

## AAHIR Press Release

### AAIHR Meets with US Embassy Officials in Manila, Philippines

AAIHR Representatives and Board members, Shari Sandifer, CEO Avant Healthcare, and Michael LeMonier, CEO of MedPro Healthcare, met with US Embassy officials in Manila on August 24<sup>th</sup> to discuss the issuance of visitor visas for Filipino educated physical therapists desiring to take the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) in the US. The NPTE is only offered in the contiguous 48 states, Hawaii and Alaska. Beginning in July 2011 the NPTE is offered on fixed test dates which had increased demand for the visitor visas for the 4 to 5 dates per year.

US Embassy officials reiterated the laws that consular officers are guided by in Section 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which presumes that a visa applicant is an “intending immigrant” and, in order to qualify for the visa, must demonstrate ties to the home country that will compel him or her to return after the trip to the U.S. The burden, by law, is on the visa applicant to convince the consular officer on these points. This section of the law also states that the consular officer must be satisfied that “the applicant will credibly engage in the activities authorized” under the visa category.

AAIHR Representative shared detailed information on the arduous screening and selection process the physical therapy candidates must undergo to qualify for testing sponsorship through AAIHR member companies. It was also pointed out that the AAIHR was the first US trade association to adopt a Code of Ethics which all member companies subscribe to. Although no specific guidance was provided on how to deal with the increased rate of denials for visitor visa applications, it was apparent that if candidate could fully articulate the long preparation process through a reputable staffing/recruitment company, intent to return to the Philippines for employment based visa processing, as well as other information such as social and family ties there is a higher likelihood of the visa approval.