

Profile : from sloane to regent : Rohit Mehta's Nutri Centre may parallel a royal wedding but this enterprise marries vision with practical nutritional help / Auriel Mott.

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PROFILE

FROM SLOANE TO REGENT

Rohit Mehta's Nutri Centre may parallel a royal wedding but this enterprise marries vision with practical nutritional help. AURIEL MOTT visits.

“The Nutri Centre is the culmination and synthesis of years of expertise, as a pharmacist and in the health food trade.”

When you have reached the zenith of your chosen métier where is there left to go? For Rohit Mehta, former owner and manager of the famous Sloane Health Shop in London, it has meant coming full circle – but arriving at a different level.

His new venture, the Nutri Centre on the Lower Ground Floor of the Hale Clinic near Regent's Park, is the culmination and synthesis of years of expertise acquired both as a pharmacist and in the health food trade. It is the realisation of a vision – one which was formed through sharing the frustrations of customers and practitioners at being unable to find exactly the right nutritional remedies to meet their requirements.

Hitherto practitioners, when prescribing for their clients, would have to consider a number of limitations.

For a start, it had to be possible for the client actually to be able to obtain the product. In practice this either meant going to the local health food store or tracking down a mail order service.

Health food shops and supplement manufacturers on the whole do an extremely good job at providing advice, assistance and reassurance for their customers and will go to great lengths to help a particular individual. Health food shops are often the vehicle for instituting major nutritional and lifestyle changes and are often the first place an ailing person will turn to after years of dissatisfaction with more orthodox medicine. But for the nutritional therapist or other practitioner and their clients there

are difficulties in relying on these outlets.

Owing to lack of space a health food shop usually only stocks a limited number of ranges of nutritional supplements and a limited number of products within those ranges. The practitioner would therefore have to restrict himself to what he knew was available locally. Even if he did not the client would sometimes come away from the shop with the next best thing to what was prescribed, which meant that the customer's particular and specific needs were not being met.

As for mail order, a client often doesn't even know where to begin to find a company which provides all the products he or she needs. It may mean placing orders with a number of different manufacturers whose despatch times may vary. Consequently, the institution of the régime is delayed or becomes staggered. Since delay can cause further upset to someone already in distress and staggering can mean that it takes longer for the full benefits of the treatment to be effected and felt (nutrients interact with each other and the régime will have been designed with this in mind) the client may lose heart and motivation.

In an effort to circumvent some of these problems some practitioners have arrangements with certain manufacturers or else stock the remedies themselves. But, again, this means offering the client a restricted choice since no practitioner could afford to stock every possible remedy. It also means that time spent in administering the purchase and sale of remedies may mean time taken from other, more

PROFILE

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important, demands such as client care and furthering one's expertise. More likely it simply increases the stressload on practitioners and their practices.

The aim of the Nutri Centre is to lift all of these burdens forever from practitioners and clients. Essentially, it stocks or has access to the most extensive range of nutritional supplements – from those you would find in your health food shop, to practitioner products, to exclusive lines, even to the occasional batch made up for specific requirements.

Now practitioners can recommend whatever their clients need, knowing that the Nutri Centre can provide it. This freedom means that each individual client will be able to receive the best nutritional support régime for maximum effect.

And if a client begins to feel better sooner the incentive to keep going with the régime becomes stronger and healing is achieved at a much faster rate.

This integrated approach to the availability of nutritional remedies has a number of other beneficial spin-offs. But these are no accident. All aspects of Mr Mehta's project have been carefully thought through.

Perhaps the most obvious one is that the service the Centre provides is convenient. Situated in the Hale Clinic its location is ideal for the practitioners who operate there and their clients. Everything can be acquired within minutes of leaving the consulting room and the client can begin the régime immediately. It is also convenient for the practitioner not to have to provide his own dispensing service and to be able to direct the client to just one location. The client is saved from the tiring and time-consuming exercise of visiting several shops in order to obtain what he needs.

But this convenience doesn't just extend to the immediate environs of the Hale Clinic and its inhabitants and visitors. The intention is that practitioners and clients from anywhere in the country should be able to order all their supplies from one phone call to the Centre. And Mr Mehta guarantees next day delivery.

At a deeper level, Mr Mehta hopes that his centre will stimulate curiosity and the desire to learn more.

Just the presence on the shelves of the most com-

prehensive selection of products anywhere in the UK is enough to make practitioners aware of what they don't know. But the Centre can take them a step further by providing detailed information about each range, and with a reference library as well practitioners are able to keep up to date on recent developments in nutritional therapy.

This library is also available to the customer. It stocks a wide selection of books (which are available for purchase) and leaflets, diet sheets and even videos which can be watched on the premises. Mr Mehta strongly believes that understanding is the key to better health.

Even the health food industry stands to benefit from this venture. It provides manufacturers with a permanent showcase for their entire range of products; it helps them to keep in touch with what other manufacturers are doing; it encourages them to innovate and it provides them with feedback from customers. And because sales take place in a controlled environment, which encourages a responsible attitude towards supplementation, their products gain greater credibility in the eyes of the public.

Such control anticipates the possible outcome of harmonisation in 1992 throughout Europe of the laws relating to the sale of nutritional supplements. The availability of some of these products may be restricted through pharmacies or specialist outlets such as the Nutri Centre.

Although the Centre has only been open since the summer of this year Mr Mehta's anticipation of future trends and needs is already causing him to look further afield and it is likely that similar centres will be opened inside other major clinics in the UK and Europe.

He also has plans to further the usefulness of the Centre to practitioners by building up the reference library to enable them to continue their education in their disciplines.

Many of us have unrealised dreams and ambitions. Mr Mehta has managed to make his a reality. And this reality could have a profound effect on the future of nutritional therapy and on the futures of many individuals whose vision for themselves is to be well.

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