

ARH and the Register of Homeopaths

21 September 2007

Dear Colleagues,

Events over the course of the last few weeks have moved rapidly, and it appears that sadly, a great deal of misinformation is deliberately being circulated by outside parties. This is at the very least unhelpful, and acts as a diversion from addressing important issues, such as raising the profile of homeopathy within the public perception. Below is an attempt to clarify matters, both as they relate to ARH, and as they relate to the Register of Homeopaths. If having read this, you feel you still have questions, then please do not hesitate to ask us.

CORH

There may be a number of different perceptions relating to why CORH has floundered and there have been various accounts describing the demise of CORH. It is my opinion that some of these accounts have been misleading to say the least. The ARH perspective has already been extensively documented elsewhere (News from the Chair, *Homeopathy in Practice*, Autumn 2007), but the one issue that has proved totally irresolvable is the SoH's rigid assertion that CORH had agreed to pay them the sum of £44,000 to keep their recognition of colleges process open, whilst CORH's own accreditation process was in transition. This was once again the main area of contention at the meeting held on 03/09/07, which was convened to determine if and how CORH should finally be dissolved. One member of CORH Council had gone meticulously through all the minutes of CORH Council meetings held since 21/11/06 (the meeting at which the CORH budget for 2007 was set), and the conclusion remained unchanged: ***There was no record to substantiate the claim of SoH, that CORH Council had agreed to pay them £44,000. Furthermore, there were no contracts, service agreements or other documents giving authorisation from CORH Council, for CORH to make a payment of £44,000 to SoH.***

The meeting held on the 03/09/07 had to make several fundamental decisions:

1. Should CORH be dissolved?
2. How would CORH's debts be met?
3. Who would be responsible for ensuring CORH was correctly dissolved?

Item one – Agreement was swiftly reached to dissolve CORH, with only one abstention (out of ten) from CThA.

Item two – This generated a great deal of discussion. The financial statement presented to CORH was inadequate for accounting purposes, but it was clear that this was the most comprehensive statement we could expect to receive. ARH were being asked to fund CORH for a further £2,800, but it was apparent that SoH were short in their payments to CORH by £7,333.33. This money had been held back by SoH, in payment towards the vigorously disputed £44,000 the SoH claimed CORH had agreed to pay them. The discussions relating to this unauthorised payment had reached an impasse, when Helen Galley, ARH's honorary legal advisor (alternating for David Needleman) suggested a compromise:

1. SoH would place £4,000 of the disputed £7,333,33 back into CORH's funds
2. ARH would pay the requested £2,800
3. CORH's debts would be discharged
4. The monies over after all debts had been settled would be equally distributed amongst the registering bodies on a per capita basis
5. This would leave a shortfall for the SoH to pay of approximately £1200.

Following the announcement of this proposal the meeting adjourned for a fifteen minute comfort break. On return, and before discussions recommenced, the SoH representatives stated that they considered the obligations of SoH to CORH to have been fully met, and they left the meeting altogether.

The meeting continued in the absence of SoH, and the proposal outlined above was modified so that the final section read: '***The SoH shall be asked to pay any remaining balance due from it to CORH up to an amount not to exceed £1200***'. This proposal was voted upon and accepted with six votes in favour, and three abstentions.

Item three – Other agreements reached were that the documents developed by the CORH working groups would be archived by all representatives on former CORH, including the working groups and the patients association (NAHG), and could be used in future for the benefit of the homeopathy profession, without restriction. ARH also agreed to pay Tessa Jordon £100 loss of earnings, in order for her to represent the homeopathy profession at a PFIH Federal Working Group meeting due to be held on 26/09/07. Finally, four volunteers agreed to help ensure that the final winding up proceedings of CORH were correctly discharged.

The meeting was then formally closed. It should have been followed by a discussion of the way forward for the profession, but the earlier CORH meeting had run several hours late, so basically we had no more time. I briefly informed participants of the establishment of the Register of Homeopaths, and invited everyone to return to the negotiating table in the near future, to discuss how this new initiative could serve as an intermediate step to establishing the single register to which we all aspired.

