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The Straits Times (Singapore)

September 17, 2016 Saturday

**Chinese actress dies of cancer**

**SECTION:** LIFE

**LENGTH:** 268 words

BEIJING Chinese actress Kitty Xu Ting died from lymphoma on Sept 7 after rejecting chemotherapy in favour of **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM) and treatments such as **acupuncture, cupping** and gua sha, in which the skin is scraped with a smooth tool. She would have turned 26 on Oct 3.

Her death has ignited a debate over cancer treatment in China, according to the BBC and Chinese media reports.

According to the Shanghaiist website and other reports, she revealed to her 300,000 fans on Weibo in July that she had been diagnosed with lymphoma. Even though she said that TCM might not cure her, it was still preferable to chemotherapy, reported The Nanfang.

"I know that chemotherapy is extremely painful and is a process that can even speed up my death," she wrote, adding that she did not want to "let chemotherapy torment me to the point where there's no beauty and talent left".

In a post on July 24, she shared pictures of her back covered with cupping marks and her undergoing jiu sha, a folk remedy that involves repeated pinching, usually of the neck and back, to increase blood circulation.

She said it was tough to endure the treatments. "When it hurts, I'll joke with the nurses so that I can bear the pain."

However, said Sina website, the procedures did not seem to work and her younger sister eventually convinced her to switch her course of treatment and said: "She was cheated by so many cheats that she's turned to chemotherapy only now."

Xu was the third of seven children. She made her debut on television in the series Dad Home (2013) and her movies include the comedy Lost In Macau (2015).

**LOAD-DATE:** September 16, 2016

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Chinese actress Kitty Xu Ting (above) shared photos of herself undergoing treatment such as cupping.

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

January 1, 2017 Sunday

**No TCM at clinics, but other 'services';**

**No physicians at a few that The Sunday Times visited, but women offer 'special' massages**

**BYLINE:** Tan Tam Mei,Zaihan Mohamed Yusof

**SECTION:** TOP OF THE NEWS

**LENGTH:** 712 words

A number of **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM) establishments registered to the same man have been found to be offering sexual services.

The businesses advertise themselves as TCM clinics with signboards outside the premises promoting treatments like tui na, **cupping and acupuncture.** However, when approached, female employees at seven of the establishments The Sunday Times visited said a "doctor" was not available.

Six of the businesses instead offered a different kind of massage, with options for "happy" and "special" endings, terms used to describe sexual services. The women dressed in short dresses pointed to their bodies when making the offer.

The six "clinics" were traced to the same owner with more than 30 establishments with the word "TCM" listed as part of their Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority (Acra) registered names.

The Sunday Times learnt that the registered owner of the clinics is a licensed TCM practitioner.

GIVING OTHERS A BAD NAME.

There is a small group of black sheep who do this to make a quick buck. They tarnish the reputation of this respected profession.

PHYSICIAN TAY KIM SOON, on illicit activities in TCM clinics operated by errant practitioners.

Some of the establishments are registered under the category of Clinics and other General Medical Services (Non-western) in their Acra profiles. To register a TCM business with Acra, companies need to first obtain the required approval from the relevant regulatory authorities, said an Acra spokesman.

In the case of TCM, physicians have to be registered with the Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board (TCMPB), a statutory board under the Ministry of Health (MOH). TCM clinics are not required to be registered with MOH. The registered TCM practitioner must then submit the English and Chinese name of the clinic to the board for approval first, before registering the company with Acra.

It is unclear if this was done for the six TCM clinics The Sunday Times visited last month.

Separately, the Acra spokesman said owners registering a business with names and activities containing the terms "hospital", "medical clinic/centre"or any other similar terms are also required to get approval from MOH first.

Registered physicians have to display their original registration certificate conspicuously at their main place of practice and a certified true-copy at all other places of practice, said TCMPB's executive secretary Quah Ai Mui.

