

# Research 2030 Strategy

*5-Year Research Strategy for the Shiatsu Society UK for 2025-2029*

*Final Draft version 19/02/2025*

## Vision

**Our Vision is for Shiatsu to become recognised as an evidence-based complementary therapy for physical, emotional and mental health issues by the NHS and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).**

## Strategic Goals

1. **Evidence Base Development:** Gather a strong evidence base to demonstrate the effectiveness of Shiatsu for physical, emotional and mental health.
2. **Public and Professional Recognition:** Increase public understanding of Shiatsu and its benefits, and advocate for its recognition within the NHS and by regulatory bodies like the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA). Build partnerships with academic, public healthcare (NHS), and complementary therapy advocacy organisations such as the *IHC, CNHC and RCCM* to integrate Shiatsu into wider health and wellness initiatives.
3. **Member Empowerment:** Equip SSUK and other Shiatsu practitioners with research-based tools and resources to enhance and enlarge their practices and advocacy efforts.

## How will we achieve these Strategic Goals?

### ***“The Strategy in a Nutshell”***

The SSUK Research Strategy aims to:

- **Develop the Scientific Evidence Base for Shiatsu by:**
  - Compiling and analysing existing research
  - Creating new robust research for key health issues (i.e. some of the NHS “pain points” that it is struggling with)
- **Develop Public and Professional Recognition for Shiatsu Practitioners by:**

- Enhancing public awareness through public awareness campaigns and involvement of the public in Shiatsu research, such as through the IHC Sustainable Healthcare Day and through promotion of the existing Touch for Life resources for practitioners and the public.
- Integrating Shiatsu into mainstream healthcare through collaborations with the NHS (e.g. Social Prescribers, Link Workers), complementary medicine organisations and universities
- Collecting, analysing and presenting credible data that supports Shiatsu's claims for specific physical, emotional, and mental health benefits according to ASA's evidence-based advertising standards, using PROMs tools or other appropriate measurement tools
- Developing templates for marketing materials that meet ASA standards
- **Empower SSUK Members by:**
  - Involving Members in cutting edge research (e.g. research design, data collection) thus building up their professional profiles and practice
  - Providing regular updates about existing and new research that is relevant for Shiatsu so existing and future practitioners can use it in their practice communications
  - Engaging practitioners in advocacy efforts (e.g. through organising practitioner-led campaigns to petition for Shiatsu's inclusion in NHS referral pathways or through training practitioners on how to present Shiatsu's benefits in meetings with healthcare providers and policymakers)
  - Training Members in research methods for professional (CPD) and self-development purposes to become **Research Ambassadors**

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## Breakdown of Activities by Year

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### Year 1 (2025): Baseline Development and Research Capacity Building

#### Objectives:

- Establish the research infrastructure and identify key areas of research focus
- Build new relationships and nurture existing ones with academic and healthcare partners in order to pave the way for potential partnerships for scientific collaborative studies

#### Key Activities:

1. **Literature Database:** In collaboration with the Shiatsu Research Network (SRN), compile a searchable database of existing research, summarising existing research on Shiatsu and identifying gaps and opportunities for new studies
2. **Creation of a Baseline:** Using Typeform or a similar platform, develop and run a standardised client experience audit based on the Prof. Long study survey from 2007 to capture demographics, presenting issues, and perceived benefits of Shiatsu. Develop and run a Member survey for establishing current Shiatsu client base estimations and most common presenting issues and results of clients.
3. **Practitioner Engagement:** Organise and record an online workshop on standardised data collection and the publication of case reports to train practitioners as part of their CPD and encourage active participation also from future Shiatsu practitioners at the UK Shiatsu Schools so they can become Research Ambassadors. Create a “Shiatsu Research” info page on the [SSUK “CPD Ideas”](#) and upload the recorded training for CPD training purposes of Member practitioners.
4. **Partnership Building:** Leveraging existing contacts in IHC, RCCM and others, reach out to universities, NHS healthcare institutions, and complementary therapy organisations and identify the “pain points” of the NHS, i.e. physical, mental and emotional issues or patient groups that they find challenging to manage for medical, financial or other reasons, and that could be suitable for potential Shiatsu research collaborations
5. **Data Collection Platform:** Create or identify an existing digital platform (e.g. Open Data Kit or Kobo Toolbox) for practitioners to record and share anonymised case studies
6. **Public Engagement:** Share initial findings through the SSUK e-newsletter, website blogs, and social media channels to build momentum

