**1018**

319 of 995 DOCUMENTS

The Times (London)

April 9, 2005, Saturday

**Take one rhino horn with meals**

**BYLINE:** Richard Ellis

**SECTION:** Features; Weekend Review 5

**LENGTH:** 1505 words

Threatened species are facing extinction for dubious Chinese cures, writes Richard Ellis

I used to think that practitioners of **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** made extensive use of **acupuncture** and herbal concoctions -if I thought about animals at all it was only in the belief that their parts played a small role. I was, therefore, startled to find that rhinos, tigers and bears are being killed for **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** in such numbers that their existence is threatened. A century ago, there were an estimated one million black rhinos in Africa; there are now perhaps 2,500. At the turn of the 20th century, there may have been 100,000 tigers in India; there are now fewer than 5,000. As many as 10,000 bears are kept in squeeze cages on "bear farms" in China, with steel catheters inserted into their gall bladders to drain off the bile. When the bears outlive their usefulness, they are killed.

North and South American bears are also being killed for their gall bladders, which are then smuggled into China. There are five species of rhinoceros three in Asia and two in Africa -and all are being slaughtered for their horns, which, when ground into a powder, are said to cure a variety of ailments. Tigers, endangered throughout their range, are killed for their bones, which are made into a "tiger-bone wine" or soup that is said to give the drinker the sexual stamina of the tiger.

The driving force behind animal poaching is not medicinal but monetary. To a poor herdsman in India, an animal passing by that might be worth $ 10,000 is an irresistible temptation. The parts of these animals are worth a fortune to middlemen, and are even more valuable to the purchasers of the medicines. Ground rhino horn is one of the most valuable natural substances in the world. As long as users are willing to pay astronomical prices for bones, powdered horn or bear gall, poachers will continue to slaughter the animals.

While plants can be picked, leaves plucked, fruits, vegetables, and nuts harvested, and seeds collected without threatening the species, some animals must be killed so that the valuable parts can be harvested for use in Chinese medicine.

The bones or skin of a tiger or the gall bladder of a bear cannot be removed without killing the animal, and while some clever entrepreneurs have figured out how to obtain bear gall from a living bear, the technique is so awful that death for the bear might be preferable. It is possible to anaesthetise a rhino and saw its horn off, but it is a difficult, cumbersome, and dangerous process that might result in the death of the rhino anyway, so poachers take the easier path and simply shoot the animal.

In the not-so-distant past, people such as Ernest Hemingway hunted rhinos for the thrill of shooting a large animal with a powerful gun from a great distance. The animals' stuffed heads were hung on the wall and their feet turned into umbrella stands, but overall demand for such trophies was modest. In reality, most rhinos dying at the hand of man during the past century were killed to meet medicinal demand for their horns, with a substantial number being killed for dagger (jambiya) handles in Yemen. The three Asian rhino species -Indian, Javan and Sumatran -were the first to go, hunted almost to extinction, but the horn of the African black rhino, highly prized for carving dagger handles, is also sought. The seemingly innocuous pursuit of carving dagger handles has brought the black rhino to such low levels that its existence is threatened too.

Where once there were eight subspecies of tigers in Asia, there are now five, and three of these are close to extinction. They are being hunted because traditional Chinese medicine needs the bones, flesh, fat, eyeballs, teeth and claws, and fashion needs the pelts.

Most medicinals prescribed in traditional Chinese medicine are of a vegetable or herbal origin; only a few originate in animal parts. Of these, many are from domestic animals such as pigs, cows, horses, camels, goats and sheep. But a few come from wild animals, such as lions, leopards, deer, monkeys, otters and beavers. I am not offering a blanket criticism of the principles or practices of traditional Chinese medicine, but rather I am pointing out that some irresponsible people, often perverting the fundamentals of this venerable tradition, carry a large responsibility for the destruction of some increasingly endangered species.

It is a terrible anachronism that so many people today rely on largely ineffectual animal-related remedies, but the real tragedy is that large numbers of animals have to die to provide these nostrums.

There are millions of people in China, South-East Asia, and elsewhere with little access to education on science. They are therefore ignorant of the composition of the potions they so eagerly consume and they know little about the endangerment of animals. A wider understanding of the traditions, the medications, and the status of the endangered species might possibly save even more lives -human and animal.

