

The integration of acupuncture within medicine in the UK – the British Medical Acupuncture Society’s 25th Anniversary

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Abstract

Acupuncture was first used in China, probable about 2000 years ago. When acupuncture first arrived in the West in the 17th century, the principles which the Chinese had used to explain its actions were at variance with current scientific knowledge of the body’s structure and function. This led to the rejection of acupuncture by the medical profession in the UK, although individual practitioners adopted it with enthusiasm, usually needling the point of maximal tenderness to treat musculoskeletal pain. Acupuncture was more generally accepted in France and Germany, where the pioneering British physician Felix Mann encountered it in the 1950s. He then taught acupuncture to other medical practitioners and organised regular meetings in London, from which the British Medical Acupuncture Society, BMAS, emerged in 1980. The tradition of biannual scientific meetings has continued since then. The Society has many connections with prominent acupuncturists internationally and is a founder member of the International Council of Medical Acupuncture and Related Techniques (ICMART), and has hosted two world congresses. The Society was involved in standardisation of the meridian nomenclature published in 1990. The Society’s scientific journal, *Acupuncture in Medicine*, was founded in 1981 and has gained international recognition, being indexed on several databases. The Society has established regular teaching courses at different levels, which lead to professional qualifications of Certificate and Diploma. The membership is now open to different health professionals, has grown steadily and now stands at nearly 2500. The Society is administered from offices in Cheshire and London.

Many individual members have contributed to the Society’s characteristic Western ‘medical’ approach to acupuncture in which needling is seen as a form of neuromuscular stimulation that owes little to traditional meridians or points. The Society has shown a particular interest in acupuncture for myofascial trigger point pain. Members of the Society have contributed to the evidence base of acupuncture with several books, clinical trials and reviews. The Society is optimistic that it will have an increasingly important role in promoting the use and scientific evaluation of acupuncture for the public benefit.

Keywords

Acupuncture, history, integration, British Medical Acupuncture Society.

Historical background

In order to explain what led to the formation of the British Medical Acupuncture Society (BMAS) in 1980, it is first necessary to provide a historical review of some earlier relevant events.

The Western world’s introduction to Chinese acupuncture

The Chinese had been employing a highly complex therapeutic procedure involving the insertion of needles into the body for at least 2000

years before people in the Western world first learnt about it from Jesuit missionaries returning from the East, and from various medical officers employed by the Dutch East Indies Company during the 17th century.¹

Their accounts of the principles upon which the practice of this particular form of treatment appeared to be based, however, seemed to be considerably at variance with knowledge concerning the structure and function of the human body already acquired during the 16th

century by people such as the Italian anatomist Andreas Versalius and the British physician William Harvey. This inevitably caused members of the medical profession in Europe to conclude that it was a somewhat esoteric and enigmatic form of treatment and for this reason they made no attempt to use it.

Resurgence of interest in acupuncture in the Western world during the 19th century

In view of that early rejection, it is interesting and surprising to find that during the 19th century acupuncture began to be used by doctors in Britain, France and Germany.

In England, the first two doctors who wrote about acupuncture lived in London. One was a surgeon, JM Churchill, who published two books on the use of acupuncture in 1821 and 1828.^{2,3} The other was John Elliotson, then Professor of Medicine at University College Hospital, who wrote a paper on it in 1827.⁴ Neither of them, however, employed traditional Chinese acupuncture, but instead treated musculoskeletal pain by the far simpler expedient of inserting needles at sites of maximum tenderness – a procedure that was clearly the forerunner of the present day treatment known as myofascial trigger point dry needling. Although both of them reported the beneficial effects of this procedure enthusiastically, they failed to persuade many of their contemporaries to use it, because neither of them could adequately explain how it worked.

This notwithstanding, toward the end of that century, doctors at both Leeds Infirmary and Sheffield General Hospital were reported to have used this type of acupuncture for the relief of muscle pain.⁵

The most influential physician to use acupuncture at that time, however, was Sir William Osler. He first did this whilst working as a young physician at McGill University in Montreal, and then again when, at the beginning of the 20th century, he became Professor of Medicine at Oxford University. In his widely read undergraduate textbook of medicine published in 1912, he recommended the insertion of ladies' hat pins at points of tenderness in the lower back for the relief of what at that time was called 'lumbago'.⁶

Despite Osler's considerable eminence, however, such treatment was not widely adopted and it was another 46 years before the medical profession in Britain once again began to take any interest in acupuncture.

