How to… ensure your advertising and website comply with ASA codes

From 1st March 2011, all marketing communications on websites, as well as leaflets and advertisements, will be regulated by the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA), the UK’s independent regulator of advertising across all media.

The Association of Reflexologists advises you take immediate action to review your promotional activity and website to ensure you meet new guidelines.

Since September 2009, both the CNHC and the ASA have received many complaints relating to what is considered inappropriate advertising for reflexology. Last autumn, new guidelines for promoting reflexology were produced. Now, from the 1st March 2011 the ASA will also be regulating websites, meaning they will also be reviewing complaints about claims made on websites. The CNHC have issued a guidance sheet available as PDF download.

In summary, The Association of Reflexologists has to review its own website and the ‘Find a Reflexologist’ directory, and is asking its members to:

1. Check your leaflets, advertising and your website

The key issue is to keep yourself safe regarding any information on your leaflets, advertising and now your website. You should also be using the same language when you talk to your clients either face to face or on the phone.

Remember that each reflexology client is an individual and will react in an individual manner.

Check that you only use ‘may’ and ‘might’ - not ‘can’ and ‘will’ in your wording.

Check that you do not use the words ‘reflexology has been shown to be effective in or with...’

Never say that ‘reflexology will cure or take the place of medical care’.

Do not use medical diagnoses in your documents – for example use fertility issues rather than infertility or sub fertility.

Do use testimonials to support your claims but you must be able to provide a signed version of the testimonial or to be able to contact that individual should that testimonial be queried.

Do use research but remember that this cannot necessarily be generalised to the public as a whole and so can only be used specifically for that project. Always remember to cite the reference.

For example: A research project suggests that reflexology may have an effect on anxiety state:

2. Check your ‘Specialisms’ on the Find a Reflexologist advanced search

Due to the changes with the ASA and its ability to accept complaints about websites, from 22\textsuperscript{nd} February 2011, the ‘specialisms’ area of the Association’s website will be changing to ‘experienced in’ areas. This will also remove the medical definitions that we used to have and make them more general definitions.

As an example:

- Infertility will now become fertility issues.
- IBS will come under stress related digestive disorders.

Training courses will be listed separately, so if you have carried out an ART or VRT course for example, this will be clear in your listing.

These changes will be made automatically so you might find that where you were once a specialist in Crohn’s disease you are now ‘experienced in digestive disorders’.

We are aware that some of the changes might not seem a very comfortable fit – for example asthma into the breathing disorders box, BUT we are making these changes to protect you and the AoR from complaints.

The ASA guidelines say: ‘marketers should delete all references, including implied references, to medical conditions for which suitably qualified medical advice should be sought.’ There is a list of these on the CAP website.
# New phrasing being adopted by the Association of Reflexologists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old specialism phrase</th>
<th>New ’experienced in’ phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ART reflexology (reg)</strong></td>
<td>Advanced reflexology techniques (ART registered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Auricular therapy</strong></td>
<td>Auricular therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Baby reflexology</strong></td>
<td>Baby reflexology</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cranial sacral</strong></td>
<td>Cranial sacral reflexology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facial reflexology</strong></td>
<td>Facial reflexology</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Foot reading</strong></td>
<td>Foot reading</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gentle touch</strong></td>
<td>Gentle touch reflexology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hand reflexology</strong></td>
<td>Hand reflexology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intuition and sound</strong></td>
<td>Intuition and sound reflexology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maternity reflexology (reg)</strong></td>
<td>Maternity reflexology (registered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VRT</strong></td>
<td>Vertical reflex therapy (VRT)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conditions:** (note this does not use medical terminology)

- **Arthritis**
- **Asthma**
- **Eczema**
- **Autism**
- **Babies and children**
- **Cancer**
- **Crohn's disease**
- **Cystic fibrosis**
- **Depression**
- **Diabetes**
- **Digestive system**
- **Elderly**
- **Epilepsy**
- **Fertility**
- **IBS**
- **Insomnia**
- **Learning difficulties**
- **Learning disability**
- **Lupus**
- **ME/CFS**
- **MS**
- **Menopause**
- **Parkinson's disease**
- **Pregnancy**
- **Psoriasis**
- **RSI**
- **Stress**

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Version 1
### Strokes
- Clients living with stroke

### Substance abuse
- Clients with substance abuse issues

### Thyroid
- Thyroid disorders

### Tinnitus
- Ear disorders
- Adrenal disorders

#### Claims that are likely to be acceptable to Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP)

‘Reflexology helps relaxation, improves mood, aids sleep, helps to relieve tension and improves sense of wellbeing.’

...and yes, we know it does lots more, but the problem is having evidence to back this up! Certainly testimonials can help here, as long as you do not over generalise.

### 3. Proof of ‘experienced in’

We are also changing the way you can be classified as ‘experienced in’ – previously there was no specific evidence requirement, but for safety’s sake we now will be asking for proof of experience. You will have two ways of becoming classified as ‘experienced in’:

**Either**

1) You have attended a specialist course in this area that is 2 days or longer duration, **AND** have treated and documented at least 10 clients with this issue.

**Or**

2) You have treated at least 20 clients with this issue and have signed testimonials to back up your experience.

As we are aware that most members will not have collated evidence, we are allowing you **one year** to collect and document your evidence and in that time you can remain ‘experienced in’. After March 2012 we will randomly request a number of ‘experienced in’ members to provide their back up evidence for confirmation of standards.

**Do not forget that all the documentation produced for this can be classified as CPD!**

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**Disclaimer:**

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