It is an offence for a person who is not registered as a TCM practitioner to practise, advertise or claim to be qualified to carry out prescribed TCM practice, she added.

"It is also an offence to employ someone who is not qualified or registered to practise any prescribed practice of TCM."

If convicted for practising TCM or advertising oneself as a qualified TCM practitioner, first-time offenders can be fined up to $25,000 and jailed for six months. For employing someone who is not a qualified TCM physician to carry out related practices, those convicted face a similar penalty.

Spas and massage outlets - some of which have been fronts for those offering sexual services - have found it more difficult to receive a licence to operate from the Police Licensing and Regulatory Department. This has prompted a growth in "TCM" establishments in recent years, said those in the industry.

TCM physicians The Sunday Times spoke to said they are aware of such illicit activities in TCM clinics operated by errant practitioners.

Said physician Tay Kim Soon, who has been practising for over 15 years: "There is a small group of black sheep who do this to make a quick buck. They tarnish the reputation of this respected profession."

Police often raid massage establishments to weed out those that operate illegally.

Last June, 75 people were arrested in a four-day enforcement blitz on unlicensed massage parlours and public entertainment outlets. Last November, police also nabbed 81 women in raids at Thomson, Paya Lebar, Selegie, Outram and Bukit Timah areas. A police spokesman said: "We take a tough stand against vice activities and will continue with our regular enforcement checks to deter and detect such illegal activities. "Operators found conducting illicit activities in massage establishments will be taken to task."

**LOAD-DATE:** December 31, 2017

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** The businesses visited by The Sunday Times had signboards outside the premises promoting treatments like tui na, cupping and acupuncture.

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

June 10, 2007 Sunday

**Shouldering the burden;**

**Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) experts answer your queries in this fortnightly column. Remember, you should not self-medicate. Always consult a practitioner. Send your questions to stlife@sph.com.sg**

**BYLINE:** Gerard Yeo, SINSEH SAYS

**LENGTH:** 282 words

I am a 53-year-old diabetic male and have been experiencing a 'frozen shoulder' since early this year. I have undergone both Western and Chinese treatments. I have heard of treatments like **acupuncture**, **cupping**, tui na and 'walking the wall'. What do you advise I do?

Collagen plays an important part in ligaments and tendons because it holds the bones together in a joint.

In the view held by Western doctors of diabetic patients, glucose molecules attach themselves to collagen, resulting in abnormal deposits of collagen in the cartilage and tendons of the shoulder.

This build-up causes the affected shoulder to stiffen. It occurs most commonly in the shoulders, but can happen in other parts of the body as well.

Walking the wall' is an exercise where someone stands facing the wall and runs his fingers upwards on it. A patient with a frozen shoulder has difficulty lifting his hands in this manner. This exercise can help him loosen the cartilage and tendons of his shoulders.

TCM practitioners believe a frozen shoulder is caused by external injury, a deficiency and stagnation in qi and blood, and pathogenic factors such as 'wind', 'cold' and 'dampness'.

Chinese medicine, acupuncture, cupping therapy and tui na can improve your condition by enhancing circulation of qi and blood and dispelling the pathogenic factors.

You should keep your joints warm by avoiding a cold environment like an air-conditioned room, and by wearing extra clothing. You should also abstain from cold drinks. Stick to a strict diet and monitor your fasting blood glucose level to ensure it is within a healthy range.

Information provided by Ms Lim Lay Beng, a TCM physician at YS Healthcare TCM Clinic in The Adelphi.

**LOAD-DATE:** June 9, 2007

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**A Cure For All?**

August 19, 2001, Sunday

Kao Chen

**TRADITIONAL** **CHINESE** **MEDICINE**

East is East and West is West but will the twain ever meet -- in medicine? Can **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM), like **acupuncture** (above), ever blend with modern medicine? To put a finger on its pulse, senior correspondent KAO CHEN visited Beijing, Shanghai, Hongkong and Taipei and talked to 55 officials, doctors and researchers. In the first of a four-part series, she looks at TCM in the land of its birth.