Tigers and rhinos are heading for extinction, perhaps in our lifetime, almost certainly in the lifetime of our children's children. They will certainly know what a tiger is -we live in an age of eternally preserved video images -and all those tigers in cages, zoos and circuses will ensure that these powerful cats will not be relegated to the trash bin, like the dodo or the passenger pigeon. In The Outermost House, Henry Beston wrote: "We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals. Remote from universal nature, and living by complicated artifice, man in civilisation surveys the creature through the glass of his knowledge and sees thereby a feather magnified and the whole image in distortion."

Surely the most distorted image it is possible to conjure is that animals were put here for our use. Domestication for food is easy to rationalise -it will be a long time before people stop eating cows or chickens -and the use of oxen, camels, or buffalos as beasts of burden is not likely to cease until Third World agriculturalists obtain inexpensive internal combustion engines. But enlightened human beings, even those who have used animal parts for medicine for thousands of years, should recognise that most of these nostrums are only primitive superstitions, and more critically, that the animals providing these often useless pharmaceuticals are becoming extinct.

There are arguments to be made -not all of them convincing -that it is necessary (and morally acceptable) to use animals such as mice, rats, rabbits, or monkeys in tests that might have beneficial applications for human medical needs. These animals are sacrificed for a "higher purpose", namely the production and testing of vaccines, hormone preparations or even cosmetics. The number of laboratory mice and rats that die every year in the name of medical research must be astronomical.

Within the precepts of Chinese medicine, however, some animals are killed to provide what practitioners are convinced are cures for ailing people, or people who might be sexually dysfunctional. In many cases, these prescriptions do not work, or do not work as well as some synthetic pharmaceuticals. But it is not, after all, the use of animal parts per se that is the problem -it is the slaughter of the animals for what might be specious applications, or worse, the slaughter of critically endangered species.

Richard Ellis is the author of Tiger Bone and Rhino Horn: The Destruction of Wildlife for Traditional Chinese Medicine, to be published in June by Island Press

ON THE CRITICAL LIST

Bengal tiger (Panthera tigris); number thought to survive: 4,000

Amur (Siberian) tiger (Panthera tigris altaica), 450

Almost every body part of the tiger -teeth, claws, bones, fat, eyeballs -is used in Chinese medicine. Most of the uses have to do with increasing virility; to somehow transfer the strength and savagery of the tiger to men whose sexual prowess needs enhancing. And, of course, the beautiful striped coat of the tiger is valuable for non-medical reasons.

African black rhino (Diceros bicornis), 2,500

Northern white rhino (Ceratotherium simum cottoni), 100

Indian rhino (Rhinoceros unicornis), 2,400

Sumatran rhino (Dicerorhinus sumatrensis), 50

Javan rhino (Rhinoceros sondaicus), 100

It is only the horn (and sometimes the toenails) of rhinos that are used. In Yemen, the horns are carved into dagger handles that are worn by young men upon achieving manhood. Ground rhino horn is not used as an aphrodisiac, but is prescribed for everything from headache and toothache to infertility and fevers.

Asiatic black bear (Ursus thibetanus), 10,000 in "squeeze" cages in China.

Bear gall (bile) is used for a variety of ailments, but especially gall and kidney stones, stomach ache, and fevers. (The bears are not killed until their gall bladders run dry of bile.) In all cases, numbers are estimates.

**LOAD-DATE:** April 29, 2005

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

Copyright 2005 Times Newspapers Limited

1019

404 of 995 DOCUMENTS



The Times (London)

April 20, 2009 Monday

Edition 1

**Does it work for you?;**

**fitness Peta Bee reviews the latest fitness trends This week: Acupuncture for runners**

**BYLINE:** Peta Bee

**SECTION:** T2;FEATURES; Pg. 10

**LENGTH:** 344 words

What is it? Serious runners will leave no stone unturned in their quest for speed, and the latest trend is **acupuncture** to ease weary limbs, niggling injuries and post-race fatigue. According to the ancient theories of **traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture** is vital in clearing blockages and helping to balance the body's yin and yang, as imbalances manifest themselves as illness or pain. It involves practitioners placing a thin, disposable needle into one of more than 2,000 specific points on the body.