#### **Planned Milestones for 2025:**

1. Database on existing research has been created
2. Summary report on existing research has been published on the SSUK website
3. The NHS’ primary “pain points” that lend themselves well to collaboration with Shiatsu therapy have been identified
4. Client experience audit with at least 500 responses has been completed
5. Member practitioner survey with at least 100 responses has been completed
6. At least one academic and one healthcare partnership have been established
7. A data collection platform has been created or identified
8. At least three articles on existing research have been published in the SSUK e-newsletter and/or SSUK Journal
9. Survey for the general public for gauging the level of awareness about Shiatsu has received at least 1000 responses from across the UK

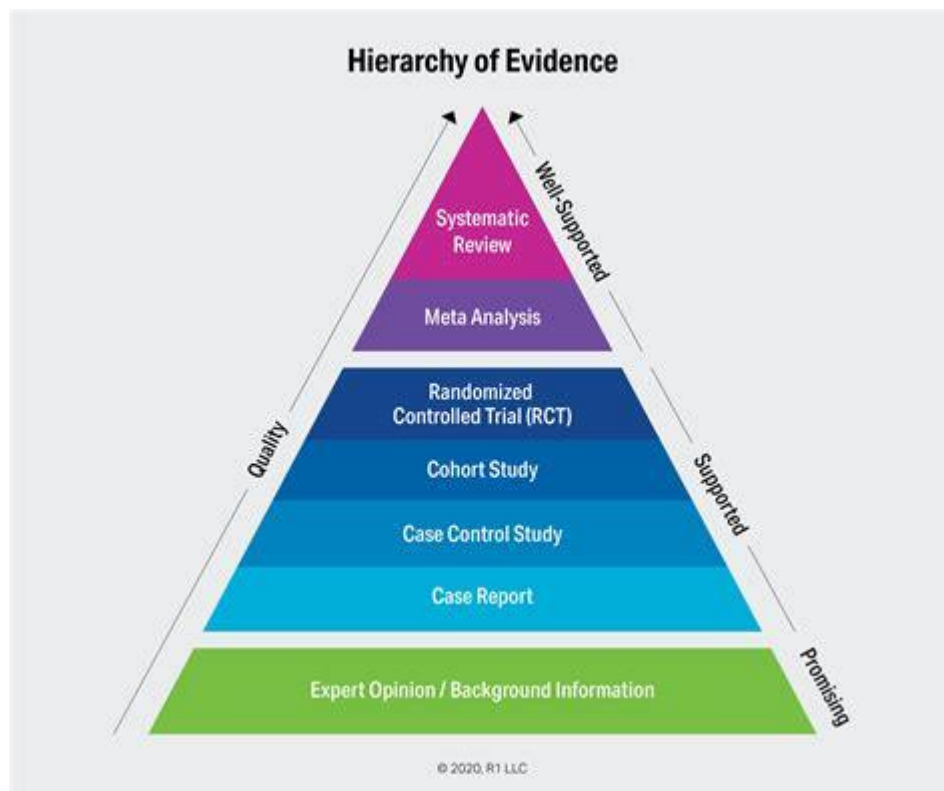


Figure 1: The Hierarchy of Scientific Evidence. Source: <https://r1learning.com>

## Year 2 (2026): Launch Collaborative Research and Small-Scale Studies

### Objectives:

- Begin primary data collection and small-scale studies on the NHS “paint point” topics of priority research interest for Shiatsu as a profession based on the results of last year’s data obtained from surveys and following insights gained through the development of partnerships
- Validate methodologies and expand the basic levels of scientific evidence for Shiatsu based on the Hierarchy of Evidence (see Figure 1)
- Develop visibility within the health and wellness community

### Key Activities:

1. **Continue Practitioner Engagement:** Organise a workshop focusing on an NHS “pain point” topic of priority research interest for Shiatsu as a profession to engage Members’ and stir up interest for the planned small and large-scale research studies

2. **Develop Case Reports:** Conduct 1-2 small-scale case reports focused on key NHS “pain point” conditions like anxiety, cancer, long Covid, chronic pain or stress
3. **Continue Public Engagement:** Share case report findings through conferences (e.g. RCCM Annual Conference), newsletters, blogs and social media to build further momentum. Exhibit at national well-respected health and wellbeing conferences, e.g. the Integrative & Personalised Medicine Congress.
4. **Analyse the funding landscape:** Assess the funding landscape for health and wellbeing and the potential need for the creation of a non-profit research vehicle to access funding.

