

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING AN ADVOCATE

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID QUACKENBUSH
BY SARAH HART, LAC

In August 2020, CSOMA's Public Policy and Executive Committees hired lobbyist David Quackenbush. CSOMA Board Director, Sarah Hart spoke with Mr. Quackenbush to shed some light on an elusive yet essential function of the acupuncture profession: advocacy.

What is your role with CSOMA and why did you choose to work with CSOMA?

I have been an advocate and consultant working with nonprofit associations for over 20 years. I have previously worked with, and on behalf of, Acupuncturists and was approached to engage with CSOMA to assist in the development and implementation of its policy agenda. I have worked on creating access to primary care services for ethnically diverse, underserved families for over 20 years and my work with CSOMA is a continuation of these efforts.

Why is it important for Acupuncturists to be involved in advocating for our profession in the state government?

It is critical that all health care providers are active advocates for their profession to enable professional growth and ensure the profession is integrated into the health care delivery system. Most health care providers in California belong to an association for support in their individual work and to promote and protect the profession. Those health care providers who do not have an association representing and advocating for them tend to be left out of important health care policy decisions being made in Sacramento and Washington D.C.

Individual health care providers that do not belong to associations tend to be left to their own limited resources to advocate for themselves and do not have a broader support system for the development of business relationships and their businesses.

Why should Acupuncturists advocate?

Advocacy by and for health care providers has led to the expansion of their services to a larger patient population. The Affordable Care Act (a.k.a. Obamacare) was only passed by a focused advocacy effort from advocates throughout the country.

By advocating for acupuncture, important access to this medicine will be expanded and more readily available for patients seeking these services.

As these services expand and more patients access them, Acupuncturists will have more job opportunities and growth of their individual practices.

As these services become more requested, larger health systems will make them available in their insurance plans, services and facilities. The more coverage and inclusion of acupuncture in the health care delivery system, the more jobs.

How can Acupuncturists and patients get involved in influencing health care policy?

Join CSOMA - it's that simple.

Without individual Acupuncturists being advocates through CSOMA at the federal, state and local levels of governments, progress will be slow and minimal. Most importantly, policymakers want to hear directly from practicing Acupuncturists to understand firsthand how policy change impacts practitioners and businesses. CSOMA's impact will be directly correlated with the level of involvement from individual Acupuncturists.



DAVID QUACKENBUSH (LEFT)
SARAH HART, LAC (RIGHT)

"Individual Acupuncturists should be part of CSOMA to collectively advance the practice of acupuncture in our ever-changing health care delivery system."

How does a lobbyist help grassroots advocacy efforts be more effective?

A lobbyist is a professional advocate and is your representative in Sacramento and Washington D.C. where health policy is developed and goes through the legislative process. A lobbyist is a strategist in health policy and the legislative process but receives direction from the organizations they work on behalf of. While the lobbyist performs the activities, the organization sets the policy in which they want adopted.