IMAGINE a 500-bed modern hospital where patients are treated by herbal brews and injected with -- or given intravenous drips of -- **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM).

When they are wheeled into a theatre, they are operated with the aid of **acupuncture**. Shocked?

Welcome to Beijing's Xiyuan and Guang An Men Hospitals, which rank among China's best health-care institutions and represent the striking new face of TCM.

Judging by the 2,500 patients who crowd Guang An Men Hospital every day, TCM is alive and kicking in the country of its birth.

After almost fading away in the first half of the last century, when much of China's traditional culture came under siege from influences of the West, TCM has staged a robust comeback.

Thanks to an aggressive modernising programme under the communist government, TCM has become part of the country's formal tertiary education system since 1956.

Active research has led to the rise of an array of new TCM drugs and treatment for cancer, heart disease, hepatitis and malaria -- some through the re-discovery of a lost or secret formula, others from new research.

What's more, a dialogue between Western medicine and TCM has been initiated.

It is true that the two theories -- one based on modern science, and the other on ying, yang and the five elements (metals, wood, water, fire, and earth) -- remain worlds apart.

While Western medicine is concerned with the disease, TCM focuses on the state of health of the whole body, and often treats the same disease with different medications and prescribes the same medicine for different diseases, all because of the differences in the nature of the bodies.

Still, it is now common in China to find doctors who are trained in both disciplines and able to integrate them in practice in varying degrees.

Acupuncture is the field which has witnessed the most breakthroughs.

Dramatic images of patients bristling with needles like a porcupine yet alert and showing no pain stunned Western media and the world in the 1970s following former US President Richard Nixon's historic visit to Beijing.

Acupuncture has now won a level of acceptance from the mainstream, orthodox medicine in the West that was unthinkable two decades ago.

Will other TCM disciplines soon follow?

To put a finger on the pulse, Sunday Review spoke to Dr Shen Zhixiang, secretary-general of China's State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (SATCM) in Beijing, which is a bureau under the Health Ministry.

Expressing cautious optimism, he replies: "We must address a few issues first, but I think TCM's time has finally come."

He cites favourable conditions in the West: A yearning for a more holistic approach to medicine, which has enhanced the appeal of TCM, known for its focus on the wellness of the whole person.

In addition, there is a strong back-to-nature movement and rising demand for natural, herbal-based medicine and health products as an alternative to chemical-based medicine and adverse side effects.

But Dr Shen acknowledges the stumbling blocks still in the way. "We still have problems with quality control. There is a proliferation of both fake, sub-standard herbs as well as counterfeit proprietary formulations."

Another issue, he notes, is how to modernise TCM without turning it into a branch of Western medicine.

To address the quality issue, he says, the Chinese government started phasing in a set of regulations in the late 1990s known as the five Ps -- good agricultural practice, good manufacturing practice, good laboratory practice, good clinical practice, and good selling practice.

"We want to ensure that not even trace heavy metals, which are viewed as toxins in Western medicine, are in the formulations, that they are made under the same conditions as modern pharmaceutical industries elsewhere."

In addition, the authorities are tackling the issue of the quality of herbs, which will always vary, he notes.

But with good agricultural practice, people will be assured of their authenticity (di dao yao cai), that they are not contaminated by fertilisers and pollutants, and grown in optimal climate and conditions.

HOW MODERN SHOULD IT BE?

THE debate over how far to push the modernisation of TCM is more controversial.

One of those who favour modernisation is Professor Qiao Wangzhong, deputy party secretary at the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, the leading TCM university in China.

Speaking in his office, he argues that the "T" should be dropped from the term "TCM", because it implies a closed mind to progress and development.