What happened in France and Germany was entirely different. In France, Berlioz, the father of the famous composer, wrote a book on traditional Chinese manual acupuncture in 1816.⁷ And Sarlandière, a Parisian physician, pioneered the use of electroacupuncture in 1825.⁸ These two therapeutic procedures were then quickly adopted by doctors in that country and have continued to be widely used there ever since. In Germany, papers concerning the alleviation of rheumatic pain by means of the insertion of needles into the body were published by both Bernstein and Lohmayer during the early part of the 19th century.¹ This was to lead to acupuncture being employed there for the treatment of pain of that type, and for a variety of other disorders from then onwards.

Acupuncture in the UK since the 1950s

The development of acupuncture in the UK to the present day has depended hugely on Felix Mann, the doyen of current practice of medical acupuncture in Britain. He was educated at Malvern College in Worcestershire and received his medical training at Cambridge University and Westminster Hospital in London. He was introduced to traditional Chinese acupuncture when in 1955 – already a fluent linguist, and with many friends in Europe – he went as a junior doctor to France and Germany. He was so impressed by the seeming efficacy of this form of treatment, that he took the opportunity to be trained by Dr Anton Strobl in Munich, Professor Johannes Bischko in Vienna and Dr Van Nha in Montpellier.

Following this training, he turned to two sinologists, David Owen and Frank Liu, to teach him to read both modern and ancient Chinese, before travelling to the East to learn more about the subject from doctors in Peking, Nanking and Shanghai.

On his return to England in 1958, it was with considerable perspicacity and – considering the prevailing hostility amongst members of the British medical profession to traditional Chinese acupuncture – courage, that he purchased consulting rooms in London's West End in order

both to treat patients with acupuncture and to provide courses of instruction for any doctors wishing to learn about it.

Initially only a few doctors attended his courses, but during the 1970s the number increased considerably. This was in part because of the rapid spread of his reputation as a teacher of acupuncture also because of a number of events during that decade that were to lead to the medical profession in the Western world taking a renewed interest in this form of treatment.

Events that encouraged the acceptance of acupuncture

One of these events was President Nixon's goodwill visit to China in 1972. During this trip, he and his entourage were shown how acupuncture was being used there at that time to suppress surgically-evoked pain. This led his personal physician, Walter Tkach, on returning to America, to publish a lengthy article somewhat emotively entitled 'I have seen acupuncture work' in a widely read popular magazine.⁹ The effect of this was twofold: it not only caused the general public to become interested in this form of treatment, but more importantly it prompted various distinguished members of the medical profession - both in Britain and the USA - to visit China to judge for themselves the efficacy of the procedure. Included amongst these was John Bonica, then Professor of Anesthesiology at the University of Washington in the USA,¹⁰ and various delegates from the Medical Research Council in London.¹¹

There were, in addition, a number of fortuitous and extremely propitious advances in knowledge concerning the neurophysiology of pain about that time that helped to provide insight into some of the possible mechanisms involved in acupuncture's ability to control pain.

These included, from the 1950s onwards, Melzack and Wall's important observations concerning the centripetal transmission and modulation of nociceptor-generated information, summarised in due course in their widely read book *The Challenge of Pain*, published in 1982.¹² Also, the discovery of endogenous opioid peptide receptors in the nervous system by Solomon Snyder at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine

in Baltimore and Candice Pert at the USA's National Institute of Mental Health in 1973.¹³ And thirdly, the discovery two years later, by Hughes and his co-workers at Aberdeen University, in Scotland, of naturally occurring opioid peptides that attach to these receptors.¹⁴

