

planta medica

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Herbal Medicines From A Co-Operative

Your Manufacturing Company

Created To Benefit The Herbal Community

The Decisions Are Yours

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Please turn the page

It is difficult to investigate the history of western herbalism without considering the political dimension, the persecutions during the Middle Ages that sought to extinguish the flame of herbal knowledge with the same swooping campaign that was to extinguish the old religions with its ancient Gods and sacred trees. A campaign that specifically attacked the rights of women and their herbal healing practices. A brutal campaign of flames and torture that left behind an intellectual and cultural wasteland governed by the fear of God and by ignorance. Only in the remotest corners, hidden valleys and far off wildernesses, where the iron arm of the inquisition did not reach did the stories of ancient gods and spirits survive along with the herb lore and healing art.



So what are we about?

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Quite simply we believe it is time for the production of herbal medicines and the practitioners that use them to be more closely integrated; with the benefits of supply and production more fairly shared with the herbal community. A co-operative, which by definition shares these goals, appears to be the most appropriate vehicle to achieve this.

Why?

It is fair to say that herbal medicine throughout history has faced significant challenges, and possibly rarely more so than at present. It is perhaps not an over exaggeration to say that we are in fact in the grips of the perfect storm, far worse than the oft quoted cliché of being at a crossroads. The focus of this prospectus is the formation of a new co-operative herbal manufacturing company. First it is worthwhile reviewing the position that leads to the need.

There has for many years been an understandable disconnect between the practitioners, their medicines and the herbal suppliers. The supply chain in the UK is for the most part, a fragmented and disparate group of small, privately owned companies supplying what is overall a relatively small market place worth in the region of £3,000,000. This generates reasonable profits, which benefit a small number of entrepreneurs but offer little to the herbal community as a whole. For example it is worth noting that not a single herbal supplier has made a donation to the NIMH Education Fund charity in over two decades. It is further worth noting that there have been no step change improvements in quality since the mid 1980's. Your co-operative is being created to redress these and other shortfalls.

The aims of the co-operative are:

- + **The production and or distribution of medicines of a quality to rival the best in the world**
- + **To distribute profits to relevant charities**
- + **To support education in herbal medicine**
- + **To support research in herbal medicine**
- + **To create a return for the members of the co-operative**
- + **Other activities to benefit the herbal community as agreed by its members**

It becomes clear that a new way can only be of benefit to herbal medicine, especially when compared to the current status quo, helping on all levels and creating stability in the market.

THE KEY TO THE SUCCESS OF PLANTA MEDICA IS YOU.

The key to the success of Planta Medica is you. Do you want to engage in changing the way we make and buy our medicines and what we do with the funds created? Or not?

If yes please turn the page

The witch-hunts left a lasting effect: An aspect of the female has ever since been associated with the witch, and an aura of contamination has remained – especially around the midwife and other women healers. This early and devastating exclusion of women from independent healing roles was a violent precedent and a warning: It was to become a theme of our history. The women's health movement of today has ancient roots in the medieval covens, and its opponents have as their ancestors those who ruthlessly forced the elimination of witches.



Premises

We have secured space in Syston, Leicestershire in premises that have a tradition for the creation of herbal products. The address is 103 High Street Syston; that previously used by a well-known manufacturing company during the 1990's. The space extends to some 12,000 sq. ft. across two floors and includes the use of nine manufacturing rooms, storage facilities and packing rooms. The premises also benefit from a purified water system, some filtered air systems, Wi-Fi, office space and parking. We have also secured the use of three acres of land for the cultivation of fresh herbs.

Staff

Tony Carter MNIMH and Sue Copeman MNIMH have agreed to manage the day to day activities of the company on a salaried contract basis. Both have extensive experience in the production of herbal medicines (combined over 40 years). Tony and Sue will be responsible for the engagement of additional staff as required. An independent board of directors (per co-operative requirements) will be engaged.

Documentation and Governance

We have engaged with co-operatives UK to help with the creation of all the appropriate governance documentation and with the legal process of registering the co-operative. We have also registered "Planta Medica" as the company name with Companies House and registered plantamedica.co.uk

Computing and software

A full software package is in place, with modules for production and warehousing, with full traceability throughout. The package will also connect directly with a web shop and allow members access to their own account online. The cloud based software also includes a full sales package, accounting ledgers; in fact everything required.

Equipment and licenses

Equipment suitable for the production of high quality extracts is already in place, as is equipment for the production of capsules and pessaries. Alcohol and Soil Association licenses are in place.



At the outbreak of ww1 demand for herbs by the pharmaceutical industry was met by Germany and Austria, so herb cultivation was encouraged. The role of women in responding to the call had a profound impact in shaping herbal medicine through the interwar period. However, the state discouraged the practice of herbal medicine, and opposed their bill for registration in 1923. Despite this attempt at marginalisation herbal medicine began to flourish. The herb society was formed in 1927 by Hilda Level, and the concept Culpepper shops offered health and beauty treatments. The pattern continues to the modern day, with successive governments promising state recognition only subsequently to renege on their commitments, remaining themselves hidden behind a veil of faceless nameless self-serving bureaucrats.



Much has already been done, but more is needed, please turn the page

What Next?

