



Department of Health

Proposed regulation of Counsellors and Psychotherapists

Response by

Institute of Homoeopathic Practitioners Ireland

IHPI

Introduction

Institute of Homoeopathic Practitioners Ireland (IHPI) is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the Department of Health in connection with its proposal to introduce regulation for Counsellors and Psychotherapists. Such a service is vital for the wider community and this response is aimed at optimising the benefit of that service through the provision of varied and integrated services, combining traditional Psychology with Energy Medicine and Nutrition and other Natural Health Services.

Institute of Homoeopathic Practitioners was founded in 1992, just at a time when natural therapies were beginning to come to the attention of the Irish Public. It was founded by a small group who were then students of kinesiology, a muscle-testing procedure which enabled the Practitioner to identify health problems resulting from excess toxins or nutritional deficiencies or a host of other problems that people encounter. For purposes of training and further development, the group named itself The Naturopathic Society of Ireland. Different natural therapies were added on a step-by-step basis by Practitioners, such as herbs, homeopathy, flower therapies, nutritional therapies and more. Over the years, as experience developed, it was found that the combination of kinesiology and homeopathy were the two segments most needed by clients and as might be expected, these therapies became most popular with the community. Consequently, our members deemed it appropriate that we should change our name to reflect that.

Services Provided by Members

The public demand for Natural Therapies has grown around the world over the last 40 years. Demand in Ireland has mirrored that worldwide demand but the level of availability in Ireland is considerably lower than that of other countries. It is worth noting that some European countries, notably Germany, Austria, and France, have had a history of traditional healing going back centuries, with a particular focus on the last two hundred years. Eastern civilisations, notably China, India and Japan, have had their own versions of what we would now describe as Natural Therapies for thousands of years.

Members provide a number of therapies, the front line of which will include kinesiology, homeopathy, herbal medicines and nutrition; all combined with advice on diet, exercise and lifestyle. The latter will include detoxification procedures together with advice on the avoidance of further exposure to toxins. Acupuncture or other manual therapies might be recommended as needed. Supportive therapies in the lifestyle category might include yoga, meditation, mindfulness or prayer; all of which have a direct relationship to emotional wellness and mental health. In the context of the topic under review, we will concentrate on emotional and mental health.

Risks to Emotional Health

There are several contributors to emotional health and wellbeing, some of which are within our own control, yet others are part of our environment and our planet.

- **Diet** has been identified by medical and nutritional scientists as a contributor to or cause of cognitive health decline. We continue to identify certain foods as contributors or causes of conditions such as autistic spectrum, schizophrenia, Alzheimer's, motor neuron and Parkinson's. For example;

- Casein from dairy milk, but excluding dairy fats, is viewed as a problem as milk from a certain bovine gene pool contains an opioid. Russian scientists compared outcomes for children fed on breast milk with those fed on commercial infant formula. The infants fed on breast milk had normal psychomotor development whereas those fed on formula, if they were unable to breakdown and excrete the opioid, had slower psychomotor development and were at risk of autism.¹
 - Gluten from grains, excess carbohydrates and refined sugar are troublesome contributors to a range of health issues including coeliac disease, colitis, Crohn's disease; all of which impact on gut health, which in turn impacts brain health.²
 - Food additives such as colorants and taste enhancers are chemicals and so must be viewed with caution. Monosodium glutamate (MSG) is a non-essential amino acid which is added to many foods. It builds up in brain fat, causing inflammation and swelling and kills brain cells.²
 - The brain connection and the gut, (flora or microbiome) are increasingly being recognised as problems in cognitive health. Several studies indicate a strong GI link with autistic spectrum in particular.^{3,4}
- **Obesity** and excess weight are contributors to impaired brain health as researchers have discovered that the higher the waist-to-hip ratio becomes, the smaller the hippocampal area of the brain becomes. As the hippocampus is the area of the brain that regulates memory, excess weight is directly related to memory loss.³ Calorie restriction to suitable levels are recommended as epidemiological data shows there is a strong correlation between lower food consumption and reduced risk of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and stroke³
 - **Medications** including antibiotics, whilst needed for the treatment of various conditions, have many downsides, one of which is the disturbance of gut flora impacting on the Digestive System which in turn depletes the Immune System and so the body begins to feel the effects. Nutrients are not absorbed or assimilated and various organs including the brain become undernourished. Brain fatigue is but one outcome.⁵
 - **Narcotics**, like medications, have the same effect on the microbiome and in addition, interfere with dopamine pathways leading to adverse brain function with conditions such as Parkinson's and Schizophrenia resulting.⁵
 - **Pathogens** are associated with brain and cognitive function. In particular, Toxoplasmosis (a single celled parasite), Herpes Simplex, Chlamydia and Cytomegalovirus are among the range of microbes that infect the brain and contribute to adverse cognitive health, decline in life quality and later, disabling brain disease such as Alzheimer's.⁶ Viral infections such as Epstein Barr and Lyme Disease emit neurotoxins that cause inflammation in nerves and brain cells.²
 - **Organophosphates** is the term given to a range of pesticides and herbicides that are used in farming, gardening, forestry and sport facilities which expose enormous numbers of people to those compounds. Babies not yet born are at risk as pregnant mothers who are toxic from organophosphates can give birth to children with impaired cognitive function. The following indicates how organophosphates can affect health:

