

AACP – the next 3 years

The AACP is a Clinical Interest group (CIG) of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) and is a member centred organisation representing the professional interests of physiotherapists who practice acupuncture as an integrated part of their profession.

While we have seen enormous changes within the AACP in the last four years, no organisation can stay in one place and we must continue to drive the organisation forward in order to remain a robust and respected voice within acupuncture, to encourage and support further research and audit within the profession and to maintain and improve the level of membership benefits. It is imperative that the AACP continues to maintain a watchful eye on the changes within the areas of healthcare, professional development and professional autonomy to name but a few and ensure that we remain responsive to these and the impact that they may have on our membership.

The central tenets of the AACP remain and are key to any future plans. These are

- to ensure safe, clinically effective, evidence based and cost effective intervention for the benefit of the patient;
- to ensure that all members are fully informed and have the tools to offer safe, clinically effective, evidence based acupuncture intervention to agreed national and international standards, amongst acupuncture stakeholder groups in order to protect the public, protect the membership and enhance professional development ;
- to provide an integrated, evidence base for the clinical effectiveness of acupuncture within physiotherapy;
- to support, encourage and facilitate clinical, and academic research furthering the development of members and the wider acupuncture and physiotherapy profession;
- to define and maintain standards of acupuncture education that will enhance physiotherapy practice and clinical management;
- to facilitate access to high educational standards and advanced courses in acupuncture training courses;

- to raise the public, the professional and the media profile of acupuncture within physiotherapy;
- to assist the general public and service users in accessing physiotherapists using acupuncture and specialist physiotherapists using acupuncture both via internet searching and from its membership;
- to influence the health care agenda for the benefit of the patient and the membership and ;
- to identify, accommodate and meet the diverse needs of service users and the membership.

The Board

The AACP Board consists of nominated members who give freely of their time to attend quarterly Board meetings and carry the title of Director. With this title come a number of requirements; to act on behalf of the best interests of the organisation and the business; to consider Board issues as and when they arise and to contribute through the various AACP committees to the business and strategic development of AACP. There are vacancies on the Board that are required to be filled. An optimum number of Board directors will ensure that duties, such as committee membership are fairly shared thus ensuring that no one Director is over burdened. Recruitment of Directors is a priority. We are aware that potential Board directors may be put off by the time commitment involved therefore more time effective means of communication will be explored, such as conference calling. The recruitment of a lay member is in process.

Due Processes

The internal structure of the AACP is one that has evolved over many years. Within the organisation of there are six current committees, Financial Audit, Clinical Audit, Education, Training and Research committee (ETRC), Regional representatives, Journal committee and Conference committee. Each committee should have clearly defined terms of reference and are charged with maintaining transparency within their current workings. The Chair of each committee is responsible for liaising with the Board by submission of a report prior to each Board Meeting. Methods of increasing communication between the committee Chairs will be investigated.

Safe Practice Committee:

The AACP have a responsibility to set, publish and monitor standards of safe practice among its members. The current Safety Guidelines were published in 2008 and will require review in September 2010. This is a significant undertaking and therefore a dedicated committee should be set up to ensure that current guidelines are reviewed, new and significant evidence is included, and that the updated guidelines are disseminated to all current tutors and members.

Statutory Regulation.

The AACP continue to maintain a vigilant eye on this somewhat stagnant beast!

There is no word at present about the future of regulation. While further governmental review of the White Paper of June 2008 is undertaken we must endeavour to maintain a high profile at the HPC, CSP and at governmental levels and keep abreast of all political developments. We are not alone in this impasse and we must continue to liaise with other stakeholders to ensure that we are speaking a collective language on the provision of acupuncture. Meanwhile we must ensure that we are maintaining highest standards of safety, education and internal regulation. Jennie Longbottom, who has been co-opted onto the HPC, will ensure our voice is heard and we will continue to liaise closely with the CSP.

