

BUC HEALTH MINISTRIES GUIDELINES ON NATURAL MEDICINE AND WHOLISTIC LIFESTYLE PROGRAMMES

In 2011 the BUC Health Ministries Department launched its Natural Medicine and Wholistic Lifestyle Strategy.

A key aim of the strategy is to highlight the safe and effective evidence-based use of natural medicine whilst balancing the message about the use of contemporary medicine in chronic and acute cases of illness. As part of the strategy launch, guidance on these issues has been given to both health leaders and ministers.

It is hoped that the strategy will enable the following:

- a) Encourage evidence based practice
- b) Train individuals in the safe and effective use of natural medicine
- c) Safeguard people, health practices and health related programs within the BUC

Use of natural products

Amongst some of the key messages that our department wishes to get across with the strategy are the following:

- It is advisable to use only alternative or complimentary treatment or therapy that has a scientific validation and is shown to be safe and effective for use
- Individuals taking prescribed medication or undergoing medical treatment must consult their regular practitioner before undertaking any alternative or complimentary medicine. This is to ensure that there are no contraindications, negative drug interactions or serious side effects as a result of additional non medical treatments.
- We encourage members to seek medical help in terms of elective or emergency surgery and use of medication, including where necessary chemo- and radiotherapy for the treatment of serious or life threatening conditions

Guidance on presenters and health programmes

There is a church protocol for invited guests to enter the territory and speak at any designated church or area. The church board is responsible for enacting this protocol. Additionally where necessary for some health programmes, the church board needs to ensure that there is documented action in relation to insurance coverage by the Adventist Risk Management (ARM).

***Check first** with the conference elected Director of Health or Mission Health Sponsor whether they are aware of / familiar with any individual who wants to undertake a health program, run training events or approach members as health practitioners / advisors

*** Request evidence** of accredited specialist training or qualification in the specified area of practice from individuals who want to act as consultants.

* **Health evangelism courses** of up to 4 weeks are not enough to classify an individual as an independent practitioner of any kind; be it natural, alternative or complementary medicine. Courses such as L.I.G.H.T (Lay International Global Health Training) may be valuable for training in medical missionary work as may M.E.E.T Ministry (Missionary Education and Evangelistic Training) however these do not make individuals competent or immediate practitioners.

***Accredited Medical missionary courses of 6 months and over** may be identified as sufficient to credit individuals to practice however the BUC Health Ministries Department cannot be held responsible for the practice outcome of these individuals as they are undertaking work as independent practitioners. Please check with the BUC Health Ministries Department in relation to the minimum standards for accredited courses.

***Health training from Healthy Lifestyle Centres** – A number of our SDA health institutions undertake comprehensive training in natural medicine. For example Uchee Pines (USA) runs the Lifestyle Educator (6 months), Lifestyle Counsellor (12 months). Individuals undertaking these programs and qualifying as practitioners may decide to practice independently. However the BUC Health Ministries Department will be looking at how this may be undertaken within the parameters of natural medical practice in the UK.

The BUC Health Ministries Department are working to ensure that where any health related programmes from Healthy Lifestyle Institutions are run that the accepted peer reviewed guidelines for health practice in the UK are followed.

In order to safeguard the health choices and health practices of our membership we aim to undertake the following:

- 1) Encourage pastors and health ministries leaders to ensure that if alternative or complimentary products / therapies are mentioned or presented as part of a health program, it must first be vetted for validity by appropriately qualified medical or health personnel or an individual with a science background. The information should also be presented within the context of a holistic lifestyle in regards to good health maintenance. It should not be presented as a sole treatment for every situation or as a diagnostic for anyone who is ill.
- 2) If the above is presented as part of a program it must be clearly stated by the presenter that these products are not being presented as a 'cure' or replacement for essential medical treatment. Additionally though some benefit may have been reported by some individuals using these products, this should not be used as an example for every case and assumed as automatic use for those with serious illnesses. Furthermore anecdotal evidence is not accepted as (scientifically) evidenced-based.
- 3) Encourage pastors, elders and health ministries leaders not to allow the promotion of any brand name products or network marketing schemes as a means of drawing membership or sales. It should also be clearly established by the leaders that marketing techniques should be avoided in health presentations. This is in order to preserve integrity and avoid any issues of conflict of interest.
- 4) As far as possible seek to ensure that a qualified health professional is part of the church health ministries team. Where this is not possible we advise contact with an area accredited medical or science personnel to oversee health programs and workshop content and be present at events where health programs are presented.
- 5) We advise that where health-related initiatives are undertaken at local or BUC level that a disclaimer is used.

- 6) We advise those in leadership positions to only accept health presenters who are in good and regular standing and who do not hold extreme health views which are in conflict with our General Conference Working Policy on Health Ministry practices for institutions.
- 7) In reference to Supporting Ministries, promotion and fundraising events, please ensure that individuals are acquainted with and adhere to the following: General Conference Working Policies: S 50 25 Unauthorized Presentations and Solicitations, and K 05 05 Criteria for Defining Supporting Ministries.

Health practices

- The aspect of health practices, dietary guidelines and anxiety over unregulated therapies and their conflicts with Adventist belief are important and valid areas of concern.
- The General Conference voted in 2007 at the Autumn Council to reaffirm the health guidelines of the Seventh-day Adventist church. This included upholding the list of unauthorised alternative / complementary health practices; guidance against tea and coffee and the serving and preparation of flesh foods on church premises and Adventist institutions. A letter to this effect was sent out to all pastors and health ministries leaders at the beginning on 2008.
- Caution needs to be taken when individuals offer to give a 'healing' testimony in a public setting. Any reports of healing should be accompanied by verification from a medical source e.g. "here is the letter / report that states I no longer have cancer..." or "my GP / consultant told me that I am now in remission / my illness has been cured....."

At the BUC Wellness Summit June 21st – 26th 2011, the above guidelines were reemphasised. At the same event also attendees were trained in specific aspects of the BUC Natural Medicine and Holistic Lifestyle Strategy. This enabled them to become acquainted with the key messages and disseminate the information in their churches.