The History and Future Direction of ACOEM and Occupational and Environmental Medicine

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OEM Mission

Occupational and environmental medicine is the medical specialty devoted to prevention and management of occupational and environmental injury, illness, and disability; and promotion of health and productivity of workers, their families, and communities.
The history of occupational medicine can be traced into antiquity. Observations of increased rates of illnesses and mortality among miners date back to Greek and Roman times.
Georg Bauer publishes *De re metallicus*, a discussion of the dangers and diseases of miners
Occupational Medicine: The Beginning – Ramazzini

1700

Bernardini Ramazzini publishes first edition of Diseases of Workers
Occupational Medicine: The Modern Era – Alice Hamilton

1869-1970

“who more than any other American laid a solid base for the practice of occupational medicine and for the protection of worker health”

Harriet L. Hardy, MD, 1972
Occupational Medicine: The Modern Era – Alice Hamilton

1925
Industrial Poisons in the United States

1934
Industrial Toxicology

1943
Exploring the Dangerous Trades
Occupational Medicine: The Modern Era – ABPM Board Certification

1948
The American Board of Preventive Medicine and Public Health, Inc., created

1955
Certification in occupational medicine authorized
In 1970, Congress passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act), creating the:

• Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

• National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)

• Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission (OSHRC)
ACOEM History

1916 – AAIP&S
American Association of Industrial Physicians & Surgeons formed

1951 – IMA
AAIP&S changes its name to the Industrial Medical Association
ACOEM History

1974 – AOMA
IMA becomes the American Occupational Medical Association

1988 – ACOM
AOMA and the American Academy of Occupational Medicine merge to form the American College of Occupational Medicine
ACOEM History

1992 – ACOEM

ACOM becomes the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
ACOEM Vision

ACOEM is the pre-eminent organization of physicians who champion the health and safety of workers, workplaces, and environments.
ACOEM Mission

ACOEM provides leadership to promote optimal health and safety of workers, workplaces, and environments by:

- Educating health professionals and the public
- Stimulating research
- Enhancing quality of practice
- Guiding public policy
- Advancing the field of occupational and environmental medicine
ACOEM’s Core Values

• Visionary leadership
• Ethical behavior
• Professional expertise
• Service to members
ACOEM’s Strategic Goals

• Enhance OEM’s image, visibility, stature, and recognition
• Provide OEM leadership for health care and public policy
• Enhance competence of OEM physicians through education
• Promote high-quality OEM practice
• Advocate support for OEM research and its application
• Maintain and strengthen ACOEM
Code of Ethical Conduct

This code establishes standards of professional ethical conduct with which each member of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) is expected to comply. These standards are intended to guide occupational and environmental medicine physicians in their relationships with the individuals they serve, employers and workers’ representatives, colleagues in the health professions, the public, and all levels of government including the judiciary.

Physicians should:

1. accord the highest priority to the health and safety of individuals in both the workplace and the environment;

2. practice on a scientific basis with integrity and strive to acquire and maintain adequate knowledge and expertise upon which to render professional service;

3. relate honestly and ethically in all professional relationships;

4. strive to expand and disseminate medical knowledge and participate in ethical research efforts as appropriate;

5. keep confidential all individual medical information, releasing such information only when required by law or overriding public health considerations, or to other physicians according to accepted medical practice, or to others at the request of the individual;

6. recognize that employers may be entitled to counsel about an individual’s medical work fitness, but not to diagnose or specific details, except in compliance with laws and regulations;

7. communicate to individuals and/or groups any significant observations and recommendations concerning their health or safety; and

8. recognize those medical impairments in oneself and others, including chemical dependency and abusive personal practices, which interfere with one’s ability to follow the above principles, and take appropriate measures.

Adopted October 25, 1993 by the Board of Directors of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
Role of the OEM Physician

The occupational and environmental medicine physician assists employers in:

- Identifying hazards
- Detecting exposures
- Protecting the workforce
- Educating people regarding workplace hazards
The OEM Team

The OEM physician is part of a team that includes:

**Industry**
- Safety Professional
- Industrial Hygienist
- Worker Representative
- Management
- Health Physicist
- Ergonomist
- Environmental Engineer

**Medicine**
- Nurse
- Physician Assistant
- Private Physician
- Physical Therapist
- Epidemiologist
- Clinic
- Hospital
The Team Approach

Working with management and other occupational and environmental health professionals, the OEM physician achieves:

- Enhanced health and safety in the workplace
- A match between the worker and the task
- Rapid and appropriate medical management of illness/injury
- Appropriate return to work
- Effective communication for all
- Cost effectiveness/efficiency
Challenges Faced By OEM

• Changing demographics
• Diversity of the field
• Recognition
• Volunteerism
Challenges Faced By OEM

• Effective use of health care resources

• Compliance with government rules and regulations

• Technological advancement and shifting workforce demographics

• Social, ethical and moral attitudes

• Global industrial development and its impact on the workforce
Practice Activities of ACOEM Members

- Administration: 18%
- Clinical Practice: 65%
- Consulting: 12%
- Research: 2%
- Teaching: 2%
- Other: 1%
Diversity of the Field

Settings:
- Corporate
- Private Practice
- Academia
- Research
- Hospital/Clinic

Specialties:
- OEM
- Emergency Medicine
- Internal Medicine
- Epidemiology
- Family Practice
Recognition Issues

Government/Public/Media Awareness:

• Develop science-based position papers/position statements

• Communicate ACOEM/OEM positions on legislative issues to appropriate Washington agencies
ACOEM Government Relations

Federal Relations — ACOEM provides testimony, comments, and information to help develop sound policies based on sound science.

• Congress
• Administration
• Federal Agencies (DOL, HHS, NIOSH, EPA, DOE, ATSDR)

State Government Relations — ACOEM provides updates on state legislative and regulatory issues.
The Future of ACOEM and OEM

Image

• Credible, professional organization
• Non-political
• Networking, collegiality
The Future of ACOEM and OEM

Government Relations Goals:

• Base message on scientific evidence
• Carry a clear message to agencies and lawmakers
• Present objective opinions to agencies
• Influence government agencies
• Provide a credible voice