This then led to a number of research workers throughout the world demonstrating that these endogenous opioid peptides are involved in acupuncture's effect in relieving nociceptive pain. These researchers include Professor Han at Beijing Medical University in China,¹⁵ Professor Pomeranz at the University of Toronto in Canada,¹⁶ and Vicky Clement-Jones with Professors Besser and Rees at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, UK.¹⁷

The formation of the British Medical Acupuncture Society

Once Felix Mann's courses in acupuncture became well established, he organised an annual meeting for all those he had taught. It was as a direct result of this that a London-based medical acupuncture society was formed, with Felix Mann elected as president. Members of that society included, amongst others, Virginia Camp, Anthony Campbell, Keith Glennie-Smith, Alan Grant, Julian Kenyon, Alex Macdonald, Ted Redfearn and Michael Roberts.

In 1978 various members of the London-based medical acupuncture society went to China on a fact-finding tour organised by Julian Kenyon. During that visit he and Virginia Camp discussed the possible need for a nationally based society. This suggestion was put to the members of the existing society. Once they had agreed on this proposal, a steering committee was set up consisting of Virginia Camp, Keith Glennie Smith, Julian Kenyon, and Ted Redfearn under the chairmanship of Alexander Macdonald. With legal advice from Virginia's husband John, (a barrister, who remains legal advisor to the Society), they drew up a constitution and presented it to the first meeting of the BMAS.

The inaugural conference of the BMAS

This was held in the spring of 1980 at the Dormy House Hotel, Ferndown, Dorset. It was organised by David Dowson, a local general practitioner, and his wife Kathy. Keith Glennie-Smith, a consultant

anaesthetist at the nearby Poole General Hospital, also gave valuable help with the necessary arrangements.

The 60 doctors present voted for the first committee of nine members: Virginia Camp (membership secretary), E Ferris, Keith Glennie-Smith (vice chairman), Julian Kenyon (chairman), George Lewith (treasurer), Alex Macdonald (secretary), Pat McMillan, Ted Redfearn and Mike Roberts. The honorary president was Dr Felix Mann. The constitution decreed that the chairman and vice chairman should stand down after one year's term of office (this was extended to two years in 1991). Ted Redfearn was elected to honorary treasurer and was to hold this post for many years to come and at an early stage arranged for the Society to become a registered charity. A list of elected officers of the Society is given in Table 1, which also reflects the change from Committee to Council that took place in 2000.

The BMAS logo was designed by Keith Glennie-Smith, who subsequently arranged the commissioning from a pottery on Brownsea Island, Dorset of a special edition mug showing the Society's logo (see Figure 1).



Figure 1 Pottery mug specially commissioned, showing BMAS logo.

Subsequent meetings of the Society

During the following year David Dowson organised a spring meeting at the Alverstun Manor Hotel in Stratford on Avon; and Ted Redfearn, a general practitioner in Birmingham, arranged for an autumn meeting to be held at the Midlands Art Centre.

Since then, the BMAS has continued to hold its meetings biannually. For many years, eminent practitioners and researchers from Asia, USA, Canada and Europe were invited to run master classes for one or two days following the scientific meeting itself. The current custom is to hold a spring meeting at varying venues throughout the country and an autumn meeting in London, in recent years usually at the Royal College of Physicians.

The Society has over the years been much indebted to a number of its chairmen and other members for arranging the programmes for these events. For some long time, however, this task has been left to Dr Jacqueline Filshie, a consultant anaesthetist at the Royal Marsden Hospital, London. It is entirely due to her extensive knowledge of the medical acupuncture literature published worldwide and her close relationship with so many leading figures in this particular field of medicine that the papers presented to the Society's conferences by speakers from both this country and abroad are now invariably of such a high scientific standard.

The education of members of the BMAS concerning the practice of Western acupuncture has been greatly facilitated by the video recording of lectures given at its scientific meetings. This was first started by Paul Marcus who produced these on video tape. Following this, Colin Lewis took over and in 2002 recorded the proceedings of the Society's spring meeting on video compact discs. He then proceeded to provide himself with equipment which allowed the whole of the Society's spring 2003 scientific meeting in Coventry to be recorded on a number of digital versatile discs (DVDs). And at the Society's spring meeting in Oxford in 2004 every person attending was given a DVD on which was recorded in low resolution format a complete day of lectures.