Who's it aimed at? Any of the 40,000 runners preparing to cover the 26.2 miles from Greenwich to the Mall in the Flora London Marathon next Saturday.

What's the idea? It is thought that the needles stimulate the brain to release endorphins, boosting mood and relieving tiredness, and trigger the immune system to help to ward off injuries, soreness and joint pain. Several small studies have suggested that it works for runners. One published last year in the journal Chinese Medicine found "significant differences" in muscle soreness among those who had acupuncture during an exhaustive training regimen compared with those who didn't.

Who uses it? The marathon superwoman, Paula Radcliffe, admits to being a fan. Athletes in other sports, including the tennis player Maria Sharapova, also use it.

Can I try it? In the wrong hands, acupuncture can be risky, so make sure your practitioner is registered with the British Acupuncture Council (BAcC). To find someone who is experienced at treating sports people, visit its website, acupuncture.org.uk, or call 020-8735 0400. According to the

BAcC spokeswoman Charlotte McNeil, you will need a couple of sessions a week if you are injured. For healthy runners, acupuncture before and after the marathon will help to restore some normality to your body. Expect to pay around �40-�60 per session.

Is it worth the money? If it helps to prevent your muscles from turning to concrete in the days after the race, then bring on the needles..

'' The marathon superwoman Paula Radcliffe admits to being a fan of acupuncture

**LOAD-DATE:** April 20, 2009

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** TIM

Copyright 2009 Times Newspapers Limited

All Rights Reserved

**1020**

450 of 995 DOCUMENTS

The Times (London)

November 30, 2000, Thursday

**Bad medicine?**

**BYLINE:** Peta Bee and Sophie Petit-Zeman

**SECTION:** Features

**LENGTH:** 1058 words

Some alternative remedies have been questioned by the House of Lords. Are they right? We ask a specialist and three patients

**Traditional Chinese medicine** combines herbs, **acupuncture**, massage and exercise techniques.For: Musician Andrew Golden, 47. decided to look for an alternative remedy for his psoriasis after giving up the drug that his GP had prescribed.

"I have suffered from psoriasis on my hands for years. In the past I'd gone to see my GP who prescribed Betnovate, which did sort it out. It was only when I discovered that the drug was carcinogenic that I decided to stop using it. I didn't want to go back to my GP and yet I didn't know what else to do. I'm a drummer in a band and I had a tour coming up - psoriasis is a stress thing for me and it got really bad, affecting my ability to play the drums. I decided to go to the Institute of **Chinese** **Medicine** in Chandos Place in London. One of its doctors had already cured me of back pain using **acupuncture**.

"The doctor I saw told me that she could cure my psoriasis, which surprised me because I didn't think there was a cure. I was given some lotion, along with some ghastly herbs, which I had to boil and drink. It worked very well, I'm not 'cured' but I blame myself for that - I think if I'd finished the course of treatment I was prescribed, it would have disappeared completely."

Against: Dr Graham Lord, a kidney specialist at the Hammersmith Hospital, published a paper in The Lancet in August last year which reported the cases of two women who had suffered kidney failure after taking Chinese herbal remedies for eczema.

"More than 3,000 UK clinics now prescribe herbal remedies. In the cases of these women, a few years after starting the herbal treatment they developed rapidly progressive kidney failure and both needed dialysis. One has since had a kidney transplant and the other is still on the NHS waiting list.

"The woman who has had the transplant went to see her GP because of sudden headaches and high blood pressure. Tests were done and she was found to have severe kidney failure.

"I arranged for analysis of the herbs with colleagues at Kew Gardens and we found that both women had been exposed to a toxic chemical called Aristolochic acid. The import, sale and use of this acid, which may be a component of a number of Chinese remedies, has now been banned by the Medicines Control Agency. It is unclear how successful the ban is. I advise anyone who sees a Chinese herbalist to ask them whether there is Aristochic acid in the preparation and see their GP immediately if they feel unwell while taking any remedies."

Kinesiology is muscle testing using acupuncture principles to assess "imbalances in the body".

For: Lucy McCann, 33, an events organiser from London, suffered digestive and irritable bowel problems for several years. She visited an applied kinesiologist as a final attempt for a cure.

