

Dear Everyone

On the 8th March the Shiatsu Society sent its members an email headed, 'Stop press' which was about the Advertising Standards Association and the Shiatsu Society, and the present situation, as they see it.

At the end of the document there is postscript: -

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Despite this clause, which I have not before seen in any emailed information from the Shiatsu Society to its members, I believe that I have a right of reply/comment to that which I conceive to be inaccurate or misleading, particularly where I or the IAWE are implicated in any way by their statements.

1) In the last few days some members have received emails from either the Zen Shiatsu Society (ZSS) or the International Association of Waveform Energetics (IAWE). (Mail from Waveform, or the IAWE has only been sent to members of the GSC and interested people and also those who have chosen to receive mail from us through Waveform Enews. Some of these are members of the Shiatsu Society. No-one has received unsolicited mail).

2) These organisations have also put material on their websites. For whatever reason these organisations are publishing miss-information on the subject of the ASA case described above. (We have placed information on our website because the Shiatsu Society has not, despite my questions as to why, (until this press release), they had not advised their members of their actions which, as they so rightly state, will affect not just every Shiatsu Practitioner (which until Feb this year included me), but every Complementary Therapist. We urge every member of the Shiatsu Society to look on our website at the responses to our correspondence from the members of the Management Committee, that is, when they have responded, and decide for themselves if we have provided miss-information or not).

3) In our letter to the ASA on 12/7/05 we said *“However, we cannot accept that we will only advertise Shiatsu as a ‘relaxation therapy’ in the future.*

This actually, is a quote from my reply as Marketing Manager on behalf of the Shiatsu Society.

Below is an excerpt in response to my letter, from Malcolm Phillips Investigations Executive (ASA) dated the 4th August 2005 addressed to me as the Marketing Director of the Shiatsu Society.

“We note that you do not accept that you should only advertise Shiatsu as a ‘relaxation therapy’ in the future. (We were advised by the ASA that we had to do so in an earlier letter)...In a previous letter we referred you to CAP clause 3.1 which requires marketers to hold documentary evidence to prove all claims that are capable of objective substantiation. We should be happy to consider any peer-reviewed articles detailing the use of shiatsu in the treatment of medical conditions.

Were such evidence to be submitted to the CAP Copy advice team with any future advertising which make specific claims about the use of shiatsu treatment, our position may change, (specific scientific proof) Until that time we are likely to take up any complaints made against advertising which makes claims for shiatsu therapy that go beyond relaxation”.

The evidence from David Home’s report of the meeting with the CAP 11/10/05, one month later, (well worth a read), indicates that the Shiatsu Society had chosen to give way to the demands of the ASA. (*Have a look at, ‘This is the ASA come out with your hands up!’ on the ‘News’ page of the Waveform website.*)

There has been enough opportunity over several months, and the number of communications I have had with David Home, Elizabeth Davies and Cliff Jenkinson to refute my claim that they have accepted the CAP definition of what shiatsu can, and cannot do, and they haven’t done this. If this is misinformation, then these MC members had numerous opportunities over several months to make that known to me, and correct me; and for some strange reason, they haven’t!)

4) The full correspondence between the ASA and the Society is available on the website or from the Office. If you wish to discuss or comment on this in more detail please get in touch with us.

Although the website is now up and functioning, the members side is still down so you still do not have access to the ASA information, if that is where it is; however there is now a change in the code of conduct; that SS members are to abide by the rules as laid down by the Committee of Advertising Practice, and there is nothing about this in, 'Downloads - Documents that you may find useful' on the Shiatsu Society website.

5) The Society cannot make any member advertise in a particular way or use certain words or phrasing within their adverts and publicity material. It is your responsibility to ensure that your adverts comply with the CAP Codes.

(As you are required to comply with the Shiatsu Society Code of Conduct which includes the CAP code on advertising, isn't it a bit strange that no guidelines are being given by the Management Committee on what you can, or cannot say in your advertising, particularly when they also say: - What became very clear from this correspondence (*with the ASA*) was that the ASA only enforce the Codes when someone makes a complaint to them.

So it seems that the MC will not advise you as to what you can, or cannot say and you will have to take your chances that it fits within the CAP codes; however don't expect any support from the Shiatsu Society if someone complains about your advertising to the ASA, as you will also have breached the Code of Conduct of the Shiatsu Society!

