portability, and advocate for interstate compact agreements where appropriate.

4. Empower patients as advocates for their healthcare needs.

We provide a wide number of resources to our patients so they can confidently communicate with their healthcare providers about concerns, preferences, and treatment and champion acupuncture and herbal medical care.

Our Values



We welcome practitioners across diverse regional and historical traditions of acupuncture, herbal medicine, and related treatment modalities.

We respect the rights, privacy, and dignity of individuals in all our work with our patients and colleagues across healthcare professions.

We strive to improve health care by identifying and rectifying discrimination of all kinds to reduce disparities in public health.





Advocacy & Awareness

At the national and state levels, our communication efforts reach practicing acupuncturists, acupuncture and herbal medicine students, educators and researchers, funders and policymakers in government and insurance sectors, medical suppliers and continuing education providers, people seeking acupuncture and medical professionals across health care.

1. We share developments in legislation and policy.

We keep members informed of our advocacy efforts, developments and results of legislation at state and national levels.

2. We help people learn about and find acupuncture care in their local community.

ASA promotes national and state directories of member providers to help patients access qualified practitioners and to support our members. We support public awareness campaigns with resources and education about research on and benefits of acupuncture and herbal medical care.

3. We promote the practice of acupuncture as a part of integrated, holistic, patient-centered health care.

ASA and state associations increase awareness among the public and health care providers of acupuncture, which may include prescriptions for herbal medicine compounds, diet, nutrition, and movement therapies.

Our Values



Collaboration

Working collaboratively creates positive change and strengthens relationships across our profession.

Education and advancing the understanding of acupuncture and herbal medicine unifies us and strengthens our voice.

By collaborating with the broader community of professional healthcare providers, and organizations at the state, national, and international levels, we promote the safest, highest standards of care, positive patient outcomes, and improve the professional practice of integrative medicine.





1. We are an inclusive organization.

We welcome practitioners across the diverse traditions of modern and classical acupuncture, herbal medicine, and treatment modalities originating from traditional Chinese and Asian Medicine. By increasing the diversity of acupuncturists, we will reach wider patient populations. We support those healthcare professionals from diverse fields who practice acupuncture and herbal medicine by seeking a degree from an Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine (ACAHM)-accredited institution on a path to licensure.

2. We promote the practice of acupuncture in diverse healthcare settings.

After a systematic review of research, acupuncture expanded opportunities for acupuncturists to work in VA Medical Centers. We seek to increase access to acupuncture and herbal medical care by creating opportunities to practice in more diverse settings to serve wider populations.

Today, most acupuncturists are in private practice. By 2026, our goal is to create more career pathways and job opportunities for acupuncturists.

We continuously strive to increase the visibility and recognition of acupuncture and herbal medicine in U.S. healthcare systems and promote equitable insurance coverage for conditions where standards of evidence are met.

Our Values



We hold ourselves accountable to our patients, our peers, and the public as we practice and promote patient-centered health care with the highest quality and standards.

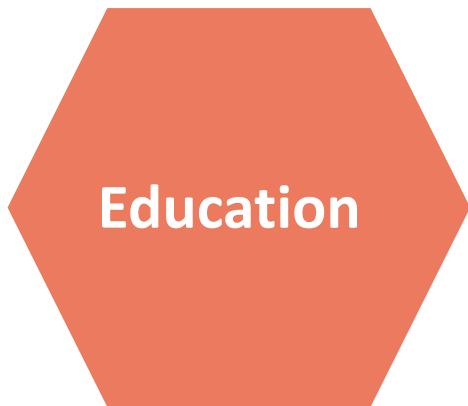
As a traditional and modern medical practice, we seek to build knowledge and understanding of the mechanisms and efficacy of acupuncture for evidence-based clinical care, improved patient outcomes, and whole-person wellness.

We offer resources, training, and mentorship in advocacy, leadership, and practice-building to help members and volunteers expand access to acupuncture through the promotion of thriving practices.



3. We promote cultural competency in acupuncture and herbal medicine.

The ASA member organizations stand for the deliverance of health care that reduces health disparities and systemic inequities. We continually strive to help practitioners and institutions provide care to patients with diverse values, beliefs, and behaviors, including the tailoring of healthcare delivery to meet patients' social, cultural, and linguistic needs.



1. We advocate for federal programs that improve accessibility and affordability of education in acupuncture and herbal medicine.

With passage of the Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act, we will move forward to make student loan forgiveness opportunities available.

2. We create leadership and mentorship opportunities for students to participate in their state association, advance research, find opportunities to practice, and grow our professional organization.
3. We collaborate with educational institutions to help students successfully transition to professional practice, whether in private practice as an owner or employee, or in VA and hospital-based settings, and to prepare for emerging opportunities in research.

