

What do you find the easiest to work with?

This is a rewarding period in the profession, for me. My days can be long and tiring, beginning at 4am to go to gym before I start at 7:40am. But I relish the opportunity to help my clients make positive health and lifestyle changes. Mostly, clients come to me wanting to change their health status and I really enjoy working with those who are keen to learn, and put in the effort and commitment to feel better and be healthier. The best thing that keeps me practising is seeing doctors change their stance from prescribing medication to considering the value of working collaboratively with me.

What is your favourite type of client?

All clients, because they have made a decision to see me - which I feel is a vital first step that needs to be encouraged and mentored. I have a 64% client retention rate and a high number of client referrals, which are extremely powerful.

What is the most challenging type of symptoms/illness/problem that you get presented with?

Most challenging symptoms can be multifactorial as my work relates to multiple diseases. Within dysbiotic gut states, my investigative work can be severely curtailed by the lack of stool and functional testing available here. For example, in working extensively with leaky gut/intestinal hyperpermeability, and having seen nearly 400 clients in this area over the years, I know that irritable bowel syndrome, intestinal motility disorders and chronic pancreatitis are the most predominant cause of SIBO and account for 80-90% of cases [Ghoshal, Shukla, and Ghoshal, 2017]. Not being able to run breath and stool testing means that in some cases where clients have lingering symptoms I need to implement a SIBO protocol without being able to test for it.

What one thing is absolutely essential to you in your practice?

Continually reviewing new research in my areas of interest, and continuous development in practice is vital. I also value sharing knowledge by giving presentations to doctors' forums locally or working with laboratory and supplement companies overseas and supporting BANT as an expert reviewer or webinar presenter. I am a proud member of BANT, who provide excellent support structures on many levels.

Why do you do what you do?

The one thing we are destined to have our whole lives are our bodies. I found my purpose when I became a nutritional therapist, to help

more people understand how to look after their bodies, and live healthier and happier lifestyles.

Which CAM book has helped or inspired you most, so far in your career?

When I started, *The Clinician's Handbook of Natural Medicine*, by Joe Pizzorno, Michael Murray and Herb Joiner-Bey. But what really inspired me early on in my career was *Alternative Medicine: The Definitive Guide*, which is packed with lifesaving information and alternative treatments from 400 of the world's leading alternative physicians.

If money, time and effort were no object, what one thing would you change about your practice or integrative medicine in general?

Short-term I will be signing up next year to do an online one-year Post-Graduate Diploma in education to allow me to successfully apply for online junior lecture positions in the UK.

My medium-to-long term goal is to start a PhD in nutrition, campus-based, as part of a team, which I am actively looking for and hoping to find a suitable scholarship to apply for overseas.

What piece of advice would you give to newly-qualified practitioners who are just setting up a business?

Follow your passion and your work will be fulfilling. Don't be afraid to start. "Use What You Have. Do What You Can" - Arthur Ashe.

What is the biggest challenge you face as a practitioner?

Running a super busy practice on my own and trying to fit everyone in without long lead times but also making sure I focus on each client. I wish I could attend some of the UK conferences, but I have earmarked to attend at least one major UK CAM conference in 2024.

How did you adapt personally and professionally to the COVID-19 climate - and have things gone back to "normal" for you?

I was fortunate to close for only six weeks when lockdown was first imposed and was then allowed to reopen as a health professional with healthy and safety protocols in place. COVID opened up the opportunity for more online work, which has been a game-changer to reach beyond the borders.

I still work with long-COVID clients and contribute to a long-COVID forum, and work

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collaboratively with a psychiatrist and homeopath to support long-COVID clients.

What would you like to see covered in IHCAN magazine that we're not getting to?

I love the magazine and am glad I subscribe, as I like to read the in-depth articles on newer evidence. Continue to offer other non-staff member practitioners the opportunity to write evidence-informed articles, and possibly a way to promote, for example, my published research - currently stuck behind a pay wall. (Look out for a feature on this in IHCAN. Kirsty's paper is "An interpretive phenomenological analysis study exploring the lived experience of personal growth in individuals who have experienced weight loss during a structured weight loss programme", published in the *European Journal of Integrative Medicine*.)



We know our practitioners are quietly getting on with changing people's lives, every day - and we want to celebrate and share the inspiration. In Practice is coordinated by regular contributor Rebecca Smith, who runs a successful practice of her own, established 20 years ago. Contact her direct to be part of the feature: rebecca@newportcomplementaryhealthclinic.co.uk, and follow her on Twitter: [@NCHHealthClinic](https://twitter.com/NCHHealthClinic).