Providing public health through practitioners such as Acupuncturists

Summary
We would like to see acupuncture practitioners recognised in future public health plans as part of a wider local workforce offering local and national public health solutions. There is a unique opportunity to encourage the more non-traditional workforce to have a role to play in the public’s health. Professional acupuncturists are a much needed asset.

Introduction
The British Acupuncture Council (BAcC) is the UK’s largest professional body for traditional acupuncture with more than 3,000 members. To achieve BAcC membership, practitioners must have completed a minimum of three-years full-time degree-level training in acupuncture; this includes physiology, anatomy and other biomedical sciences appropriate to the practice of acupuncture. The BAcC is accredited by the Professional Standards Authority which ensures that our self-regulatory approach meets the required standards of public protection and accountability.

1 Evidence Base
The National Institute of Clinical Evidence has recommended acupuncture as a cost-effective option for lower back pain and for headache. In Scotland, Acupuncture is recommended for the treatment of Chronic Pain. Acupuncture allows people to live a health, independent and fulfilling life. Acupuncture provides the holistic, quality care that people want and it’s clear from the millions of acupuncture treatments a year. the public wish to choose acupuncture.

2 Public Health, the NHS and Acupuncture

2a Making every contact count

The NHS cannot, by itself, achieve the changes necessary to make us a healthier society. BAcC members provide over 2.3 million treatments a year and there are significant opportunities to improve public health in these treatments. BAcC Members are aware, for example, of the opportunities using methods such as that advocated by Making Every Contact Count http://www.makingeverycontactcount.co.uk/. The “Making Every Contact Count” initiative provides the wider workforce with the skills to offer brief health advice to colleagues and members of the public. There is evidence that it is successful in helping people make changes such as attending stop-smoking services.

2b Improving public health through Self Care

There is evidence that acupuncture treatment improves self care. See http://www.acupunctureresearch.org/Resources/Documents/2013%20conf%20presen- tations/Paterson_Charlotte_SAR_presentation_slides_C13.pdf
2c Partnerships with public health locally and nationally

The British Acupuncture Council would like to work with public health teams as a partner to improve health.

It has already engaged with Public Health England and organizations such as NHS Citizen, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Health Watch patient groups and local authority-led health and wellbeing boards.

Many members wish to work within and with the NHS e.g. there is an NHS funded project supporting carers in the Wirral through acupuncture.

2d National information

The BAcC provides online research based information to patients and carers to assist with their research into how acupuncture can improve health.

3 Conclusion

People who are not professionally qualified public health practitioners, such as acupuncturists, have the ability to positively impact public health in their community.

This “wider workforce” could be instrumental in reducing the burden of health inequalities, motivating and supporting sustained lifestyle changes among their clients.

The BAcC hopes this workforce is referenced in key future strategic documents such as JSNAs and/or or Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies (JHWSs).

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