- Researchers in the 1980s in the UK found that people who were exposed to pesticides and other chemicals had disorders of the Central Nervous System. Long-term exposure led to conditions like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.⁸
 - Researchers in the US found similar outcomes where aerial spraying with Paraquat was frequently used to control drug smuggling.⁸
 - Researchers in France have developed a matrix for tracking and scoring people exposed to pesticides as neurological disorders including brain cancers in that group far exceed the level in the general public.⁷
- **Heavy metals**, such as mercury, lead, aluminium and cadmium, are very toxic, and impact adversely on cellular mitochondria and inhibit energy flow to the brain. This results in reduced cognitive function and constant fatigue.⁸ Mercury, which is highly toxic, was a popular item in conventional medicine in past centuries but resulted in many people committed to mental hospitals. Today's sources are amalgam fillings and fish and it is viewed by some experts as the primary cause of autism.²
 - **Modern society** throws a full load at many individuals with additional hill climbs placed before many others. Family illnesses, bereavement, separation, job loss, business loss, financial distress, evictions (a recurring phenomenon) and many other stressful situations befall people. Any one of these stressors will test the emotional strength and mental health of even the strongest. According to the Samaritans' Suicide Statistics Report 2016, research suggests social and economic factors influence risk of suicide. Figures have shown a rise in female suicide, and there were 6581 suicides recorded in Ireland and the UK in 2014. The Samaritans are working towards improving identification of risk factors and reaching those at peril. In recent times, we have witnessed the raw emotions surrounding Brexit and how this has divided different segments of society. Feelings of anger, frustration, prejudice and territorial values are clear to see. Another current example of destructive emotions is the American Presidential campaign, which has fuelled hostility and fear. These negative emotions can stress and overwhelm, which is why their existence must be dealt with as part of wellbeing and health.
 - **Destructive Emotions** fall within the endogenous category of toxins, such as fear, anger, hate and prejudice, any or all of which can be either inherited, learned in childhood or developed by oneself. Well-meaning adults (parents, grandparents, and teachers) set a tone or approach to life which can impact on a child in particular ways, and determine their level of emotional wellbeing for life. This tends to follow into relationships, be it spouse, family, neighbours, employers, church or even nature itself. It can affect the flow of energy and ability to cope with life as a result.⁹ *Miasm* was the term given by the founder of homoeopathy, Dr Samuel Hahnemann, to inherited conditions which has an adverse impact on health. Destructive emotions fall into this category.

Return to Optimal Health

When faced with a chronic health complaint, Natural Healthcare Practices will view each case individually, looking at the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of the patient. The broader aspect of health encourages practitioners to discover the context of why the symptoms exist in the first place. We believe Counsellors and Psychotherapists' practices would benefit by merging holistic practices with their own skills and practice.

IHPI feel there is a need in society to reinforce the message of promoting health rather than simply categorising diseases. By adopting this approach, all healthcare professions could work in tandem towards improving the health of the individual, communities and workforces which in turn will result in reduced costs, improved productivity and a healthier society.

Part of this, as set down in the Department's 'Obesity Policy & Action Plan 2016-2025', is to promote protective factors. According to the report, excess weight and obesity have doubled in the last twenty years and now poses a major public health challenge. Maintaining or supporting good health is just as important as dealing with current critical situations.

Integrated Conventional and Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) approaches offer workable and cost effective measures that will contribute to the restoration of wellbeing, the promotion of health education, the restoration of confidence in our healthcare system and an improvement in the management or protection of debilitating, chronic complaints.

Society must also be encouraged to engage in their own health, to nourish and enhance what they have. Education is a key factor, and in promoting natural healthcare; healthy eating, better lifestyle choices and supportive modalities such as counselling, meditation or art therapy, we can contribute to the reduction of pressure in A&E departments or GP waiting rooms. CAM Therapies can result in improvement in quality of life and energy levels, without the excessive investment of public funds.

One example of the integrative approach is provided by Dr. Jean Lionel Bagot, a French Oncologist, who has combined conventional cancer treatments with CAM Therapies, with homeopathy as his lead therapy. As part of his service, he included counselling and psychology, and in his book, he attributes this integrated approach as the key to successful patient outcomes.¹⁰

Benefits of Integrated Health Service

There are many benefits which would flow from the unification of Conventional and Complementary services in the field of emotional and mental health. They are as follows:

- (1) Drug use could be reduced by appropriate replacements such as acupuncture, herbal medicine and homeopathy.
- (2) Gut health which impacts on brain health can be enhanced by exclusion from the diet foods that are unsuitable for the individual.
- (3) Cognitive function can be protected by avoiding toxin intake, which comes through education and guidance.
- (4) Wellbeing can be enhanced through energetic body therapies such as reiki and reflexology.
- (5) Mental function can be enhanced through lifestyle practices such as meditation and yoga.
- (6) Levels of self-harm can be reduced and consequent family tragedy avoided.
- (7) Productivity can be improved through optimum health for the individual.
- (8) Hospitalisations can be reduced, resulting in lower HSE costs.

Conclusion

As CAM Practitioners, we are healers and teachers. We reach out to people who come to us for help with their health and wellbeing. Our first aim is to help them help themselves. We believe Counsellors and Psychotherapists are also healers and their patients and clients would benefit by the incorporation of CAM Therapies in their practices. World Health Organisation (WHO) has recognised this for many years and calls on Governments to incorporate this approach in national health policies.

We ask the Department of Health to give a lead on this and move the Health Service to develop choice and diversity for the community. Society as a whole would benefit.

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Administrator:

Annemarie Creighton

President:

Rosaleen Kelly

Email: info@ihpi.ie

Web: www.ihpi.ie