International connections

Being a small, young society proved no bar to attracting eminent international speakers to BMAS meetings. Those giving courses in the early years included Dr Chan Gunn, Prof Johannes Bischko and Prof Yoshiaki Omura, all of whom later became honorary members of the Society. One of the first courses was by Dr Paul Nogier,

Table 1 Elected Officers of the BMAS Committee (1980-1999) and Council (2000-present). Appointments date from the spring meeting of the stated calendar year.

Year	Chairman	Vice Chairman	Secretary	Honorary Treasurer
1980	Julian Kenyon	Keith Glennie-Smith/ George Lewith*	Alex Macdonald/ Julian Kenyon*	George Lewith
1981	David Paine	David Dowson	Alan Grant	Ted Redfearn
1982	David Dowson	Virginia Camp	Alan Grant	Ted Redfearn
1983	Virginia Camp	Alan Grant	Simon Hayhoe	Ted Redfearn
1984	Alan Grant	Elizabeth Welsh	Simon Hayhoe	Ted Redfearn
1985	Ted Redfearn	Simon Hayhoe	Peter Baldry	Ted Redfearn
1986	Simon Hayhoe	Peter Baldry	Philip Vernon	Ted Redfearn
1987	Peter Baldry	Sunil Liyanage	Philip Vernon	Ted Redfearn
1988	Sunil Liyanage	Mary Wells Jenkins	Paul Marcus	John Parry-Jones
1989	Mary Wells Jenkins	Paul Marcus	Harold Robinson	John Parry-Jones
1990	Paul Marcus	Roger Cockbain	(unavailable)	John Parry-Jones
1991	Paul Marcus	Jacqueline Filshie	Penny Brougham	Palle Rosted
1992	Jacqueline Filshie	Adrian White	Penny Brougham	Palle Rosted
1993	Adrian White	Roger Cockbain	Jacqueline Filshie	Palle Rosted
1994	Adrian White	Anthony Campbell	Jacqueline Filshie	Koneru Prasad
1995	John Reynolds	Anthony Campbell	Jacqueline Filshie	Koneru Prasad
1996	Koneru Prasad	Colin Lewis	Jacqueline Filshie	Adrian White
1997	Koneru Prasad	Colin Lewis	Jacqueline Filshie	Adrian White
1998	Colin Lewis	Hywel Watkin	Jacqueline Filshie	Adrian White
1999	Colin Lewis	Hywel Watkin	Jacqueline Filshie	Jonny Rae
Year	President	Vice President	Company Secretary	Honorary Treasurer
2000	Hywel Watkin	Colin Lewis	Jacqueline Filshie	Jonny Rae
2001	Hywel Watkin	Peter Evans	Jacqueline Filshie	Jonny Rae
2002	Peter Evans	vacant	Jacqueline Filshie	Jonny Rae
2003	Peter Evans	vacant	Jacqueline Filshie	Jonny Rae
2004	Jonny Rae	Frankie Reid	Jacqueline Filshie	Max Forrester

*change of officers due to resignations

the French physician who developed modern auriculotherapy. His course proved so popular that the committee was embarrassed at the large profit made by the meeting and bought some barrels of beer with the proceeds to be distributed free to members.

In 1983 the Society sent delegates to the 1st World Congress of Scientific Acupuncture in Vienna at which the BMAS became a founder member of the International Council of Medical Acupuncture and Related Techniques (ICMART), the umbrella organisation for medical acupuncture societies worldwide. The BMAS has traditionally provided the treasurer for ICMART, the first being David Dowson, followed by Simon Hayhoe and Palle Rosted. The BMAS 'came of age' internationally by hosting in London the 2nd

World Congress of Scientific Acupuncture, on behalf of ICMART, in 1986: friends made then have influenced the evolution of our Society, as our own uncompromisingly scientific approach to acupuncture has in turn influenced them. Since then we have held two more ICMART world congresses: at Bath in 1993 and Edinburgh in 2002.