"Some days I was in agony with my stomach, others it was just a niggle, but I decided that I wanted it sorted out. I play a lot of sport and it was interfering with my fitness and social life. I had tried to cut out foods I thought might upset my system, but to no avail. The kinesiologist I saw assessed my lifestyle and diet and tested my muscles to work out my nutritional status.

"Dairy foods, yeast, bread and mushrooms seemed to be the biggest offenders and I was prescribed desensitisers and vitamins to strengthen my immune system. On my second and third visits the therapist, a qualified osteopath, used manipulation and massage to stimulate blood circulation and help balance my emotions. Within days of excluding the foods, the pain in my stomach subsided, my energy levels rocketed and my attitude chan-ged. I now visit the kinesiologist every six months and she is reintroducing some of the foods to my diet with no ill-effect."

Against: Ellen Sims, a 38-year-old teacher from Somerset, is concerned that people who are desperately searching for a cure could be put at risk from placing all their faith in some alternative treatments.

"I am convinced that some alternative and complementary medicine works, but was struck by the pseudo-science of a kinesiologist I saw. I did not go for treatment for a specific problem, but to find out more, and I found it very flaky and unconvincing.

"The kind of stretching, bending and organ massage that makes up some kinesiology sessions could be pleasant, and even offers symptomatic relief from some problems. The danger arises if you take this as curative, or are not being treated by someone with the skills and knowledge to diagnose the underlying problem, and this then gets ignored. If you've paid Pounds 40 or so for a session, and you're desperate to get better, you might be persuaded to suspend your disbelief."

Against: Anita Morgan, 28, a writer from Kent, visited an applied kinesiologist when she suffered repeated bouts of skin rashes on her face and body.

"My skin had always been fairly sensitive, but I began to get unsightly rashes appearing regularly on my face, back and stomach. Someone told me it might be an allergy and that the best way to determine its cause was to visit an applied kinesiologist.

"The therapist I saw agreed that I was probably intolerant to some foods and tested for more than 100 different sensitivities by holding a sample of each next to my stomach and then applying pressure to my arm. The theory is that if you can't resist and your arm gives way, you have an intolerance to that substance. After that session I was told I should avoid 32 of the foods including tea, coffee, sugar and milk.

"That initial consultation cost Pounds 90 plus Pounds 8 for each vial of desensitiser. I stuck rigidly to what she suggested, but three months and several follow-up consultations at Pounds 60 each, later my rash was occurring more frequently. On a visit to my doctor, it happened to be particularly severe and he suggested I go to the hospital for a skin-prick allergy test. There, I was told I have a severe allergy to citrus fruits and pineapple, which I was eating frequently - something the kinesiologist hadn't picked up on at all. As soon as I cut them out, my rash disappeared. I feel kinesiology was a waste of money and a ruthless way to prey on someone's ill health and insecurities."

**LOAD-DATE:** November 30, 2000

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

Copyright 2000 Times Newspapers Limited

**1021**

699 of 995 DOCUMENTS



The Times (London)

March 20, 2010 Saturday

Edition 1;

National Edition

**Has the East lost its healing touch?;**

**Why is traditional Chinese medicine under threat both here and in China, asks John Naish**

**BYLINE:** John Naish

**SECTION:** WEEKEND;FEATURES; Pg. 11

**LENGTH:** 1035 words

Before anyone accuses me of prejudice, I would like to say that I do have sympathy for a balanced, holistic oriental approach to wellbeing. But as a health journalist with 20 years' experience, the popularity of **Chinese** **medicine** and its lack of regulation fill me with alarm.

I decided to test my concerns by consulting three Chinese herbal-medicine practitioners, all only five minutes' walk from my home in Brighton. At each, I complained of fatigue and bloatedness (symptoms I attribute to being a man in his forties). The first tested my pulse, looked at my tongue and asked about my symptoms. She pronounced that my body was contaminated by a cold I'd had five months ago, and that my energy channels were blocked. She wanted to charge �88 for herbs, pills, **acupuncture** and massage.

The second charged �10 for a consultation in which he examined my blood pressure. He said that I suffered "weak kidney energy" and an excess of damp in my stomach, and prescribed a two-week course of herbs for �17 and a �150 course of acupuncture. In the third consultation, the practitioner pronounced that I had "spleen insufficiency and weak pulse". He wanted �325 for herbs, pills and acupuncture.

