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Tenth Anniversary Editorial

Ten years ago I informed the BMAS committee that I wanted to establish an acupuncture journal. Little did I realise how it would grow and develop into one of the major medical acupuncture journals in the world.

It is some years since I wrote an editorial for the Journal and I thank the current Editor for allowing me this indulgence. Ten years have elapsed since our first edition. It consisted of only eight pages, however it was the first publication to bear the name "Acupuncture in Medicine".

A great deal of thought went into choosing this name as it had to reflect our hopes, our aspirations and our opinion of acupuncture. The BMAS has always considered that acupuncture should be a part of the practice of medicine. It cannot be singled out as one aspect of treatment to stand alone, because it is only part of the available medical service.

How do we measure competence in acupuncture? Some might rely on our ability to make patients better, whilst others demand knowledge of acupuncture theory; then again some think the whole exercise a waste of time anyway. But surely the patient has a right to know that the BMAS member he has been advised to see is indeed competent. Probably the patient will be paying for his treatment and is thus entitled to some assurance.

The health insurance companies are at last coming around to the idea that doctors with a "specialist" knowledge of acupuncture can be recognised and have their fees paid. The BMAS should provide a means of recognition. This brings us to an emotive term, accreditation.

A reasonable knowledge of acupuncture and an ability to make patients better are pretty good grounds for considering a doctor competent. A logical extension is to assume a doctor with considerable depth of knowledge and the ability to make a lot of patients better to be a specialist - deserving recognition.

We should encourage this move and recognise the benefits it will bring in improving the overall standard of acupuncture practice. Members will be motivated to strive for accreditation, and attendance at the more advanced courses will increase. Moreover, as our standards of training improve, we will gain credibility and demonstrate to bodies such as the DHSS and the Royal Colleges that we are determined to practise acupuncture at the highest level of competence. This can do us only good and should be welcomed!

Alan J Grant
Founding Editor