



**BALENS**  
Specialist Insurance Brokers

# BALENS FORUM NETWORKING EVENT

21<sup>st</sup> MAY 2017 – NEC Birmingham



**Hawthorn Natural  
Health Initiative**

## CONDENSED NOTES

Balens invited representatives from our broad spectrum of Associations and Organisations, and from various walks of life, all with an interest or business natural health & wellbeing to our third Forum networking event.

Opening introduction by **David Balen** whose statement encapsulated what the Forum's aims are; *"Today is an important day for me, as the CAM\* industry faces growing discrimination challenges, I want to encourage people to come together above politics, above individual disciplines, and share skills for the common good. Academics don't have much demographic epidemiological data about people who are practicing in our areas. We are aware whole sections of decision makers still view complementary medicine as a fringe cottage industry. Today is about building a collective. As I am so passionate about this project I have committed Balens to seed funding, but have no desire to be the head of anything. For this to work it needs to be a collective with a mutually supportive way of working, you all have things to share, and my hope is to have volunteers to take this forward"*.

*"The recent Charity Commission consultation was built around the notion that CAM therapies need to demonstrate public benefit. The Charity Commission has legal requirements to verify and validate public benefit, and one of the things that are a pointer, is the continued demand and payment of cash for services, which is evidence that individuals think CAM is worthwhile, and a benefit. The question of course is this benefit, measurable or not. Randomised Control Trials as they are presented at present are definitely not a benefit to the CAM industry"*.

\* **Note:** in all instances where CAM (Complementary an Alternative Medicine) is mentioned, this refers to all forms of Health and Well-being practices in its widest context, and is not meant to exclude any practice.

The next speaker was **Robert Verkerk phd**, Rob gave us an update from last year's Forum day to where we are now; *"The trends we are seeing is a move away from randomised control trials, and looking at individual intervention, and to big data in terms of pattern recognition through artificial intelligence, where we can see trends"*.

Rob went on to explain: *"In CAM settings we are often not just delivering intervention, the therapist and patient relationship process alters ongoing behaviours. In random control trials they are not measuring the quantitative and qualitative effect of placebo, but this is an important part of whole CAM process and has a profound effect on people's health. It appears there is interaction that goes beyond conventional understanding of relationship, and we are beginning to see it at a molecular level"*.

52% of studies on CAM have been positive, that is a huge number if you look at results in the BMJ where of 3,000 conventional treatments only 11% have been found to be proven to be beneficial, and 50% unknown.

## HNHI & RESEARCH WITH THE GOHAWTHORN APP

The Forum has a new name **Hawthorn Natural Health Initiative** (the **HNHI** for short) we decided on Hawthorn as the Hawthorne Effect is the effect of being observed.

One of the initial objectives is to collect big number data, coming from people who experience and do this work. To this end Balens have already sent out a pilot questionnaire, as a way to gauge if therapists would be willing to participate in pointing clients to a tool for big data, and the results were encouraging.

Via Associations and their members, and via Balens clients, we hope to introduce the **HNHI** and the **GoHawthorn app** which will provide a questionnaire to those who use CAM in its widest context.

The questionnaire we use has to be academically acceptable. And with this in mind we are favouring using one part the SF12, which is internationally recognised (<http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/SF-12>) for big data. The final questionnaire will have three parts of which SF12 will be one.

Outcomes need to be tracked for approx. 3 months for meaningful changes in health to occur, and be recorded, by doing this we should see solid long term trends.

On the issue of data protection: Patients will own their own data and will have an option to elect to share and partake in the research. We won't be able to use the information unless the individual elects to share, and obviously we hope they will, we believe it will be powerful for them to see how their own health profile will change.

A great deal of discussion was had around this Big Data Project, with good input from attendees.

## COMMUNITY

A larger part of this HNHI initiative is about community, cross fertilisation and an arena to build ideas. At present we are all in our own groups, we have our own communities and Associations, but to have a loud voice we need to be part of the wider community not just our own speciality. There is no lobbying force that speaks for the whole movement, this is an HNHI mission, to create a collective lobby group that cannot be ignored.

## OTHER TOPICS

Other topics that were covered on the day:

**BREXIT & THE NHS:** An all-party parliament group in November is putting draft white paper for dealing with Brexit on sustainable healthcare, self-care supported by CAM movement which can take the pressure off the NHS. NHS could go bust in next few years, mental health and chronic disease, both which CAM can help with, as deals with earlier in disease trajectory. Suggestion that western model works a bit like a car that drives until breaks down rather than getting regular service, very inefficient way of doing healthcare.

**POWERPOINT PRESENTATION: To show the results of the pilot questionnaire to Therapists**

**ACTIONS:** launching website / launching app / beta testing / Therapists Questionnaire / offers of help

**FEEDBACK / COMMENTS AND INTERACTIONS WITH PARTICIPANTS ON THE DAY**

Final message from David: *"In closing, of the 420 Associations, you are here thank you, we need gatekeepers, and we need the resource of the Associations. Your biggest assistance would be in disseminating the questionnaire to your members and encouraging involvement, with the cooperation from practitioners we could make this a universal feedback tool, and really affect change in healthcare delivery".*

## ABOUT THE HNHI

The **Hawthorn Natural Health Initiative** (HNHI) is a community of likeminded organisations and individuals that is non-political and non-adversarial, with the principal aim to help promote paradigm change in the way health care is thought about and delivered in the UK today. Our emphasis is on Natural Approaches to Health (necessarily involving Complementary and Alternative therapy, self-care, wellbeing and lifestyle choices).

This aim will be promoted through:

- **Big Data research** and analysis into the benefits of natural approaches to health and well-being – this is already International in scope.

To remind you, the big idea is to build a large information resource of outcome-based qualitative data driven by the experience of your members' clients (rather than the members' own opinions or supervised reporting).

- **Research into the Natural Health and Well-being sector** to gain a greater understanding of the field and those that work within it, ultimately for the benefit of decision makers in politics and the Health sector.
- **Creation of a website** that may be used as a research and information hub for practitioners and the general public alike allowing users to understand what other colleagues are doing, and to encourage networking.
- **The fostering of a network and community** that represents many Associations, umbrella groups, individuals and Organisations within the Natural Health and Well-being sector, giving a louder voice to the sector as a whole which may including lobbying.

At the Forum Event, which was the largest attended to date, we reported that within the last 12 months, much had been achieved towards these aims.

- **For the Big Date Research** - David (Balen) has been working with Robert Verkerk and Melanie Aldridge of the Alliance for Natural Health and others to develop a comprehensive questionnaire and health monitoring system for clients of Natural Health Professionals to use with their clients.

This will be delivered via an App – named **GoHawthorn** which will have the ability to generate big number data that we hope will provide credible information which is hard to ignore. The App will be available for Members of Associates & Organisations and individual professionals to offer to their clients, allowing them to give feedback on their own wellbeing.

The project is now International in Scope with University of Kansas (USA), Associations in Holland and Organisations in Australia all wanting to be involved- first in the pilot study and then subsequently to help cascade the project out further to a much wider audience and into other countries.

- **For Networking and Community** - A website is currently in creation and nearing completion, we will let you know when it goes live. We will gladly receive details from you of any formal or informal research that you are aware of and may care to share.
- **For Research into the Natural Health Sector** - A questionnaire for Practitioners is now complete and after our successful pilot is being disseminated to Therapists and Health and Well-being practitioners through Balens.