



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF  
OCCUPATIONAL AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE

# **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.



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# Occupational Medicine: The Beginnings – Ancient Times

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.



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# Occupational Medicine: Laying the Foundation – Bauer

1556

Georg Bauer publishes *De re metallicus*, a discussion of the dangers and diseases of miners



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# Occupational Medicine: The Beginning – Ramazzini



**1700**

Bernardini Ramazzini  
publishes first edition  
of *Diseases of Workers*



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# **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**



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# **Occupational Medicine: The Modern Era – Alice Hamilton**

**1925**

Industrial Poisons in the United States

**1934**

Industrial Toxicology

**1943**

Exploring the Dangerous Trades



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# **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



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# **Occupational Medicine: The Modern Era – OSH Act of 1970**

**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)**



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# **ACOEM History**

**1916 – AAIP&S**

**American Association of Industrial  
Physicians & Surgeons formed**

**1951 – IMA**

**AAIP&S changes its name to the  
Industrial Medical Association**



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# **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**



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# ACOEM History

## 1992 – ACOEM

ACOM becomes the  
**American College of Occupational  
and Environmental Medicine**



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# ACOEM Vision

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



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# 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



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# **ACOEM's Core Values**

- **Visionary leadership**
- **Ethical behavior**
- **Professional expertise**
- **Service to members**



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# **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**



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# 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 diagnoses 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



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# 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



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# 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



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# 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



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# Challenges Faced By OEM

- Changing demographics
- Diversity of the field
- Recognition
- Volunteerism



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# 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



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# Recognition Issues

## Government/Public/Media Awareness:

- Develop science-based position papers/position statements
- Communicate ACOEM/OEM positions on legislative issues to appropriate Washington agencies



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# 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.



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# The Future of ACOEM and OEM

## Image

- Credible, professional organization
- Non-political
- Networking, collegiality



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# 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



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