

## **AN UPDATE FROM THE NUTRITIONAL THERAPY COUNCIL December 2005**

Dear Practitioner

### **Grandparenting**

As you will probably know the Grandparenting scheme was due to begin in October 2005. We have delayed the launch of this scheme until the New Year to enable discussion with the Foundation for Integrated Health's (the Foundation) regulatory group at a meeting in January. We will publish on the NTC web site a report of our intended action soon afterwards. Meanwhile we would like to inform you of the progress that the NTC has made towards Voluntary Regulation for Nutritional Therapy and introduce you to the important role that the Foundation is playing.

### **Progress to date**

The Department of Health has awarded a grant of £900,000 to the Foundation for its ongoing work in this area. The grant will allow the Foundation to work with the main complementary healthcare professions towards developing improved systems of self-regulation. This includes Nutritional Therapy and the fact that it is being supported by the Department of Health is, we believe, significant.

There is a fixed financial contribution to those groups participating in the programme of £4,600 approx per annum. This money, together with the income from College & Practitioner fees will help fund our Independent Chair and support our paid administrator and treasurer. The various subcommittee members work as unpaid volunteers but still require funds to support their work and pay travelling expenses.

The NTC has reached the following stage in its regulatory process:

### **Completed**

1. Appointment of an independent chair (2002).
2. Agreed standards of training and minimum levels of professional competence:
  - 2.1. Development of National Occupational Standards (NOS) for nutritional therapy. (Published Dec 2002).
  - 2.2. Development from the NOS of a Core Curriculum (CC) for training providers (Published June 2004).
3. Regulations for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (Published 2004) NB Evidence of CPD will be a prerequisite for continued retention on the register and the scheme will be administered by the professional bodies.
4. Creation of a website for public and practitioner information (2005).
5. Publication of Codes of Conduct, Performance and Ethics which set out a practitioner's responsibilities and duty of care to patients. These will be disseminated and enforced in the near future and are available for download on the NTC web site (November 2005).
6. Publication of a Constitution (Published 2005).

7. Paid administrative support (2005).

### **In process:**

1. Development of the NTC as a governing council made up of a balance between members of the profession democratically elected by their peers and appointed lay members to supplement the skills of the professional members and represent the views and needs of consumers. The lay membership will comprise at least one third of total council membership (Active after 2006 AGM).
2. Working towards independent external accreditation of training and education provided by Schools Forum Institutions. NB the Foundation will be consulting on the development of an overarching body for the complementary healthcare professions. This may affect the eventual accreditation structure. In the meantime we are working towards a transitional process which will prepare members of the Schools Forum to move easily into any future process that may be developed.
3. Grandparenting with registration of Nutritional Therapists onto a user-friendly and accessible mechanism for the public to check the current registration status of a practitioner – to be evolved from Grandparenting register.
4. Business Plan.
5. Financial sustainability.
6. Publication of patient information leaflets.
7. Publication of annual report detailing the organization's main activities.
8. Publication of audited accounts.
9. Publication and dissemination of disciplinary procedures and establishment of appropriate fitness to practice mechanisms including investigation, professional conduct, health and appeals jurisdictions.
10. Provisions for professional conduct committee hearings normally to be held in public
11. An accessible, supportive and published mechanism for dealing sympathetically and effectively with complaints about practitioners from members of the public.
12. Provision of effective enforceable disciplinary sanctions and publication of findings of professional conduct committees.

### **Next Steps**

Our main concerns within the NTC are financial sustainability and our ability to recruit sufficient people to support our work towards voluntary regulation.

We are very aware both of the need for a robust process of regulation and the need to limit the financial burden on members of the nutritional therapy profession.

The support the NTC are receiving by being involved in the Foundation's regulation programme is extremely encouraging and we expect some of the work that is still to be completed to be shared with other participating groups which will significantly enhance the process and, hopefully, reduce cost. The Foundation will be carrying out a consultation with all stakeholders in 2006 on the future voluntary regulatory structure for complementary healthcare professionals. This will include proposals for the development of a federal system of regulation. More information will be available in 2006 on the Foundation's website – [www.fih.org.uk](http://www.fih.org.uk) <<http://www.fih.org.uk/>> . To help inform the NTC's response we propose to ask the three professional bodies which currently form part of the NTC to consult with their members about the proposals.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

Over the past months the NTC have fielded a wide range of questions and we felt it would be helpful to share these, and the answers given, with you.

