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Regulation Matters Symposium Highlights

Introduction

The transitional Council of the College of Homeopaths of Ontario (CHO, the College) was formed in 2007 in accordance with the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* and the *Homeopathy Act, 2007* to establish a Regulatory College to self-regulate homeopathy in Ontario, Canada and protect the public interest. Since that time, the transitional Council and CHO staff have laid the foundations for the College and the process of registering practitioners.

CHO has been gathering input from members of the homeopathic profession – practitioners, educational institutions, and associations -- over the last five years. Their input informed and shaped CHO's work on standards, registration and other aspects of regulation. The diverse homeopathic profession has few opportunities to connect and exchange ideas and perspectives.

CHO wanted to engage members of the homeopathic community in dialogue about what the future holds for the profession and for individual practitioners. The "Regulation Matters Symposium" was hosted in Toronto on November 16, 2014. The day's conversations, in combination with perspectives provided by three speakers, were designed to achieve three objectives identified by CHO's planning group:

1. Participants explore the value of homeopathy becoming a regulated profession
2. Participants understand what to expect from the College of Homeopaths based on the scope of its role as a regulator
3. Practitioners understand the registration supports available to them.

Participants worked in pre-assigned table groups to engage in three interactive conversations. This gave diverse members of the profession an opportunity to exchange views with practitioners who are trained at different schools in different countries, as well as with educators and representatives from associations.

The three conversations were contextualized by three speakers who offered different perspectives on the future of the homeopathic profession post-regulation. The first speaker shared his perspective was a Chiropractor, a profession that was regulated in Ontario in 1991. The second provided an international perspective on trends in regulation and homeopathy in Europe and other parts of the world. The third speaker provided an historical perspective on the evolution and regulatory journey of homeopathy in India and on regulation as a business advantage.

VISION Management Services facilitated the Symposium on behalf of CHO and prepared this report capturing highlights of the day's dialogues.



Regulation Matters Symposium Highlights

A Vision for Homeopathy in 2025

The first conversation gave participants an opportunity to dream about the future, ten years post-regulation. Although several participants acknowledged that ten years is insufficient time to achieve all of the elements identified below, these elements illustrate participants' aspirations for the profession. Despite the diversity in the room, there was significant overlap between what table groups identified as the most compelling aspects of their vision. This was particularly true with respect to awareness and credibility of the profession (founded on solid education and professional standards), that were indicated as key to the achievement of other elements.

- **Awareness/recognition and respect:** by the public, other medical professionals, government and media
 - Recognized as a “complementary” and cost-effective medicine
 - THE medicine for chronic disease.
- **Credibility/legitimacy and trust:** of the public, other medical professionals and the media.
- **Standards:** high professional and educational standards established and supported by a system (e.g. educational and research infrastructure)
 - Research priorities set and advanced, evidence-based studies available
 - Access to remedies
- **Our Practice:** reflects our definition of health and disease
 - Safe medicine, greater prevalence in primary care
- **Integration and collaboration:** with other medical professionals in the broader medical system
 - Collaboration on patient care to expand access to homeopathic options (e.g. with MDs, specialists; presence in family medical clinics and in hospital departments; collaboration with naturopaths and allopaths).
 - Homeopaths are employed as staff in pharmacies and in other parts of the health care system.
- **Education:** more streamlined and standardized educational system
 - Fewer schools... greater consistency, less divisiveness
 - On par with conventional education (doctoral degree program and title)
 - University degree as entry-level requirement... as a foundation for strong clinical education and knowledge base
 - Advanced education options available
- **Coverage:** treatments/drugs covered by OHIP and insurance companies
 - Increased affordability... e.g. for marginalized groups
- **Homeopathic hospital:** and ongoing research into the science of homeopathy
 - *Note: Toronto and Montreal formerly had homeopathic hospitals*
- **Health Canada:** no longer restricts homeopathic remedies
- **Associations:** bridge between the profession and the public.
 - One strong and united Association represents Ontario homeopaths... with one voice
- **A unified profession:** that shares in our collective successes and challenges



Regulation Matters Symposium Highlights

Insights from a Regulated Practitioner, Chiropractor Dr. Doug Pooley

“What Regulation has meant to other professions”

Dr. Doug Pooley is a licensed Chiropractor who has been practising for over 30 years. He is past President of the Canadian and Ontario Chiropractic Associations.

