

A SUITABLE BASE FOR TREATMENT

Choosing a complementary therapy can be a very confusing business. If there is no open-minded doctor on hand to ask for advice, we find ourselves relying on word-of-mouth recommendation or, if we are feeling really desperate, sticking a pin somewhere on the appropriate list in the local *Yellow Pages*.

In general, the medical profession harbours grave doubts about whether or not complementary treatments work; yet several of the therapies that are available have been practiced successfully for thousands of years.

Recommendations produced by a House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology now looks set to draw complementary therapies out of the shadows and into the 21st century.

Following a two-year, in-depth study on the efficacy of such therapies, the Government has agreed the Select Committee's recommendations advising that therapists be registered with an appropriate body;

Explaining the new rules to therapists working in the field is, of course, a monumental task. Each discipline will be responsible for ensuring that their own practitioners fully understand the new regulations, that they are fully trained and registered.

The disciplines are to be placed in groups depending on evidence of their success. Group one contains the "principle disciplines" of osteopathy, acupuncture, herbal medicine, homeopathy and chiropractic.

The second group contains those therapies that are most often used to complement conventional medicine. These include healing, the Alexander technique, reflexology, aromatherapy, massage and counselling, as well as stress therapy, hypnotherapy and shiatsu.

In this group, healing was given a special mention and was rated very highly by the Select Committee.

Douglas Ballard, who is a healing therapist of some renown, has been chosen to give presentations of the new regulations to healers at various venues, both in this country and further afield in Europe.

"We practitioners in long-established healing organisations are justly proud that healing and healers are considered so highly in

Claire Gill outlines new government recommendations regulating the training and practice of complementary medicine therapists



the eyes of such an august body as the House of Lords Select Committee," he commented.

An executive member of Kent Healers, Douglas represents this body at the British Alliance of Healing Associations (BAHA).

He is also the representative for BAHA to the European Confederation of Healing Organisations (ECHO), which has its head office in Germany, and the Confederation of Healing Organisations (CHO). As he explains:

"Although many people know it as 'spiritual' healing, it is not allied to any of the religious doctrines. All that is required of the patient is an open mind and a firm belief in the ability to overcome illness."

Douglas has practised in several American states, where he had some success with autistic children (autism is one of the most difficult childhood conditions to treat). There is always an open invitation there for return visits. He now has a small private clinic at his home in Tonbridge, Kent, and an established clinic in Lisbon, flying to Portugal for a one-week visit each month.

With regulations governing those who are trained to practice all the complementary therapies, more people may feel confident about making treatment choices, knowing that, whatever the therapy, they will be able to choose a practitioner who is registered and has a thorough training in his or her chosen field.

Once the general public is fully aware of the new regulations, it is likely that many more people will be

encouraged to try the drug-free way to good health. It may even help to bring complementary medicine to the attention of the medical profession as a whole.

At the moment, many doctors are considering complementary therapies. There are already surgeries which have osteopaths on call and will recommend treatments such as homeopathy, reflexology and acupuncture.

One or two even have a healer on hand. If more people ask for these treatments, doctors may find that expenditure on drugs goes down as a consequence.

It is becoming increasingly evident that after countless years in the wilderness, complementary therapy looks as if it is slowly, but surely, coming in from the cold. ☺

- British Acupuncture Council (020-8735 0400; or visit the website: www.acupuncture.org.uk).
- British Chiropractic Association (0118-950 5950; or visit the website: www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk).
- British Homeopathic Association (020-7566 7800; or visit the website: www.truethomeopathy.org).
- General Osteopathic Council (020-7357 6655; or visit the website: osteopathy.org.uk).
- National Institute of Medical Herbalists (01392-426022; or visit the website: www.nimh.org.uk).
- For more information on healing, call Douglas Ballard on 0871-717 9077 (or visit the British Alliance of Healing Associations website at: www.bahahealing.co.uk).