

Results of our recent membership survey

During the summer we've been busy here at the BHA analysing the results from the 2006 Friends' survey. Thank you very much to those of you who sent your questionnaire back, which was enclosed with your spring issue of *Health and Homeopathy*. We were happy to see that just under a quarter of our supporters did so – and here's what they had to say.

Health and Homeopathy

The vast majority of respondents (96 per cent) believe we get the level of the articles just right, whilst 82 per cent find the quality of the content good or very good. The media round-up and book review pages were slightly less highly rated than the feature articles, news and editorial.

We were glad to see that 90 per cent of members rate the appearance of the magazine as good or very good – the re-design and move to full colour throughout each issue has certainly been a popular change. One consequence of moving to a colour magazine has been the printing of text on coloured backgrounds, which a small number of people told us was difficult to read. We have taken these comments on board and will aim to provide a greater contrast between

“I think it is an excellent publication – I am always delighted when it drops through my letter-box.”

...

“I always find your magazine most informative and helpful – it always provides a solution to some health problem or other in the family. Thank you.”

...

“I know so many people who would choose homeopathy if they could get it on the NHS.”

...

“Homeopathy is becoming a little more understood and accepted by the NHS – but I wish progress could be quicker. It is so frustrating that medics will not take it seriously – even though I have used it successfully in the family for 30-40 years.”

text and background in future issues (particularly avoiding white text on an orange background).

In terms of content, the most popular features were articles on particular conditions, remedy profiles, case studies and self-treating. The editorial team will continue to focus on those types of articles that are most popular.

We asked supporters what topics they would like to see covered in future issues. Just under half did not answer this part, which we are hoping means people are happy with the current variety of articles! A number of respondents did suggest topics however, and these suggestions have been collated into a list which will be referred to for future issues. One topic that divided opinion was veterinary homeopathy – whilst it came top of the list of suggested topics for future issues, it also came third in a list of least popular features! On balance the editorial team feels that the current level of coverage of veterinary homeopathy (approximately two articles a year) is about right.

The most requested improvement to the magazine was that of a letters page, which the editorial team has wasted no time in creating – the first such page was included in the last issue of your magazine (summer 2006). The panel of experts includes doctors, vets, dentists, pharmacists and podiatrists who are all members of the Faculty of Homeopathy, making them well qualified to answer any query you may have about homeopathy. We hope you will find this useful – please do send us your questions.

The BHA's work

About ten per cent of respondents did not answer this section, which suggests that some supporters may not feel well enough informed about what the BHA does. We aim to let our members know about the work we are doing by publishing the BHA's



annual review in the winter issue of *Health and Homeopathy* each year. However the annual review came quite low on the list of articles people liked best. Clearly there is room for improvement here.

Over 82 per cent of people felt that the BHA's performance in five key areas was satisfactory, good or very good. The area in which the BHA was seen to perform least well was that of promoting access to homeopathy via the NHS. As many of you know this is an uphill battle that the BHA will continue to work hard at. This is particularly difficult because the government has devolved decisions to local NHS organisations and many of these have been swayed by the negative publicity about the evidence base arising from the flawed research review published in *The Lancet* in 2005. In spite of this, we do believe that there are opportunities under the new practice-based commissioning system but this will involve working with individual Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). In view of this we are looking to recruit a dedicated part-time member of staff with PCT experience to help take this work forward. This initiative will include reference to the research literature in homeopathy that has reported positive findings.

A small number of people wanted to see more publicity in GPs' surgeries and the encouragement of more GPs to take an interest in homeopathy. In 2003 the Faculty of Homeopathy produced a guide for GPs (still available) that was mailed to every single GP in England and Wales. Fortunately we received sponsorship to cover the cost. The BHA will continue to encourage members of the Faculty of Homeopathy to give talks to GPs and other healthcare professionals, but we will also investigate other ways in which we can promote homeopathy in this area. A number of other excellent suggestions for increasing publicity were provided by members and these will be taken on board.

Only 15 per cent of respondents said they would like to see additional membership benefits, suggesting the majority are happy with what the current membership provides. A number of people made suggestions and comments not only on membership benefits but also on how the BHA can improve how it works.

"My GP and others at the surgery remain completely disinterested and are unaware of the benefits."

...

"More promotion through media channels aiming at the general public I believe would promote the case for homeopathy. We seem to do a lot of preaching to the converted."

...

"Given the unrelenting opposition of much of the medical profession, the BHA does very well."

...

"I think you do a very good job with the limited funds available to you."

...

"I have benefited greatly from the use of homeopathic remedies and am very appreciative."

...

"Some doctors, surgeons and professors are very narrow-minded – the population needs to know that homeopathy really does work."

All of these suggestions will be considered and prove invaluable both for our understanding of you as supporters and for guiding the organisation forward.

The website

About half of respondents do not have access to the internet. Of those that do, a small number had visited our website and the majority found it to be good or very good. Some 106 people signed up to the BHA's e-newsletter *BHA Bytes*, which was launched last year and is sent out every two months by email. This is now included as an additional benefit for new Friends of the BHA and it aims to be informative and easy to read whilst encouraging a sense of community amongst our supporters. The website is due to benefit from a

re-design in the near future which will allow the BHA to communicate with supporters (and a whole host of other web visitors) more effectively. At the same time, the importance of continuing to communicate with our members through printed materials is confirmed by the results from this section.

About you

The answers in this section reflected how knowledgeable our members are about homeopathy – 80 per cent self-treat with homeopathy for acute conditions, and just under half treat friends and family using both acute and constitutional remedies. In addition, 53 per cent consult a homeopath when feeling unwell.

Once again many thanks for providing us with such useful information, and for your continuing support, without which we would not be able to carry out our work.

Chairman John Cook comments:



Photo: Suzanne Cook

"The views of BHA members are very important to us and I'm glad to see that so many of you took the time to let us know your thoughts. You have provided us with excellent ideas for ways in which we can move forward. As pressure on the allocation of resources in the healthcare system grows, it has never been more important for the BHA to sustain its role in the areas of research, access and training and to continue to promote the benefits of homeopathy to as wide an audience as possible. Thank you all for your valuable contribution to our work."