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Now we are in the CNHC regulation system, it is worth remembering that any particular person can now not only take 'false' claims to the advertising standards association but can now also make a complaint against you under CNHC regulations. There are a growing number of vexatious complainants out there that have turned to scrutinising reflexology and taking us to task about our claims of effectiveness; now more than ever it is important that claims that cannot be backed up are simply not made.

We have to be exceptionally careful as to what we claim. Anyone that attended the AGM is aware that there is some positive research showing effects of reflexology in some specific areas or groups of patients, and whereas we do have some scientific evidence for reflexology being effective, this is by no means extensive. Also, research is tricky because there is a requirement for repetition and reproduction, which we simply do not have as each study is a stand alone one. People such as the Advertising Standards Agency are also extremely demanding as to the level of evidence available, requiring pure randomised controlled studies which have not been done. The issue is as to whether one research study is enough and whether this can be generalised to the whole population. I am trying to gain clarity regarding this from the CNHC.

So how do we avoid getting caught in the trap? Until we have more information on this, it is important to keep yourself safe. One of the ways is to put 'anecdotally' before any mention of evidence / effectiveness - this means that the individual has shown changes rather than that we have scientific research to back it up. The other is to be very aware of wording using soft words like 'may and might' rather than 'can and will'. For example, do not claim that 'Reflexology **can** treat a whole range of conditions', but rather that it '**may help to** treat a whole range of conditions' and use terms like "There is a view that ..." or "I believe that ..." or "my clients claim that ..." If you have ever achieved exceptional results from giving treatments, why not persuade the client in question to write a testimonial for you? Testimonials are key here: although testimonials cannot be used as hard evidence of the efficacy of reflexology, they can certainly be quoted on promotional materials or your website, and can be very persuasive to potential clients.

Doreen Baker also wrote a document on how to comply with the Advertising Standards Authority Codes, which can be found on the Members Area and news pages of our website – it's called '**Advertising, don't get caught out!**'