

20th
anniversary review
1995 - 2015

As one of the founding members of the British Acupuncture Council (BAC), I am proud of the role it has played in the development of acupuncture as a profession. Our diverse clinical heritages have been respected, and both ethical and health and safety standards have been established and maintained. I congratulate our outgoing chair of the Governing Board, Charlie Buck. Charlie has worked hard to develop a new strategy for the Council and this, over the years, will be appreciated as an important contribution. Long may the Council continue to flourish!

John Hicks. BAcC President and Member

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Integrated Healthcare (PGIH) has worked successfully with the British Acupuncture Council (BAC) for over 20 years. During that time the BAC has led the strategic development of acupuncture in the UK, and provided valuable leadership in the complementary health sector more widely. Under the guidance of chairs such as Ron Bishop, Jasmine Uddin, Susan Thorne and Charlie Buck, the BAC has been instrumental in moving the acupuncture profession forward, and I welcome and celebrate its many achievements to date including, most recently, its Professional Standards Authority accreditation. I look forward to the BAC's further success in years to come.

David Tredinnick MP, PGIH Chair

In my role as patron I have been pleased to see the British Acupuncture Council's commitment to fostering a wider awareness of acupuncture and traditional East Asian medicine in the UK. The Council also upholds high standards and members provide care of great relevance to health and wellbeing in the UK. I congratulate the BAC on its 20th anniversary and send my best wishes for the future.

Anne Milton MP, BAcC Patron

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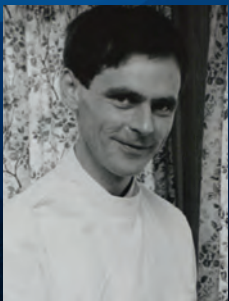
Twenty years and counting



This review honours the efforts of all those people who have contributed to the development both of the BAcC and the profession of acupuncture, the establishment and maintenance of our high standards, and the increasing recognition of our practice. Here we also acknowledge the hard work of the dedicated individuals who have served on the Executive Committee, the Governing Board, or the numerous subcommittees, together with all staff, past and present. The BAcC has provided a clear point of contact for governments, institutions and organisations seeking to identify and communicate with the majority of the traditional acupuncture profession. We can be extremely proud of what has been achieved. Happy Birthday, BAcC!

Ron Bishop

Member and BAcC Chair



The creation of the British Acupuncture Council 20 years ago was a significant moment for professional acupuncture. The founders of our organisation set a benchmark for standards of regulation and education that will be hard to surpass. I am very proud to have been around since the early days but can claim little credit for the work that has been done. Instead, I leave it to the contributors to this review to tell their personal stories.

Charles Buck

Member and Outgoing Chair

Before the BAcC

In the history of Chinese medicine, of course, 20 years is a mere moment. They also say that those who forget their history are doomed to repeat it, so a brief look back - not at the last 20 years, but the 20 before that - might be in order.

Here we are in 1975 ... and with practitioner numbers slowly growing, nascent professional bodies linked to the different schools appeared. Then came the BAAB.

Common standards of education had always been the stumbling block to a properly united acupuncture profession, and the genius of the British Acupuncture Accreditation Board approach was that it allowed diverse styles of practice to flourish while providing a robust accreditation system that raised standards across the board. This achievement set the seal on a remarkable decade of success for our profession.

From there it was inevitable that the various individual groups - five, by that stage - would have to properly unite under one banner with common codes, standards, and legal/financial systems. I recall the excitement, even exhilaration we felt as we developed the systems and structures required for a proper professional body. Could something as deeply dull as drafting a Memorandum of Association, arguing over the precise wording of the Aims and Objects, really have been that interesting? Well, maybe we all needed to 'get out more', as they say. But at the risk of going completely over the top, I'll close with a Walt Whitman quote: 'Oh, to be alive in such an age, when miracles are everywhere, and every inch of common air throbs a tremendous prophecy, of greater marvels yet to be.'

