

# BNA Consultation on Regulation of Naturopathy

The questions posed here represent the decisions that have to be made now by the General Naturopathic Council working party. Please read the briefing notes and then complete this questionnaire. Let us have your views so that BNA can debate them at our AGM and take them to the table at GNC.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

What is your view on the following statements? (feel free to add comments below)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Formation of a single national register is important for patients					
2. Naturopathy must be defined according to international definitions					
3. The initial register should allow in all those calling themselves naturopaths in the UK who can show safe practice for at least 5 years					
4. The Register should be open to all those applying a naturopathic philosophy to their practice					
5. The naturopathic register needs to fit under the umbrella of the new Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council					
6. The register should have more than one level of accredited practitioner, such as naturopathic physician and naturopathic technician.					
7. The register should be exclusive to those trained according to the international standards for a naturopath					

8. If a single naturopathic register is formed, would you want the BNA to continue as a professional body representing mainly graduates of BCOM, COET and Westminster? Or should BNA merge with the other professional bodies for naturopaths within the GNC?

9. Any other comments you want to make on this issue? (continue overleaf if you wish)

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Briefing document, April 2008

When the Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC, further details below and on [www.fih.org.uk](http://www.fih.org.uk)) was announced in January 2008, you may have wondered how and whether it affected you.

The answer is that it might, it depends what we as a naturopathic profession decide. As you will have gathered from the most recent issue of our journal BNJ, the General Naturopathic Council working party has a difficult decision to make. The crux of the matter is that we have been working towards and support the principle of a National Registers. However, all the other Registers within CNHC have a single level of entry – if this applied to us, then everyone on the Naturopathic Register would be “a naturopath”.

“Naturopath” is an international profession in Europe, Canada, Australia and beyond. The word means a highly qualified alternative physician. Yet because naturopathy is not only a practice but also a philosophy, many therapists want to be seen as “naturopathic”. They have trained in naturopathic philosophy as applied to a specific technique such as colonic hydrotherapy or kinesiology. They would like to be on our register, possibly at a second level. Roger Newman Turner said recently “ *let’s be inclusive, with internationally-agreed standards that can make this possible without being weak on basic medical sciences. We can then build a naturopathic profession that will command respect throughout the world.*”

The recent developments in regulation of health professions are being driven by the UK government, in large part reacting to the murders by GP Harold Shipman and avoidable deaths of babies during heart surgery in Bristol. The changes are enacted through White papers, the Health Professions Council (HPC), the new Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC) and for naturopathy the General Naturopathic Council (GNC).

## Government

The White Paper “Trust, Assurance and Safety” (Department of Health (DH) 2007) aims to protect the public. Medical and other statutorily regulated health professions (eg Nursing, Osteopathy and Physiotherapy) from now on will have a regulator that is independent of the profession, with a majority of lay members in order to prevent any suspicion of “closing ranks” or fear of whistle-blowing. There will be a clear division between the regulator (which represents patients interests) and the professional body, which looks after the profession. Regulators must be seen to be independent, transparent, accountable, ethical, dispassionate and just.

For complementary medicine, the government wants a single unified national register for each therapy, brought under the umbrella of a high quality regulatory framework from a single office. This single point of contact would help them find safe complementary practitioners. This concept has got somewhat split down the middle, with higher risk therapies such Herbal Medicine and Acupuncture heading for statutory regulation under the HPC, and large number of low risk complementary therapies, including naturopathy, being encouraged towards voluntary regulation under the CNHC.

## What is the HPC?

The Health Professions Council is an “umbrella” statutory regulator that works to protect the health and well-being of people using the services of their health professionals. The HPC currently registers over 180,000 professionals from 13 professions including dieticians, physiotherapists, art therapists and clinical scientists. They may eventually take over the regulation of osteopathy and chiropractic too.

## **What is the CNHC?**

The Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC) is the “umbrella” voluntary regulator. It is in the process of being launched following a year of intense work by the professions concerned with the Princes’ Foundation for Integrated Health, who were commissioned by the government to drive this initiative forward. Twelve complementary therapies including naturopathy, cranial therapy, nutritional therapy, shiatsu, and yoga therapy have been involved in the setting up of the CNHC. It aims to provide

- A single point of contact for the public.
- Economies of scale, with the potential to keep costs to practitioners down.
- Rationalisation of standards, but allowing for a range of approaches.
- Accommodation of multi-disciplinary practitioners.
- More weight in negotiations with other bodies.

There will be a generic Complaints Procedure for patients, and Code of Conduct and Ethics for practitioners. Standards of training and criteria for admission to the register will be profession-specific. Registration will give practitioners added professional credibility. The fee is promised to be in the region of £50 or less, plus a small additional fee to be on other registers within the CNHC.

## **How does the GNC fit in?**

The General Naturopathic Council was set up to create a single unified national voluntary register of naturopaths in the UK. Bringing together the various bodies representing naturopaths in the UK has been a slow process. It includes BNA and GCRN, the Guild of Iridologists, the Association of Colonic Hydrotherapists, and others. The GNC Working Group hopes to reach agreement on the standards of training, the criteria for registration, and accreditation of colleges within a few months so that the new register can open. Registration, as now, will be voluntary. It will only succeed if you register on it.

The GNC has to decide whether or not to move under the umbrella of the CNHC. This is a critical time and your answers will shape the future of naturopathy in the UK.

## **The role of the GCRN**

The General Council and Register of Naturopaths is the regulatory body which has worked in partnership with the BNA as its professional body for many decades. The procedures and standards upheld by the GCRN are robust. They are a close fit to the model the government wants all professions to adopt, apart from the lack of lay members on council. The GCRN procedures are being adopted in modified form by the GNC. If the GNC is supported by naturopaths and succeeds in creating a single register, it will replace the GCRN.

## **The role of the BNA**

Professional bodies will continue to play an important role in promoting and developing their profession, representing their members and offering services. BNA members are largely graduates of particular colleges. If a single register forms, the various college-specific (exclusive) professional associations could continue to exist, or they could join forces and be inclusive. The second option might avoid duplication of effort, create synergy and extra resources?

Further Information can be found on the web sites:

HPC <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>

GNC [www.gnccouncil.com](http://www.gnccouncil.com)

Princes Foundations for Integrated Health [www.fih.org.uk](http://www.fih.org.uk)