

Spiritual Healing is going through some wonderful changes at the moment. At long last, the NHS has started to recognise the benefits of most complementary therapies and it is now possible to receive healing on the NHS in Britain.

Adele Penn is a trustee for Brighthelm Healing Trust, an organisation based in Brighton, England that offers healing and training for future healers. The Trust is also a member of The British Alliance of Healers, the UK Healers and the Doctor-Healer Network. She said, "The Brighthelm Healing Trust are trustees with the British Alliance of Healers and therefore we are part of the UK Healers. Consequently, when students train through us they are not just getting an internal certificate, they also get a £2 million indemnity insurance policy which we can use abroad.

"The government have to recognise healing now as it is in the second category of the House of Lords White Paper on complementary healing (see table below). This category includes hypnotherapy, aromatherapy and reflexology. Although, of course, healing is not strictly a therapy. It is a discipline in between a spiritual act and a therapy, but they had to put us somewhere. The first category includes osteopathy, which has been recognised for a long time, physiotherapy and acupuncture.

It is possible to get healing on the National Health Service but it depends on the Hospital Trust. We are one of the few countries in the world where you do not have to be a medical practitioner to do healing. Germany has just made healing legal but in Spain the government hasn't even recognised it. We are not allowed to diagnose and we have a Code of Conduct. Part of our training is to respect the medical profession."

The Doctor-Healer Network

General Practitioners, dentists, nurses, etc, have joined the Doctor-Healer Network which promotes healing in modern healthcare. The members either practise healing themselves or they refer patients to healers. They are setting up groups all around the country where doctors and healers can meet, and they send a newsletter out to members.

The Network also is able to help members find the right training and courses both in Britain and abroad. These training programmes include those that help healers to work in a medical setting, and include subjects such as administration, ethics, basic anatomy, communication skills, confidentiality, how to observe the patient's condition, how to refer a patient to other professionals, how to keep a record of the patients condition, etc. All healers are required to have professional indemnity insurance and to follow a strict code of conduct. The healers are encouraged to improve their skills at every opportunity.

Some hospitals and GP's surgeries now have healers, counsellors and other therapists working on their premises. Others refer patients to outside therapists. Either way, this is a welcome improvement on the past, when doctors would dismiss complementary therapies out of hand as 'cowboys' and claptrap. After seeing the research that has been done recently, such as at a GP practice in South Devon, which has recorded a reduction in their drug bill together with the fact that patients are attending the surgery less often since they have been using spiritual healing. This

obviously has positive rewards for the NHS, who are constantly looking for ways to cut costs, but still provide the British public with a comprehensive and state-of-the-art health service. Spiritual Healing does work and the sooner organisations such as The Doctor-Healer Network becomes common place in all surgeries and hospitals, the better it will be for the NHS and it's patients.

UK Healers

UK Healers formed in 1999 when Ken Baker, the Chairman of the British Alliance of Healing Associations (BAHA), suggested that The Healer Practitioner Association International (HPAI) (who have since left the organisation), The National Federation of Spiritual Healers (NFSH), The Spiritualists National Union (SNU) and The World Federation of Healing (WFH), form an umbrella group for the Healing community. This group works towards self-regulation for Spiritual Healers, a Code of Conduct, Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures and a minimum Standard for Training and Development. UK Healers has been growing steadily, and they are supported by The Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health (previously known as The Foundation for Integrated Medicine).

National Federation of Spiritual Healers (NFSH)

The NFSH was founded in 1955. It has more than 6000 members in the UK and has a growing international membership. It works to help train healers and helps clients to find healers locally. The NFSH co-operate with doctors to research the effects of healing. The NFSH also works with doctors and nurses in the NHS and even goes into hospitals to perform treatments.

The Prince of Wales Foundation of Integrated Medicine (FIM)

FIM encourages complementary therapists and conventional medicinal professionals to work together and therefore integrate both types of medicine. It is working towards complementary therapies being available to all those who need it, integrated with conventional medicine, so that patients receive the best treatment from both areas of healing.

I spoke to Jo Eede, at FIM who explained, "we are working towards integration of conventional and complementary medicine, and hope that they will become fully integrated in the future. We want to see the public becoming more involved in preventative, as well as curative medicine and to get this on the NHS.

1 in 5 of the public take complementary healthcare products, including over the counter remedies. 1 in 10 (an estimated 5.75 million people a year) have visited a complementary practitioner and 90% of these are seeing therapists outside the NHS. Most of those have chronic conditions and have seen a doctor first. There are 45,000 therapists of one kind or another in the UK, and not all are regulated. This means there are more therapists than there are GP's. It is our aim to regulate all practitioners, for their good and the good of the patient. Therefore, the statistics show that there is a demand for integration."

The Department of Health is awarding a 3 year, £900,000 grant to FIM to support it's work on regulating complementary and alternative medicine.

FIM have published "Complementary Healthcare: A Guide for Patients" which is available to download free from the website or it can be obtained for £5.99 plus £1.25 p & p through the contact details below. It is full of sensible information, such as see your doctor first and inform him of any therapies you are receiving, also how to find a practitioner, what qualifications they should have, what questions you should ask and what to do if you are unhappy with the treatment you receive. I would recommend that anyone who has never had complementary therapy to get the guide from FIM. It has information on all the major players in the industry and will give you the confidence you need to find the right therapy for your illness or injury.

Select Committee on Science and Technology

The House of Lords have been looking into complementary therapies for several years. They have produced a report (6th Report on Complementary and Alternative Medicine dated 1999-2000) which encourages all therapists to work together to set up umbrella organisations to represent each therapy, which will support and advise members, self-regulate the industry by agreeing standards of training and competence, encourage further development and education of healers, provide professional indemnity insurance, publish a code of practice and ethical guidelines showing the responsibilities of the practitioner, disciplinary procedures and a provision for public professional conduct hearings.

This report is seen by many in the complementary therapy field to be a long-awaited recognition of the benefits of the most common therapies and it has helped the NHS to look on the industry more favourably.

The Committee has also published a definition of various therapies and placed them into three groups.

The first group is referred to as principal disciplines, they have a diagnostic approach, two of which, osteopathy and chiropractic, are already regulated by Acts of Parliament. The second group complements conventional medicine and does not offer any kind of diagnosis. The third group offers diagnosis, treatment and a philosophical approach to illness. This group has been sub-divided into two further groups; group 3a involves therapies that have been established for many years, group 3b covers therapies that have no scientific evidence of value.

Group 1 – Professionally Organised Alternative Therapies

Acupuncture
Chiropractic
Herbal Medicine
Homeopathy
Osteopathy

Group 2 – Complementary Therapies

Alexander Technique
Aromatherapy

Bach and other flower remedies
Body work therapies, including massage
Counselling stress therapy
Hypnotherapy
Meditation
Reflexology
Shiatsu
Spiritual Healing
Maharishi Ayurvedic Medicine
Nutritional medicine
Yoga

Group 3 – Alternative Disciplines

3a – Long-established and traditional systems of healthcare

Anthroposophical medicine
Ayurvedic Medicine
Chinese Herbal Medicine
Eastern Medicine (Tibb)
Naturopathy
Traditional Chinese Medicine

3b – Other alternative disciplines

Crystal therapies
Dowsing
Iridology
Kinesiology
Radionics

Let's hope that these trends continue and that some time in the near future there will be no distinction between conventional and complementary medicines, so that patient care in this country will give the treatment that we need without having to look outside of the NHS.

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