

Herbal medicine profession rewarding

Name: Sandra Clair
Career: Herbalist

STAFF REPORTER

Q Any physical requirements?

A I need stamina for long working days, but otherwise my job is not physically demanding — only perhaps when I am harvesting herbs in the Alps.

Q What do you do on a daily basis?

A I used to have a full-time practice, which meant that I saw clients every day. But today I am focused on ensuring that the manufacturing and distribution of my therapeutic herbal teas, creams, tinctures (oral liquid), oils, health syrups and elixirs is completed in the best possible way. Part of my daily job is to answer product questions on the phone, prepare lectures and seminars, write articles, conduct research and development and seasonally harvest fresh medicinal plants for my remedies.

Q What is the most challenging aspect?

A Time management! There is so much to do.

Q What is the most interesting assignment you've had?

A I love the process of formulating a new product.

Q How has the job changed since you started?

A It has shifted from a very hands-on job to one of business governance. However, I continue to spend a good amount of time on research and development, which is great fun.

Q What's something people generally don't know about the job?

A Many people don't realise that they can use herbal medicine alongside pharmaceutical drugs. There are many formulations . . . which can help the body to tolerate drugs better.

Q What are the highs of the job?

A I have hundreds of testimonials on file from people who have documented their positive experiences with the certified organic Artemis remedies. This gives me great joy and motivates me to continue with my job.

Q What are the lows of the job?

A That natural healthcare is not integrated yet into mainstream medicine in New Zealand. This is despite the fact that 50% of adults and 70% of New Zealand children are

actively using natural treatment strategies. It may be some time before natural healthcare is officially acknowledged as having longstanding clinical and evidence-based value. An acknowledgment should entitle natural healthcare to be included in the official New Zealand healthcare strategy, and have professional representation in our schools of medicine as long practised overseas.

Q What's the strangest thing you've had to do?

A How about successfully treating a horse? This may be strange to those who think that herbal medicines are just for people.

Q What is the salary?

A I am not seeing clients at present.

Q Where will you be 10 years from now?

A I hope that I still will be involved in my business and that I can dedicate most of my time to the research of herbal medicine, which I feel very passionate about.

To be precise

If you were not doing this job, what would you be doing?

I probably would be working for the Red Cross. I think their work is amazing and much needed worldwide.

What did you want to be when you were 10?

I wanted to help in a humanitarian way, having been deeply disturbed by images of war and the suffering of drought victims when I was young.

What should 10-year-olds aspire to today?

Take care of yourself, of others and our planet and enjoy doing it.

Name one thing you would change about your job.

I would love to do less paperwork!

Do you get weekends and public holidays off?

Mostly not. Apart from running my business, I am also involved in an academic research project translating a Renaissance *Materia Medica* (medical book) from 1588.



Potent herbs . . . Dunedin medical herbalist Sandra Clair.

PHOTO: PETER MCINTOSH