

Individuality

Past JBMT editorials have emphasized the ideals of convergence, integration, interdisciplinary cooperation and the blurring of professional boundaries, and nothing said below should minimize the importance that these seemingly unstoppable processes and ideals represent.

But ... and there is a 'but' attached, because there is also something very positive to be said about individuality and idiosyncratic approaches to health care, whether these characteristics are displayed by individuals or professions. In complementary health care, particularly in the bodywork and movement arena, the history of practically every major profession is highlighted by the presence of larger than life, free-thinking, rebellious mavericks, who kicked against the orthodoxy of the day, or who espoused heretical points of view and unfashionable practices, and whose beliefs and teachings ultimately led to major shifts in the way many practitioners and patients see the world and understand health care issues. People such as Palmer, Goodheart, DeJarnette (chiropractic, AK and sacro-occipital technique), Cyriax, Mennell, Janda, Lewit (manual medicine and physiotherapy), Ling (massage), Still, Sutherland, Upledger, Jones (osteopathy,

craniosacral and positional release methods), Lief (naturopathic osteopathy), Alexander, Pilates, Feldenkrais, Rolf, Heller, Trager, Aston ... and a great many others not listed, have contributed enormously to our understanding of how the body works, and how to help it to recover when functionally compromised. Most if not all of these individuals rebelled against the accepted norms of their times, crossed boundaries, borrowed ideas, adapted and synthesized, created new perspectives and methods, and ultimately, as is the fate of innovators, became mainstream, even if only within their own professions.

As the academic content of bodywork and movement training steadily increases, with more university departments now offering validated (often degree) courses in a wide range of bodywork and movement topics (from sports massage to Pilates training), and with a growing worldwide tendency for governmental regulation of previously unregulated professions, with all the red-tape and standardization which such processes entail, a degree of homogenization is occurring. As noted in previous editorials, it is now almost impossible, when observing treatment delivery, to distinguish the professional background of a modern osteopath, chiropractor or manipulatively trained physiotherapist. Techniques are virtually identical; concepts are almost indistinguishable, and the only separation remaining seems to

involve use of profession-specific terminology, which is rapidly being blurred and lost as training of these professions (in some institutions) increasingly involves all three professions tapping into identical core curricula, and often physically attending the same classes.

Human nature being what it is such a process, with its suppression (or at least curbing) of dissident thinking, is bound to lead to the emergence of a new generation of iconoclasts, who will attempt to change current mainstream (for their profession) beliefs and practices. Fortunately the worldwide web offers a means for the rapid dissemination of new ideas, and publishers are increasingly looking outside mainstream for evidence of authors capable of describing evolutionary and revolutionary concepts.

In this issue of JBMT it may be useful to reflect on these thoughts as you read the papers by Pyves, Peters and Myers in particular. Each of these contributors has looked at an issue with fresh eyes, and come up with something new. This is not to say that they are revolutionaries, rather that perspectives have shifted, and different ways of observing the commonplace have emerged, in their thinking and doubtless in the way they work.

Pyves has approached a problem, overuse damage to the therapists hands and body, and has come up with a radical solution for bodyworkers — stop using the hands. Thankfully he offers

practical alternatives. Peters, a medically trained osteopath, has evaluated the impact on his thinking of perhaps the most radically controversial topic in the realm of bodywork in particular, and healing in general, the ideas promulgated by James Oschman PhD in his excellent text *Energy Medicine*. Peters, whose ability to produce withering analysis and criticism of anything smacking of woolly thinking, is legendary, has found much to be commended in this text. His review, a study in clarity of thought applied to a difficult and emotive topic, should help to encourage a

better understanding of what is clearly a new frontier awaiting those with the courage to explore it. Both Peters and Oschman are participants in JBMTs November conference, which will offer a unique opportunity for exploration of these and other integrative models in bodywork. Myers (also presenting and offering a workshop for JBMT in November) has for the moment put aside his 'anatomy [fascial] trains' theme' to look at the strange world of intranasal bodywork methods. Having observed this method in clinical use, and assessed its value, it was an easy decision to include description of

this somewhat bizarre approach in JBMT. The reader is reminded, however, that the method is not for the faint hearted, and should not be attempted in any form described in the article, without thorough training and clear indications for its use.

Having perhaps suggested in this commentary that the days of the individual had passed, it is now clear that this is not the case, that radical thinking and innovation continue. For that we can all be thankful.

Leon Chaitow
Editor