6) As soon as we know from our discussions with CAP what sort of wording is acceptable we will, of course, let you know.

The ASA have made the wording that is acceptable perfectly clear to the Management Committee since July 2005, it was reiterated again in August 2005. Their position hasn’t changed as the report of the CAP meeting on 11th October 2005 bears witness; however the problem lies in that you are not going to like the truth of it.

If you have any doubts contact the CAP and ask them yourself!

Mike Webster pointed out that the wording in our Rules & Regulations was **unclear** on this matter so at a Board Meeting in January we made the following rule change:
Rule 5 b) vii) Advertising
Advertising shall comply with The British Codes of Advertising and Sales Promotion as devised and enforced by the Committee of Advertising Practice (C.A.P.)

“Incorrect” was the word I used in response to Cliffs words, which were:

“Unless we change the rules we cannot dictate the wording of every advert that a member uses. Our rules say that a member's advertising should comply with CAP etc.

My response was: This rule must be a very recent addition which the members have yet to be informed about as, until very recently the rules stated ‘Guidelines for practice – Advertising’ number 9 “Advertising shall comply with the British Council of Advertising Practice”, a body, which I as far as I am aware, does not exist. You (Cliff) admitted in October 05 that the rule was incorrect and had to be changed - but I have yet to see a sign of this. (Please see Communication with Elizabeth Davies and Cliff Jenkinson - Directors to the Shiatsu Society MC in ‘News’ on the Waveform website)

7) Rule 5 b) vii) Advertising (new within the SS Rules and Regs)

Advertising shall comply with The British Codes of Advertising and Sales Promotion as devised and enforced by the Committee of Advertising Practice (C.A.P.).
Further information on advertising and the CAP Codes can be found on the CAP website at <http://www.cap.org.uk/cap/codes/>

Have a look and see what it says about Shiatsu!

Shiatsu - Description

Japanese massage to stimulate the bodies healing ability by applying pressure to points across the body.

Regulation

No apparent trade body or regulation.

Suitably “qualified” for serious conditions?

NO

Acceptable minor and serious conditions?

Minor conditions: “soft” relaxation- type claims only e.g. help relax, improve mood, aid sleep, relieve tension, relieve fatigue and improve sense of well being.

8) The Codes are drawn up by the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP). If we want Shiatsu to be recognized as a therapy that can be beneficial to certain illnesses or diseases we need to work with the CAP to get Shiatsu added to their lists so that we can advertise, for instance, that Shiatsu can be used to treat backache. To this end we are prioritizing research in this years budget and consulting with CAP on what sort of wording is acceptable for us to describe the benefits of Shiatsu whilst not transgressing the Codes.

If the CAP code of advertising for shiatsu is followed and excerpts of their letters to the Shiatsu Society which are on our website are read, the wording we are allowed to use is very simple. As the Shiatsu Society MC was advised by the ASA: -

"We propose that you do the following to bring your advertising into line with the code:

1) Make no direct or implied medical claims in future advertising and

2) Ensure that future advertising promotes Shiatsu Therapy only as an effective means of relaxation and improving state of mind"

9) We also contacted many other CAM organisations at the time of the complaint and arranged a meeting to discuss a way forward to get CAP to change their view on Shiatsu as a therapy.

Warning of the meeting was given to CAM organizations only seven days ahead of the GSC meeting where the ASA complaint was discussed, and not as intimated at the time of the complaint several months previously.

10) We held the meeting after the General Shiatsu Council (GSC) monthly meeting so those organisations belonging to the GSC were present but only one other external organisation turned up to support us.

It is hardly surprising that with only seven days warning only a single Chiropractor turned up.

11) We believe that at least two other therapies have also had a complaint made against their literature and are in the process of an investigation. The Society is still in contact with these organisations and hopefully we can work together to resolve this issue as well as canvassing further support from other bodies.

Apart from the GSC meeting in September of last year where we discussed the ASA problem with the Shiatsu Society, I am not aware that any member of the GSC (perhaps apart from the Shiatsu College) has since been contacted or 'canvassed' by the Shiatsu Society to provide ideas or support on this issue.

Mike Webster March 18th 2006