He was the only one to require my GP's address or to ask if I was taking Western medications - crucial information as components in Chinese medicine can interact dangerously with conventional drugs. None of the practitioners would discuss their medicines' ingredients. It's this sort of apparent randomness that has British lobbying organisations such as Sense About Science - a charitable trust run by academics and scientists - arguing that Chinese herbalism should not be defined as "medicine", as it gives many practitioners a credibility that they do not merit. Yet about 6,000 Chinese herbal medicine stores have sprung up on the high streets of Britain in recent years, a popularity that might suggest that they are in rude health.

But Chinese medicine is threatened here and in its home country. When its record of selling potentially poisonous "cures" and making wild diagnoses is examined, this might not seem surprising. The dangers of dodgy Chinese medicine were highlighted in a trial at the Old Bailey last month. Patricia Booth, a civil servant, told how "safe and natural" pills she bought for a skin complaint from the Chinese Herbal Medical Centre in Chelmsford, Essex, destroyed her kidneys and caused her to develop cancer. The pills contained aristolochic acid, which is carcinogenic. Booth, 58, is now housebound. The practitioner, who admitted prescribing the pills, was given a conditional discharge.

Is aristolochic acid off our streets? Apparently not. The Government's drug-safety agency, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), is pursuing two cases involving the substance. The agency has investigated other cases in which patients have fallen ill or died after being sold Chinese concoctions containing illegal substances, such as powerful Western medicines, poisonous plants, heavy metals and asbestos.

The MHRA says that there is "no entirely reliable way of telling whether a traditional Chinese medicine is safe" because "standards of safety, quality and product information are so erratic". Chinese medicine also faces growing scepticism in its homeland. The China Daily reports that only one fifth of patients there now use it. China has 270,000 traditional doctors today compared with 800,000 in the early 20th century. In recent years the Government has invested heavily in Western medicine - often used in conjunction with traditional therapies - and this has brought improvements in life expectancy and childbirth mortality.

In 2006, Zhang Gongyao, a professor at Central South University, Hunan, launched an online campaign against traditional medicine, claiming that it lacked "a rational foundation" and used "poisons and waste" for cures. Such protests may grow as social change sweeps China. Today's traditional Chinese medicine was systematised in the 1950s under Mao Zedong to prove that China had no need to rely on Western technology. An army of herbalist "barefoot doctors" was more affordable, too. But Dr Li Zhisui Li, Mao's personal physician for 20 years, revealed in The Private Life of Chairman Mao that Mao extolled Chinese medicine only in public. Privately, he used Western cures. Chinese medicines can have powerful effects, though, and Western drug companies and academics are collaborating with herbalists to find the active chemicals involved. For example, Australian scientists are working with the Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine to use lupin extract to treat diabetes.

Meanwhile, the European Union is reining in Chinese herbs. Under EU rules that must be enforced in Britain by 2011, all herbs sold will be registered and inspected. The rules ban unregulated practitioners from commissioning or formulating their own medicines. This would effectively put thousands of Chinese herbalists out of business, says Emma Farrant, the secretary of the 450-member Register of Chinese Herbal Medicine.

Both Farrant's organisation and the Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine want the Government to regulate their members. The Department of Health is on its second consultation process on this issue - the results will be published "as soon as possible". But Sense About Science is lobbying against this, saying that herbalists should be regulated as health professionals only if they can prove that their therapies work in Western drug trials.

David Colquhoun, Professor of Pharmacology at University College London, who described Chinese medicine as "baloney" in the British Medical Journal last year, supports this: "You cannot start to think about a sensible form of regulation unless you first decide whether or not the thing you are trying to regulate is nonsense." Sense About Science also wants rules requiring Chinese herbalists to have Western medical training.

Such moves could effectively stamp out traditional Chinese medicine in Britain. That would be a pity for the thousands of patients who believe that it helps their conditions. It may also force therapists underground, where dodgy herbalism could run riot.

**LOAD-DATE:** March 20, 2010

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** TIM

Copyright 2010 Times Newspapers Limited

All Rights Reserved

**1022**

702 of 995 DOCUMENTS



The Times (London)

August 4, 2009 Tuesday

Edition 1;

Ireland

**Consultation on herbal therapies**

**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 24

**LENGTH:** 37 words

Practitioners of **acupuncture, traditional Chinese medicines** and herbal remedies are being invited to suggest how they should be regulated. The Department of Health is to seek views on whether a UK-wide system should be created.