Ken Shifrin, Member: Oxford

Key dates

1989: British Acupuncture Accreditation Board (BAAB) established

1993: European Journal of Oriental Medicine (EJOM) publishes first issue

1995: British Acupuncture Council (BAcC) established

1999: World Health Organization publishes Guidelines on Basic Training and Safety in Acupuncture

2000: House of Lords report on Complementary Medicine released

2011: Governing Board replaces BAcC Executive Committee

2013: BAcC achieves accreditation by Professional Standards Authority

2013: BAcC launches Acupuncture Awareness Week

2013: John Hicks named BAcC president; Anne Milton MP and Peter Hain MP announced as first BAcC patrons



Beginning with the BAAB



The British Acupuncture Accreditation Board (BAAB) came into existence in 1989, as an independent company to accredit acupuncture colleges and their courses, and this paved the way for the BAAC. It has been increasingly satisfying to articulate ourselves more comprehensively and see others recognise and appreciate our aims and objectives. Although it might not always have felt like it at the time, the BAAB has proved a true critical friend who has championed values and standards impeccably well. The future is what we face and there is no doubt that together is better!

Rob Hughes, Member: East Sussex

The birth of the BAAC

Prior to the genesis of the British Acupuncture Council, there were five separate professional registers: the Chung San Acupuncture Society, members having graduated from Lily Cheung's Chung San Acupuncture School; the International Register of Oriental Medicine (IROM) for graduates of the International College of Oriental Medicine; the Traditional Acupuncture Society for graduates of the College of Traditional Acupuncture in Leamington Spa; and the British Acupuncture Association and Register for graduates of the British College of Acupuncture. The fifth group, the Register

of Traditional Chinese Medicine, was an independent register, not affiliated to any college. It was clear that this subset system was not to the benefit of the acupuncture profession as a whole and that a wider vision was the way forward. In June 1995 the British Acupuncture Council was formed by the unification of the five member groups of the Council for Acupuncture. I would like to add that I am very proud to be a member of this organisation, which has done so much to advance the profession I love.

Tim Stillwell, Member: Hertfordshire

Small acorns grow into beautiful trees

In 1985 I was asked if I would like to earn a little money by being the registrar of an acupuncture organisation, the Register of Traditional Chinese Medicine (RTCM). I converted my tiny spare bedroom into an office and off we went. I got to know each and every member, many of whom are still members of the BAAC. We worked hard and played hard and slowly our membership increased, until by the time the Council for Acupuncture (CFA) was formed the RTCM had substantially more members than most to add to the pot. In 1995 the CFA became the British Acupuncture Council (BAAC), members of five organisations merging into one membership body, setting educational standards, codes of conduct, etc. We had no idea of the extent of what was to follow. Acupuncture was little heard of back then. After some time I took a full-time position with the BAAC as membership manager, a role I've been very happy in for the past ten years. I have grown alongside the BAAC. To be part of an organisation which had very small beginnings and to see it grow into the recognised body it is today has been a privilege. I still feel passionate about acupuncture and what it can do to help people. I've met some amazing people,



and I have the utmost respect for those who have given up chasing successful and high-earning careers to practise this strange and beautiful thing.

Carol Dalglish
BAAC Membership Manager



The BAAC has been a valuable part of my professional life since 1995, keeping me connected to other people and giving me a sense of belonging that feels important. In all my dealings with my fellow members, and also those who work for the BAAC, I have found caring compassionate people working to serve others. It's been good to have been a part of it.

Susan Woodhead, Member and Regional Group Co-ordinator



2000 onwards

Growth and development



Education

The Education Policy Committee of the BAAC produced Education Guidelines in the year 2000. They have also lead and developed many other major educational projects. Together with the BAAB, we have seen teaching institutions and their graduates become more professional as educators and as practitioners, not just in their knowledge and skill levels, but in their right conduct and processes enacted from the professional values we espouse. It has been a privilege to participate in the raising of educational standards for the training and practice of acupuncture in the UK over the years; such a difference to when we started the BAAC 20 years ago, and exemplifying the strengths of collaborative working in our profession. I call on you all to remember these professional values, which are equally as important as the skills you have and develop. Only together and co-operatively can we continue to move the profession forward for the next 20 years.

