

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Dr. Kallie Guimond, D.O.M., L.Ac.  
Legislative & Regulatory Liaison, ASA Board  
240-432-7522, Drkallieguimond@gmail.com

## **ACUPUNCTURE CAPITOL HILL BRIEFING PRESENTS POWERFUL, COST-EFFECTIVE TREATMENT OPTIONS TO NATION'S OPIOID EPIDEMIC**

**Washington, DC** (November 8, 2017) -- With the nation reeling from the mounting opioid overdose epidemic, acupuncturists from the American Society of Acupuncturists (ASA) and the American Alliance for Professional Acupuncture Safety (AAPAS) presented compelling evidence to demonstrate how this comprehensive, dynamic system can offer safe and cost-effective treatment alternatives for both pain and addiction recovery. Attendees were offered sample acupuncture treatments conducted by a team of licensed acupuncturists from around the country, further deepening their understanding of this powerful tool in the fight to combat opioid abuse and overdose deaths.

The event, sponsored by Congressman Tim Ryan (D-OH) and Congresswoman Judy Chu (D-CA), drew over 50 attendees. These included a bipartisan mix of staff from the US House and Senate representing Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, several districts in California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Utah, Wisconsin and the Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives, along with government affairs directors of chronic care and allied health associations and a representative from the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM), the profession's national credentialing organization for acupuncturists.

Ellen Hamilton, representing Congresswoman Chu's office, presented opening remarks that highlighted the collaboration between these two national acupuncture organizations. This is the first time in history that licensed acupuncturists had come together to offer treatments on Capitol Hill.

Following several acupuncture group treatment sessions, panel members Dr. David W. Miller, M.D., L.Ac. and Dr. Tracy Soltesz, D.Ac., L.Ac., of the American Society of Acupuncturists (ASA), Dr. Jun Xu, M.D., L.Ac. of the American Alliance for Professional Acupuncture Safety (AAPAS), and Dr. Arthur Fan, M.D. (China), Ph.D., L.Ac. presented to the audience.

Dr. Miller spoke of the large volume of contemporary research on acupuncture, highlighting its use for the relief of pain, increasing pain tolerance, lowering the volume of opioids needed to treat pain, and assisting in addiction recovery. "We have sufficient evidence of effectiveness, a well-developed educational system, and a large force of practitioners ready to help. Acupuncture stands as a potential 'shining star' in the fight against the opioid epidemic, and Licensed Acupuncturists are ready to work. It's time for our nation develop the infrastructure needed to utilize these powerful resources."

Dr. Xu and Dr. Fan presented on the extensive educational training of acupuncturists in China, and gave examples of ways in which Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is offered as a fully integrative treatment choice in China's conventional medical institutions and hospitals. China's hospitals use acupuncture and TCM as a preventative measure to support healthy long-term lifestyle changes, thus reducing the need for surgeries that may require prescription opioids. The treatment of pain with acupuncture and other manual methods also decreases the reliance on pharmaceuticals.

Dr. Soltesz gave an overview of the comprehensive training that acupuncturists in the United States undergo in order to achieve licensure. This education includes an entry-level master's degree or professional doctorate degree with thousands of hours of didactic training in foundational theory, diagnostic skills, biomedicine, and collaborative care systems, as well as supervised clinical training. The profession also offers a post-graduate doctorate focused on advanced clinical skills and knowledge.

“One of the greatest barriers to actualizing the resources of [the licensed acupuncture] workforce is the lack of understanding regarding the extensive training that acupuncturists undergo in order to qualify for licensure,” Soltesz explained. “We have a ready and ably trained workforce but patients can’t access it because of misunderstandings that perpetuate outdated restrictions which then exclude services.”

Breaking down barriers to accessing acupuncture treatment could be life-saving, said Terri Winn, who spoke about the journey her family endured as a result of her son’s addiction to heroin. “Unfortunately, this story does not have a happy ending,” Ms. Winn said as she told the audience that her son eventually died of a fentanyl overdose following a year and a half long attempt to recover. Though her son initially declined standard pharmacological interventions during his recovery attempts, he was continually pressured by hospital staff and finally relented. After his initial dose of suboxone was administered, Ms. Winn was told by hospital staff that only 1% of those who choose this recovery option will kick their addiction.

“I know they were doing what they felt in their hearts was his best option,” Winn explained. During the time of his attempted recovery, her son experienced an acupuncture treatment and described it as the best he had felt during the difficult journey. Ms. Winn feels strongly that had acupuncture been more readily available to her son, he would be alive today. She continues to tirelessly search and advocate for non-pharmacologic options to treat opioid abuse and addiction, and believes acupuncture should be available in all hospitals and rehabilitation centers throughout the U.S.

Further outreach was undertaken by members of AAPAS, with their participating acupuncturists sending educational emails to legislators who were unable to attend the briefing. ASA’s membership spent weeks contacting their respective legislators in the House and Senate.

For more information on how acupuncture can provide a powerful tool in combating the opioid epidemic visit [www.asacu.org](http://www.asacu.org) or call ASA legislative and regulatory affairs liaison Dr. Kallie Guimond at the above contact.

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