

## **Regulation for Shiatsu? Your opinion is requested.**

At the last Shiatsu Regulatory Group (SRG) meeting we were advised by the lay Chair, Paul Nethercroft that, at our next meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> May, we will have to make a decision as to whether to 'buy' into Regulation as a profession, or not as the case may be.

Those of you who are Shiatsu Practitioners, this decision is yours to make and we at 'Waveform' will respect that, and take your overall decision to the next meeting of the SRG.

Before you decide 'yes' or 'no', here are what I see as the pros and cons of Regulation for Shiatsu.

First of all, the purpose of Regulation is to protect the public, by providing an agreed standard of performance and professionalism in the UK (in this case Shiatsu) for recognition as a practitioner in the eyes of the Regulator.

What I see as being the good bits are:

### **Unity - working together**

Organizations providing an agreed standard of training will all be regarded as equal. This should, and I say **should** remove the acrimony of the past as all will (we hope) be working towards a common aim, that is an agreed standard of performance and professionalism in the UK!

### **Recognition for those not in a Professional Organization (PO).**

Practitioners who do not belong to a professional organization can apply directly to the Regulator for acceptance on the 'Register'. Acceptance will be on the production of evidence that they meet the required standards as agreed by the SRG. In my opinion this is a particularly good thing, as it takes away the power of the organizations, which will have to work harder to provide something of use for their members in order to justify their membership fees

### **Standards more important than letters after your name**

The Regulator will recognise any Practitioner or School Diplomad Graduate who produces evidence of the required standards. As the standards should reflect commonality between schools of thought and training, (as advised by the Prince's Foundation), most practitioners and Graduates should immediately qualify acceptance on the register. Evidence of standards and competency, is what the Regulator is looking for, and not your professional standing within your professional organization. This is worth bearing in mind if your Organization is part of the SRG, (The IAWWE is a member) as it will be empowered to recommend to the Regulator its members for approval.

### **Disciplinary decisions made by a group outside of POs**

Organizations policing themselves is, in my experience, inherently problematic. Even with the best will in the world disciplinary action taken by an organization against one of its members, leads to all sorts of complications which do not always disappear with time. With a Regulator all complaints made by a member of the public will be dealt with by a board which is outside of the jurisdiction of the organization. As far as I am aware, complaints by members against other members will, unfortunately remain the responsibility of the member's professional Organization.

### **Stamp of Approval**

On the surface, regulation appears to confer a stamp of approval by the government on the professional discipline and a measure of acceptance by the medical profession however, I am not so sure!

What I see as being the bad bits are:

### **Integrated Health - an equal partnership?**

From what I have experienced so far the integrated relationship is not an equal one.

The importance of objective research into Complementary Medicine was strongly emphasized in the 6th Report of 21st November 2000 of the Select Committee appointed to consider Science and Technology:

One of the recommendations in the conclusion of the report was:

*“That CAM should attempt to build up an evidence base with the same rigour as is required of conventional medicine, using both randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and other research designs.*

At the inaugural meeting of the Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council, Ben Bradshaw, Minister of State for Health Service said -

*“We want patients and clinicians to make informed decisions about the use of complementary therapies. A robust evidence base is needed in order to do this, which is why the Department of Health supports research capacity in complementary medicine through a £3.4 million research programme”.*

All attempts to find out what research is being carried out and by whom, and who has the £3.4 million that the NH is supposed to have made available for objective research for CAM, has drawn a blank. I approached the Princes Foundation Research contact Ian Brownhill, and asked him what research was being done, and by whom.

He said that he didn't know. I asked him where the £3.4 million had gone; he said, 'I can't tell you'. Waveform has a research team which the Princes foundation has known about for more than two years, and it has produced

objective results (which the Princes Foundation also knows about) however as we now need funding to continue our research work, we have an interest in the answers to these questions.

Nearly two years ago the Princes Foundation agreed to set up a meeting with the Waveform team when we had results of the objective research to demonstrate to them. We contacted them last year to report that we had results to show them, as agreed with Stuart Bold who was then their research contact.

The Princes Foundation, it appears is now not prepared to meet with us.

We have been advised to look to Europe for funding for our ongoing research.

Ian Brownhill of the Princes Foundation also advised us:

*"In October 2007 we ran a two day conference with the King's Fund to begin to identify the most appropriate methods for assessing complementary therapies. The recommendations from this conference will be published by June.*

*We did invite the independent lay chair of the SRG to attend the consensus conference to represent the Shiatsu profession (it was an invitation-only event due to the size of the venue). Unfortunately Paul was unable to attend".*

Paul, the SRG lay chair, who, by definition knows absolutely nothing about Complementary therapy, or even research into CAM was invited to attend a meeting, "To identify the most appropriate methods for assessing complementary therapies" Knowing nothing about what we do, our lay chair was invited to the meeting where important decisions were being made, and then was to report back to us about what had been decided on our behalf.

As it is, our chair didn't go to the meeting which was held in October 2007, and we only found out about it recently by accident. For some unknown reason, the report on this meeting will not be out until June 2008, a gap of eight months after the event.