His views have wide support. Even some old-timers, like 81-year-old Dr Yan Zhenghua, the well-known TCM doctor in Beijing, says that "the age of just using three fingers is over", referring to the traditional method of feeling the pulse for diagnosis. "TCM will die unless it moves with the times".

But detractors insist that too much modern training will dilute the TCM physician's special expertise.

To SATCM's Dr Shen, however, these issues pale by comparison to what is keeping TCM back from joining the world: Its credibility as a science.

"Some still consider it un proven -- that it is based on anecdotal instead of hard evidence, that it is not a solid science."

There is no escaping the yawning chasm that still separates TCM from modern Western medicine.

TCM's proponents say that its 5,000 years of history represent the best clinical evidence that it works.

But its critics maintain that TCM theory is not anatomically correct, and that its efficacy is based on anecdotal evidence, and that its reliability is an issue.

Some argue that the qi (vital energy) and xue (blood and body fluids) flowing in the jing luo system (through which the vital energy flows, regulated by the acupoints of the body), which is central to the TCM theory, cannot be proven scientifically.

The arguments and counter arguments go on and on.

Even the vast volumes of clinical studies on herbal medicine carried out by the researchers in China are greeted with scepticism.

Why?

According to Professor Leung Ping Chung, a prominent surgeon and professor of orthopaedics and traumatology at the Hongkong Chinese University Medical School, this is because the Chinese researchers do not always adhere to internationally accepted methodologies of clinical research.

The result is that much of their published work is now being repeated elsewhere in accordance to internationally acceptable methodologies, before they are scientifically admissible.

Another longstanding problem is the lack of scientific understanding of the herbs themselves despite extensive documentation of their medicinal properties and uses in ancient texts. For example, what are their chemical compositions? Which of the many ingredients contained in each herb are active?

As Prof Leung notes, much Interest brewing up for TCM outside China of TCM was developed before the advent of modern science and medicine.

Even less is known about the decoctions -- proprietary medicines made from a handful to a dozen or more of specially prepared herbs -- and their physiological impact.

While many believe that TCM works, explaining convincingly how it works to the practitioners of Western medicine that control the mainstream health-care profession outside China is a different matter.

Yet they must. Especially if they want to win over the agency which guards the door to the world's largest health food and herbal products market: the United States Food and Drugs Administration.

As China's late Premier Zhou Enlai once observed: "Until science can explain how TCM works, there will always be doubters and sceptics."

A SHOT AT THE MAINSTREAM MARKET.

CHINA exported 5 billion yuan (about S$1 billion) worth of TCM products last year, over half in the form of low value-added medicinal herbs and the rest split between extracts and proprietary products, according to SATCM's Dr Shen.

Given a global herbal products market which stands at about US$20 billion (S$35 billion) a year now and grows at about 10 per cent a year, this means China has only 3 per cent of the pie.

Still, with a 50 billion yuan domestic TCM market at home, even leading TCM pharmaceutical companies in China -- like Beijing's 300-year-old Tong Ren Tang, with annual sales of about 2 billion yuan -- seem too absorbed at home to focus on markets abroad.

But there is growing interest from overseas, with "international visitors crowding the SATCM's corridors", says Dr Shen.

Pharmaceutical giants such as Merck, Pfizer, and Johnson & Johnson have all come a-calling, keen on joint research and development programmes. He adds that there are already more than 20 joint drug development projects with French partners.

"We have three herbal products under FDA trial and evaluation; one is for lung cancer," he discloses.

The rest of Asia is also awakening to the potential of TCM in the global economy.

The Hongkong government has not been coy in declaring its intention to become an "international TCM centre". Not to be outdone, Taiwan says it wants to be a "TCM Technology Island".

And enterprises such as Hongkong's New World Development, Taiwan's President Group and Sun Ten, and Singapore's Eu Yan Sang have all formed joint ventures in China, either for TCM research or to secure the source of top-grade herbal materials.

As China, which will join the World Trade Organisation later this year, takes its place among the economic powers, will its thousands-year-old medical prowess win global acceptance as well?

