

Prof Simon Jarvis,

2 2005

Regarding Review in SIH, Cavendish Campus

Having studied in medical school in Britain and latterly in SIH, I am shocked and the way 'scientific' teaching and practices are flourishing. Other students have raised these concerns and staff, especially the course leader in herbal medicine, have not shown any concern and still have not stopped these practices.

It is a flagrant contradiction of a 'science' in the BSc to have these practices, but it also jeopardises our profession, which is under DoH review and being constantly attacked in the media (justifiable I suggest).

We are taught that simply tasting plant tinctures can tell us which part of the body they work on and what they do in the body. We are given printed charts with an outline of the body on to record our findings on. This is both nonsense, but is dangerous as it implies that the pharmacology of plant tinctures can be divined by taste alone. In class we are taught that we can divine the drug actions or use of an unknown plant simply by tasting an alcohol extract. Science ? or dangerous fantasy.

There are lecturers taking clinics who allow students to dowse and partake themselves in dowsing or pendulums to diagnose and even to test suitability of plant drugs.

Dowsing is taught to us by some lecturers and frowned upon by others but we feel it brings the herbal medicine into a poor light as it is unscientific and bogus nonsense. We are concerned that we have seen the course leader brush over this practice as though she is frightened to make a stand.

While there is certainly a good amount of literature with evidence for effectiveness and safety of herbal tinctures, some of the staff seem not to know this and tell us to use herbs on the basis of their own 'fantastical' hunches about effectiveness. The differences between the lecturers is amazing and leaves us very confused about what is true and what is just 'fluff'. Again this is very unscientific.

The new government regulation of herbal medicine puts heavy weight on the scientific basis of the training and of the practice in clinics and in prescribing and making drugs. We feel that were they to come and look at our Westminster course, they might well close it down for being unscientific and therefore unsafe. We pay good money for fees and expect a sound training. We certainly don't get this now.

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