The Register of Homeopaths (RHom)

Background history

I was one of the founding members of CORH. Ten years ago I became involved in the politics of homeopathy, and a somewhat informal forum named JMORPH (Joint Meetings of Organisations Registering Professional Homeopaths) already existed. Following the agreement of National Occupational Standards for Homeopathy (NOS's) a couple of years later, it seemed logical to build upon work done to date, and for all sectors of the profession to come together in order to establish a single register for homeopaths.

Over six years ago, the late Frank Meredith (one of the founding Directors of ARH) suggested at a CORH Council meeting, that the first logical step towards creating a single register was to start with a combined register. There was shock and horror expressed by the representative of one registering association, who suggested that standards would be seriously compromised if this proposal was acted upon. Frank and others pointed out that we had already agreed basic standards for the profession in the form of NOS's, so we could build upon this over a period of time, and achieve greater parity of standards across the profession via Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and also via the accreditation of homeopathic training. However, Frank's simple proposal was rejected, and CORH started down the path towards setting up a single register

The emphasis changes

When CORH decided to engage an 'independent' Chair, the emphasis of what it was trying to achieve began to change. CORH was no longer working to establish just a single register, but a single register and **regulatory body**. The focus shifted from representing the needs of the profession to protecting the public interest, as though the two could be separated from each other. As the years passed, it was apparent that the structure CORH was moving towards was becoming increasingly process-orientated and bureaucratic. I voiced my concerns about the long-term feasibility of a proposed single register that was going to have to pass on its administrative costs to practising homeopaths. In their turn, practising homeopaths were not going to receive any tangible benefits from registration with CORH, apart from being a 'registered homeopath'. Furthermore, since existing registers depended upon their registration function in order to generate income, who would represent a voice for the profession in future, if the established registers ceased to exist through lack of funds? The only answer to this question offered by the independent Chair was: '***Who provides a voice for the homeopathy profession in future is not the concern of a regulatory body.***'

Combined or not combined

CORH Council had to decide who would be eligible to register with the new register when it was finally established. After much heated debate, it was decided that all existing registrants of registers represented on CORH could apply, subject to signing an agreement to abide by the CORH Code of Ethics and undertake regular CPD etc. A separate route would apply for new applicants not yet registered with any association. ***Surely this meant that at its inception, the new single register was effectively going to be a combined register?***

CORH flounders

There have been a number of accounts describing the last few months of CORH, some of which have been misleading to say the least. One positive result to manifest from the frenzied dissemination of misinformation, is the fact that never before have so many homeopaths been actively engaged in following the course of events. Suddenly, everyone is interested in what is going on, which is really good news. Below is a summary of the Board's perceptions of the inherent problems that eventually led to CORH's failure:

- Differences between existing registers were never allowed to be properly aired, thus compromising meaningful unity within the profession
- CORH tried to have a perfect register and regulatory body in place from the beginning, instead of starting the single register by building upon what already existed
- The business planning of CORH was seriously flawed and its financial management was incompetent

Problems the profession would have faced with CORH's model of a single register:

- The bureaucracy needed to support the proposed single register (the new council alone was going to comprise 15 people) was going to be expensive, and the cost would have to be borne by registrants (**£290** estimated in the first year alone)
- The single register was only going to register and regulate. All services would have to be brought in from outside at additional costs
- The existing registers/membership bodies would probably cease to exist, leaving the profession without representation and a voice.
- The creation of one register, offering no services and representing an unknown quantity, would have resulted in the probable destruction of other, existing registers who already offer valuable and necessary services to the profession
- The proposed new register had no checks or balances in place to prevent it from becoming a monopoly

Fallout from CORH

Prior to the establishment of RHom, the SoH had already started to try to recruit ARH members. Following the announcement of RHom, this campaign has intensified, and it is fronted by Paula Ross, the non-homeopath Chief Executive of SoH. SoH have launched an aggressive propaganda campaign to coincide with membership renewals to ARH. This campaign can be viewed as an overt attempt to subvert ARH members, and recruit them as members to SoH. Paula Ross has also circulated a letter containing false information. The main points are set out below:

