

Review of Balens CPD Conference

By Linda Rose, MCCR, MBRA

At the Holistic Health Show, Birmingham NEC

Session 1 - Where is healthcare going?

Professor David Peters, School of Life Sciences, University of Westminster

The first lecture of the day covered the major changes to the NHS resulting from government budget cuts, including cost-cutting targets to be achieved by 2020. This is to be achieved by the selling off of services, with every area being put out to competitive tender.

Medicine today is linked with keeping people alive, not necessarily providing a cure, and this can often leave people with multiple problems. Doctors are taught to prescribe medication and less importance is given to advice on lifestyle. The measurement of success is how long people can be kept alive.

As so many more people are dealing with chronic diseases, often due to stressful life styles and environments, CAM can help where medicine cannot, as it offers:

- a more personal experience
- small scale
- encouraging the self healing process
- participative
- mind-body concentrated
- low tech
- low risk

The NHS has been successful in dealing with infectious diseases, but less so with chronic illness, an area that can often be helped by therapists. The top ten minor ailments account for 75% of GP consultations (www.selfcare-library.info is a useful website for leaflets to download). Many of these illnesses are our body's reaction to stress, and as therapists we can help by encouraging a relaxation response. Technology has allowed us to see how the living brain works, e.g. what happens when we think and feel. Prolonged stress will even lead to changes in the genetics of cells. Also, early bonding with babies (the first eighteen months) has been shown to influence the right frontal cortex of the brain.

As the constraints and future financial demands for budgeting in the NHS escalate, and as staff come under increasing pressure, they are not always able to deliver the compassion which attracted them to the Service. If they are not supported by the NHS, they will leave. Compassion and caring matter, and as therapists outside the NHS we are better placed to offer both.

Session 2 – Empirical science, vitalism, or what?

Limitations of empirical science in conventional medicine and CAM Professor Paul Dieppe, Professor of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Exeter

Part 1

There are four ways of knowing things in day to day living:

- observation or experiment – empiricism
- being taught
- logic and reason
- intuition

Modern medicine only values one therapy: empiricism based on biomedicine. The model modern medicine uses is randomised control trials based on the idea that “If there is no evidence, then it doesn’t work.” Its success has been in eradicating infectious diseases, and this model works well for acute care, but not for chronic care.

Why randomised control trials don’t work:

- Complexity – patients are subject to so many influences that it is impossible to guarantee a single variable
- One size fits all – medical empiricism assumes that everyone with the same health problems will react in the same way.
- The pharmaceutical industry controls the majority of medical research.

Part 2 - Placebo or nocebo?

A placebo (from the Latin “I will please”) is an inert substance that creates either a positive or no response in the subject. A nocebo (from the Latin “I will harm”) is a harmless substance, which creates negative response in the subject.

Claims have been made that placebos don’t work, rather that it is suggestion that is having the effect. Most of what we do as therapists is placebo, but this is not a problem as the most important thing is that the client experiences a benefit. Equally, much of what doctors do involves a nocebo effect created by the need to warn patients of possible negative side effects of medical treatments. Unfortunately, this in itself scares them and leads to the manifestation of these side effects. It is also worth noting the results of “sham surgery”, in which patients have undergone operations where the chest or knee have been opened up, with nothing being added or removed, but leading to physical benefits.

Therapies offer care, healing intent, empathy, love, concern and compassion (the deep awareness of the suffering of another, coupled with a wish to relieve it), which can be so efficient in promoting positive outcomes.

As humans, we have a natural need to construct meaning for our world, and this includes disease and illness. Both placebo and nocebo have a place in

meeting this need. The placebo response can be identified as what you find being dependent on what you are looking for. It is therefore important to recognise the degree to which you listen to people telling you what happens, rather than suggesting to them what will happen.

Discussion at the end of lectures 1 and 2, joined by David Balen:

- Recommendation was made to not pretend to know how your treatment works – just keep it simple.
- Devise a questionnaire, to go to the general public across all therapies, to ascertain their reaction to the therapies they have tried, with an aim to gathering as large a sample as possible in order to demonstrate that people get benefit from these treatments
- One way forward may be to have an umbrella organisation to show outcomes and best practice.
- Each therapy likes to do its own thing, but a larger organisation would be more powerful
- Important for CAM to fill the gap created by changes to the NHS, for both the general public and NHS staff.
- These lectures were videoed and will appear on the Balens website at a later date.

