

Workshop Feedback

The afternoon session of the seminar took the format of four workshop groups. To aid discussion each group consisted of stakeholders from both the conventional and complementary sectors as well as commissioners and voluntary groups.

The workshops considered the barriers complementary medicine faces in moving towards greater integration within the Health Service. The groups considered the barriers from the perspective of the GP, the patient, the commissioner and finally the complementary therapist. Groups were also asked to consider possible solutions to overcoming the barriers outlined.

The information below provides a brief outline of some of the comments made from each group and highlights the areas they considered as barriers and solutions to integration.

Patient Perspective - Barriers

- Lack of knowledge of the therapies
- Cost
- Patients not willing to advise GP they want CAM therapies
- Fear of offending GP if they ask for CAM
- Lack of funding to pay for CAM treatment
- Concern in relation to communication between practitioners
- Lack of publicity of NHS complementary services
- Concern in respect of CAM practitioners credibility and regulation standards
- Cultural and religious

Patient Perspective – Solutions

- Education
- Communication (networking and marketing)
- Increased joined up approaches
- Effective leadership
- Written feedback after referrals
- Building relationships between health professionals
- Learning from the past

GP Perspective – Barriers

- GP's not fully aware of the services that are offered
- CAM therapists reluctant to share
- Lacks of understanding on insurance cover therapists have when referring to them

- Funding – where is the money coming from
- How do GP's actually assess what actually happened during the referral treatment to a CAM practitioner
- Historical misperceptions
- Lack of health strategy to move integration forward
- Lack of time

GP Perspective – Solutions

- Increased education for GP's on CAM therapies including at pre registration stage
- Provision of day courses on the various therapy areas
- Develop meaningful, practical health strategy
- Provision of accredited booklet for GP's outlining CAM practitioners in local area
- Appraisals – work with allied health professionals
- Funding – DHSSPS earmark money from savings made using CAM and reinvest in innovative areas
- CAM therapists should be pushing for inclusion in new health centres

Complementary Therapists Perspective – Barriers

- No referral mechanism into CAM
- Education required informing GP's of CAM therapies
- GP's are taught that medicine is the only answer
- General lack of knowledge on CAM regulation procedures
- Lack of information on CAM therapist's professional accountability
- Providing evidence that the therapy is working
- GP's need more information on CAM practitioner's registration
- The need for ease of access to a practitioner

Complementary Therapists Perspective – Solutions

- Improved networking where relationships can be developed
- CAM provided during medical practitioners training
- Provision of geographical lists of CAM practitioners
- Adequate funding provision
- Respect for therapists
- Patient education
- Provision of a fact sheet listing all therapies from the DHSSPS
- A recognised pathway from GP assessment to CAM practitioner

Service Commissioner Perspective – Barriers

- People unwilling to pay for service
- GP's don't want to refer patients to paying services
- Fear of patient complaints especially if it doesn't work (especially if they pay)
- Fear of patients suing
- Reservations – What am I paying for? / What am I referring to?
- Lack of funding
- Lack of knowledge
- Not enough research

Service Commissioner Perspective – Solutions

- Provision of education on CAM services
- Knowledge of clear standards among therapies and therapists
- Holistic approach to medical training and more exposure to CAM
- Clear goals for patients and what they can expect
- Adequate supply of practitioners
- Provision of information on where CAM practitioners are located

NOTE

Delegates also had the opportunity to ask questions of the various speakers. Questioning in the following areas was asked:

What is the difference between Osteopathy and Chiropractor?

Funding for provision of services

Regulation of therapies

The need to highlight the examples of good practice that already exist