**LOAD-DATE:** August 4, 2009

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** TIM

Copyright 2009 Times Newspapers Limited

All Rights Reserved

**1023**

721 of 995 DOCUMENTS



The Times (London)

April 2, 2010 Friday

Edition 1;

National Edition

**Alternative practitioners will need to prove training**

**BYLINE:** David Rose

**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 17

**LENGTH:** 400 words

High-street herbal remedies, **traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture** are to be more tightly regulated. Andy Burnham, the Health Secretary, said he was "minded to legislate" so that all providers of unlicensed medicines had to register with a regulator.

The Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council will ensure that practitioners are properly trained and operating a safe business. A pilot study is also planned to analyse how acupuncture could be used within the NHS to help conditions such as lower back pain. Critics say that the proposals, due to be implemented later this year, do not go far enough.

It is estimated that Britons spend about �1.6 billion a year on alternative and complementary remedies, with one in five people having tried the medicines or therapies.

The CNHC, the only regulatory body for complementary healthcare that has official government backing, currently issues "charter marks" to registered practitioners of 11 therapies, including massage, aromatherapy and yoga.

To be accepted by the council, those providing unlicensed herbal medicines will have to show that they have the right training and experience, abide by a code of conduct and have insurance in place. From next year, European law will permit only statutorily registered professionals to prescribe manufactured herbal remedies. But clinics or practitioners will not be judged on whether the therapies they provide are effective. Mr Burnham said: "Emerging evidence clearly demonstrates that the public needs better protection, but in a way that does not place unreasonable extra burdens on practitioners." The Department of Health said that proposals for those providing acupuncture are still being considered, but a pilot study is due to begin this year.

Regulators recently issued warnings about herbal products containing aristolochia, a banned toxic and carcinogenic plant derivative. Packs of the herbal medicine Jingzhi Kesou Tan Chuan Wan are thought to be circulating despite a recall by the distributor.

Edzard Ernst, Professor of Complementary Medicine at the University of Exeter's Peninsula Medical School, said that he had some concerns about the proposals. "All healthcare professionals regulated in the UK have the proviso that they administer evidence-based medicine. If there is an exemption for those providing herbal medicines it would set a double standard that could be very detrimental."

**LOAD-DATE:** April 2, 2010

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** A pilot study will consider acupuncture on the NHS

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** TIM

Copyright 2010 Times Newspapers Limited

All Rights Reserved

**1024**

755 of 995 DOCUMENTS



The Times (London)

June 21, 2008 Saturday

**Where does all the extra NHS funding go?**

**SECTION:** FEATURES; Pg.21

**LENGTH:** 284 words

Sir, Alice Miles describes the report that I chaired on **acupuncture**, herbal medicine, **traditional** **Chinese medicine** and other traditional medicine systems practised in the UK as twaddle. She is entitled to her view but it is ill informed.

Our conclusions echo those of the House of Lords' Select Committee on Science and Technology's Report on Complementary and Alternative Medicine (2000), the Government response (2001) and a Department of Health consultation on regulation of these professions (2004, 2005) all of which supported statutory regulation. Moreover, our recommendations have taken account of the most recent regulatory policy introduced to protect patients.

The NHS funds very little complementary and alternative medicine and NHS resources should only be used where there is evidence of efficacy, safety and quality assurance. Some of the therapies, including acupuncture, are used by orthodox healthcare professionals. Contrary to what is implied, neither the Prince of Wales nor the alternative health industry had any input into the report. There is honest recognition that the evidence base for many therapies is thin but, given the public demand for treatment, this should be addressed alongside the introduction of statutory regulation and not as a prerequisite.

Miles argues that the NHS should provide medical, dental and nursing care but absolutely nothing else. What about all the other health professionals such as radiographers, physiotherapists and occupational therapists ? I would be the first to admit that extreme views exist among some advocates of complementary medicine but clearly they are not alone.