Our Values



Growth & Empowerment

We empower Licensed Acupuncturists to provide care to diverse populations in their communities.

We advocate for acupuncture pain care and wellness to combat the U.S. opioid epidemic, leading to increasing demand among veterans, seniors, cancer patients and survivors, and many others with chronic pain.

We create opportunities for Licensed Acupuncturists to work in diverse clinical settings, including private practice and public institutions, so they can reach their potential as compassionate clinical healthcare providers.



Professionalism

We help acupuncturists grow their careers as well as advance acupuncture and herbal medical care. We support pathways to satisfying careers as clinicians, educators, researchers, and business owners. We support members through resources including networking, mentorship, and education, as well as by respecting their diverse and independent career paths.

1. We work with continuing education providers, acupuncture and herbal supply companies, technology solutions, and insurance providers to provide valued, quality services for profitable practice growth.
2. We seek to increase opportunities for referrals and collaboration within integrative medicine teams and across all practice environments in U.S. health care.
3. We recognize and nurture volunteer members to advance the health and strength of our organizations, deliver value to more members and develop local and national leadership to achieve our goals for the public health.

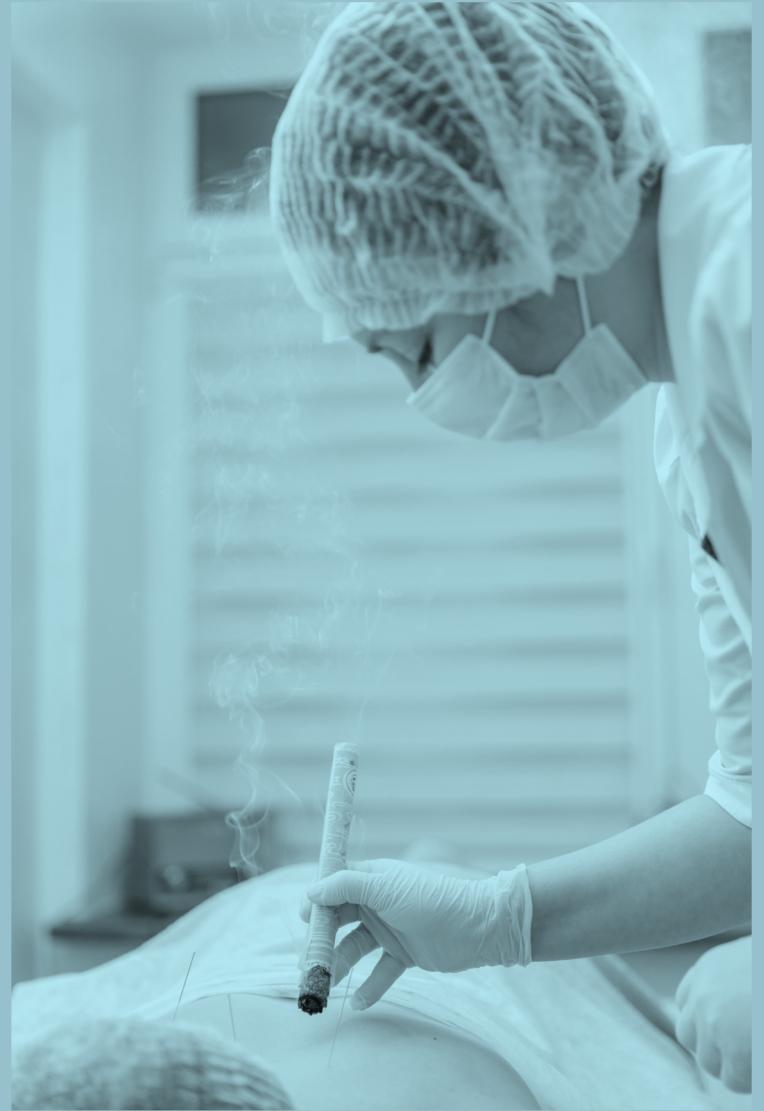


Photo by Thirdman on pexels



Research & Evidence

The NCCIH seeks to increase the number and diversity of scientist-clinicians able to conduct rigorous complementary and integrative health research, thereby creating new opportunities for acupuncturists in expanded practice settings.

1. We advocate for the modern, evidence-based practice of acupuncture and herbal medicine.

As a traditional and modern medical practice, we promote evidence-based acupuncture and herbal medical care. Treatment is informed by the best available evidence, clinical knowledge and expertise, and understanding of patients' unique needs and preferences to make informed patient-care decisions and deliver optimal health outcomes.