NEXT WEEK: Will Hongkong be the international centre for TCM?

TCM: Now and the future.

Interest in joint R&D programmes with China expressed by pharmaceutical giants such as Merck and Johnson & Johnson 20 joint drug development projects with French partners Hongkong wants to become an "international TCM centre" Taiwan wants to become a "TCM Technology Island". Joint ventures, either for TCM research or to source for top-grade herbal materials, between China and enterprises such as Hongkong's New World Development, Taiwan's President Group and Sun Ten, and Singapore's Eu Yan Sang.

Traditional treatment awaits at Guang An Men Hospital, with its outpatient centre (above), a herbal pharmacy (left), and integrated treatment, including qigong lessons (right), for cancer patients to improve their overall health.

**SECTION:** (Review Cover Story), Pg. 28, 29

**LENGTH:** 1826 words

**LOAD-DATE:** August 21, 2001

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** (Guang An Men Hospital's outpatient centre) (Page 28); (Herbal pharmacy) (Page 28); (Qigong lessons) (Page 28); (Acupuncture) (Page 28); (Can traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), like acupuncture, ever blend with modern medicine?) (Page 28); In large pressure vats, herbal brews are prepared in Beijing's Xiyuan TCM Hospital. The brews are delivered to patients in sealed plastic pouches. (Page 29)

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

August 14, 2016 Sunday

**Cupping wins younger fans;**

**Olympic swimming champion Michael Phelps is not the only athlete who finds the healing therapy beneficial**

**BYLINE:** Gwendolyn Ng

**SECTION:** LIFE

**LENGTH:** 825 words

**Traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM) practitioners here say they have seen a growing number of athletes, fitness enthusiasts and working professionals turn to the healing therapy of **cupping**.

This is even before many more people throughout the world came to know of the practice after American swimming champion Michael Phelps was photographed at the ongoing Rio Olympics sporting the purplish-red marks - a tell-tale sign that he has received the therapy.

**Cupping** is believed to relieve muscle tension by improving blood circulation, which helps to stimulate the qi, or the "vital energy" of the body.

The process involves placing on the body inverted cups in which a partial vacuum is induced by heat or a vacuum suction pump. Bruises, ranging from light pink to dull red, appear because the suction causes the blood capillaries under the skin to rupture. S-League football star Jermaine Pennant has been seeking the traditional Chinese healing therapy of cupping for years, even when he was playing in England and Spain, where the practice is probably less common than in Singapore.

My muscle soreness normally takes four to five days to go away. But when I do cupping, it goes away the next day.

FITNESS INSTRUCTOR ROZANNE YAP.

"I believe it brings blood and circulates (blood) to the area of the muscle that is damaged as new blood will repair it better," says the 33-year-old Tampines Rovers player, who last received the therapy two weeks ago to release the tension in his back.

According to TCM practitioners, cupping is effective for various ailments such as eczema and influenza, and muscle aches and pains, as well as for better performance.

Ms Jaime Cheong, general manager of the Singapore Athletics Association (SAA), says: "We send our athletes to TCM chain Kin Teck Tong for cupping treatment to accelerate their recovery and for better performance."

Long associated as a preferred treatment for older folks, TCM has found a younger clientele in recent years.

Kin Teck Tong reports a 95.6 per cent increase over the past two years in customers - mostly in their 30s - opting for cupping.

One such convert is national sprinter Smriti Menon, 18, who has been seeking TCM treatments such as cupping, acupuncture and massages over the past three years.

"I was a bit apprehensive about trying TCM because I hadn't heard much about it, but I trusted my coach who recommended it. The treatments help to loosen tight muscles and prevent injury," says Menon, who trains five days a week and goes for TCM treatment about once every three weeks.

A spokesman for Kin Teck Tong's Sports Hub branch says many customers ask for cupping treatment after engaging in sports and fitness activities in the vicinity.

