

WEST COAST HOMEOPATHIC SOCIETY

Board Report on Homeopathy Awareness Week June 11 - 18, 2004

This year, West Coast Homeopathic Society sponsored Canada's first national Homeopathy Awareness Week (HAW), which was aptly named ***In Celebration of Homeopathy***. WCHS members held free talks and a variety of informal opportunities for the public to meet and talk with a local homeopath. Other members offered discounts for consultations booked during that week or provided homeopathic prizes for draws.

Generous corporate support from HAW Corporate Partner, Dolisos Canada, made it possible for our members to hold free draws for first aid homeopathic remedy kits during their HAW events. **The Board of Directors thanks Dolisos for its support in celebration of Homeopathy Awareness Week!**

For thousands of Canadians, HAW provided an opportunity to learn something about homeopathy and, in some cases, to meet a homeopath face to face. Some of these people were encouraged to try acute remedies for the first time. Others decided to commit to homeopathic treatment for their chronic conditions. And even greater numbers were exposed to the concept of homeopathy for the first time through a barrage of posters, bookmarks, various literature, and media releases. WCHS and our members found many different opportunities for informing and educating the public about homeopathy.

Our members also found many benefits from participating in Homeopathy Awareness Week. Anita Francouer from Port Alberni told us that being part of HAW gave her access to places she never would have approached otherwise. "It gave me a reason to go in their door and after that they were pleased to co-operate."

And on the opposite coast, Joan Macdonald of Halifax raffled off a handpainted tray at her homeopathic talk – **raising \$30 for the WCHS Scholarship Fund**. Many thanks, Joan!

Between the coasts, many other WCHS members were involved with talks, mini-clinics, 'meet & greets', open houses, information booths, library displays, and numerous other ideas to draw attention to the subject of homeopathy.

Adding to the success of each event, **HAW Corporate Partner, Dolisos Canada**, generously provided **beginner's remedy kits** to be included in free draws for the public. **Huge thanks go to Michel Biermann, Western Canada Regional Manager**, for initiating and organizing these kits and for his continued support of WCHS. We look forward to partnering with Dolisos in the future.

Judging by enquiries to our office, the public seemed to be most interested in attending introductory talks on homeopathy. Audience feedback was very favourable and **most said they would recommend similar events to friends and relatives**.

The most frequently-held event involved homeopaths making themselves available to discuss homeopathy one on one with the public. These took the form of **'meet & greets' and mini-clinics** (either informal drop-ins or scheduled 10-15 minute sessions); the former were more social and informative, the latter provided free advice on acute conditions. Most were held at pharmacies or natural health stores where a broad selection of homeopathic products was available.

These sessions were so popular with stores and the public that several members were asked to repeat them on a regular weekly or monthly basis. In fact, one member reports that she was even offered a part-time job!

Interaction with staff in health stores was another welcome benefit. The staff learned a bit more about homeopathy and were given the opportunity to meet a qualified homeopath to whom they could refer their customers. Since then, several members have planned special information sessions for staff of natural health businesses.

As Karen Jonas of Toronto found at her 2 mini-clinics, it's all about basic education – **explaining the basics over and over again.**

Some of our members held **open houses in their own offices**, offering an opportunity for patients, friends, colleagues, and the interested public to drop by and discuss homeopathy. Most events featured a supply of handouts (many provided by WCHS!), and displays of books and remedy sources.

Canteris Hartley included the video *Homeopathy: Mystery of Healing* at her Open House in North Vancouver. **Thanks to Minimum Price** for offering a special 20% discount to WCHS members who purchased this video for their HAW events.

From southern Vancouver Island, Simone Kehl and Julia Nowosielska paired up, each **co-hosting at the other's Open House**. They found that this helped to ease the stress of welcoming strangers to their own offices, as well as making it possible to share display materials.

Other members in BC, AB, and ON approached their **local public libraries to set up HAW displays**. This involved informing the library staff about homeopathy, which in itself made them more knowledgeable for future enquiries and book selection. WCHS handouts were available and patrons were able to borrow from a selection of the libraries' books on homeopathy.

An **information booth** provides another way to present homeopathy to the public. Christopher Gehry spent an enjoyable Saturday afternoon handing out information and discussing homeopathy with passers-by at a sidewalk booth in North Vancouver.

Some members who were unable to hold an event chose to offer draws for books, remedy kits, or free consultations. Many also offered **20% discounts on initial consultations**. Other members made use of the local media, by submitting articles on HAW events or on homeopathy in general, or by arranging radio and newspaper interviews.

Feedback from WCHS members was overwhelmingly enthusiastic and all were looking forward to getting even more involved next year. As Pat Deacon of Naramata commented (based on her experience with similar awareness events), the **momentum will build as each year passes**. She predicts that over time the public will come to look forward to the next HAW, anticipating more opportunities for discounts, promotions, and free events.

Tania Bouchon and Julie Anne Lee, both of Vancouver, were delighted with the **support available from WCHS for their HAW events**. Participating members received detailed tip sheets to help them organize their activities and a range of free handouts to distribute. Others purchased copies of the PE manual that provided step-by-step guidelines for promoting and presenting introductory talks.

The HAW committee co-ordinated the overall promotion, mainly through a huge mailout to targeted retailers and public libraries in all communities where our members practice. Included in the mailouts were **25,000 Homeopathy Awareness bookmarks**, distributed to public libraries, alternative book stores, and retailers of homeopathic products. We are hopeful that over time these titles and others will find their way onto retail book shelves and into library collections across the country.

The HAW committee also took advantage of many free opportunities to draw attention to HAW events by making use of the internet to send announcements by e-mail and to post details on numerous other websites. Other free announcements also appeared in the local print media and health-related publications.

Central to our promotion was the **HAW page on the WCHS website**. During the first half of June, HAW activities were updated daily and during this period, traffic on the website doubled as people from across the country responded to our promotion.

The 2004 Homeopathy Awareness Week taught us what we need to know about what works and what doesn't work when co-ordinating celebrations on a national scale. With this experience, our Society is now positioned to work with our members to make the 2005 HAW a memorable and significant event, a fitting commemoration of the 250th anniversary of Hahnemann's birth.