Di Eckersley, Member: West Sussex

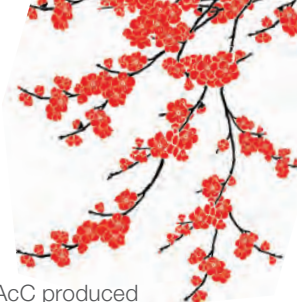
Conference

Our BAAC conferences have continued to enhance the status and credentials of the Council, not just in the UK but globally. That serves the interests of every BAAC member running their clinic, whether they attend a conference or not. Highlights over the years have been far too many to mention so here are just a few personal favourites:

- BAAC conference clash with a murder mystery party at Beaumont Estate in 2012 - I had to formally advise our delegates that a wink from a stranger along the corridor was an attempt to locate a murderer!
- Just a year before she died, in 2012 Mary Austen came in to listen to a lecture on a history of the BAAC, which acknowledged her contributions to the profession as a foremost advocate and practitioner.
- The energy and enthusiasm of the student volunteers.
- Letting our hair down on Saturday night to all manners of music – and even the chief executive showing he can dance!

Janice Booth,

Member and former Conference Consultant



Over the past 20 years the BAAC has grown from strength to strength and although there is still work to be done, we have highly committed members working hard to promote professionalism in acupuncture. One of the great ideas of the BAAC was the creation of Regional Groups, where members could meet and support each other professionally but also feel a closer communication between the members and the Council.

Ninette Sapir, Member and Regional Group Co-ordinator

From Executive Committee to Governing Board

Growing professionalism

I had known Ron Bishop for some years and worked in his London clinic after qualifying at the College of Traditional Acupuncture (CTA) in Leamington Spa. Ron had become an active member of the BAAC Executive Committee (EC) and I suppose because of his awareness of my work in administration and with an investment company, I found myself talked into filling a hole on the Finance Committee. I found it interesting and it gave me an opportunity to learn from John Wheeler, the energetic and able chair of the committee. As a result of this I went on to become a member of the EC and amongst many other things, took part in finding the right person to take on the work of a salaried chief executive, from a business background. This was Mike O'Farrell who worked hard to raise the profile of the BAAC, instil enthusiasm amongst members, and get us working as efficiently as he could. I then took on the role of chairing the Conference Committee and later, the Preliminary Investigating Committee

(PIC) for ethics, which I found fascinating. When a complaint was made it was investigated with the utmost care, hearing evidence from all parties in a totally unbiased way, writing reports on any interviews and then presenting them to the PIC for a decision on whether the case should be taken further.

Helen Fewster, Retired Member



I am proud to belong to a professional body which gives credibility and reassurance of our high standards to the public and to other professionals, alongside guidance and support to its members. The BAAC encourages networking with other practitioners through regional groups, and instead of becoming isolated lone workers we find ourselves surrounded by a team of highly trained professionals.

Jacki Winkett Member and Regional Group Co-ordinator





When I joined the Executive Committee (EC) I had the privilege of working alongside Mike O'Farrell - our then CEO - Ron Bishop, Shaun Ekberg, Susan Thorne and John Wheeler, to name just a few. My primary role was to assist in the streamlining of the organisation, reducing and reforming the EC into a new governing body.

Barry Williams, Member and former EC Member

Transition to a leaner structure

Early on, we were blessed with visionary members who gave their time establishing codes of professional conduct and safe practice, as well as educational standards and an informative newsletter for members. However, as we grew it became increasingly difficult for members to give the time needed alongside their acupuncture practice

commitments. If we wanted to be taken seriously as a profession and enable more people to benefit from acupuncture treatment, it became clear that we needed to raise our profile, and also to be seen to be represented at many tables. One of Mike O'Farrell's first tasks as chief executive was to represent the BAcC at the House of Lords Select Committee reporting on complementary therapies. He made great efforts to learn our ethos and began to raise our status with the government and the general public. When I was elected to the

EC in 2004 it was still 25 members strong and consequently rather unwieldy. By the time I became chairman in 2009 discussions were well underway to devise a leaner structure and eventually, in 2011, the EC disbanded. The long-term strategic direction of the BAcC became the responsibility of a Governing Board (GB) of five elected BAcC members and four appointed non-practitioner members and I remained as chairman to be the link to the new set-up. The chief executive would be accountable to the GB for implementing the strategy and, most importantly, for financial control. I did not seek re-election in 2012 because I felt a different set of qualities was needed to steer a course into the longer term. Charlie Buck was elected and took up the baton bringing with him different attributes and new qi.