History

- Homeopathy is the oldest of health professions – born in 1796
- It took 100 years to shift away from allopathic approach to current health care model
- Homeopathy has evolved – although many detractors remain, it’s on the cusp of being a regulated profession
- In the late 1980s a new health act was created in Ontario to govern five professions (Chiropractic was the only “complementary” discipline included) and standardize the practice of health care re: ethics, education, complaints and discipline.
- All health regulatory Colleges are mandated by the provincial government to protect the public interest and govern the health care system. They do this by setting standards and ensuring a fair complaint system that may lead to disciplinary consequences for their members.

External trends

- The public assesses credibility through credentials and they want to engage with a profession they can trust
- People have greater access to technology and information and this is making the health care environment more competitive. People are interested in choice and never have there been so many health care options.
- 73% of health care workers make use of complementary medicines, a higher percentage compared to the general population

Themes

- Associations and Colleges are different, however both are important. Associations act as advocates for and to represent the profession and their members. Colleges exist to protect the public and regulate their members.
- Registrants’ biggest fears concern getting disciplined – no one wants complaints lodged, or to be judged by peers. Within a self-regulatory system it is necessary, although only a small minority of practitioners get disciplined. This process keeps complaints from going to lawyers and the press and saves all members of the profession from embarrassment.
- The government looks to the profession, through its college, to create standards even though there is significant diversity within the homeopathic profession.

Results

- The College of Homeopaths of Ontario will have power to regulate, hear complaints and discipline members. It will hold practitioners accountable for ensuring public safety.



Regulation Matters Symposium Highlights

- Not everyone will appreciate the value of College's mandate.
- Homeopathy is on brink of exploding as a significant public presence. It has a lengthy lineage and good people but the College is critical to moving the profession to the next level. It will put homeopathy on more of an equal footing with other health care professionals and enhance credibility (e.g. in dealing with third party payers).
- Standardization will impact the quality and consistency of education
- Homeopathic professionals will engage in more dialogue with other health professionals
- The public will be more confident in knowing what they can expect from all practitioners
- As a regulated profession, homeopathy will acquire greater legitimacy as members will have a fiduciary responsibility to be accountable to the College and to the public.

Regulation and beyond

- When you establish a vision for the profession, ensure it represents your interests today and beyond, or the interests of the profession as a whole. Legislation is difficult to change once it is in place.
- The homeopathic profession, like the chiropractic profession, will continue to evolve after the regulatory process is in.
- To move forward it will be important to hire the best people to ensure you have the talent you need and to engage as many members as possible in the College.



Regulation Matters Symposium Highlights

Regulated Profession: Benefits and Barriers

One table group reinforced that the Vision described above cannot be achieved without regulation. Each table group discussed how becoming a regulated profession can help or hinder the profession in realizing the Vision.

Being a regulated profession can help the profession...

NOTE: numbers (#) indicate how many tables highlighted a particular benefit.

- **Define clear standards of practice:** standards will be consistently met by all registered practitioners and this will level the playing field
- **Communicate standards:** to the public and other key stakeholders (e.g. medical professionals, government, insurance companies, and the media)
- **Enhance public safety/protection:** standards and accountability processes will lead to greater credibility
- **Increase homeopathy's awareness, credibility and legitimacy (5):**
 - o Awareness of the definition, efficacy and defined scope of practice (the College's website can be used to inform the public and other health-care professionals about homeopathy)
 - o This will help expand access to research opportunities and collaboration in hospitals
- **Increase inter-professional collaboration:** by positioning registered members as legitimate health care professionals
- **Build public trust:** the public will have more confidence in a profession that is regulated by the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care (MOHLTC)
- **Inform quality educational standards:** that will help more practitioners succeed
 - o Along with the College's Quality Assurance program the profession can gradually raise the standards of homeopaths to a doctor designation
- **Improve confidence in practice:** being part of "the family" of regulated health care professionals; feel protected.
- **Grow the profession:** attract new patients and students (youth)
 - o Receive referrals from other health professionals (e.g. M.D.s) (3)
 - o Increased income and financial stability (i.e. more jobs, HST exemption)
- **Expand access to insurance and homeopathy:**
 - o Easier, expanded access to insurance coverage for patients and liability insurance for practitioners (3)
 - o Coverage by OHIP
- **Strengthen our voice:** one lobby, one strong voice with more homeopaths (one Association), freedom of choice.

Being a regulated profession can hinder the profession by...

While most of the benefits to the profession are substantial, the following concerns were identified by different table groups. Several emphasized that low standards (of education and practice) might inhibit the profession's ability to achieve the Vision above.



