

# Spreading the word in Scotland



Mariette Lobo, MFHT, talks about initiatives she has been involved in, and sources tips on how members can generate media interest

I have always had a great awareness and interest in the benefits of complementary therapies, much of which I put down to my upbringing. Although we moved to Edinburgh when I was a child, I was born in Africa to parents from South India. I spent my formative years learning and benefiting from a range of traditional medicines and customs from these different countries.

After working in broadcasting for 20 years, I changed careers in 1996 when I won a scholarship to learn tui na with expert Maria Mercati.

Today, as well as being a master practitioner in tui na for adults and children, I offer hypnotherapy, reflexology, aromatherapy and reiki treatments at an independent health store and complementary therapy clinic, and I also teach holistic therapies at Adam Smith College – both in Kirkcaldy, Fife.

My ambition is to see complementary therapies integrated within the NHS, so that treatments are available to all and not just those who can afford them. To this end I try to bring therapies to as many people as I can and spread the word about the benefits of treatment, wherever possible.

## Bringing care to carers

I am proud that a community-based service, involving holistic therapy students from Adam Smith College, reached the finals of the Wellbeing in the Community category of the 2010 Fife Excellence Awards.

In partnership with Fife Carers' Centre, Kirkcaldy, the college service – now in its third year – helps to promote the well-being of family carers.

Students on the stress management course staff the service, helping carers to recognise and assess levels of stress, and teaching stress management and relaxation techniques. The students also provide individual treatments in body massage, Indian head massage, aromatherapy and reflexology.

Both the staff and students were delighted to be one of three projects short-listed for these prestigious awards, and although we didn't come away with a prize, this is great recognition for the support the students provide within the community.

## On your bike, Ian!

In June, Ian Donaldson, an amateur cyclist from Fife, celebrated a personal best when he completed a trip from Land's End to John

O'Groats in

12.5 days.

What onlookers didn't appreciate was that only a few weeks before the ride, Ian injured his back and was concerned that he might not be fit for the task.

But one of the other enthusiasts Ian was going to be cycling with was a client of mine, and so Ian was pointed in the direction of my massage couch.



I set to work getting Ian fighting fit with a combination of tui na massage and daily stretching exercises. I was thrilled when I heard that he had made it through the whole trip with no back problems.

I think this success is not just down to the tui na massage before Ian's trip, but also his commitment to following a specific programme of exercises and stretches I asked him to do throughout the ride.

We have used his story to promote tui na at my practice incorporating his story into a window display and also into the next practice newsletter (see below).

## Bringing therapy to the papers

I was delighted when a piece about my tui na work was published in *The Scotsman* (above). I always try to promote the therapy work I'm involved in, but I was lucky in this instance as the article was brokered by a PR company used by Health Food and More, the store where my practice is based.

As well as increasing public awareness about the benefits of tui na and complementary therapies, the article generated a lot of enquiries, which was a wonderful response.

I asked Keith Broomfield from CatchPR.co.uk if he had some tips for FHT members, and he offered the following:

'The local media are always on the lookout for stories that have a strong local angle and it creates a great way of promoting your business. One of the keys is to get to know your local newspapers so that you understand the type of stories they are looking for.'

'An advertorial-type article is of no interest to most media. Instead, they are looking for stories with a community-wide interest. This could include charity events, a new opening or a new service being offered.'

'It is often worthwhile to take on board a local PR company to help promote your business. There are many public relations practitioners who specialise in local markets for small-scale businesses and who do not charge excessively. In most cases, a good PR should provide much better value for money compared to just advertising in a newspaper, and the response that is delivered is usually much better, too.'