Susan Thorne,
Member and former BAcC Chairman



Maturing into the mainstream

The new Governing Board met for the first time in 2011. Around the table was a rich mixture of practitioners, team members and rather diverse lay members. The lay members, however well informed, need the practitioners' knowledge, understanding of the ethos of acupuncture and feel for what the members require. The lay members' contribution can come from experience of organisations, corporate governance, finance and budgeting, and public affairs. The BAcC is the pre-eminent UK acupuncture organisation, doing good for its members, for acupuncture in general and for the public. There is a lot left to do before acupuncture becomes mainstream in this country but we have travelled a long way.

Lord Charles Cecil, GB Non-practitioner Member



The changing face of acupuncture research

Increased research activity

I have witnessed huge changes in the quality and breadth of research being carried out by BAcC members and feel proud of their contribution to the evidence base. We are in the 17th year of the ARRC (Acupuncture Research Resource Centre) symposium, showcasing impressive acupuncture research from practitioners and researchers from all over the world. During the last 20 years the evidence base for acupuncture has dramatically increased in terms of clinical trials and mechanism studies, with the UK being ranked third out of the 59 countries publishing acupuncture research between 1991-2009. Growing research capacity depends not only on motivation and love of research and inquiry but also on the availability of good research training and funding, partially evidenced in the increasing numbers of BAcC members who have obtained their PhD in acupuncture research. Despite limited availability, BAcC research funding has yielded important outcomes;

Hugh MacPherson initially received BAcC funding for his work on safety which was eventually published in the British Medical Journal. Over the years, changes in the profession, the training, education, research, regulation, CPD, and accreditation have all made a huge impact. And the last 20 years have been really just the beginning!

Professor Nicola Robinson, Member and Professor of TCM and Integrated Health, London South Bank University



Developing the evidence

It was in a climate of considerable uncertainty some 18 years ago that I decided to take up the challenge and become an acupuncture researcher. Having seen some cases involving extraordinary recovery of patients in my clinic, often with long-standing conditions, I had a desire to see the scientific literature reflect my observations. I wanted to see more high quality research being conducted and published in high impact journals. I also wanted to see the right sort of research being conducted, research that respected the traditional perspectives of Chinese medicine, rather than new approaches or styles being evaluated. And so, after an exciting ten years as founder and principal of the Northern College of Acupuncture, I switched my focus to research.

I was privileged to be supported by colleagues from the University of Sheffield and by several small grants, including two from the BAcC. Our first research study involved a survey to assess the safety of acupuncture in everyday practice, which led to a publication in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) with an independent editorial in that

issue stating that acupuncture is safe in competent hands. We went on to conduct a clinical trial of acupuncture for low back pain, also published in the BMJ, showing positive effects of acupuncture on pain and that these improvements were at their greatest some two years later, a quite remarkable result. This trial broke new ground in that the acupuncturists, who were all from the BAcC, were encouraged to work as they normally would, with the main limitation being only ten treatments per patient available within the study. These projects taught me that good research into acupuncture as it is routinely practised can be published in high impact journals. We did not need to constrain the acupuncturists within the research protocols, but rather retain a focus on mapping the harms and benefits associated with everyday care.

Another phase of my research started in 2003 when I awarded a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of York. I built on my early experiences and conducted several pilot studies, three of which led to funding for large-scale trials designed to evaluate acupuncture's effectiveness and

cost-effectiveness. Two of these trials have been completed and published with positive results: acupuncture for irritable bowel syndrome and acupuncture or counselling for depression. A third trial is soon to be published, acupuncture or Alexander Technique for chronic neck pain. I have also been involved in systematic reviews with large datasets in which we have developed robust conclusions based on high quality trials. We have found clear benefits of acupuncture for chronic pain conditions, specifically low back and neck pain, headache and migraine, and osteoarthritis of the knee. Importantly, this research synthesis is definitive in showing that for all these conditions, acupuncture is statistically significantly more effective than sham acupuncture, thereby firmly negating the sceptics' opinion that acupuncture is only a placebo. We have also found that acupuncture, when compared equally with any of the other physical therapies for osteoarthritis of the knee, is as good as, or better than, the other therapies. I have also had the opportunity to conduct neuroimaging studies at York, leading to outputs that have reinforced the plausibility of acupuncture at a physiological level and strengthened the underlying science on the mechanism(s) related to how acupuncture might work.