PROFESSOR MIKE PITTILO Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen

**LOAD-DATE:** June 23, 2008

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** tt

Copyright 2008 Times Newspapers Limited

All Rights Reserved

**1025**

859 of 995 DOCUMENTS

The Times (London)

December 9, 2000, Saturday

**The value of alternative therapies**

**SECTION:** Features

**LENGTH:** 144 words

From Mr Gabriel Mojay

Sir, The Lords select committee report on alternative therapies betrays a contradictory and ill- informed assessment of **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM).

It is contradictory because, while the report affirms that there is scientific evidence for **acupuncture** and herbal medicine, it finds none for TCM - and yet these two modalities form the very basis of TCM.

The select committee is ill-informed because there is a vast amount of pharmacological and clinical research into the therapeutic properties of Chi- nese herbs, which in any case contain many of the same active compounds as found in Western pharmacopoeias. It should revise its classification of both Chinese herbal medicine and TCM without delay.

Yours faithfully,

GABRIEL MOJAY,

35 California Road,

Mistley, Essex CO11 1JA.

November 29.

**LOAD-DATE:** December 9, 2000

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

Copyright 2000 Times Newspapers Limited

**1026**

945 of 995 DOCUMENTS

The Times (London)

June 24, 2002, Monday

**Chinese doctors return to roots**

**BYLINE:** Oliver August in Beijing

**SECTION:** Overseas news

**LENGTH:** 522 words

FOR Pounds 37 a head, patients at the Traditional Medicine Hospital in Beijing can have a massage, **acupuncture** and dinner cooked with herbal remedies in the hospital canteen. Alternatively, they can embalm themselves with oyster shells before tucking into a snack from their private fridges.

The hospital is catering for a growing demand, both domestic and international, for the return to **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine.**

Since childhood, Xiao Huang, 35, a former bank clerk, has suffered from chronic chest pains. She is one of millions of Chinese who have rediscovered the benefits of traditional medicine. She recently switched from a Westerneducated doctor to a herbal specialist who prescribed remedies that cured her. "I used to be too impatient to wait for the slower results of traditional Chinese medicine, but since I lost my job I have a lot more time," she said.

Traditional chinese medicine (TCM) is booming both in China and in the West, driven by clever marketing and waning confidence in Western medicine. A third of the demand comes from EU countries, turning TCM into an Pounds 18 billion industry last year.

British tourists visiting China are increasingly combining a visit to the Great Wall with a consultation at a TCM hospital, where they are offered lotus seed for kidney diseases, bupleurum root against liver tension, chrysanthemum to fight sinus problems, and seaweed to dissolve lumps.

"Of course, we fulfil every reasonable request of our patients," Dr Kong, head of the VIP ward, said. "Our personalised service includes food prepared to order in the canteen."

For the doctors, the real purpose of these sessions is the opportunity to attract well-heeled private patients. The fee for a separate consultation and treatment plan can boost their miserly salaries.

Few places better illustrate the shift from collectivism to commercialism in China than Dr Kong's hospital. In 1956, Chairman Mao gathered his best doctors at a cluster of courtyards once inhabited by a member of the imperial household. Their mission was to create a national health service with a network of state-run clinics. The first one was set up in the courtyard cluster and became the Beijing Traditional Medicine Hospital.

Mao encouraged the use of TCM because herbal remedies were cheaper and only state leaders such as him were afforded Western drugs.

Today, China accounts for only 10 per cent of the TCM market worldwide, but interest in traditional treatments is on the increase. Last year, domestic herbal remedy sales grew 22 per cent.

Many Chinese who have switched back to herbal remedies did so because they could no longer afford Western treatments. Hu Bai, a cancer patient in Beijing, said: "I used to take Western medicine because it works much better than TCM, but it's too expensive. If I get any pills at all now, they are herbal. "

The ancient cluster of courtyards in Beijing has been displaced by tiled high rise blocks with 550 hospital beds. Thanks to the fully-booked VIP wing, where beds cost up to Pounds 40 a night, Mao's model hospital is making a tidy profit.

**LOAD-DATE:** June 24, 2002

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

Copyright 2002 Times Newspapers Limited

**1027**

986 of 995 DOCUMENTS



The Times (London)

August 29, 2008 Friday

**Regulate quack medicine? I feel sick...**

**BYLINE:**  David Colquhoun

**SECTION:** FEATURES; Pg.26

**LENGTH:** 880 words

\* If alternative remedies are either untested or ineffective, why are we promoting them?