2. We disseminate research developments in acupuncture and herbal medicine.

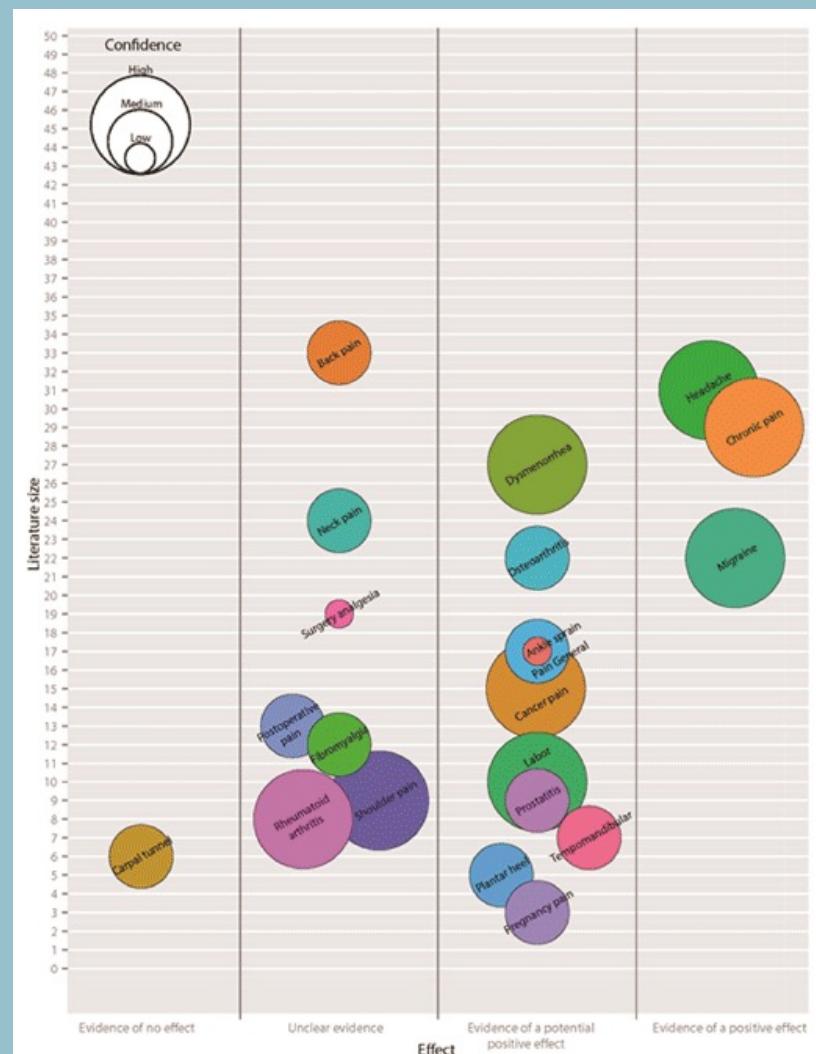
We share scholarly content and research developments to inform evidence-based decision-making in practice and policy-making. We provide education and training on planning and funding research and preparing results for publication.

3. We advocate for research funding that strengthens evidence for the modern practice of acupuncture and herbal medical medicine.

We seek to increase funding and research opportunities to build modern evidence for today's practice of acupuncture and herbal medicine.

EVIDENCE MAP OF ACUPUNCTURE FOR PAIN²

The results for the clinical indication Pain are presented in the bubble plot and a text summary below. The bubble plot summarizes the results of 59 systematic reviews for 21 distinct indications relevant to the outcome pain [search date: March 2013].



Acupuncture for Chronic Pain: Update of an Individual Patient Data Meta-analysis³

“Acupuncture is effective for the treatment of chronic musculoskeletal, headache and osteoarthritis pain. Treatment effects of acupuncture persist over time and cannot be explained solely in terms of placebo effects. Referral for a course of acupuncture treatment is a reasonable option for a patient with chronic pain.”

² Principal Investigators: Susanne Hempel, PhD Paul G. Shekelle, MD, PhD; Co-Investigators: Stephanie L. Taylor, PhD Michelle R. Solloway, PhD; [Evidence Map of Acupuncture](#), Evidence-based Synthesis Program (ESP) Center, West Los Angeles VA Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA; Washington (DC): Department of Veterans Affairs; January 2014, Amended July 2, 2021.

³ Vickers AJ, Cronin AM, Maschino AC, et al. Acupuncture for Chronic Pain: Update of an Individual Patient Data Meta-analysis, *The Journal of Pain*, Vol 19, No 5 (May), 2018; pp 455-474, doi [10.1016/j.jpain.2017.11.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpain.2017.11.005)