### **1. Q: Why Voluntary Self-Regulation?**

A: The Foundation supported the acupuncture and herbal medicine professions towards statutory regulation because of the risks involved. However, we do not consider it necessary for all complementary healthcare professions to go down this route at this time. The cost of statutory regulation may be disproportionate to the rewards expected and a voluntary system of self-regulation is probably adequate in our current case. If, at some future date, statutory regulation is considered appropriate for any of the professions, this work towards a voluntary self-regulating system will enable this to happen

### **2. Q: What about cost?**

A: Once in place, structures should be streamlined and efficient. The NTC as the regulatory body will only carry out those functions that are absolutely necessary. All other professional functions will continue to be the responsibility of the professional associations e.g. implementation of continuing professional development, professional indemnity insurance, promotion of the profession etc

### **3. Q: How will you ensure that different practices and traditions are not excluded?**

A: The system of regulation will allow for inclusiveness and diversity of practice and traditions. It will also take account of practitioners working in both the public sector (NHS) and private practice. In addition, consideration will be given to practitioners who are already regulated by a statutory healthcare regulator.

### **4. Q: Who is going to monitor the various groups?**

A: The Foundation's Regulation Team in conjunction with their Regulation Advisory Group (RAG) will monitor the progress of the participating groups and provide progress reports to the Department of Health. The Regulation Advisory Group provides a means of external monitoring and accountability which ensures openness and transparency in the process. The current members of the RAG are:

Francis Blunden, Principal Policy Advisor, Consumers Association

Steve Catling, Head of Health & Social Care Regulation, Department of Health

Jonathan Coe, Chief Executive, Prevention of Professional Abuse Network (POPAN)

Steve Dewar, Fellow. Health Care Policy, King's Fund

Simon Fielding, Chair of the Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health

Pamela Jack, Regulation Programme Manager, Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health

Kim Lavelly, Chief Executive, Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health

Barbara Rowlands, Deputy Head of Journalism, City University, London

Prof Julie Stone, Deputy Director, Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE)

**5. Q: What is the difference between a regulatory body and a representative body or association/**

A: In developing regulatory structures, it is important to understand the difference between representation and regulation. This was first outlined in the Exeter University information pack, 2000.

A regulatory body primarily exists to protect the public. It is responsible for the registration and regulation of practitioners. It does this by establishing codes of practice, ethical guidelines and, when necessary, enforces disciplinary sanctions on practitioners. It sets standards of education that assist in ensuring that all practitioners are safe and competent to practice for the protection and safety of patients and the public. The ultimate sanction is the removal of a practitioner from the register.

A representative body (or professional association) acts in the interests of its members. The body may aspire to the highest standards and widest scope of practice above and beyond that required by the regulatory body which is adequate to ensure 'safe practice'. It also exists to promote the profession, and often provides training and CPD courses. Professional indemnity insurance is usually provided through the professional association. It also exists to support practitioners in any dealings with the disciplinary committee of a practitioner's regulatory body.

**6. Q: What is the Stone report?**

A: The Stone report, published in September 2005, was commissioned by the Foundation to explore options for the most effective and sustainable regulatory solutions for the voluntary regulation of complementary therapies. We would strongly recommend that you obtain a copy and read it but please remember that the content is only a recommendation and that the Foundation will be undertaking a comprehensive consultation on this. This report is available on the NTC web site:

[www.nutritionaltherapycouncil.org.uk](http://www.nutritionaltherapycouncil.org.uk)  
<<http://www.nutritionaltherapycouncil.org.uk/>>

This letter explains the progress that the NTC is making on your behalf. It is not an easy process and we hope that you understand the need for delaying the Grandparenting scheme. We look forward to updating you in the New Year.

Yours faithfully

Education & Training Sub committee on behalf of NTC

Tracy Smith NTC Administrator