The BMAS was also closely involved in the WHO attempts between 1984 and 1986 to standardise aspects of acupuncture, involving a series of meetings and 'shuttle diplomacy' in Hong Kong. The BMAS was the sole representative of the UK. The one outstanding culmination of this effort was the standardisation of the meridian abbreviations, reported in an article in 1990.¹⁸

BMAS publications*Acupuncture in Medicine*

Alan Grant produced the first issue of the BMAS journal, *Acupuncture in Medicine*, in 1981. The cover of an early journal is shown in Figure 2a. In his initial editorial he wrote: 'The objective of the Society is to stimulate and promote the use of scientific acupuncture as part of the practice of medicine. The journal is now produced to keep YOU in touch and up to date with the new and original research of other members and the latest scientific advances ... Produced half yearly, the journal will include a diary of activities, courses and meetings of interest to all directly involved in the field of acupuncture... we hope that through its own activities and through the journal the British Medical Acupuncture Society will make a contribution to the future of acupuncture within the United Kingdom.'



Figure 2 Covers of earlier editions of *Acupuncture in Medicine* a) 1983 -1987 b) 1988-1998.

In 1988 Simon Hayhoe took over the editorship and he, as a result of his ability, dedication and enthusiasm, succeeded in making the journal sufficiently meritorious for it to be listed in international databases from 1996 onwards. This currently includes, amongst others, Embase (Elsevier), Index Medicus, Medline (USA National Library of Medicine), AMED (British Library) and CINAHL (Nursing and Allied Health). A cumulative index of the journal and selected articles are also now available on the journal section of the BMAS website. Figure 2b shows the cover of the journal under the early years of Simon Hayhoe's editorship: the present cover has been used, with minor modifications, since June 1999. In 1992, the journal published a special Supplement of three papers read at the conference of the British Association in Plymouth, 1991, including a detailed scientific review by Paul Marcus.

In 2000, Mike Cummings became editor responsible for day-to-day editing and production of the journal. He, together with Jacqueline Filshie, were responsible for making further important changes both to the format and contents of the journal commensurate with its ever increasing prestige and position as the leading journal in the world that emphasises the medical, scientific approach to acupuncture.

It is interesting to note that currently the burden and scope of the journal are such that it requires the work of two additional editors – Adrian White took over as editor in chief at the start of 2004 – in addition to a managing editor, Ms Joy Ogden. The editorial board includes a statistician, Dr Susan Ashley and eight experienced medical acupuncturists; and the international editorial board comprises 23 people of considerable eminence in acupuncture.

This journal currently now largely concentrates on original peer reviewed articles on clinical, experimental, technical, and basic aspects of a Western-orientated form of acupuncture using the prevailing understanding of neurophysiology and anatomy to interpret its effects. Currently, 7000 copies of each issue are printed, and circulated to members of the Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists and to the Swedish and Finnish Medical Acupuncture

Societies, as well as to the members of the BMAS and other subscribers around the world.

The Point

An important innovation in the spring of 1996 was the publication of a bi-annual newsletter called *The Point*. The introduction of this was the brainchild of Colin Lewis, a medical practitioner in Guildford. He continued to be its editor for a number of years. His successors were firstly Marie James and then more recently Julian Price, the Society's chief executive.

Colin, in his introduction to the initial issue wrote: 'Welcome to the first edition of a brand new newsletter for BMAS members. This is your newsletter, so keep me supplied with your ideas about acupuncture and the BMAS. This is not about heavy research articles or extensive database searches, but the more simple ideas that you find useful in your practice, equipment you want to sell or even griping about the Society!'

One of this publication's important features is that it has become a forum where members of the Society can seek help concerning problems arising in their everyday clinical work from a panel made up of experts in the many different facets of medical acupuncture.

BMAS website

An important contribution to the dissemination of information concerning the practice of Western acupuncture to both the medical profession and the public in general was the setting up of our Society's own website by Colin Lewis in 1996. The pages of this site have since then rapidly grown, and in 1998 Ruth Livingstone took over the important task of keeping them up to date. The pages include membership sections with news, documents and resources, as well as journal pages and information for patients.