There are a few things left to do and a few decisions to be made. Some of these will need to be made in the traditional way, and others through research among practitioners or in consultation with co-operative members joining at an early stage within the process.

- + Pricing and pricing structure (just the cheapest?)
- + Quality
- + Benefits to members
- + The board of directors
- + Raising funds; the cost of membership

Pricing and quality

This proposal is the creation of a genuine co-operative, with genuine shared ownership throughout the herbal community. Looking at the aims and objectives of co-operatives, the model would appear to fit the ethos of many practitioners and, (provided there is engagement) help to solve a number of issues.

The aims of a co-operative are fundamentally different to those of a privately owned company. In the latter the overriding principle is to generate profits for the owners or shareholders and to maximise value within the entity with the aim of an ultimately successful exit strategy. The primary aim of a co-operative is to benefit the community it serves; in this case the herbal medicine community. In part this can be through remuneration on investment, but more to the fore are ongoing education; donations to relevant charities and an improvement in products or services.

So how could a co-operative help with the issues highlighted? One way to create initial engagement is through financial incentive. This, however, must be only part of the rationale for engagement, even if it is the initial “hook”.

Practitioners need to have respect for their medicines, their herbs, and respect for the effort that goes into the creation of quality products. Practitioners need to have input into the specifications of what they receive and use, and fundamentally to understand what truly confers quality to a product. Naturally some of this carries a measure of debate; but this can only be healthy in a democratic society. One of the functions of the co-operative is to generate a set of values to which its members can subscribe. Fundamental to this must be the shift to quality. It is sad that the UK no longer creates the highest quality products..... So is the cheapest the answer? NO. The answer is in efficacious products at a reasonable and fair price, which still allows for the generation of profits to be used for the good of herbal medicine.

Benefits to members

Membership of Planta Medica confers both direct and indirect benefits. Direct benefits include a likely return on investment and reduced pricing over non-members, straight forward simple economic benefits. However, as a co-operative, this is seen as secondary; the primary aims being centred on benefitting the community as a whole. Simply the knowledge that excesses generated are being used to assist in the future development and sustainability of herbal medicine through your direct input is valuable in of itself.

The co-operative model also engenders loyalty and creates long term stability of supply. Many of the owners within the current model are approaching retirement age, which means a likely period of

instability and ownership change, which rarely brings benefit to the consumer. The ongoing re-investment of co-operative funds allows for a kaizen approach to the business.

It appears now to be less and less likely that statutory regulation of herbalists will proceed. Whilst section 12:1 must remain, there will be no real avenues open for the supply of finished goods to herbalists. The formation of a co-operative will help to provide this avenue. Whilst legal advice has not been taken on this issue; logically it is clear that any challenge to the co-operative model would be more difficult to uphold. The model also allows for more innovation, something that is now totally stifled in other sectors of the industry.

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on educational institutions to allocate funding to less controversial subjects. Supporting research and education are two fundamental aims of this venture.

Herbal Medicine has gained in popularity over the last few decades amongst the general public although within the media we have a few vociferous critics (one of whom you would think should be a supporter of Herbalists!) Our opponents claim there is little good evidence in support of Herbal Medicine, however this is just lazy thinking as a search through both complementary & orthodox peer reviewed journals will show. The growth of good higher education courses in Herbal Medicine has now reversed with pressure being brought



Quality and Value; interested? Turn the page

Summary of benefits

- + Competitive pricing
- + Enhanced quality
- + Shared ownership
- + Loyalty
- + Ongoing re-investment in herbal medicine
- + Practitioner control and input
- + 1 Herbalist 1 vote
- + Ongoing education
- + Improved patient outcomes
- + Returns on investment
- + Stability

Raising funds, the cost of membership

The current thinking is that the cost of set up, beyond what is already in place is approximately £75,000, to cover the cost of stock, web development, promotional materials and some working capital. Of this £40,000 has been secured. We are seeking membership of the co-operative to raise the balance. Our proposal is for the creation of shares which confer ownership within the co-operative. One share of £250.00 value would confer membership within the co-operative. There is no limit to the allowed investment, however under co-operative rules voting rights are independent of shareholding, 1 member 1 vote. It is therefore up to you as individuals how much you would choose to

invest. Remember much of this is for the future development of your profession as much as direct remuneration on investment. As a guide we would hope new herbalists and students about to graduate may by one share, whereas experienced successful practitioners may take between 4 and 6 shares. Thus the investment is small and spread widely among the herbal community. We only need 70 herbalists to invest £500.00 to bring these benefits to herbal medicine, but would anticipate a much wider participation than this and therefore a much wider customer base.

Of the sample taken thus far 100% of the practitioners spoken with are at least interested in receiving his prospectus and helping to ensure that the project goes ahead.

No member's funds will be spent until it is certain that the project can launch; anticipated to be August 2015. Each member will be kept fully informed at which point funds are to be allocated.

Summary

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We believe this to be an exciting opportunity to revolutionise the supply of herbal medicines and subsequently the delivery of herbal medicine in the United Kingdom. It really is time for a change and your opportunity to engage with that change for the better.

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ENROLL

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To enrol, you can send a cheque to the above address or call for bank details to make a transfer. Upon receipt you will receive a confirmation of membership and regular updates on the launch date.



Sue Copeman & Tony Carter
 The NIMH Education Fund