1. In a letter from Paula Ross dated 30/08/07 to myself (Karin Mont) Chair of ARH (and apparently first circulated on the SoH intranet before being sent to me) the SoH claims that in November 2006, CORH Council agreed to pay the SoH £44,000 towards maintaining its 'recognition of colleges' process. This is not the case. A budget was agreed by CORH Council at the November 2006 meeting, but not how the income generated would be used. The issue of the proposed payment to the SoH of £44,000 has been exhaustively debated at all subsequent CORH meetings, and the facts remain unchanged: CORH Council did not authorize any such payment to the SoH, no minutes, contracts or other documentation exists to support the SoH's claim to receive such a payment, and only CORH Council had the powers to authorize any such agreements.

2. This letter also states '*At no point has CORH ever paid money over to The Society*'. This is an astonishing assertion that either displays complete ignorance of basic accounting procedures on the part of Paula Ross, or is a deliberate attempt to mislead. The SoH withheld the payment of £7,733.33 to CORH to set against the fee they had decided CORH was going to pay them, even though this had not been authorised by CORH Council. In accounting terms, this represents a payment made by CORH to SoH, and furthermore, this payment was unauthorised by CORH Council.
3. In the same letter Paula Ross suggests the collapse of CORH was due to ARH not asking their members to pay £50 each, '*reporting instead their members would simply not agree to it.*' This is a false and misleading claim. ARH had already committed to paying to CORH the amount they had budgeted for, and were prepared to ask their members for the shortfall. ARH were clear to point out that as this request was for a voluntary payment, there was no guarantee it would be forthcoming. From December 2006 onwards, ARH repeatedly pointed out to the Chair of CORH and to CORH Council, both in writing and verbally, that CORH was in danger of allowing its expenditure to exceed its guaranteed income, a warning that went unheeded with disastrous consequences.
4. Paula Ross claims ARH were invited to attend an 'independently mediated' meeting proposed by the SoH on 25th July 2007. The ARH received an email circulated to all CORH Council participants announcing the meeting. ARH were separated out from the other groups invited, and conditions placed upon their attendance: '*A representative from their organisation (ARH) will be welcome to the proposed meeting if they are in agreement with the aims as listed and are prepared to contribute £313.65 towards the costs of the meeting.*' ARH responded by enquiring (among other things) what was being mediated, and questioning how impartiality could be guaranteed when the mediator being engaged for this proposed meeting had previously worked for the SoH. ARH received no reply to these fundamental questions, and no attempt was made by any other party to contact ARH to clarify matters or present an unconditional invitation.
5. SoH has sent a 'Position Statement' dated 04/09/07 not only to its own members, but also to ARH members. The statement makes a number of inaccurate claims regarding the Register of Homeopaths (RHom) based upon general assumptions. At no time has the SoH attempted to establish the actual facts. The claims made, and the conclusion drawn, '*The Society would not recommend that its members join the Register of Homeopaths*', represent a deliberate attempt to discredit the Register of Homeopaths.
6. SoH has sent out inaccurate and defamatory information to ARH members to coincide with ARH membership renewals. This communication has been accompanied by information and registering documents inviting ARH registered members to join SoH. This at the very least, constitutes unethical behaviour.

SoH appear to be deliberately attempting to discredit and defame its principal rival organisation ARH, in order to create a monopoly. It also appears determined to deny homeopaths freedom of choice, by undermining RHom from the onset. By contrast, RHom has been constituted to respect the autonomy of existing organisations, and build upon the work of existing structures, as opposed to destroying them, which CORH was likely to do. The majority of the homeopathy profession have been asking for the establishment of a registering and regulatory body that is based upon clear, easily comprehensible principles, is inclusive of the majority of practising homeopaths, and is cost effective. The RHom is constituted to encompass all these qualities, and thus has the potential to bring the profession together in a meaningful and lasting manner. However, the SoH's recent actions suggest that they are more concerned about preserving their own position of power within the profession, than representing the actual needs of practising homeopaths.