It is fashionable to think things are true for no better reason than you wish it were so. Anything goes, from fairies, crystals and Ayurvedic medicine (as advocated by Cherie Blair) to fooling yourself about WMD (as advocated by her husband).

The latest sign of this trend is a report to the Department of Health from Professor Michael Pittilo, Vice-Chancellor of the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen. His May report - on **acupuncture**, herbal medicine, **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** and the like - recommends that these therapies should have statutory regulation run by the Health Professions Council, and that entry for practitioners should "normally be through a bachelor degree with honours". Consultation is supposed to begin around now.

Both of the ideas in the report are disastrous. The first thing you wanted to know about any sort of medical treatment is: "Does it work?" One of the criteria that must be met by groups aspiring to regulation by the HPC is that they "practise based on evidence of efficacy". That evidence does not exist for herbal and Chinese medicine, which remain largely untested. For acupuncture the evidence does exist and it shows very clearly that acupuncture is no more than a theatrical placebo.

Placebos can, it is true, make you feel better; and if there is no better treatment, why not use them? That's fine, but it raises huge ethical questions about how much you can lie to patients, and how much you can lie to students who are training to use the placebos.

New Labour has often said that its policies are guided by the best scientific evidence, but the problem is that the answer you get depends on whom you ask. Pittilo's committee consisted of five acupuncturists, five herbalists and five representatives of traditional Chinese medicine (plus eleven observers). There was not a single scientist or statistician to help in the assessment of evidence. And it shows: the assessment of the evidence in the report was execrable.

Take one example, the use of a herbal preparation, Gingko biloba, for the treatment of dementia. On page 25 of the report we read: "There have been numerous in vitro and in vivo trials on herbal medicine... which have established the benefits of single ingredients such as gingko...for vascular dementia". That is totally out of date. The most prestigious source of reliable summaries of evidence, the Cochrane Collaboration, says: "There is no convincing evidence that Ginkgo biloba is efficacious for dementia and cognitive impairment". The NHS Complementary and Alternative Medicine Specialist Library (compiled by alternative medicine people) says: "The evidence that ginkgo has predictable and clinically significant benefit for people with dementia or cognitive impairment is inconsistent and unconvincing." Since then another large trial, funded by the Alzheimer's Society, concludes: "We found no evidence that a standard dose of high purity Ginkgo biloba confers benefit in mild-moderate dementia over six months."

The Government's answer to the problem is, as always, to set up more expensive quangos to regulate alternative medicine. That might work if the regulation was effective, but experience has shown it isn't. It makes no sense to regulate placebos, especially if you don't admit that is what they are. The Government should be warned by the case of chiropractors about the dangers of granting official recognition before the evidence is available. The General Chiropractic Council already has a status similar to that of the General Medical Council, despite it being based on the quasi-religious idea of "subluxations" that nobody can see or define. Recent research has shown it to be no more effective, and less safe, than conventional treatments that are much cheaper.

The problems that Professor Pittilo's recommendations pose for universities are even worse. You cannot have universities teaching, as science, early 19th century vitalism, and how sticking needles into (imaginary) meridians rebalances the Qi so the body systems work harmoniously. To advocate that degrades the whole of science.

The vice-chancellors of the 16 or so universities who run such courses presumably do not themselves believe that vitalism is science, or subscribe to the view that "amethysts emit high yin energy", so it is hard to see why they accept taxpayers' money to teach such things. Thankfully, the University of Central Lancashire abandoned its first-year homoeopathy course this week because of low numbers.

Fortunately there is a much simpler, and probably much cheaper, solution than Pittilo's: enforce the laws that already exist. It is already illegal to sell contaminated and poisonous goods to the public. It is already illegal to sell goods that are not as described on the label. And, since May 2008, new European laws make it explicitly illegal to make claims for any sort of treatment when there is no reason to believe the claims are true. At the moment these laws are regularly and openly flouted on every hand. Enforce them and the problem is solved.

David Colquhoun is Research Professor of Pharmacology at University College London. His blog is at dcscience.net

**LOAD-DATE:** August 29, 2008

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** tt

Copyright 2008 Times Newspapers Limited

All Rights Reserved