

American Botanical Council Celebrates 25 Years of Herbal Medicine Education

In November 2013, the American Botanical Council (ABC) celebrated a quarter century of promoting the responsible, science-based use of herbal medicine.

The nonprofit's 25th anniversary is a major milestone for the Austin, Texas-based organization. "I've been affiliated with and have supported ABC since its inception, because I believe in its mission," said Andrew Weil, MD, founder and director of the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona College of Medicine. "As more health professionals are trained to use medicinal plants and other natural therapies, healthcare costs will decrease and health outcomes will improve. Education is required for this to happen, education of the sort that ABC has provided over the past 25 years and I'm sure will continue to provide."

In the 1980s, when the modern herbal medicine movement was experiencing a revival and consumer awareness and exposure to natural medicine was slowly increasing, ABC Founder and Executive Director Mark Blumenthal saw the need for an authoritative, science-based source

of information on botanical medicine to act as a touchstone for herbal education and quality for all aspects of the herbal industry including consumers. Blumenthal, whose passion for herbal medicine earned him the nickname "Herbal Cowboy," together with two internationally respected medicinal plant experts—ethnobotanist James A. Duke, PhD, and the late pharmacognosist Norman R. Farnsworth, PhD—established the educational nonprofit American Botanical Council in 1988.

As ABC celebrated its 25th anniversary, the organization's flagship publication—the quarterly, peer-reviewed journal *HerbalGram*—commemorated 30 years of herbal education with its 100th issue. Part scientific journal, part consumer magazine, *HerbalGram* has furthered ABC's unique nonprofit educational mission by disseminating extensively researched, literature-supported, and expertly peer-reviewed information on botanical medicine. "From history to new clinical studies, reporting on new regulatory and market developments to comprehensive reviews and covering the world's herbs and the world of herbs, no publication has provided more to all interested stakeholders in every aspect of herbal medicine," said author and medicinal plant expert Steven Foster.

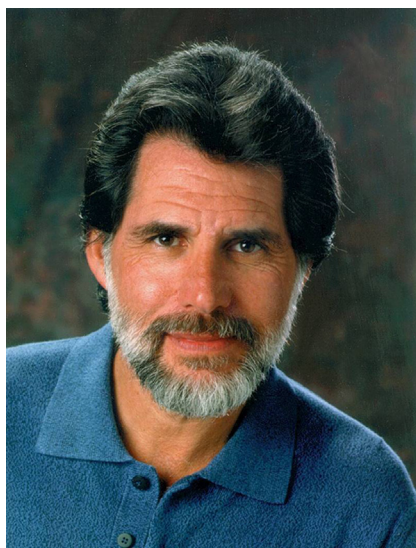
In addition to *HerbalGram*, ABC publishes numerous other publications that provide dependable herbal medicine information for consumers, health care practitioners, researchers, educators, industry, the media, and more. The nonprofit's most recent new publication, the weekly online newsletter, "Herbal News & Events," keeps ABC members and supporters abreast of events, conferences, and news items relevant to the herbal community. Members of ABC can also access HerbMedPro™, a professional, continuously updated database of medicinal plant research articles searchable by herb name, condition,

indication, and more. ABC provides free online access to HerbMed®, a "sister" database featuring 20–30 herbs from HerbMedPro that are rotated on a regular basis. Making this unique resource free to the public increases the number of people who benefit from updated information on herbs, in accordance with ABC's nonprofit educational mission. These services and many others are all available online through www.herbalgram.org.

ABC's headquarters at the 160-year-old Case Mill Homestead in the heart of East Austin serves as an extension of the organization's commitment to herbal education. Purchased in 1997, the property was renovated with medicinal plant gardens, a greenhouse, and an annex that functions as home for ABC's library and a community meeting space. The gardens are used as a tool for dietetic and pharmacy interns from local universities, who apply their research in hands-on medicine-making labs and presentations using herbs from the grounds.

In 2011, ABC joined forces with the nonprofit American Herbal Pharmacopoeia (AHP) and the University of Mississippi's National Center for Natural Products Research (NCNPR) to bring to light the accidental and intentional adulteration of botanical materials. To date, the ABC–AHP–NCNPR Botanical Adulterants Program is underwritten and/or endorsed by more than 100 natural product industry companies, independent analytical laboratories, nonprofit and professional organizations, trade associations, and accredited natural medicine institutions.

The American Botanical Council's dedication and passion for providing reliable information on herbal medicine for the past 25 years has impacted thousands of individuals around the world. "Mark Blumenthal and the American Botanical Council have played a tremendous and important role in opening the



Mark Blumenthal



ABIHM and AHMA Leaders come together to discuss future of Academy of Health and Medicine

eyes and minds of countless healthcare professionals to the importance of herbal medicines in healing, eco-conservation, traditional use, and even economics,” said Aviva Romm, MD.

“We are deeply grateful to all of our members, donors, and other supporters who have made this milestone possible,” said Blumenthal. “From medicinal plant researchers, healthcare professionals, consumers, industry members, and many others, in the United States and 80 countries around the world, ABC’s success is a result of the strong ongoing support of people who value reliable, science-based information on the many positive health effects of herbs, spices, teas, phytomedicines, and other beneficial plants and fungi.”

For more information, please contact ABC at P.O. Box 144345, Austin, TX 78714-4345, Phone: 512-926-4900. Website: <http://www.herbalgram.org>.

ABIHM Announces Expansion

The American Board of Integrative Holistic Medicine (ABIHM) recently announced that it will expand its focus to become an international academy. The mission of the new global academy will be “to implement the science of health and healing into practice by bringing leaders of medicine

and the healing arts together into an academic and clinically focused community.”

Major funding for the ABIHM expansion was made possible by the Taylor Family Foundation. Founders and principals of the Foundation, Don and Ruth Taylor of Calgary, Alberta, are committed to projects to transform medicine from an institution-based service that reacts to sickness with mechanical fixes and pharmaceutical intervention, to a system of early intervention, social support, and prevention that promotes optimal health.

In plotting its expansion, the ABIHM identified six major shifts in healthcare that are creating the need for an expanded education and certification program to a wider array of healthcare professionals moving forward.

- *Patient Demand:* Increased patient demand for integrative health care services.
- *Efficacy:* Proven cost efficacy of integrative medicine in wellness programs in employment settings, universities, and pilot programs has been summarized by the Bravewell Collaborative.
- *ACA:* The Affordable Care Act stipulates that all licensed health care professionals (including licensed acupuncturists, naturopathic physicians, and others) must be included for reimbursement by insurance.
- *Recognition:* The increased recognition of integrative medicine as affordable

and effective. A recent senate resolution declared naturopathic medicine to be affordable, effective, and safe, and encouraged more Americans to consider naturopathic medicine as an option for their health care.

- *Assurances:* Both patient and the health care industry’s need for assurance that integrative medicine practitioners are highly qualified. Patients rely on their physicians for advice and quality referrals regarding safe and effective integrative approaches, which now have a significant place on the health care map.
- *Doctor Demand:* Increased demand for certification in recent years has escalated considerably for primary care physicians and specialists. This is based on continual increased growth of demand for certification during the past 14 years by MD and DO physicians.

In one of its first actions, the academy is planning to support professionals licensed as ND, DC, MD, DO, LAc, RN, NP, PA, DDS, and RPH, as well as psychologists, nutritionists, and dieticians. Programs in support of this goal will be provided over the next several years.

Mimi Guarneri, MD, and other ABIHM board members are providing leadership for the expansion. The public announcement, which was made by Dr. Guarneri in November 2013, can be

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