Building our evidence base

A key message from Lord Darzi's report is that health care provision is patient centred and focuses on quality and continuous improvement. It remains imperative that we continue to reason our clinical decisions, to use the best level of evidence to support our treatment interventions. Health care commissioners are increasingly requiring evidence of cost effectiveness and efficacy and we feel that the AACP should be helping its members to collect data to support the effective use of acupuncture within physiotherapy. Evidence comes in many shapes and sizes and I hope that in the next three years we will see an increasing number of members involved in collecting data to support the use of acupuncture within physiotherapy. The clinical Audit Committee is charged with the responsibility of developing co-ordinated clinical audit and will be responsible for the development of audit tools to support data collection.

The AACP have engaged the services of Dr Mindy Cairns at Hertfordshire University as our research advisor to help develop a research agenda that we hope will foster high quality projects that enable us to provide concrete evidence that acupuncture forms an effective part of physiotherapy intervention. We must also ensure that we liaise with our colleagues within physiotherapy and in other stakeholder groups to ensure that precious research funding is spent wisely and that collaborative projects produce meaningful results for us all.

Financial assistance for research will continue to be provided by AACP upon consideration of a formal application. The General Audit committee will continue to review and set the research budget accordingly.

Raising Educational Levels

Post accreditation training

Now that a minimum training standard has been attained by all current members and the foundation course is well established, many members are attending specialist courses to further their knowledge beyond that attained at accreditation level. Many members have gained extensive knowledge and experience and currently the only mechanism for acknowledging this expertise is by attaining advanced membership on completion of a Masters degree. Many of the specialist post-foundation courses are not accredited while a few HEI's offer postgraduate courses where students can attain M-level points. The AACP feel that a more formal framework of post-foundation training would benefit the membership and will investigate ways of structuring specialist training. All strategic planning proposals and cost models will be discussed and debated.

The current number of advanced practitioners on the AACP register is 227. AACP will aim to increase the number of advanced practitioners by 10% by 2011.

Mentoring

We feel that the AACP should facilitate the creation of a network of mentors who are able to offer clinical support to students in the early stages of providing acupuncture. We are keen to look in to the feasibility of providing this service.

CPD

The AACP is committed to fostering innovative ways of providing affordable and accessible CPD for its members.

AACP is aware that postgraduate courses are expensive and that training budgets are continually being restricted if not removed completely. CPD requires each member to attain 10 hours of on-going professional development every 2 years but this may take many forms. It has come to light that many members prefer to attend “in-house” CPD sessions in the form of “in-service training”. But not all members have access to these services. Regional roadshows have proven to be quite popular although they are proving difficult to co-ordinate. One –day workshops providing in-depth theoretical and practical tuition organised at a regional level and incorporating the organisational skills of the regional representatives have been suggested as a possible replacement of the roadshows. This template needs to be explored and developed.

New Tutors.

For an education programme to grow, more accredited tutors will be needed. The AACP is aware that the number of tutors has reduced in the last few years and is keen to foster new tutors. The AACP will need to provide a tutor framework and establish educational requirements. This will require us to liaise with Higher Education expertise and the ETRC. As much of the training needs of our members is self funded AACP need to look carefully at the market forces and economic climate that govern the take-up of courses.

The Journal

The production of the AACP Journal involves many people but the brunt of the work is borne by the clinical and corporate editors whose hard work we value tremendously. However, over the last 18 months it has become apparent that the role of the clinical editor, currently a voluntary position is proving too time consuming and onerous. The Board is therefore considering that the role of clinical journal editor should become a paid one.

Obtaining contributions of high academic standard continues to be a challenge. While we welcome opportunities to include contributions by established authors we would very much welcome contributions from our membership, such as MSc abstracts and audit

reports as we feel that publishing post-graduate endeavours provides both incentive and information to others.

Ideally we would like our Journal to be peer reviewed and therefore more work needs to be done on raising the calibre of scientific contributions while remaining appealing to the readership.

Membership services

The daily needs of the membership are met by the administrative staff at Peterborough. The needs of the current administration are under review to reflect the ever changing demands of a growing organisation. The AACP office is keen to understand the needs of its membership so that member services can be developed. The provision of access to online Educational databases has proved popular. We are keen to explore further member services and we need to canvass membership opinion on this in order to deliver meaningful benefits to our membership.

We have outlined our vision for the next three years and we will, of course remain responsive to our members needs. We hope that if you, as a valued member, feel that this vision falls short of your expectations you will tell us.

Merian Denning
Chair AACP