#### **Planned Milestones for 2026:**

1. At least one workshop on an NHS “pain point” topic of priority research interest for Shiatsu as a profession has been organised
2. At least one case report has been completed and its findings have been submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal
3. Preliminary case report results have been presented at a health conference
4. At least one blog or journal article on the case report has been published
5. A list of potential funding routes for the NHS “pain point” topics of priority research interest has been created

### **Year 3 (2027): Analyse and Disseminate Initial Findings**

#### **Objectives:**

- Use early research results from case reports to establish credibility and secure further funding
- Increase visibility of Shiatsu within the health and wellness sector

#### **Key Activities:**

1. **Analyse Data:** Evaluate survey and case report data to identify trends and statistically significant outcomes
2. **Prepare Scientific Publications:** Write and submit at least one article to a peer-reviewed journal
3. **Participate in Health Conferences:** Present findings at national and international health and wellbeing conferences such as the RCCM Conference or the Integrative & Personalised Medicine Congress
4. **Design Large-Scale Study and Prepare Funding Applications:** Design a larger-scale Cohort Study or higher in the Hierarchy of Evidence (see Figure 1) based on case report results, focusing on specific health conditions or populations on the

basis of the NHS “pain points”. Ensure the inclusion of research on the cost-effectiveness of Shiatsu compared to conventional treatments. Apply for larger grants from health-focused organisations (e.g. NIHR, Wellcome Trust)

#### **Planned Milestones for 2027:**

1. At least one research paper has been published
2. Case report findings have been presented at a major health conference
3. Additional funding to expand research efforts has been secured

### **Year 4 (2028): Expand Research and Advocacy**

#### **Objectives:**

- Broaden the scope of research and use findings to advocate for Shiatsu’s inclusion in the NHS NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) Clinical Guidelines and into clinical care pathways
- Advocate for recognition by the ASA
- Highlight the economic and health benefits of Shiatsu

#### **Key Activities:**

1. **Launch Larger Scientific Study:** Launch a larger-scale Cohort Study or higher in the Hierarchy of Evidence (see Figure 1) based on case report results, focusing on specific health conditions or populations on the basis of the NHS “pain points”. Ensure the inclusion of research on the cost-effectiveness of Shiatsu compared to conventional treatments.
2. **Economic Analysis:** Analyse the cost-effectiveness of Shiatsu compared to conventional treatments
3. **Advocacy Campaign:** Use preliminary findings to lobby for Shiatsu’s recognition by the NHS, insurers and regulatory bodies such as the ASA
4. **Practitioner Resources:** Develop a marketing toolkit and training materials based on research findings and ASA requirements for Member practitioners

#### **Planned Milestones for 2028:**

1. One large-scale Cohort Study or higher has been completed and published in a peer-reviewed journal
2. An economic impact report of Shiatsu has been published in a peer-reviewed journal

3. A targeted advocacy campaign with policymakers, insurers and the ASA has been launched
4. A marketing toolkit and training materials based on research findings and ASA requirements has been published on the SSUK website

## **Year 5 (2029): Consolidate Research and Promote Public Awareness**

### **Objectives:**

- Synthesise research findings and launch a major public awareness campaign
- Position Shiatsu as a credible, evidence-based complementary therapy

### **Key Activities:**

1. **Create a Public Awareness Campaign:** Develop a nationwide public awareness campaign to showcase the benefits of Shiatsu, leveraging research findings. Survey the general public across the UK to gauge level of awareness of Shiatsu.
2. **Prepare Publications and Presentations:** Submit a Final Summary research paper and present findings at leading health conferences
3. **Continue Advocacy Campaign:** Use final findings to lobby for Shiatsu's recognition by the NHS, insurers and regulatory bodies such as the ASA
4. **Undertake a Comprehensive Strategy Review:** Publish a report summarising the 5-year research outcomes on the SSUK website
5. **Legacy Planning:** Establish a framework and funding sources for continued research and advocacy beyond the 5-year plan

### **Planned Milestones for 2029:**

1. A Final Report has been published and findings have been presented at a major healthcare event
2. The NHS has included Shiatsu as part of its recommended treatments as part of a NICE Guideline or similar
3. The ASA has amended its recommendations for advertising of Shiatsu, widening the scope of what practitioners can advertise
4. At least 100 SSUK Member practitioners have been engaged throughout the 5 year Strategy in research-related activities, empowering them to become active participants in research
5. Additional funding sources and partnerships for future research have been identified

## **Implementation of the Research Strategy**

To help achieve the objectives, it is necessary to regularly monitor and report on the implementation of the Strategy on an annual basis. The monitoring and reporting is the responsibility of the SSUK Research Committee.

Based on the results, the Strategy could be reviewed to better adjust to the Shiatsu profession's needs, newly arising opportunities and available resources.