

THE IMPORTANCE OF BECOMING A REGISTERED ESSENCE PRACTITIONER

In 2000, a House of Lords Select Committee report called for the regulation of therapies in order to protect the general public from malpractice. They offered two options - for therapies to either set up a system of Voluntary Self Regulation (VSR) or be regulated under a system of Statutory Self Regulation, like other health professions. A third option of doing nothing and hoping regulation would go away was also available but most therapies saw this as an unwise route to take. In 2000 osteopaths and chiropractors were already regulated by law. The imposition of future statutory regulation was planned for therapies such as acupuncture, herbal medicine and possibly homeopathy which were thought to pose significant risk to the public. Currently, no plans are yet in place for the regulation of those offering less risk, such as essence therapy.

This confusion on CAM regulation means that thousands of complementary practitioners remain unregistered with a professional body and the main reasons given for doing so include:

1. *I am a free spirit and can't be bothered with stuff such as CPD.*

Such comments suggest that the therapist is either ignorant of or in complete denial about modern professional behaviour. To give an example of how times have changed, in the 'sixties, being insured for treating people was not even a consideration. By the mid 'eighties most practitioners not only carried one but two types of insurance and since the turn of the century we (many complementary practitioners including those on the BFVEA and BACH centre registers) additionally carry out CPD activities. That is what professionals now do.

2. *I can't afford the fees*

Although most of us would be sympathetic to this reason, one really should not be practising therapies for which one cannot afford yet be charging a professional fee. If one is practising but not charging a professional fee this undermines the therapy even more.

3. *I only do it a little bit.*

In medieval times barbers performed surgery and their red and white poles still symbolise the blood and bandages involved in such skills. Today, the idea of a surgeon offering to re-style one's hair after a knee replacement would be laughable. Yet many clients are being asked to accept and pay for an essence treatment from unqualified practitioners.

Unfortunately, professional behaviour of adequate training, insurance and CPD for each therapy practised, remains voluntary despite regulators' claims that the safety of the general public is vital. The need for membership of a professional body has also become confused by the formation of regulatory bodies that claim to cover the interests of a wide range of therapists without reference to any professional associations. These are often backed by insurance companies who are attracted to covering CAM business as claims are rare. Indeed, outgoings are so low that the idea of 'add on' cover, i.e. that if you are insured for a 'big' therapy you can 'add on' insurance for more minor practices (such as essence therapy) with minimum scrutiny' is still worryingly commonplace.

Training additionally exacerbates the problem. Many therapies include the use of essences in their training just as the BFVEA includes dowsing and muscle testing in its courses. Yet no BFVEA student would claim that they were trained dowsers or kinesiologists after their course. In contrast, homoeopaths, iridologists, and other therapists regularly feel sufficiently able to administer essences to their clients without training to COREP standards.