Regulation Matters Symposium Highlights

- **Setting minimum educational standards:** until standards are raised, better educated and experienced homeopaths will be limited in their ability to practice (e.g. access to controlled acts)
 - o Accepting unqualified practitioners into the College
- **Inhibiting change and continuous improvement:** post-regulation it will be difficult to address gaps and/or change existing standards and guidelines enshrined in regulation
 - o Limiting efforts: post-regulation complacency might set in
- **Shrinking the diversity of methodologies practiced**
 - o Limiting innovation
- **Increasing government control/interference (2):** in practice and products
 - o Regulation may limit access to some remedies (e.g. opium, certain mother tinctures, nosodes)
- **Increasing administrative time and expense:** increased cost (2) – e.g. for paper work and record-keeping
 - o Too much rigidity in the process may put some people off
- **Exposing our inability to demonstrate results (i.e. cure rates):** this may lead to attempts to fit homeopathy into a narrower scientific paradigm
- **Introducing more conflict:** e.g. between the College, government and associations
- **Not registering enough initial registrants:** there is a risk the College could fail... and that the profession could fail

Insights from a Practitioner, Georges Arragon

“Regulation of Homeopathy in other jurisdictions – what it means to the profession”

Georges Arragon has been practicing as a Homeopath for 30 years. He is also a speaker, teacher, and owner of homeopathic school (1997-2007). George is on the Board of The International Council of Homeopathy and has authored a book on homeopathy. He shared an international perspective on homeopathy at the Symposium.

Emerging trends

- Competency standards in different countries are being shared and there is an emerging agreement on an international standard
- Few countries have regulated homeopathy to date. Around the world homeopaths are regrouping and different associations are developing quality services and ethical competency standards.
- Homeopaths (e.g. in ON, PQ) want to practice homeopathy properly and value efforts to strengthen the profession.
- When regulation happens everything changes: the profession can defend itself from divergent interests and from other parts of the medical community that want to push the profession out.



Regulation Matters Symposium Highlights

Challenges to homeopathy

- Within the profession conflicts exist, driven by private interests and different practice orientations. We have trouble speaking with one voice.
- Our education is neither sufficient nor standardized, and practitioners deliver inconsistent results.
- There are prejudices against homeopathy and its different paradigm. Because we don't fit anywhere this discredits our profession. The medical profession and large pharmaceutical companies don't understand homeopathy and fear our entrance into the health care system.
- The public is prejudiced by, and fearful of homeopathy based on negative media. These reports also influence government's perspectives.
- Internal disagreements have created misunderstanding which have compromised opportunities – e.g. attempts to form a national registry in the UK failed.
- There are signs around the world that the profession may be in jeopardy... face extinction:
 - In May 2014 a delegation reported in London that non-medical professionals have been banned from practising in Belgium. Homeopathy is only permitted after everything else has failed.
 - In 2014 homeopathy was banned in Florida, USA.
 - Although homeopathy has been legislated in Norway, South Africa, Australia, Switzerland and Portugal, etc... Some are trying to overturn, ban, or scale back the legislation claiming that homeopathy is a risk to the public or that it's a fraudulent practice.
 - The media showcases any mistakes or evidence of malpractice and this damages the profession.
 - If the legislation fails in ON it will be held up as a negative example for BC and PQ as they try to bring in regulation.

Opportunities for homeopathy

- In Ontario, we have the opportunity to define our own future. We must seize this opportunity and work together to achieve consensus.
- We need to strengthen our medical education, and training programs so practitioners have the necessary competencies – e.g. requiring 3-5 years and 1000s of hours of practice for certification.
 - South Africa has a 5-year course and a one year internship, homeopaths graduate as MDs.
 - In Switzerland homeopaths complete an 800 hour course in medicine, in addition to another 800 hours and one year of clinical training (2500 hours total).



Regulation Matters Symposium Highlights

- We need to ensure educators are in place and that students are selected for their ability.
- As professionals we must deliver a service that is efficacious, high quality, professional and ethical, and socially credible.

The future – some ‘cures’

- To move forward and succeed, we need to join forces and move beyond individual interests and divisions.
- We listen to others, be tolerant and go beyond our own fears and self-interest.
- We must use research, rigour and quality education to promote our profession and advocate to government (including our own MPPs).
- We have much to be proud of and regulation could make us more proud as a profession. India offers an encouraging example (see Insights from Akshay Banker on the next page).
- In countries with regulation there is a change in attitude. Practitioners are confident and they’re not worried about the future. They feel they have a lot to gain, but know they still have to work for it.
- We need to unite as a community around what will be a long and continued effort. The alternative is Belgium and Florida.

How do we transition from a healing movement to being a scientific discipline? Science and healing converge in practice; we need to continue to practice and cure people.



