Cancer patients turn to complementary and alternative therapies

The use of complementary and alternative therapies is widespread among cancer patients and their use appears to be increasing in Europe, a Sussex sociologist said last week.

“Doctors need to take account of what other therapies their patients are using, or may use in the future, when they are considering treatment options,” Dr Gillian Bendelow (pictured) told delegates to the 4th European Breast Cancer Conference, in Hamburg. “Some complementary and alternative therapies have the potential to interact dangerously with drug regimes,” she said.

Gillian told the conference that those who seek complementary and alternative therapies – such as vitamin preparations, mistletoe therapy and mineral preparations – tend to be women who are better educated, of higher socio-economic status, more health-conscious and younger than those who do not.

There are a variety of reasons why women with breast cancer choose to use complementary and alternative therapies, she said. These include improving quality of life, giving them more control and greater responsibility for their care, and the need to explore all possibilities.

Gillian emphasised that patients and researchers need to be clear about the distinction between complementary and alternative therapies.

Alternative therapies used instead of mainstream treatment may be problematic in oncology, she said, when delayed treatment can diminish the possibility of remission and cure. “Moreover, interventions sold as literal alternatives to chemotherapy, surgery and radiation therapy may be biologically active, potentially harmful and extremely costly.”

Complementary therapies, on the other hand, are used as adjuncts to mainstream cancer care. “They include supportive measures that control symptoms, enhance well-being and contribute to overall patient care,” said Gillian.

Academics beat celebrity chefs in food book award

Two science policy academics have beaten top celebrity chefs in a competition to find the best food book of 2003.

SPRU’s Dr Erik Millstone and his co-author Professor Tim Lang from City University have been celebrating the success of their book, The Atlas of Food, in the prestigious André Simon Memorial Fund awards this month.

Without a recipe in sight, they saw off competition from the likes of Nigel Slater, Michel Roux and the River Café duo Rose Gray and Ruth Rogers.

“We’ve had some tremendous feedback about the book already,” said Erik, a reader in science policy based at SPRU – Science and Technology Policy Research. “But it was a surprise and delight for us to pick up this award, particularly when you look at who else was on the shortlist.”

The Atlas of Food, published by Earthscan, uses easy-to-understand graphics and charts to present comprehensive information on global patterns and trends, such as where hunger and over-consumption exist side by side; how pesticide sales are increasing despite consumer and ecological concerns; and how agricultural biodiversity has rapidly declined.

Intended for a general audience, the publication is also of particular relevance to students of geography and international relations.

“The book gives a snapshot of 40 of the powerful forces that politicians must grapple with if they are to deliver a food supply system that doesn’t contribute to ill health and environmental damage,” said Erik. “We managed to present a huge amount of information – and we could have done another 40 snapshots.”

Staff volunteer for the day

The National Trust have commended Sussex staff for their energy and enthusiasm during a mud-drenched conservation day this month.

The work involved six staff from the Students’ Union helping to fell and remove trees from Wolstonbury Hill on the South Downs. Although it may seem bizarre to be chopping down trees in the name of conservation, this is part of a large-scale National Trust initiative to return areas of the South Downs to ‘wildlife-rich’ grassland. The volunteer challenge was organised by Project V in conjunction with One Brighton and Hove Cares, who specialise in facilitating employee volunteering opportunities in the local area.

The event was the first in a series of regular volunteer challenges for staff from the Students’ Union.

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Cost of the new visual identity

I find it incredible and most concerning that this University is prepared to waste taxpayers' money on useless folders containing materials bearing the new 'visual identity' to all staff etc., and causing damage to the environment by destroying trees; also spending large sums on our new identity that isn't a patch on the old one, which was both striking and noticeable.

It is strange that we have all been informed, on numerous occasions, that this University is short of finances.

How much better it would have been for this money to have been spent on improving facilities and updating outdated equipment around campus, or increasing salaries of the lower-paid staff.

I think we should be advised as to how much this exercise has cost.

Tessa Ellis, Life Sciences

Detail of the costs of developing the new identity were presented to Council and have been published online (at www.sussex.ac.uk/ouridentity) since October 2003. The initial design work cost £35,000.

We think it is right to spend time and money explaining the new identity in materials sent to all staff. Their high-quality look may suggest they were expensive; they were not. The folders cost around 50p, the postcards 10p, the letter-headed paper 4p, the poster and leaflet £1.20.

Most important, however, is to look at the outcomes alongside the costs. The new designs applied to the undergraduate prospectus have already resulted in increased interest from potential undergraduates.

Developing good new designs for Sussex is not an end in itself. And good design is only a part of ensuring we attract high-quality students and engage and with external bodies. But unless they are attracted and engaged, we can't show them all that Sussex has to offer. Getting this right now will do more to ensure Sussex can afford better salaries and equipment in future.

