

## Report on academic CAM conferences, 2011.

*Hannah Mackay, on behalf of the Shiatsu Society Research sub-committee.*

Attendance aims: Networking with other CAM professionals and academics; keeping up to date with current issues in CAM research.

### **ACHRN 6<sup>th</sup> July 2011.**

Networking with Charlotte Paterson, Peninsula medical school; Beverley de Valois, John Hughes (as above).

Keynote address by Prof Alex Molassiotis: Utilisation of Complementary Therapies with chronic illness: Science or fiction.

Alex's speciality is cancer care, and his presentation gave a broad perspective on research in CAM. He discussed some of his own research on acupuncture for chemo side effects. Some of his main points regarding how CAM research should proceed were as follows:

- Methodological weaknesses are a major problem – we don't need more surveys of CAM use, or systematic reviews when there are not enough good quality primary studies. Single studies with small sample sizes are not useful – if we do things, we should do them well or not at all.
- We need to move away from discussing 'CAM' as a single entity, and focus on those therapies known to be effective and cost-effective.
- We need to take calculated risks in a very risk-averse funding system. E.g. there is a lack of funding on research on herbal medicine in CAM, even though it is commonly used, because of risks involved.
- We need to develop a programme of research, not just individual projects, using the MRC framework and thinking over an 8-10 year time frame.
- We need physiological work to show how CAM works.
- We need to do research acceptable to the wider medical community and publish in mainstream, high prestige journals.

Ongoing problems include lack of funding (e.g. 0.08% of all cancer funding is on CAM); lack of acceptability in a medically dominated health care system.

### Other parts of the conference

It was clear at this conference that researchers based in Universities were feeling stressed and pressured by the current state of the Higher education sector.

Charlotte Paterson described her qualitative research into communication about self-care in acupuncture sessions. This could be a model of how to do research without needing a lot of funding – she would be interested in doing similar work with other practitioners (working with tape recordings of sessions). The research was done within a group of interested practitioner-researchers who have been working together for a number of years. She used conversation analysis to

investigate how self-care talk was used in discussions between acupuncturist and patient, to individualise the advice by linking it to 'life-world' talk and 'acupuncture' talk.