

Letter to The Aromatherapy Quarterly
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By Mike Van Moppes

Thank you AQ for having the courage to publish Martin Watt's probing article, **The Pure & the Natural (AQ 54)**. Those who are familiar with Martin's work will know that for years he has been concerned about the proliferation of misinformation regarding the properties of essential oils. He is also a leading campaigner for Legally defensible definitions for aromatherapy.

Until recently his thoroughly researched articles were met with disbelief and sometimes downright hostility. For many aromatherapists, the Truth was just too difficult to stomach. Thankfully, things have changed. Aromatherapists are increasingly speaking out about malpractice within our profession. A word of warning: we are in for a bumpy ride.

For instance. Teddy Fearnham (Chairman of the ATC and acting Chairman of the AOC condemns AQ for printing spiteful and Vituperative items (AQ 55). One so-called offensive piece is the letter from Alan Barker. Regular readers will know that Alan Barker is a highly respected clinical aromatherapist working within the NHS. He was forced to abandon a clinical trial because the essential oil he obtained from an apparently reputable source was adulterated. It seems that the self-crowned 'authoritative' bodies would like to see every concerned aromatherapist gagged, lest she/he should damage the reputation of the trade.

Incidentally, readers may be interested to learn that I too have been cautioned (in private) by certain significant individuals. Apparently, by 'going political' I risk tarnishing my good reputation. After much heart searching I've decided to speak openly on this issue

ATC prides itself on being a self regulatory body. For years unsuspecting aromatherapists took this to mean that ATC ensured that its members sold pure unadulterated essential oils. We now know that virtually anyone can join ATC so long as they pay the membership fee and label their bottles according to ATC's specifications. But how can members be certain that they themselves have not been hoodwinked by unscrupulous distillers? Indeed, essential oils are often adulterated at source. EOTA, the second largest trade association, carries out random GLC testing of essential oils, thus keeping it's members on their toes.

Despite criticism from the IFA and other aromatherapy organisations, the majority of aromatherapists are deeply grateful to EOTA compiling the Readers Survey and for campaigning on our behalf. With or without the support of certain significant bodies. I believe we will eventually get clear definitions for our therapy, definitions approved by Trading Standards, and be given the protection of the law. I look forward to a time when suppliers will no longer be able to promote synthetic aromatics, modified essential oils, BP grade oils (or otherwise adulterated products) in the name of aromatherapy.

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