Looking back, it is clear that a lot more evidence on acupuncture has been coming through from around the world, especially in the last 10 to 15 years. Moreover the quality of the evidence on acupuncture is as high as, or even higher than, any of the other physical therapies. While opinions on the evidence base for acupuncture may be mixed, the actual evidence is shaping up strongly. We now have a very solid basis for knowing that the majority of acupuncture delivered in the UK, which is most commonly used to treat musculoskeletal conditions and headache and migraine, is evidence based. .

Hugh MacPherson,
Member: North Yorkshire



Being a member of the BAcC has actually played a very important role in my life. Feeling the weight of a really professional body at my back has empowered me to step out of my comfort zone many times and talk about acupuncture and its wonderful benefits. I was encouraged and supported by Mike (O'Farrell) and now by Nick (Pahl) to put myself and acupuncture 'out there' and I enjoy every minute of it. Having this first class knowledge base and group of experienced professionals to turn to is priceless and gives me great encouragement to do my bit as a practitioner. I think it is vital for us practitioners to engage with the human contact within the organisation and to feel that support.

Susan Evans, Member and
Professional Development Lead



Twenty years on



Good grief, 20 years already. Did I ever think I was going to be a practitioner for 25 years and helping to run the professional body for 23 of them? Almost certainly not, so I suppose the fact that I'm still here says something about the adhesive nature of the work. Highlights? Well, I 'treasured' for about seven years and have 'secretaried' for the last fifteen, and I still believe that our attempt to obtain a Royal Charter was a truly heroic failure. We managed to put in three years work in two months to have everything ready, and made it. All of you played your part, with some of you setting aside legitimate concerns for the greater good, and we were within two hours of making it in July 2010. Charter we didn't make, but the change in governance arrangements has been a truly

healthy one. If you're looking for financial highlights, you're in the wrong profession. We're solvent, the fees have hardly moved in the last five years, and the level of service has improved.

I've been niggling for years to have a page or two in the newsletter headed 'What has the BACc ever done for us?' because of the hundreds of members we have dug out of the mire, often in evenings and at weekends, whose stories you need to read. My personal favourite was arguing with a social services department over a Bank Holiday weekend, to keep a member's kids from being taken into care after she had needled her son and the childminder's mother had made a formal complaint about child abuse. That, and discussing with an environmental health officer (EHO) the merits of a member sharing a room with a colonic irrigationist and gradually realising that the EHO was worried about our member infecting the other person's clients. I always used to say that for me the BACc represented the relentless pursuit of excellence, better research, more accreditation, and more affinity benefits; well, everyone does this. What we also need is a little of the magic that inspired five disparate bodies to come together, burying hatchets and for once not in each other, and to build on what we now have. .

John Wheeler,
Member and BACc Company Secretary

Edited highlights

There were so many highlights during my time at the BACc: being part of the team that gave evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on their investigation into the strengths and weaknesses of complementary medicine; attending many, many regional meetings around the country and learning at source the pressures under which many members worked; regular meetings with students at the various colleges, and appreciating the extent of their commitment to learning whilst holding down full-time jobs and bringing up families; battling with the sceptics, both privately and in public; explaining the BACc position both on radio and TV; chairing groups for the Department of Health as we all tried to find ways and conditions under which the different bodies could work together; the BACc drive towards chartered status ... and so much more. It was an amazing and humbling experience and one which I would not have missed, and whilst I hesitate to mention individuals,



I would like to say a particular thank you to Sarah Williams, Joan Maynard and Carol Daghish who were members of the staff when I joined and who took an individual like me, knocked off the rough corners developed during 37 years of manufacturing and corporate life, and made me see what acupuncture was really about!

