



Protocol for:

OCOM Research Interest Follow-up Interviews

BACKGROUND

As complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) moves into the mainstream of healthcare, relevant and well-conducted research is needed to help inform clinical judgment and contribute to the knowledge base on the treatment of a range of medial conditions. Such research requires the participation of CAM practitioners to help design the studies, treat research subjects, and/or conduct outcomes-based studies in their own clinics. An important challenge for acupuncture and Oriental medicine (AOM) has been the lack of research training for practitioners and research education opportunities for students at AOM colleges. Between 2005 and 2007, the NIH/National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) awarded nine grants to CAM colleges to increase research appreciation and research literacy among students, faculty and graduates. OCOM was the only stand-alone AOM college to receive such a grant.

The aim of OCOM's *Acupuncture Practitioner Research Education Enhancement* (APREE) grant was to integrate research literacy and an evidence-informed perspective into the OCOM Master's and Doctoral curricula. A secondary intent of the grant was to provide competencies in the design and implementation of AOM-relevant research to those practitioners who desired to participate more directly in research.

OCOM has recently received supplemental funding (Bridge Grant) from NCCAM to help sustain the accomplishments of the initial grant and to help strengthen OCOM's position to apply for the next generation of R25 research education grants (soon to be announced by NCCAM). As an integral part of this sustainability and preparation effort, a web-based OCOM Research Interest Survey (ORIS) was launched in November 2011 to determine the extent of recent and current participation in AOM research by alumni, TAs and faculty, as well as to gauge interest in future participation as a clinician/researcher. This needs-assessment ORIS survey was completely confidential: no names or other identifying information were collected from respondents. Its purpose was to assist us in planning our next research education initiatives. The ORIS was closed at the end of December.

One hundred fifty members of the OCOM community completed the ORIS survey, representing a 15% response rate. The results of the ORIS showed us that a majority (>83%) of respondents had never received any training in research participation. Approximately 50% had participated in continuing education activities to enhance research literacy and in writing case studies, and nearly 40% had received training in evidence-based medicine and related statistical concepts, and had attended research conferences. More than half of the respondents indicated they would be interested in such research education opportunities as on-line courses; learning tips on how to discuss research with colleagues, patients, and the media; and learning basic study designs relevant to clinical practice.

We would like more detailed information about respondents' past research experience, interests in participating in future studies, and perceived needs for additional research education to help us plan future research education and participation initiatives. At the end of the ORIS, OCOM

alumni, faculty and TAs had the option of entering their name and contact information if interested in being interviewed to obtain such detailed and specific information. *Forty three respondents (29%) indicated that they would be willing to be interviewed. Their responses to the survey questions were not stored electronically along with their names and contact information. Therefore we do not know anything about their responses to ORIS.*

The goal of these follow-up interviews is to obtain additional detailed and specific information about the research experiences and interests of AOM practitioners. These interviews will help to identify what alumni perceive as their strengths and weaknesses in participating in research, as well as how OCOM can best meet the needs of alumni interested in improving their skills in accessing, evaluating, communicating and participating in research. Our intent is to inform development of research-friendly education and training initiatives for AOM clinicians who are interested in participating in research.

PROTOCOL

The study team will invite the forty-three self-identified ORIS respondents to participate in follow-up audio-recorded interviews. The sample represents faculty and TAs, as well as doctoral students and alumni of the OCOM Masters and Doctoral programs. The identified practitioners will be sent an initial email invitation (attachment 1). The email will be accompanied by a copy of the Consent Form (attachment 2), and a link to a 'Doodle' calendar in which respondents will be asked to indicate all of the potential focus group times that would be convenient for them to participate. The study coordinator will then determine 3-4 times that best suit most of the participants and will contact each person to confirm a their participation in one of the focus groups. Interviews with respondents who do not live in the Portland area will be conducted by telephone, and so the Doodle calendar will help to identify the best times for a group conference call. A member of the study team will also follow up with any persons who did not respond within ten days.

PROCEDURES

The interviews will be conducted in a focus group format of up to 10 participants. There will be 3-4 focus groups and the option of a phone conference for potential participants who live outside of the Portland area. Each focus group will comprise a recorded 50-minute semi-structured interview (interview guide attached) conducted at the OCOM Research House. Focus groups will be facilitated and audio-recorded by a member of the research team named in the IRB application. Audio recordings will be uploaded from the digital audio-recorder into the Research Department's password-protected computer storage. Interviews will be transcribed and analyzed for themes, as described below.

MEASURES

The semi-structured interview will include questions related to perception of the role of research in the field of AOM, observation of attitudes regarding research and evidence informed practice, self report about research skills, and interest in future participation in research and research education as well as examination of unexpected benefits or lessons learned from participation in research. Example of the types of question that will be asked is provided below. These questions are designed to complement the questions in the web-based survey.

FOCUS GROUP SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1—*Have you participated in research?*

2—Do you think research is important to the field of AOM? What do you see as the role of research (if any) for the field?

2—If you were at OCOM during the initial APREE grant (2005-2009), what changes in attitudes and interest in research and evidence informed practice have you observed within the OCOM community?

3--How have your own skills and attitudes regarding research and evidence informed practice changed (if at all) over the past few years?

4--In what ways (if any) do you see yourself as involved in some type of research activities at this stage of your career? How would this complement your clinical practice?

5—What are some thoughts you have about how OCOM might continue to provide education in research and research opportunities?

6—Please describe any unexpected benefits or lessons learned from your participation in research *if any*.

DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

Digital recordings of interviews will be up-loaded to the investigators password protected computer. Participants will be asked not to state their name (or name of others) during the interview. If needed, pseudonyms will be assigned post-hoc and used for publication purposes. Members of the research team will transcribe the tapes.

Descriptive analysis, assisted by qualitative research software, will be conducted by a collaboration of research team members. Descriptive analysis will characterize participants' research education, interest, and experience. Interviews will be analyzed with the assistance of software designed for qualitative research. Key themes and unique responses will be identified. Two members of the research team will read the transcripts and assign codes to demarcated segments that are relevant to the research objectives. Agreement between the two coders will help to insure validity of the assigned codes. Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, such as NVivo, will also be used to enhance the analysts' efficiency at data storage/retrieval and at applying the codes to the data. When coding is complete, the analysts will prepare reports via a mix of: summarizing the relative prevalence of codes, discussing similarities and differences in related codes across distinct contexts, or comparing the relationship between one or more codes.