



The Evolution of the HCPF

Jerome Whitney July 2007

Have you ever observed how the tide ebbs and flows? It does not happen all at once; rather it pulses in phases and stages, active and passive, in and out.

It is a fact that the representatives of the Council of Homeopathic Colleges (CHC) introduced the concept of the Forum to the deliberations of the Accreditation Working Group (AWG) two and one half years ago, however the seed impetus for the Forum was sown ten years earlier in 1995. What has followed is a sequence of tidal-like phases, which have ultimately, lead to the dynamic HCPF we have now.

Phase 1

Prior to 1995 the Society of Homeopaths (SoH) Education Director and the course providers met regularly on a joint basis. However, as time passed and circumstances changed it had become evident that it would be in the best interest of all parties if each were to carry on with separate meetings. The result was an amicable separation in order to more effectively pursue the roles and interests of each.

Phase 2

Unfortunately the course providers held only two subsequent independent meetings attended by only three college principals and no further meetings were called. The lack of perception by the course providers to appreciate the need for an on going group voice with which to communicate with the SoH Education Department was to have long term and lasting consequences for both.

Meanwhile in 1996 the Dept. of Health informed the alternative therapies that if they did not develop systems of professional standards and work toward unity from within their professions, it would write and impose them from without. The “encouragement” from the DoH served to stimulate a series of initiatives that lead to the formation of the formation of the Council of Organisations Registering Homeopaths (CORH) in December 1999.

This pressure also led to a rapid expansion of the SoH Education Department from being an Education Director with periodic consultation and research input to that of several regular part time education officers with a Chief Education Officer responsible to the Education Director.

The need for this accelerated expansion into a major department was based on real necessity and urgency. The Care Sector Consortium, a quango holding a private consultative contract with the Dept of Health, was in the process of pressuring homeopathy and three other therapies into a 'one size fits all' street sweeper level of NVQ standards. Fortunately homeopathy was able to break out and with the aid of Lindsey Mitchell, wrote the National Occupational Standard professional standard for homeopathy, that remains the professional standards for homeopathic education and practice right down to the present day.

Additionally, the number of courses recognised and seeking recognition increased rapidly also justifying an enlargement of the SoH Education Department. However, the need to develop a comprehensive set of written procedures for applicants, recognition, and maintenance was urgent. The result was that the pressures from without and within the profession led to the evolution of a 'bolt on series of procedures' rather than a strategically planned integral recognition system with adequate checks and balances. Changes were developed at such a rapid pace that the courses and colleges did not have adequate time to adjust or adapt to them. Further, a series of inappropriate procedures were introduced, of which the following is but one example:

Normally in educational circles, the rules that apply when an organisation engages in an accreditation or validation, the process remains fixed and in force until it is completed. There should be no surprises. However, some applicant courses, in the midst of the recognition process, found that the requirements which they had accepted, were being changed mid term with new or altered hurdles being imposed. Isolated with no group forum to speak on their behalf applicant courses felt they had no alternative but to accept these less than transparent impositions from the top-down in order to obtain recognition status.

It is imperative to keep in mind that the Education Department was acting from sincere motive by working to achieve high standards for homeopathic education. However, there was no group voice available to provide individual homeopathic educators with a vehicle, at that time, with which to effectively critique and dialogue with the Education Department. Good intentions by the Education Department do not necessarily mean that every action it takes to fulfil them is appropriate or achieves the desired result. It had become evident that the homeopathic colleges

were now experiencing the consequences of failing to provide an adequate check and balance to the Education Department.

Phase 3

The beginning of the movement to provide an independent group voice for homeopathic educators emerged stimulated by and parallel to the early initiative to work toward a single register. Fred Cole of the Homeopathic Medical Association (HMA) became concerned that there was no effective input from colleges into JMORPH (Joint Meeting of Organisations Registering Professional Homeopaths) the predecessor to CORH.

Cole proceeded to invite colleges to a series of meetings in Birmingham from which emerged the CHC (Council for Homeopathic Colleges) during late 1999. CHC spent the year 2000 developing its organisation, establishing common ground, and initiating negotiation for it to be represented on CORH.

The primary aim of CHC was: “To be a voice for homeopathic education, to ensure the growth and freedom of homeopathy in all its diversity.” Membership consisted of 17 homeopathic courses with a schedule of regular meetings. Discussions centred on education issues including: professional regulation issues and topics common to the colleges. Particular attention was paid to discovering common ground between often very diverse course provision and to understanding the principles involved in different regulation systems and their effects. This helped to clarify appropriate techniques for improving clinical education, and providing guidance to the CHC representatives to CORH Council and the CORH working groups, especially the Accreditation Working Group.

Membership in CHC was open to all homeopathic course providers, whether or not they chose to engage in the recognition process of SoH. Due to the out-spoken nature of one of the members, many courses were reluctant to join CHC. Unfortunately a disinformation campaign emerged to the effect that CHC was made up of a group of malcontent dissidents. It is true that some of the membership had serious concerns about the handling of specific education issues, but the motivation was to discover and promote that which would work well for homeopathy and would promote the healthy growth and development of the profession and education as a whole.

Phase 4

As the work of CORH Council and its working groups progressed the primary agenda at CHC meetings became:

- 1) reports from the Council and Working Group representatives

2) the preparation of papers, considerations, and proposals to present in return.

By early 2005 a concrete outline for the accreditation process began to emerge. At this point CHC proposed an organisational structure to facilitate that process that included an independent course providers Forum. By being independent the Forum would:

- 1) be in a position to clearly represent the interest of course providers
- 2) provide representatives to the, soon to be founded, Accreditation Steering Group,
- 3) be a partner in the evolution of the accreditation process.

The Accreditation Working Group (AWG) accepted the CHC proposal for establishment of a course providers forum and initiated action to achieve it.

As 2006 progressed AWG sponsored the initial meetings and facilitated the organisation of the Homeopathic Course Providers Forum (HCPF). Following the formal establishment of HCPF, the Council for Homeopathic Colleges, ceased to be an active organisation, mission accomplished. In the meantime, AWG was engaged in formalising and completing the CORH Accreditation Handbook which was then presented to the course providers for review and suggestions.

Meanwhile, HCPF, now self-financing and independently operating began to meet regularly to discuss and debate issues regarding accreditation, provide nominees for accreditation peer review, panels, and hear reports from its representatives on CORH Council and its Working Groups.

Phase 5

In May of 2007 just as preparation was being made by AWG to engage in two pilot accreditations and send peer review teams out to the volunteering course providers, CORH Council suspended its operation due to financial shortcomings. The HCPF immediately stepped in and provided a significant share of the funding needed to carry out the pilot visits thus supporting the momentum of setting up a robust accreditation system. Currently HCPF is engaged in a series of actions to support the continuation and effective implementation of the accreditation system.

Overview

The Forum as a formal organisation is in its early days. However, it has come together in an intense, focused and purposeful way that inspires positive hope for its future. The ebb and flow of the tidal wave of forces and events that have brought it into being have invested it with a background of experience and depth that belies its youth and provides a firm foundation for the future.

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