Regulation Matters Symposium Highlights

Regulation Benefits to Our Practice

Table groups discussed how being part of a regulated profession will benefit homeopaths in their practice. Top responses included:

- **Increase in credibility**... we will be recognized as professionals by members of the public and the broader health care profession
 - o Public will have more confidence in our profession (4)
 - o Other health care professionals will refer to us and collaborate with us (2)
 - o Skepticism will be reduced, patients' families will take our practice more seriously
- **Increase in profile and public awareness** (3)... will lead to greater interest in trying homeopathy and we will attract more patients (2)... leading to more jobs and full-time homeopathic careers
 - o Large corporations may be interested in including our services in their health programs
- **More homeopaths coming into the profession**... will lead to an increase in the number of patients served... everyone will be busier
- **Increase in collaboration and networking**... will lead to better access to test results and previous treatments
- **Peace of mind**: as a member of a college we will have greater peace of mind regarding safety of practice
- **Legal backing, professional backing**... will lead to legal and professional protection
- **Expansion of insurance company coverage** (3)... will help increase our income
- **Increase in revenues**... will lead to greater financial security
 - o OHIP coverage
 - o HST exemption

Insights from Akshay Banker

“Regulation as a business advantage”

Akshay Banker, M.D. (Homeopathy) is an ex Principal, Professor from India. He has been involved in homeopathy since 1982 and today operates homeopathic clinics in Mississauga and Scarborough.

The evolution of homeopathy in India

- Homeopathy has been practiced in India since 1810
- Over the last 32 years homeopathy has grown significantly in India as a result of government regulation.
- 1973: “Homeopathy Central Council Act 1973” was passed and the Central Council of Homeopathy was formed by the Government of India. Homeopathic education was standardized in all Indian colleges.



Regulation Matters Symposium Highlights

- Since 1990: Universities accepted Homeopathic education under their banner and a Degree of BHMS (Bachelor in Homeopathic Medicine and Surgery) was awarded.
- Practitioners can train to be a regular full time M.D. for 3 years in any one of the 7 specializations (Medicine, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, Pharmacy, Organon, Materia Medica, Repertory)
- Individuals in India can obtain a Ph.D. in Homeopathy.

Regulation

- Prior to, and in the early days of, regulation, Homeopaths in India were either: qualified Homeopaths, doctors of other systems of medicine, or self-taught lay men
- All were registered and those who were not qualified were trained in hospitals and clinics and given the designation of RMP (Registered Medical Practitioner). All practiced with dignity and were paid by the government.

The environment

- Homeopathic colleges, clinics, and hospitals were gradually established by government and private entities.
- Homeopathic education was standardized and a common syllabus implemented throughout India. This includes a 5.5 year course and a compulsory internship in a homeopathic hospital (approximately 4800 hours total).
- Today there are 185 Homeopathic colleges (35 are government medical colleges, 40 offer M.D. designations, and 247,000 practitioners are registered as Homeopathic doctors); 215 Homeopathic hospitals, plus 7,015 clinics run by government. Approximately 7% of ambulances are staffed by homeopathic professionals.

Results of regulation

- Because of standardization and the regulation of homeopathic education, Homeopaths are considered almost equal to Allopathic Doctors in many aspects of health care.
- Allopathic doctors and other health care practitioners refer patients to Homeopathic doctors (and vice versa) and this has benefitted patients.
- Patients have confidence in homeopaths' competency based on the education received.
- Homeopaths are included as service providers in National health care schemes implemented by government.

Internationally

- Homeopathy is the second most used medical system internationally
- A federally funded survey in 2007 found that in 2006 nearly 5 million Americans used homeopathic remedies ([Washington Post](#), 27 Oct 2009).
- According to the National Center for Homeopathy, sales of homeopathic remedies in the US are over \$300 million and are increasing by 12% per year. National drugstore chains carry homeopathic products and the number of professional practitioners in the US has increased from 200 in the 1970s to 3,000 today (Stehlin, 1996).



Regulation Matters Symposium Highlights

- Homeopathy has proven effective in the treatment of acute and chronic diseases. It shortens recovery times and promotes a healthy life style.
- Homeopathy is a cost-effective option for employers, insurance companies, and the Canadian health care system.

Benefits of Regulation in Ontario

- We will have government recognition as being a trusted system of medical treatment;
- People will recognize homeopathy as a method of treatment and take it more seriously
- Homeopaths will be taken more seriously by other professions
- Insurance companies will providing coverage to homeopathy which will benefit patients and patients will be more willing to take homeopathic treatment
- Regulations will encourage homeopaths to be up-to-date in recent advances, in medical knowledge,
- With increased knowledge a homeopath will be more confident in their practice and in professional circles
- There will be an increase in inter-professional collaboration
- With increasing positive results of homeopathic treatment there will be more recognition of homeopathy among society.