BMAS teaching courses

In 1982, at Alan Grant's suggestion, Virginia Camp, who was at that time the Society's chairman, persuaded some senior members to join her in running BMAS-organised acupuncture teaching courses. The first of these was a weekend course of instruction held at High Wycombe, where she worked as a consultant rheumatologist.

Subsequently they were held at a number of different venues throughout the country.

Some time later Sunil Liyanage, also a consultant rheumatologist, took over this task and, with the help of a number of experienced BMAS members, ran courses in the postgraduate centre at King Edward VII Hospital, Windsor, where he was consultant. Subsequently, Mary Jenkins, an experienced medical acupuncturist in Cardiff, ran these introductory courses, and with the help of a team of doctors that included amongst others Penny Brougham, Alan Grant and Roger Cockbain, she re-designed them.

Eventually, however, it became evident that the demands for development, teaching and organisation of suitably detailed courses were too much for any one person to do in their spare time, so in 1997 the Society decided to appoint a salaried Director of Education. Mike Cummings was the first holder of this post, and in 2001 he became the Society's first Medical Director. Mike, together with Dr Frankie Reid and a number of other experienced medical acupuncturists, now runs excellent courses based on present day neurophysiological concepts, with foundation courses and a more advanced programme designed to cover the core syllabus for the Diploma of Medical Acupuncture.

The competence Certificate and Diploma of medical acupuncture

When, during the early 1990s, senior members of the BMAS became aware of the general public's increasing demands for therapists of all kinds to have overt evidence of their fitness to practice, Virginia Camp and Paul Marcus were given the task of exploring how best this could be achieved with respect to medically qualified acupuncturists. The outcome was the setting up of a Competence, Accreditation and Examination Board Steering Committee. The members of this were John Camp, Virginia Camp, Anthony Campbell, Jacqueline Filshie, Alan Grant, Simon Hayhoe, George Lewith, Paul Marcus (chairman), David Paine, Koneru Prasad, John Thompson, Elizabeth Welsh and Adrian White.

As a result of their deliberations a decision was made at the Society's Annual General Meeting on 29 April 1995 to establish a Competence,

Accreditation and Examining Board, chaired by Virginia Camp. The Board then drew up regulations appertaining to the obtaining of a Diploma of basic competence and also those required for obtaining the Diploma of Medical Acupuncture which allows a practitioner to become an accredited member of the Society. It is currently necessary for these members to undergo a re-accreditation procedure every five years.

BMAS membership and administration

The membership of the BMAS has continued to grow steadily since its foundation, as shown on Figure 3. The dip in membership in 1987 was the result of a purge of members whose subscriptions had lapsed; the significant increase in 1999 was the result of complimentary membership for doctors attending the foundation courses. In 1998 a decision was made to invite two organisations to become affiliated to the BMAS, the Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists and the British Academy of Western Acupuncture. In 2002, membership of the Society was opened to a number of other health professions in addition to medical practitioners. This decision was primarily taken in order to provide training, support and continuing professional development to regulated health professionals working in the NHS who wished to use a Western style of acupuncture.

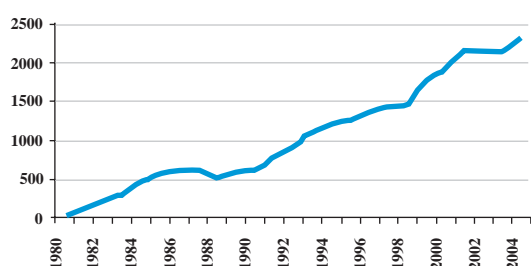


Figure 3 Growth in membership of the BMAS since its foundation in 1980.

The Society's administration

Initially much of the administration was done on a voluntary basis by Kathie Dowson, the wife of David Dowson, and our Society is much indebted to her for this. Subsequently, secretarial and administrative support was purchased on an hourly basis and very largely provided by Paula Aczel in High Wycombe. When in 1987 our

Society's membership had increased to around 500, it was considered necessary to create a salaried administration post. Jean Marcus, the wife of Paul Marcus, was appointed to this, and from then until April 2000 when she resigned she carried out her duties with considerable diligence and skill at the Society's head office in Cheshire, a converted section of the Marcus residence. Jean ran every aspect of administration of the Society, including the regularisation of membership lists, the collection of subscriptions and all aspects of finance, and the arrangement of meetings of committees and trustees. She also administered the scientific meetings and weekend training courses throughout this period as well as managing and developing the administrative office.

