

# Acu.

## Editorial: Synergy

Summer 2025 | Guest editorial



**Mike O'Farrell**

First BAAC CEO



It all began in the mid 1990s, when I was a regular recipient of acupuncture to help with the re-emergence of injuries that I suffered from playing rugby many years before.

**T**his was my only connection with the profession – until I received a call that the British Acupuncture Council was changing its structure, looking to appoint its first CEO, and did I wish to put myself forward for interview?

I was very interested – having just finished 37 years with Eastman Kodak Company. Suffice to say, after a very rigorous interview process with a panel including Jasmine Uddin, I was fortunate enough to be chosen.

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The next few years were full of excitement, challenges, disappointments, some highs and some lows. Above all, I had an opportunity to meet some amazing people, the individuals who make up the membership of the British Acupuncture Council.



Executive Committee 2006: back row left to right: Rob Hughes, Belinda Coppock, Ken Shifrin, John Wheeler, Ron Bishop, Cecil Chen. Front row left to right: Ruth Champion, Mike O'Farrell, Barry Williams, Janice Booth, Linda Miller, Amanda Rockhill, Ye Zhang, Duncan Hird, Toni Tucker, Jasmine Uddin, Susan Thorne, Paula McPhail, Sue Kalicinska, Shaun Ekberg

I was part of an organisation that had amongst its members men and women who had achieved a great deal in an earlier life, before turning to the ancient profession of acupuncture and bringing this focus and commitment to their patients. I watched as that profession developed its own educational standards to a level where a number of universities were happy to have acupuncture as part of their degree offering.

This was an organisation which went face to face with a handful of cynics in western medicine, to show the value of acupuncture in helping with many health matters – from simple muscular issues through maternity support and cancer care to helping with mental stress in different forms.

However, it was elsewhere in the field of medicine that acupuncture and particularly the British Acupuncture Council began to make its presence felt.

The medical world, and particularly GPs practising acupuncture, began to recognise the special skills of BAAC members. The organisation took on challenges from traditional critics in public debate and were able to demonstrate the evidence for what traditional acupuncture could do. Academic institutions began to show real interest, and the Chinese medical community – who had always seen themselves as a step apart from our members – started to work with us.

It was around the same time that after years of internal debate and decision making, the BAAC came close to gaining statutory regulation. However, wider political events got in the way and a change in government policy put an end to that possibility.

But perhaps the most challenging and surprising time was when, with the full support of members, the BAAC then decided to work towards gaining a royal charter. It is important to remember that this is with the support of the Department of Health and a Minister of State, Anne Milton, a former nurse.



## **Who could have imagined that over a relatively short period of time acupuncture had gained so much recognition**

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Our case had to be presented to the Privy Council and eventually – in spite of very good support and significant amounts of data – we were unsuccessful due to the challenge of another acupuncture body. Even so, it was clear to the wider medical world how much progress and recognition acupuncture had made – and of course all of this down to the skill of the BAAC members.

Who could have imagined that over a relatively short period of time acupuncture had gained so much recognition – and that the practitioners of this ancient profession had acquired such a reputation.

I see many examples of acupuncture being used – in professional sport, in a business setting and of course in normal healthcare facilities – and all of this because of the skills of people like you practising in the way

you do.

My congratulations to all current and former members of the BAcC at this special landmark birthday time and with those congratulations go my hopes that the healthcare world will continue to recognise and appreciate what can be achieved.

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