Mick O'Farrell,
Former CEO and Honorary BACc Fellow

Our profession of acupuncture

How does a discipline, a practice, come to be seen as a profession, and what does it mean? A profession has a specialised body of knowledge with skills based on that body of knowledge. The BACc has worked hard to be open about the thorny question of what our specialised body of knowledge is and to promote the multiple currents that form Chinese medicine. The Standards of Practice for Acupuncture have managed to weave together the propositional, professional and craft knowledge, the attitudes and behaviours of professionalism, and also the way of being an acupuncture professional. More recent work on limits of competence and the extra guidelines for treating children and obstetrics were developed with extensive consultation from members experienced in these areas;

it is thorough, sensitive to the way Chinese medicine works and is of the highest order. The technical aspects of practice are woven into the knowledge and attitude. It is not about needling but needling with the appropriate attitude and understanding of qi.

Training in those skills is certified by examination. The BAAB, responsible for accrediting the teaching institutes who train the professionals, is one of the most professional accreditation boards in the sector. It has been pioneering in its developmental approach to courses to the point that all courses now meet UK Higher Education standards, with clear assessment processes and criteria to explain what students as professionals are expected to do. Applicants to the profession who have not

When I needed help and support the BACc were there, accessible and available, out-of-hours if necessary. I was grateful and felt part of an organisation that cared. Among all the benefits of being a member, having someone on the end of the phone is incredibly valuable. Thank you, BACc.

Adam Leighton, Member and Regional Group Co-ordinator





The BAcC is a great reminder that acupuncture works and that this system of medicine is the healthcare system of the future. It is an honour to be a member as the organisation's open mind and heart allows much dialogue with the other scientific professions who seek to help humanity into long life and wellbeing. Let us continue to bring medical and social advance to the beings of this world, helping to advance society as a whole and transcend the need for sickness, old age and untimely death.

Mary Mike,
Member: London

gone through an accredited course are asked to display both knowledge and experience of practice, and they are judged by senior members of the profession.

A profession also has peer regulation that defines standards and quality of practice through published codes of professional conduct and practice. The BAcC has produced a number of key and well thought out documents setting out good practice. The Code of Safe Practice and the Guide that supports it are constantly being updated with reference to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The Safe Practice Self Audit is an excellent document for any practitioner to follow and work with, guaranteeing best safety guidelines for patients. Likewise, the Code of Professional Conduct and the ethics complaints and disciplinary procedures are of the highest standards, fair, thorough, rigorous, and carried out and overseen by members' peers.

Responsibility to the public is also key, and given that our work involves a relationship of trust between our patients and ourselves, we must be able to give an account of our practice. The BAcC has tried to produce a system of continuing professional development (CPD) that puts the responsibility on every one of us to research our own practice from the inside, to reveal our theories-in-use, and from this reflection to determine what and how we need to improve our practice. Our CPD is a process of self-monitoring and consideration of the moral, emotional and contextual aspects of our practice. The BAcC plays a dual role, both supporting its members and also disciplining them as necessary. It also acts as a place for the public to seek redress if a member has broken its trust. The arbitration process, conducted by the ethics committees, is truly supportive in its approach, always aiming to find ways of addressing any issues revealed.

So given that we act as professionals, why no statutory regulation? Maybe the BAcC has just been too good at voluntary self-regulation for the Department of Health to be concerned.

Felicity Moir,
Member: London



Working over the last twenty years in an unregulated healthcare arena, I have found the BAcC to be a reassuring presence helping to fly the flag of our profession. For an organisation with such a small membership we command a very loud voice.

Tom Sydenham, Member and Regional Group Co-ordinator



In my experience I have found everyone at the BAcC to be helpful, knowledgeable, supportive and approachable. When there have been times I've needed some guidance or reassurance, I found the staff to be focused and clear in their responses which, for me, was just what I needed. Everyone at the BAcC is either a phone call or an email away, which is brilliant when quick responses are needed.

Balquees Ali, Member and Professional Development Lead

*So we stand as a volunteer register
United in the purpose of our identity
Our individuality protected
We who touch so many lives and hold firm
In our resolve to be the best that's been
To work on ideals that we hold dearest
To represent and safeguard members and public
We stand firm and united against the tide of time
As we progress and become stronger still
Be humble and yet firm we must be
Free spirits swimming in the same current
Concerted concentrated energy
We survive growing in stature daily.*



Phil Rose Neil, Member: London