On Jean's retirement, Vanessa Edgerley, who was already working at the Cheshire office, became the senior administrator and continued in this post until leaving the Society at the end of 2004. And, as was said in a recent edition of *The Point*: 'Many members will remember Vanessa as the smiling face that greeted them on a foundation course or at the scientific meetings. Her friendly and helpful approach was the hallmark of many of our events and did much to make them a success.'

Jane Llewelyn joined the team in 2000, and now runs the administration in Northwich, Cheshire, where the Society purchased a permanent office in 2003. Jane is ably assisted by Dianne Hough and Pauline Boll, soon to be joined by a further member of staff.

The BMAS was formally incorporated as a limited company on 16 August 1996 – one important reason for this being to meet the requirements of the bank to allow the Society to set up a direct debit system for collecting annual subscriptions.

BMAS London office

Because of the Society's marked increase in membership and ever rising prestige during the 1990s, it was decided towards the end of that decade that it was necessary to have an additional administrative office in London. In 1999 Koneru Prasad, then chairman of the Society's Development Committee, arranged for this office to be established at the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital. This has since then been

staffed by Julian Price, the Society's chief executive, and by his personal assistant. Among Julian's many contributions to the efficient running of the Society, he has recently been actively engaged, together with the Medical Director, in helping to protect its members' interests at senior levels of government in the matter of professional regulation.

The Western approach to acupuncture of BMAS

When the Society was formed in 1980, some of its founders practised the centuries-old traditional Chinese form of acupuncture. Over the years there has been a gradual change and the majority of its members now practise a more modern, Western-orientated form. A large number of people have contributed to this metamorphosis but space only permits mentioning some.

Sam Lipton, a founder member of our Society who until his death was a consultant anaesthetist and head of the Centre for Pain Relief at Walton Hospital, Liverpool, did much to promote a scientific approach to acupuncture in lectures he gave at BMAS meetings. A good example of this is when in 1988 he stated: 'I would suggest you acquaint yourselves with simple statistical methods using squares, variance, normal distribution curves, standard deviations. We can only expect acupuncture to be accepted by the medical and scientific world as a valid treatment, if we are prepared to apply statistical methods of evaluation to well planned and controlled clinical trials...'¹⁹

Peter Nathan, who during his life time was a long standing member of our Society and a much respected physician at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in London, made an important contribution to scientific acupuncture when he and his colleagues at that hospital carried out well designed clinical trials to confirm its efficacy in the management of migraine and tension headaches.²⁰

David Bowsher, Director of Research, Pain Research Institute, Walton Hospital, Liverpool, has very importantly documented many of the neurophysiological mechanisms involved in acupuncture's effects on nociceptive pain.²¹

John Thompson, Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology, University of Newcastle, has also presented a number of papers to the Society on

the mechanisms of acupuncture and in addition has made important contributions to our understanding of the *modus operandi* and practice of transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS).²²

Felix Mann, the 'father' of the Society, has gradually, over the years, abandoned the traditional Chinese approach to acupuncture that he originally learnt, in favour of a Western-orientated approach based largely on his own shrewd clinical observations. His discovery of the pain-relieving efficacy of periosteal pecking and his recognition that there is a group of patients who are particularly strong reactors to dry needling and therefore only require a very lightly applied stimulus, are but two of his many important contributions to our present-day practice of acupuncture. His present views on this subject are clearly expressed in his latest book, which is intriguingly entitled *Reinventing Acupuncture – a new concept of ancient medicine*.²³

His move towards a Western-based form of acupuncture was first signalled when in 1977 he wrote a book entitled *Scientific Aspects of Acupuncture*.²⁴ In that, amongst other topics discussed, he drew attention to the important observations made by the American physician Janet Travell from the 1950s onwards concerning the referral of nociceptive pain from points of maximal tenderness in muscle or what she called myofascial trigger points (MTrPs).²⁵