The future

- According to Akshay Banker, “We can make a considerable impact officially in promoting health in patients. This will be seen by people and governments. It can open doors for homeopathic jobs in different areas like – hospitals, clinics, long term care, old age homes, and almost everywhere, where there is a need of health care.”



Regulation Matters Symposium Highlights

An Overview from the Registrar

The transitional College of Homeopaths of Ontario's Registrar, Basil Ziv, became certified as a Homeopath in 1995 through the Council for Homeopathic Certification (CHC). He has also served as a board member for the North American Society of Homeopaths (NASH), a body that started unifying stakeholders. Basil provided participants with an overview of the regulatory journey to 2014.

The evolution of homeopathy in Canada

- Homeopathy was regulated in Ontario in 1859, and the Ontario Medical Act was passed in 1869.
- Hospital funding in the early 1900s played a part in homeopathy's demise in North America.
- Since the late 1960s homeopaths have been practising as an unregulated profession in Ontario and this has given rise to concerns about the viability of the profession.

The path to Regulation in Ontario

- In 2006 HPRAC (Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council) recommended legislation be developed to enable self-regulation of the profession.
- In 2007 the Homeopathy Act was introduced and the College of Homeopaths of Ontario was conceived. This led to the formation of the transitional Council. The government of Ontario has funded the development of a framework for regulation.
- Controlled medical acts are defined by Acts related to each College. Homeopaths can't perform any controlled acts.
- Regulation is expected to expand opportunities for homeopaths to work with other regulated health care professionals. Basil spoke to the anticipated benefits of regulation.
- He indicated the College consulted widely (including with other provinces and countries) is nearly ready for and anticipating proclamation in early 2015.
- Regulations will be approved for registration, and the regulation of Quality Assurance and professional misconduct.

Practicalities of Regulation

- Post-proclamation, only registered homeopaths will be permitted to call themselves homeopaths.
- Professional self-regulation requires self-funding... the costs of maintaining a regulatory College are well known based on the experience of other Colleges.
- In setting fees for full-time and part-time homeopaths the transitional College balanced the need for affordability with the College's sustainability. It estimated the number of practitioners in Ontario and consulted with practitioners on fee structures.
- The College simplified the individual assessment tool in response to feedback. The final tool is simpler, more logical, and quicker to complete. This helped lower registration costs substantially. The College has developed a range of supports to assist practitioners with the registration process.



Regulation Matters Symposium Highlights

Conclusion

Symposium conversations were focused, animated and at times challenging to conclude with so much to talk about. Ideas exchanged throughout the day expanded how some participants thought about the implications of regulation for the homeopathic profession and for individual practitioners. While many differences of opinion persist, regulation represents an opportunity for the profession to stand together on behalf of homeopathy in Ontario and beyond.

In reflecting on the day, participants reinforced the importance of regulation from the perspective of the public and other health care professionals. By registering with the College, practitioners can give key stakeholders greater confidence in receiving care from, and collaborating with, homeopaths. This will ultimately expand the legitimacy of the profession as a whole.

The importance of quality education and high educational standards were recurring themes throughout the day. This is understandable when education is the foundation for the delivery of competent and effective care and a key to public confidence. Determining how high to set the bar initially, and where to raise it to, require more discussion. In his remarks, Basil Ziv indicated that a future think tank might be held to explore how the College would fulfill its role in protecting the public interest.

Transitional Council President Bhupinder Sharma closed the Symposium by thanking all for attending and sharing their passion for homeopathy. He reminded participants that achieving the Vision for 2025 and strengthening the health care system, with homeopathy as an integral part, in Ontario will require the concerted effort of all parts of the profession.

Bhupinder Sharma, M.D. (Homeopathy) graduated from Nehru Homeopathic Medical College and Hospital in 1976. He has been involved in health care for over thirty-seven years; starting his career as a Homeopathic Physician in Government Dispensaries and continuing as a Homeopathy Medical Officer in charitable institutions. As well as being an educator and consultant in homeopathic medicine, Prof. Sharma has served as President, Vice-President and Secretary in various homeopathic associations. He is an active member of the health care community in Etobicoke and Brampton, having organized international conferences, seminars and public awareness meetings on health topics relating to homeopathy. Bhupinder Sharma has been appointed to the Board of Directors of the William Osler Health Centre's Community Advisory Council and he also sits on the board of Central West Community Care Access Centre.