I do not believe that the 'Integrated' relationship claimed by the Prince's foundation is an equal one. If this were a personal or a business relationship it would be doomed to failure, because one partner is not being fully involved, informed, consulted or kept aware of what is going on in matters that are vital for their recognition and survival. Matters that are important for the recognition and acceptance of CAM by the other parties involved.

In practical terms, apart from protecting the public I am wondering if Regulation is going to be of any more use to the practitioner, than the NHS Directory of Complementary Practitioners was.

### **Evidence based Standards as opposed to a Curriculum?**

**This to me means, 'What can you do?' rather than 'What have you been taught?'**

Ian Cambray-Smith, of the Princes Foundation said (twice) at the SRG AGM, that we are looking at 'standards and competencies'.

We are not producing a 'curriculum', there is a huge difference in meaning, and

however a delegate of one organization is determined to create a curriculum. From what has been seen so far the curriculum being suggested is the one their organization uses.

Ian Cambray-Smith also said 'Variations of the profession are to be recognised around an agreed core for regulation; smaller organizations are not to be lost, their 'shape' is to be heard and recognised'.

If a curriculum is created, then in order to be eligible for Regulation many of the small creative shiatsu organizations will have to conform to the teaching laid down by the SRG and ticked off by the Regulator. This has nothing to do with competencies in Shiatsu, but a suggestion that we should all be taught and believe the same thing. This does not leave room for, 'Variations of the profession are to be recognised around an agreed core for regulation; or that, 'smaller organizations are not to be lost, their 'shape' is to be heard and recognised'.

Some of the smaller organizations have already left. If a curriculum is produced instead of an agreed core of competencies, then more of the smaller organizations will leave rather than have their creativity, individuality and development curbed. It would be the death of the development of shiatsu if we were all pigeonholed into one narrow view of shiatsu, and how we should all do it.

This may yet happen.

Regulation has not appealed to everyone, and some of the biggest professional bodies in the country have not liked what was on offer and opted out. The Reflexologists are one example.

There is a scathing report on Regulation in the latest issue of CAM magazine which is well worth reading. I am trying to get the report as a PDF, to put on the Waveform website for all to see.

### **Creating Unity in Shiatsu?**

There are those organizations that have left the SRG and those that have remained. A division has been created, as not all the reasons for the organizations leaving the SRG, have been about regulation.

Is there unity within the SRG organizations?

There will always be differences between different organizations with different views; that is life. However one would think that there would be some cooperation between organizations who are supposedly working towards a common goal. This is expecting too much it seems.

As all our members will be aware, Waveform has designed a double blind Random control test for shiatsu.

In an atmosphere of cooperation we asked the largest organization in the SRG if they would be happy to canvas their members for volunteers to take place in the trial. They agreed to help and asked for the information to be sent out to their members. This was supplied.

One month later, without a single response to our request for volunteers from this organization, we asked a number of the practitioners on their register whether our request for volunteers had been received by them. The answer was No!

It may be that their members, some at least had been informed, however we did not receive a response from a single member of the largest organization in the UK regarding a trial which could pave the path to Shiatsu being recognised and accepted by the medical and science communities. One would have thought that at least one person would have leapt at the chance to prove what they can do.

Research is essential, and the evidence is that we are not consulted with regard to Research. Despite the repeated demands for 'rigorous, objective research into CAM' and the claims of the Princes Foundation; the injection of £3.4 million for research from the NH, we do not know where the money has gone and we are no wiser as to what the 'research' is that it is being used for, and we do not know who is doing this research. The response I have received to requests for this information from the people who should know, have either been a refusal to provide the information, a claim not to have the information, or no response whatsoever. I do not find this encouraging.

What is being asked of Shiatsu is crystal clear, and has never wavered in its wording i.e. Objective Research. If shiatsu practitioners are not prepared to play their part in providing this information then taking part in 'Regulation' will not change the status quo. It will not change how we are perceived by the medical and science communities who want scientific evidence of the effectiveness of CAM. Nor will it change the stance of the Committee of Advertising Practice with regard to the advertising of Shiatsu.

Regulation will not be the governing factor that will bring clients to you or keep them away. Clients will come, as always to the Practitioners who are effective and can do their job.

We at Waveform will continue to respect all forms of shiatsu. We will continue with our objective research programme either in this country or abroad.

We will continue to provide inspiring workshops for our graduates and representation for our members. We will continue to strive to improve our energetic skills and provide opportunities for our members to do likewise.

I think that we are fully justified in saying that we are the most advanced energy training and research group in Europe and have much to contribute in the field of Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

As a shiatsu practitioner you have a choice with regard to the Regulation of Shiatsu, which is to vote either YES or NO for the Regulation of Shiatsu.

We will respect your decision.

If your decision is YES, we will remain as members of the SRG.

If your decision is NO, and the overall decision of the members of the SRG is to move towards regulation, we will remove ourselves from the SRG.

Should we decide to remove ourselves from the SRG there is a contingency plan for our Shiatsu members.

Please send your vote of YES, or NO, to [mike@energymasters.co.uk](mailto:mike@energymasters.co.uk) and put the words 'Shiatsu Regulation' in the subject matter.

Please realise that your vote is important, and VOTE.

We look forward to hearing from you.

With very best wishes

Mike Webster