Session 3 – Online marketing & social media: Ian Lickorish

Websites

A good website should be:

- Informative - balance with visual, “about us”, content rich
- Clear, concise and organised
- Relevant – think about the audience
- Navigable – easy to understand and consistent in layout
- Encouraging – call for action, contact us
- Updated – continual fresh content
- Competitive – check out the competition, ensure you show *your* benefits
- Search engine friendly – even if people know your web address, they will often still use a search to find you

Websites created five or more years ago should be updated, as screen resolutions have improved since then. In addition, an increasing number of people are viewing websites on smaller screens than five years ago – laptops, tablets and phones.

Avoid using Google AdWords, as you pay a fixed price for every click your ad gets, regardless of whether it generates new business, and the majority of clicks won't. Be careful as the cost escalates.

When planning your website, consider what the reader is looking for (this not only helps the reader themselves, but if done well will raise the ranking of your site within a search engine):

- Include key words in your page title – this helps search engines find you
- Write a metatag description up to 255 characters
- Include key words in headers
- Position your key words in the first paragraph of the body of your text

Examples of key words: type of treatment, location within your town, what your treatment can help with

Generate links from other websites by:

- Submitting to directories such as www.dmoz.org, trade organisation sites and specialised directories
- Write articles for others
- Use in websites and newsletters

Social media

Social media, such as Facebook, is an inexpensive way to promote your website, and keep new and existing clients chatting about your business. It can be seen as a kind of virtual word of mouth recommendation.

<u>Do</u>	<u>Don't</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Channel your efforts✓ Lead from the front✓ Keep it real✓ Be sure to respond✓ Be patient (it can be 18-24 months before benefits are felt)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Open too many accounts✗ Let it become a distraction✗ Fall into a spam trap✗ Lose consistency✗ Take negativity to heart!

Session 4 – The law and your practice

Data protection, record keeping, and the importance of written contracts

Carly O'Dowry from DAS Legal Expenses Insurance Co. Ltd.

Data protection

Personal data includes any computer or paper records that include details of name and address etc. If you hold personal data, you must register with www.ico.org.uk, and pay an annual fee of £35.

This is a legal requirement. Subject access request (SARS)

If you are asked by a client for the information you hold about them, they can ask for;

- The description of the data
- Why it is held

- Who the information might be given to

As a therapist you can:

- Insist on a request in writing
- Ask for a fee of up to £10
- Seek the identity of the person who is making the request

Such information must be given within 40 days, failure to comply may result in prosecution. Information must be given in an intelligible form (clear with no abbreviations).

Privacy notices

These are a written statement to let people know what you will do with any information that you hold on them. You must have their consent if you are going to pass on their details, giving them the option to opt in or out.

Practical tips for dealing with client notes

PCs:

- Keep passwords safe and change them regularly, lock your computer when unattended.

Paper records:

- Keep under lock and key, and keep the key in a safe place.
- Dispose of confidential waste in a cross-cut shredder, this is to include any telephone numbers and scribbles.
- Do not leave client notes lying around
- Keep records up-to-date
- Client records need to be kept for seven years, but Balens recommend never getting rid of them, but keeping them secure.
- Carry out identity checks if someone phones for information.

Record keeping

Why keep records?

- To refer back to
- For other practitioners
- Refer to questions, if raised, about care/conduct for legal or disciplinary proceedings.

Good practice

- Can they be read?
- Date and time
- Signature to prove that you have read and checked your notes, and that they were created by you
- Abbreviations – use standard abbreviations
- Alterations – do not erase or overwrite, sign and date alterations
- Additions – date, time and sign

- Personal comments – beware of biased notes; always someone will read them
- Dictated notes – check and sign
- Record all findings
- Record (in brief) treatments from demonstrations, exhibitions and training sessions

The importance of written contracts

Client/Practitioner contracts – for clarity and in case of dispute

Good practice: Include

- What service you are offering
- How many sessions are being proposed
- The cost per session/block
- When payment is due

Room/Clinic rental agreement

Make sure that you obtain a written agreement.

- Licence versus lease
- Commercial lease seek legal advice
- Room lease – read the small print