Critical letters in the Bulletin

Just a brief note of congratulations on publishing the critical letters that you have in the last couple of issues — and especially in allowing them to stand without instant rebuttals from the Senior Management Group (SMG). This has been widely noticed among my colleagues.

It would be great to see the Bulletin developing the letters section into a proper forum where faculty and others can voice their concerns. If it did I am sure the readership on campus would increase dramatically!

Dr Andrew Chitty, Philosophy

A new tool for management control?

The composition of the new School Promotion Boards was brought to Senate for approval extraordinarily late, indeed after the Boards had been set up and began their work.

Two aspects of the composition are very odd and everyone whom I've talked to thinks they should be changed. Yet when the matter was raised at Senate this month the Vice-Chancellor stated that it was not even to be discussed, let alone resolved, until "next year". Thus the management's lateness in proposing the composition of the Boards was used as an excuse to deny Senate its explicit right to participate in deciding their composition.

So what's wrong with the Boards?

Well, firstly they are packed with ex-officio members, at the expense of elected members, who are reduced in number in comparison with the former Area Promotions Committees. Some elected members, with no line-management responsibilities for junior colleagues, have no relevance to these Boards. They should be struck out.

Another problem concerns elections to the elected places. No one quarrels with the candidates being restricted to senior lecturer (or equivalent) and above in other words, excluding anyone whose case for promotion might come before the Board. But under the election procedure set up this year lectures were denied the vote they have always had in the past. That may reflect just careless drafting rather than intention, but the effect is still an arbitrary and uncalled-for reduction of lecturers' contribution and their rights.

The elections that actually took place were conducted in the more casual of the State of Florida: some electoral districts got things right, while others did not. My own school, Science and Technology, followed the new rule but others, according to the Director of Human Resources, gave lecturers a vote.

Shouldn't the incorrectly held elections now be retried? Let's hope that no candidate for promotion runs off to a lawyer when they learn they haven't got through this year.

It is hard not to suspect that the Vice-Chancellor used a cock-up to force through an agenda and deny legitimate voices their say. Whether that was cock-up or conspiracy, it was certainly an abuse of Senate, and Senate is owed an apology.

Professor Charles Goldie, Mathematics

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, replies:

I find it puzzling that I am supposed to have an "agenda" for an area of University business in which I had no involvement until it came to Senate. Senate discussed this issue fully at its meeting on 12 March and reported to Council for its meeting on 19 March. I did not deny Senate its rights; I proposed that, whatever had gone wrong this year, it would not be sensible to change circumstances for a process that was already well under way.

Following discussion, Senate agreed that it would not be appropriate to change the composition of the Boards at this point, but that the composition should be reviewed in the light of experience this year and Deans could propose changes to the composition if appropriate in the Autumn term 2004.
High flyer wins aerospace award

A top engineering accolade has been awarded to a senior researcher at Sussex.

Dr Nick Hills is the 2004 recipient of the Rolls-Royce plc Research Fellowship, beating international competition for the title.

The annual honour is awarded to just one academic from numerous UK and international universities working on research projects for Rolls-Royce plc.

Nick is senior research fellow for the University Technology Centre, supported by Rolls-Royce plc, at Sussex. The team work on engines for aircraft, in particular the Trent 500 engine used on the Airbus A340.

Last year, Nick gained recognition among his peers for creating innovative design software, now used by Rolls-Royce plc engineers globally.

"The practical software is a design and analysis tool used by engineers developing engines," he explained. "It helps to design quieter, more efficient and reliable engines for aircraft. It has been excellent seeing the software go into general use and an honour to have my work acknowledged with this lifetime fellowship award."

Nick began working at Sussex in 1992 and completed his DPhil in computational fluid dynamics at the University in 1996.

How effective is e-learning?

A group of geography students are watching an animated diagram of a volcanic eruption that their lecturer has just downloaded. Meanwhile, a class of history students collaborate on a project with students in another country via the internet. E-learning is already around us in colleges and universities - but how effective is it?

"The government wants to embed e-learning across all education sectors," says Dr Julie Coutts, a research fellow in the Informatics department at Sussex, "but acknowledges that it has very little evidence of its effectiveness."

Over the next two years Julie will be addressing this lack by reviewing the value of e-learning for people in the post-16 sector.

"The impact of new technologies on learning and teaching and the needs of learners and employers in relation to technology-supported learning are not yet fully understood," says Julie. "In order for politicians, teachers, learners, employers and commercial suppliers to contribute to a process of change, they need more information."

Julie will be working with Dr Rose Luckin and Professor Ben du Boulay in the Human Centred Technology Group. On 7 May they will be holding the first of a series of seminars to consult with experts on e-learning.

Julie’s two-year research fellowship for the project is worth more than £121,000 and comes from the Eduserv Foundation, which received 350 applications for just four funded projects.

