

BY CAMILLE HOHEB

CHAUM LIFE CENTER



CHAUM LIFE CENTER IS RENOWNED IN wellness tourism for its conceptual approach to integrating health, beauty and youthful aging therapies. The enticing brochure reads, "More than a medical clinic. More than a destination spa. More than an urban club ... Chaum is a Life Center."

Who would have thought that the inspiration for Chaum would come from the legendary American inventor Thomas Edison? The following quote from him is prominently included in their glossy marketing brochure. "The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, in a proper diet and in the cause and prevention of disease."

Opened in 2010, the center was founded by Kwang Yul Cha, M.D., the head of CHA Health Systems, which currently operates a global network of health care facilities including the Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center in Los Angeles, 12 general hospitals in South Korea and two fertility treatment and anti-aging research centers in both countries.

"The new vision of a hospital is not a hospital at all—it is an urban oasis that people want to visit as part of their lives, a place they belong to, designed to slow the aging process through the prevention of disease," said Cha.

I was fortunate to secure an appointment at this first class facility, where initial membership runs \$170,000 USD! The Korean Tourism Organization (KTO) supported my visit. The marketing manager of KTO started my adventure into wellness by making all the arrangements. I was picked up at my hotel and off we went to Gangnam, the Beverly Hills of Seoul, made famous by the pop sensation PSY.

By combining spa facilities with modern medicine, Chaum has revolutionized private health care in Korea with a "hospital" concept that includes integrated therapies, luxurious anti-aging facials, yoga studios, leading edge technologies and much more. Early diagnosis, preventive strat-



TheraSpa lounge

egies and lifestyle changes are emphasized. Their services address a number of modern concerns, from the daily stresses of aging and urban living, serious illnesses and conditions to providing clinical tests and treatments for cerebral palsy, Parkinson's disease and strokes. The service delivery model is based on personalized medicine designed to achieve optimal health, harmony and balance of the body, mind and spirit through positive and memorable experiences.

My half-day at the Chaum Life Center began with a long and luxurious full body massage.

The Korean style of massaging the breasts was a big surprise, but a Korean woman I know later explained to me that this was sought after and appreciated by Korean women, who believe that this form of stimulation increases the bust line. When in Seoul, do as the Koreans do! Quite honestly, I was more concerned about my aching feet, and was very relieved when a second attendant came in to work on my arches, pull my toes and knead my feet. My favorite treatment, however, was the facial, which gave me a glowing, peachy complexion. Each of the three services took between 45 minutes and an hour, and I was so relaxed I could have slept in the tranquil, well-appointed TheraSpa room, but a facility tour was the next step to understanding the many offerings at the Chaum Life Center.

Located in a mixed use building in an upscale district, I found Chaum's co-tenants to be an interesting blend. The underground level featured high end groceries "for the rich," I was told. The first floor featured a wine shop and a boutique for designer eyeglasses. The atrium and escalators drew my eyes skyward to the multi floor building holding the Chaum Life Center. The design, with its high ceilings and flowing ap-

continues



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proach, emphasizes openness and grandeur. An abundance of light, eclectic art and interesting furnishings set the tone for futuristic treatments and attentive services.

KMD Architects, known for merging health care and hospitality design, created a medical and wellness facility with the ambiance of a five star luxury resort. The multi floor layout features expansive lounges and concierge desks evocative of hip international hotels.

Based on the Chaum philosophy of "diagnosis and care from arrival to departure, KMD Architects designed the 200,000 square foot space specifically to influence emotion and relaxation. There are no cramped waiting rooms, and initial exams are performed in a single futuristic pod like room referred to as a "medical check-up hive." All staff and portable equipment come to the patient, rather than sending the patient to different rooms for different consultations and tests, providing an efficient, comfortable and private experience.

In my years of health care marketing, I have not seen a medical environment like this one, which combines design elements that are striking yet serene. There is a long meditation staircase with deep risers, which makes stepping more difficult. In contrast, there is a stem cell bank displayed in a museum installation behind floor to ceiling plate glass windows.



Dr. Kwang Yul Cha believes the design esthetic that combines a futuristic vision of medical innovation with traditional healing elements allows people to live healthier and longer lives by making health care social and stimulating.

A world leader in stem cell research, Chaum has led research using stem cell fat transplantation for breast cancer reconstruction. Many international clients have chosen to invest in their future health by storing their stem cells at Chaum.

Spa treatments, restaurant access and product purchases are among the à la carte offerings for visitors. The full membership package provides full access to their own world class physician, who will lead members through a diagnostic process and treatment plan. Chaum also offers the ancient art of tea therapy, in which customized tea is designed especially for the patient.

Les Trois, the five star restaurant at Chaum, was an unexpected treat. It is a dining facility for members, where personalized gourmet cuisine is prepared for diners based on individual diagnostic profiles.

At the end of the day, after having enjoyed the hospitality and offerings of the Chaum Life Center, I went away feeling very fortunate to have experienced it firsthand. ■

Camille Hoheb is the founder of Wellness Tourism Worldwide (WTW), whose mission is to improve well-being and economic growth through travel. Hoheb has held advisory board positions with several associations. She speaks on the topic of wellness tourism all over the world and is a contributing writer for numerous publications. For more information, visit www.wellnesstourismworldwide.com, www.wellnesstraveljournal.com or www.camillehoheb.com.



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