Myofascial trigger point pain

Felix Mann's interest in Travell's work on this subject came to the attention of one of the other founders of our Society, Alex Macdonald who, when working in the Pain Clinic at Charing Cross Hospital, London, developed the technique of superficial dry needling over MTrPs. Then in 1983 he and his co-workers reported the results of a well designed controlled trial demonstrating the efficacy of this type of acupuncture in the treatment of MTrP low back pain.²⁶

Other BMAS members who have done much to further the practice of MTrP acupuncture include Mike Cummings,^{27,28} Adam Ward,²⁹ John Reynolds and myself,^{30,31} who over the years have lectured and written various books, chapters and papers on the subject. In addition, Chan Gunn, a physician in Vancouver and an honorary member

of our Society, has pioneered the use of a closely allied technique of intramuscular stimulation (IMS) for the treatment of myofascial pain.³²

Evidence based acupuncture

Edzard Ernst, Director of the Department of Complementary Medicine at the University of Exeter, and Adrian White – who was a research fellow there from 1994 to 2003 – have also done much to further the cause of evidence-based, scientifically orientated acupuncture. Included amongst their many contributions to the literature on this subject is a book they edited, called *Acupuncture: a scientific appraisal*, published in 1999.³³ In this there is an outstanding chapter written by Adrian White on the neuro-physiological mechanisms brought into action when acupuncture is employed for the alleviation of nociceptive pain, and an equally important one by Edzard Ernst in which he critically reviewed the validity of the published clinical trials of acupuncture. Jacqueline Filshie and Mike Cummings also provided a pivotal chapter in which they discussed all the various aspects of Western medical acupuncture.

Our Society is also indebted to Jacqueline Filshie and Adrian White for having, with considerable discernment, drawn together a large number of international acupuncturists to contribute to a book called *Medical Acupuncture – a Western Scientific Approach*, published in 1998.³⁴ Their aspirations concerning this book were well expressed in the final paragraph of an introductory chapter which reads, ‘It is hoped that this textbook celebrates the emergence of acupuncture from its mystical alternative roots and hastens its complete integration into conventional medicine over the next decade’.

Another member of the Society who has done much to further this aim is Anthony Campbell, Emeritus Consultant Physician, Royal London Homeopathic Hospital, both in his training courses and in his latest book *Acupuncture in Practice – Beyond Points and Meridians* published in 2001.³⁵

Clinical trials in acupuncture

Success in bringing the Society’s current scientific approach to acupuncture within the ambit of

orthodox Western medical practice perforce requires evidence from well conducted clinical trials. With respect to this, two of its members have provided a valuable service by writing extensively concerning the optimum trial design: Charles Vincent, Senior Lecturer in psychology at University College, London, with his book *Complementary Medicine: a Research Perspective*³⁶ and George Lewith, a clinical senior lecturer at Southampton University with his book *Clinical Research in Complementary Therapies*.³⁷ Specifically for BMAS members, a Research Committee was set up by Paul Marcus during his chairmanship, to advise on trial protocols. In addition, Jacqueline Filshie invited research-active members of the BMAS and guest researchers to form an International Acupuncture Research Forum who collaborated on a consensus document on the methodology of acupuncture studies.³⁸

The future of the BMAS

From what has been said, it is apparent that the BMAS has gone from strength to strength during the past 25 years. This Society currently has a membership of 2500 health professionals, and the enthusiasm of these for the practice of acupuncture is such that they not only attend its scientific meetings and teaching courses in large numbers but have also formed themselves into 18 regional support groups.

There is every reason therefore to believe that the Society has an extremely promising future and that over the years to come will have an increasingly important role in promoting the use and scientific evaluation of acupuncture for the public benefit.

Acknowledgements

I should like to express my sincere thanks to Professor John Thompson for having provided me with much meticulously kept material concerning the Society’s history which greatly facilitated the writing of this review.

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Acupunct Med 2005 23: 2-12
doi: 10.1136/aim.23.1.2

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