A walk on the wild side

Several readers have contacted us about the recent changes to the shrubbery between Pevensey and North-South Road, concerned about the use of non-native species.

While it is true that most introduced plants support few herbivorous insects, some can benefit wildlife in other ways.

The new planting includes two buddleia bushes. They are of a particularly well-travelled variety, ‘Royal Red’, which was developed in Ohio (USA) from a western Chinese species. The ‘Latin’ name of its wild ancestor – Buddleja davidii – commemorates Armand David, a French missionary who discovered it in 1869, and the Essex vicar-cum-botanist Adam Buddle, in whose honour the first buddleia species grown in Britain – Buddleja globosa from Chile – was named in 1774.

The bushes will be adorned from summer until late autumn with large tassels of fragrant, magenta flowers. These blossoms are rich in nectar, a food resource that has previously been scarce in the centre of campus. The flowers should therefore act as magnets for bees, birds and butterflies by day and for moths by night (although moths prefer paler-flowered varieties such as ‘White Profusion’).

The downside is that Buddleja davidii can spread like a weed, thanks to its tiny wind-blown seeds. Removing fading flowers before the seeds set reduces this problem and also encourages further blooms. Failing that, the bushes should be replaced with less invasive species such as the earlier flowering Buddleja globosa.

A shrub that quite definitely is native and in full flower at the moment is Spurge Laurel, Daphne laureola. This is a low evergreen shrub growing to a height of about 1 metre. The branches are rather sparse and the leaves, which are a dark shining green, tend to be crowded towards the top of the stems, hence its specific name (laureola, a garland of laurels). The flowers are rather unusual in that they consist of four petal-like sepals. In many related species these are brightly coloured and sweet scented, hence their popularity with gardeners. Unlike its cultivated cousins, the flowers of Spurge Laurel, which are grouped in tight clusters in the axils of the leaves, are green and pollinated by small flies. Later in the season it develops black poisonous berries.

On campus there are just a few plants in Botes. On the other hand it is quite common in some of the woods round about, especially in Stannmer Park. William Arnold Bromfield recorded in the mid-18th century that it was collected from Sussex woods and sold in the Chichester and Portsmouth markets as a horse medicine! The bark has also been used as a country cure for cancer.

In our climate, evergreen plants such as Spurge Laurels provide valuable cover for hibernating insects; we were interested to discover large clusters of Cream-spot Ladybirds having a winter snooze beneath their leaves in Stannmer Park.

FIRST CLASS

Three members of faculty have been promoted to professorships with effect from 1 April: Dr Peter Childs (Engineering Design), Dr John Gaventa (Institute of Development Studies) and Dr Marcus Wood (English).

A part-time DPhil student in the Informatics department has won a national Associate Lecturer Teaching Award from the Open University (OU). Michelle Hoyle started teaching in the OU’s Faculty of Technology in May 2000 and delivers internet technology courses, primarily online. The award will be presented on 20 April at a ceremony in Milton Keynes and comes with £1,000 to be used for personal or professional development.

Sussex graduate and magazine editor Alexandra Shulman was one 180 of guests at a Buckingham Palace reception earlier this month for high-achieving women. Alexandra, who studied social anthropology at Sussex, became editor of Vogue in 1992. Other guests at the lunch included Cherie Booth QC, author J. K. Rowling and singer Charlotte Church.
Artists and scientists create a “walk-in brain”

Imagine what it would be like to walk into a brain and experience the sights and sounds of thinking in action.

Norwegian artist Sol Sneltevold set her own grey matter to work on this problem and, in collaboration with Sussex neuroscientist Professor Michael O’Shea, has created Mindscape, a dynamic audio-visual art installation that will be on display from 1-13 April at the Unitarian Church in New Road, Brighton.

The installation involves projections of highly magnified images of brain nerve cells, which have been digested and manipulated and combined with sounds derived from recordings of the electrical impulses of living nerve cells.

Small ads ↓

Holiday let: Stone-built house & converted barn in Sussex Normandie (great walking & cycling country, accessible from Cairn or Deepdale, Wood-burning stove, CH, VHS, video, peace. Email xsc@btconnect.com or call 475137.

For sale: Sony Disc handheld PDA, colour screen, extras incl mini keyboard. 1 yr old, hardly used. £125. Call Pete on ext. 7297 or p.pulling@sussex.ac.uk.

Wanted: Healthy men aged 60+ for brief questionnaire on side-effects of two common prostate cancer therapies. Contact TrustExist at Psychosocial Oncology Group: ext. 7919, email t.I.edginton@sussex.ac.uk.

Wanted: Accommodation for professional, married couple from Sep for 1 yr or more. House sitting or sharing considered. Pref. between Lewes and campus. Email ahampton@ymalumni.co.uk or call +001 703 753 2496.

