Those Three Scary Letters: CPD

By Lorna Osborn MRSS(t) on behalf of the CPD Sub-Committee

I’m not sure why these 3 letters have such a reputation and what it is we fear about them, but CPD in our Shiatsu world seems to cause confusion and negative reactions. What do they actually stand for?

**Continuing/continued Professional/practitioner Development.**

If we look at each in turn we see that these are actually words that resonate deeply with us and with our ethos as Shiatsu practitioners.

**Continuing** – in our treatments we are continually evaluating and checking our client’s responses to our work, observing both ourselves and our clients and we are continually looking at how we work as practitioners.

**Professional** – we have a Code of Ethics and a framework within which we work as practitioners, keeping the space and our records confidential. We have a professional organisation representing our interests nationally to the public, with links to other professional organisations both here and in Europe. We are also trying to raise our profile nationally as a profession with a good career path that can be viewed in the same light as other health professions.

**Development** – we keep records to chart the changes or development of our treatments and our clients’ responses to them. We look at how we work as practitioners and see how we can develop further in our work. In our training, self-development is a given factor in our learning and afterwards this self-development is a natural consequence of being a Shiatsu practitioner.

So CPD is a built-in consequence of simply being Shiatsu practitioners. What it needs, however, in the framework of the Shiatsu Society’s requirements is a ‘form’ or method. This may be an anathema to our treatments in which we follow the flow and ‘form’ or method is not always present. But if we think back to our early student days, a lot of what we did was taught by rote and learnt as a ‘form’ until we were confident and able to follow the Ki. So all we need to do when tackling our CPD requirements is to have a student mind and consider it another ‘form’ to learn/use.

We often get queries in the office about how to afford CPD and what it actually constitutes. Well, ‘student mind’ and thinking outside of the written form the Society sends out is the way to start.

Of course it is great to go on courses; they expand our vision, refresh our techniques, teach us new ones, help our self-development and allow us to meet other practitioners with different views and experiences. But that doesn’t necessarily mean they will cost or that you need to travel far. Get together with other practitioners in your area and put on workshops for each other. In any gathering of Shiatsu workers you will find a huge variety of experiences
and information that can be shared. It is a ‘course’ but not expensive, especially if it can be held in your homes or working spaces.

Then there are the meetings between practitioners, not just for treatment exchanges, where the conversations get round to things you found in a treatment, complications, meridians worked, techniques used etc (all without violating client confidentiality). Reading around clients who have presented interesting issues/responses etc and reading for our own interest and development is also a very valuable exercise and often forgotten. Changing, designing and adapting our business materials for specific client groups, or discussing our amazing therapy with people at fetes, fairs, coffee mornings etc all counts as CPD. Joining a Sub-committee to help the Society, providing an article, or anything else you feel would interest members, doesn’t cost much at all and is a great form of CPD.

And then there is the course/meeting/conference you may attend as a result of other work you do. If it makes you consider how you practice, gives you pause for thought about the relationship between TCM and the body for example or in the lunch break you see a perfect example of Zen theory at work, you can use this as CPD. It has informed your Shiatsu, made you consider what you do, are doing and will do.

CPD is not about ticking a box and filling in a form sheet; it is about our continuing development as practitioners and our reflection on what we have done and will do in light of our profession. The main problem we have with these instances is in recording our thoughts and providing evidence.

The Society does provide a template of a letter that can be used for course/workshop leaders to fill in for you. However, it is obviously less easy to provide evidence for those spontaneous and amazing events, when we have a conversation about LU/LI function with friends in the park or when a light bulb goes off in your head whilst reading a book on anatomy for example. But the main point of CPD is to reflect and consider what difference this event has made to you as a practitioner. Providing a brief written explanation of the event and its effect on you can be all the evidence we need. It just needs a little thought and obviously, if we think of CPD as an adjunct to our work and not an integral part of it and wait until the end of the year to complete a tick list, then these ‘opening’ opportunities will get lost in the mists.

So it is vitally important that we do think of CPD as integral to our profession and note down throughout the year all that makes us reflect on what and how we do our jobs. In this respect, as a Society, we are not asking the members to do anything that other professions from nurses to teachers to engineers etc don’t do in their every day professional working life. In fact if we wish to be seen as professionals we cannot, in honesty, not commit to CPD.

CPD is about our development as practitioners and we all know that Shiatsu is not just a 3 or 4 year training course but a lifetime of learning, experiencing, reflecting and developing.
As a Society we are always looking for examples of CPD you have done and feel that you could share, whether or not the experience was successful (we learn about our clients from not getting a diagnosis as much as when we do!) We would like to see members contributing to and enjoying this area of our profession, as it truly is about enriching what we do.

Here are some examples of comments taken from the forms for 2011, which practitioners have kindly agreed can be used for this article.

Personal Statement by Nina Jones:

Running a busy Shiatsu clinic in Edinburgh provides a constant focus for me on the value of Shiatsu. I get a lot out of professional development through attending courses, supervision and regular meetings with my business partners. I have seen my skill level increase and feedback from my clients has definitely changed over the years due to my continued learning and practice. From every course I do I’m able to take those skills and integrate them into my work. Some things I keep as a regular part of my tool kit, others will pop up and be used only occasionally. I feel very confident though, that I’m able to work with my clients to the best of my ability and know that they are benefitting from their sessions with me.

Personal Statement by Julie Decarroux:

I moved to Bristol in September 2010 after 10 years of Shiatsu practice in Brighton. So 2011 was a challenging year for me in the sense that I had to start a whole new practice again. I’m still commuting to Brighton one weekend a month to see my clients and teach on the ESS curriculum. Looking back at 2011 made me realise how much I did to get to know my Bristol colleagues and develop my new practice. I now feel in a stronger place. The one area that I really need to get back into is receiving Shiatsu treatments, which I am going to start again very soon as I really need it to keep strong and inspired.

Comments on peer exchange by Claire Gilliver:

I find that astute feedback from a trusted peer always gives clarity and honesty to my own Shiatsu work. It’s like going back to class; where you are taught to give and receive feedback. Analysing the benefits and being reminded of this intense pleasurable healing experience, gives a boost of worth and trust to my practice of Shiatsu.

Personal Statement by Lizzie Douglas:

Although I have been practising Shiatsu for many years now, I did take a break a few years ago to go sailing with my family, and have only recently decided to start practising as a job again. Therefore much of my recent work has been developing my promotional material and writing my website which has been very focusing. In treating a colleague, and researching points relating to the ear I was reminded of techniques / approaches which I had not used regularly for some time. In having a therapist to use for supervision
when I had an emotional reaction to a client’s illness I was able to really look at how I act and react to clients. This was also addressed in the discussion about professional boundaries at the Emsworth Shiatsu support group.