The HMA and CoRH

A recent statement from HMA seems to have thrown everyone into confusion. CoRH (with a little 'o') was the name that CORH (with a big 'O') was going to change to, once the first phase of CORH was completed (by about July 2007). Obviously that was before things went so badly wrong. There have been suggestions that CoRH might be established, in order to continue where CORH left off. HMA have proposed someone who might act as independent chair of this group, if it comes into being. At the moment, no new proposals appear to have been put forward for consideration, however ARH will participate in any discussions that might help the profession come back together again, and we will let you know what transpires.

Four practitioners come together

When CORH's financial difficulties were finally acknowledged in the public arena, ARH members and other practitioners began to ask for a 'simple' single register, where everyone came together to create a **combined register**. Seven years after Frank's first proposal, the profession themselves were now asking for a combined register. We listened to that request, and as four practising homeopaths who also passionately believe in the concept of a single register, David Needleman, June Sayer, Steve Scrutton and myself, established the Register of Homeopaths (RHom). RHom is **not** a single register (how can it be, there are ten other UK registers?) However, RHom has the potential of being the central register for UK homeopaths because it accepts registrants from all existing registers previously represented on former CORH, providing their registration with a primary registering body is current and ongoing. It is up to individual practitioners to decide if they want to register with RHom, irrespective of the views of their primary registering body. Basically, it is up to registered homeopaths to support the move towards a single register, by joining RHom.

What does RHom do?

- RHom is set up as a registering and regulatory body only. It does not offer membership services such as journals, events, insurance etc. These will be provided by registrant's primary registering body.
- RHom will run an electronic database of registered practitioners for the public to access
- RHom will publish a printed register annually
- RHom expects its members to practice according to the RHom Code of Ethics and Practice, and will take appropriate action in the event of a concern/complaint being made against a member registered with RHom

How is RHom set up?

- RHom is a company limited by guarantee, and is registered at Companies House as the Directory of Homeopaths. RHom trades as the Register of Homeopaths.
- There are currently four Directors already known within the homeopathic community, Karin Mont, David Needleman, June Sayer and Steve Scrutton. RHom also has a fifth Director, a non-homeopath, who brings legal expertise to the organisation, and will oversee that correct processes are adhered to when dealing with professional conduct issues.
- RHom buys into the administrative services ARH can offer on an as needs basis, thus keeping overheads down to a minimum. The two companies are run entirely separately, and RHom is financed by its own membership fees
- RHom's Code of Ethics and Practice is based upon the CoE agreed by former CORH. Following a thorough legal check, it has been modified for greater clarity
- All registrants listed in RHom will have the letters MRHom after their name, followed by the letters of their primary register
- The electronic and printed register will both carry a section that states what the letters following a registrant's name denote, and will also give a brief description of the registering criteria of the registrant's primary register

How does RHom propose to work with the rest of the homeopathic community?

- RHom will be extending an invitation to all the registers to come together to determine how RHom can be used as the vehicle to take the profession towards a single register. If enough practitioners support RHom, that will help to make meaningful unity a reality.
- RHom will communicate with all the Course Providers, and see how links between both registration and education can be developed, so the profession as a whole can be strengthened.
- RHom, in collaboration with ARH and other registering organisations who wish to participate, will endeavour to support the newly formed and independent Homeopathy Accreditation Board
- RHom will seek to liaise with DoH, PFIH and other organisations in order to promote homeopathy in the public arena

What will RHom deliver for me?

- RHom will provide you with registration and regulation
- A member of the public who wants to receive homeopathic treatment can refer to the register and find the most comprehensive list of homeopaths in their area
- RHom is set up to be inclusive. It offers registration to all practitioners currently registered with a register previously represented on CORH
- RHom offers registration at a price most practitioners can afford, just **£36** for the year

In conclusion

Rather like homeopathy itself, RHom is based upon very simple principles. We don't pretend to have all the answers to all the problems facing homeopathy at the moment, but if you as practising homeopaths want a single register, and a genuinely unified profession, RHom is offering you the foundation upon which to build. Ultimately the choice is yours. You can allow fear and rumour to hold sway, or you can follow common sense and reason. Homeopathy is going through an intense aggravation at the moment, and we simply have to trust the principles of homeopathy, and look forward to the healing we know will follow.

Best wishes,

Karin Mont, on behalf of homeopathy.