For sale: Packard Bell slimline scanner PB8124Af. £220. Email rpe6@sussex.ac.uk or ext. 7944.


£7.49/pno. Call ext. 4055, 516692 or 07888 903605.

For sale: CCTV system: £500 pno. Ethernet hub: offers. Sony memo-scribe audio tape recorder (no foot pedal): offers. Ferguson camcorder 35V0: £250. Call Tracy Lloyd-Cressey on ext. 8156 or email counselling@sussex.ac.uk.

To let: Furnished single room in Lewes cottage. Share with female mature student. N/S only. £290 pcm incl. Call Jane on 07979 865055.

Holiday let: Restored 18th-C timber-frame cottage, Normandy. Sleeps 6 +, all mod cons, £50 p/h. Easter availability. Email S.PColard@sussex.ac.uk.

To let: Double room in house nr London Rd station. Suit N/S PG. Broadband. £350 pno incl. Contact Mike on ext. 7668, 07949 146505, m.s.potter@sussex.ac.uk.

For sale: Digital camera, Sony DSC-P71. 3 2M P x zoom, + extra 128Mb memory card, spare battery. £110. Email g.mather@sussex.ac.uk.

For sale: 3 anti-glare computer filter screens for 15in PC monitors. Offers (catalogue price £62.49). Contact Cat Stread on ext. 8676, c.j.stread@sussex.ac.uk.

Chancellor’s Awards 2004

The deadline for nominations for the annual Chancellor’s Awards is 7 May. The awards recognise exceptional contribution to the work and life of the University by members of staff. Awards can be made for work in any area of activity at the University, other than direct teaching and research. Up to four winners will receive their £500 prize at the graduation ceremonies in July. For details and nomination forms, see www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/Registrar/chancellorsawards.shtml.

Staff vacancies ↓

For further details, see www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/staffing/personnel/vacs or contact staffing services on ext. 8706, fax 871401, recruitment@sussex.ac.uk

APPLY BY 31 MARCH

Director of SPRU
(ref 571)

Research Fellow, Physics and Astronomy
(ref 557)

Research Fellow in Molecular and Cell Biology, Biochemistry
(ref 585)

APPLY BY 1 APRIL

Project Co-ordinator, SI
(ref 589)

Research Co-ordinator, SocCul
(ref 590)

APPLY BY 2 APRIL

Senior Library Assistant - Systems, Library
(ref 572)

Corporate Editor, Publications
(ref 577)

Gardner Arts Centre↓

Box office 01273 685861
www.gardnerarts.co.uk

Sussex students and staff are eligible for tickets at concessionary rate to all events on presentation of a valid ID card.

EXHIBITION

Sat 3-Sat 17 Apr
Brighton & Hove Camera Club

Photography Exhibition

Inspirational images, both colour and black-and-white, of subjects including portrait, landscape, still-life, photo-journalism and abstract – all produced using various photographic techniques.

News in brief↓

Brighton Festival prize draw

If you’re a fan of African music and you’re free on the evening of Wednesday 19 May, read on. The University is sponsoring ‘African Songs’, a Brighton Festival event at the Dome.

(See www.brighton-festival.org.uk/index.asp?id=877 for details.) To be in with a chance of receiving one of 32 free pairs of tickets (each worth £90) for this gala event, with drinks and canapés thrown in, just email internalcommunication@sussex.ac.uk by Friday 30 April. Don’t forget to include your name and contact details.

Teaching Awards 2004

The deadline for nominations for the annual Sussex Teaching Awards is 23 April. The awards are open to all those teaching or providing academic support. The Teaching and Learning Development Unit (TLDU) would particularly welcome nominees from new staff, including hourly paid tutors, as well as more experienced colleagues. Up to three winners will receive their £500 prize at the graduation ceremonies in July. For details and nomination forms, see www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/TLDU/teachingawards/index.shtml.

Spam successfully reduced

IT Services report that the anti-spam techniques they introduced recently (see Bulletin 12 March) have been working well. As a consequence, you should be seeing far less spam in your inbox. In fact, 88% of emails being sent to Sussex are now being rejected because they come from sender addresses that cannot be verified as genuine.

Judith Pope

Judith Pope, who had worked as a part-time cleaner for Estates since December 2001, died suddenly on 21 March at the age of 64. Her supervisor, Les Thwaites, describes Judith as a “conscientious and friendly lady who always made a point of speaking to the academics in Pevensey II, where she worked.”

The Bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field and Benedict Brook, with contributions from Jacqui Bealing, Maggie Clune and Aix Macfarlane. We welcome any news, story ideas, letters or small ads from staff and students of the University. The next issue will be out on 23 April, with a copy deadline of 1pm on 18 April. Please contact the Press & Communications Office in Sussex House, ext. 8888 or email bulletin@sussex.ac.uk. Happy Easter!