The chain has also been providing free TCM treatments - including cupping - to selected sportsmen from SAA and the Basketball Association of Singapore in the past year.

Aegle TCM Wellness Clinique's clientele is largely made up of young working professionals in their 30s and 40s who lead active lifestyles.

One of its physicians, Ms He Dandan, says: "Mixed-martial arts fighters, marathon runners and triathletes come to our clinic to do cupping and acupuncture to help relieve sports fatigue and injury and improve performance."

At Raffles Chinese Medicine, physician Chua Hui Zi says more young professionals are going for cupping to relieve neck and back pains due to long hours sitting in front of the computer and tilting the head when using mobile phones.

Fitness instructor Rozanne Yap, 28, finds that her monthly cupping sessions, along with other TCM treatments, help to ease her muscle aches. "I experience much faster muscle recovery when I do cupping. My muscle soreness normally takes four to five days to go away. But when I do cupping, it goes away the next day," says Ms Yap, who runs fitness studio Energize Movement.

From a Western medicine perspective, cupping may help relieve pain in sore muscles with painful trigger points, says Dr Chiam Tut Fu, a consultant sports medicine physician at Pacific Healthcare. This leads to relaxation of the muscles, which improves their function and strength.

Dr Chiam adds: "An athlete with sore muscles due to hard training or injury may benefit from cupping. Otherwise, it will not be of any value."

Dr Lim Ang Tee of Changi Sports Medicine Centre says there are some studies investigating the effectiveness of cupping for relieving muscular aches and pains that appear promising. But he adds that there has yet to be large-scale quality studies published on the therapy.

Going by Phelps' haul of at least four gold medals at the ongoing Olympics - where at age 31, he is older than many other competitors - cupping may have given the champ a boost, even if it is just all in the mind.

Dr Chiam says: "There is a lot of psychological influences in sports and if the athlete feels he or she has an edge with any form of therapy, that added confidence translates to better performance."

**LOAD-DATE:** August 13, 2016

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Swimmer Michael Phelps (above), national sprinter Smriti Menon, fitness instructor Rozanne Yap and footballer Jermaine Pennant all sport the tell-tale marks of cupping.

Swimmer Michael Phelps , national sprinter Smriti Menon, fitness instructor Rozanne Yap and footballer Jermaine Pennant (above) all sport the tell-tale marks of cupping.

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Chinese medicine gaining favour in Britain;**

**Acupuncture clinic gets royal backing as more Britons recognise worth of traditional Chinese cures**

December 23, 2003 Tuesday

Neo Hui Min

LONDON - Tucked at a corner of the Lambeth Hospital in South London is a little clinic where queues of local residents turn up to get needled.

It was here 13 years ago that **acupuncture** was first given a chance in Britain's government- managed, taxpayer-funded National Healthcare Service. This month, **Traditional Chinese Medicine** (TCM) and **acupuncture** was given another boost when the enterprising place called The Gateway Clinic won the biannual Good Practice in Integrated Health award given by the Prince of Wales Foundation for Integrated Health.

In his speech, Prince Charles gave strong endorsement for complementary medicine when he said: 'I would suggest that there is a correspondingly urgent need to see a much greater expansion of integrated approaches, and not simply for people who can afford them, in order to deal with the enormous challenges surrounding us.'

He called the clinic 'a very good example of a service which is not only helping to fill in gaps in conventional care, but is also addressing problems that conventional approaches don't always answer'.

TCM in general and acupuncture in particular are not only gaining acceptance among royalty, but also among a growing section of the British population.

The British Acupuncture Council (BAC) has noted a pronounced growth within the past five years. An estimated 20 per cent of people here use complementary medicine, and among the four most well-used forms is acupuncture.

The council's chief executive officer, Mr Michael O'Farrell, told The Straits Times that this sudden surge in popularity could be attributed partly to the British government's interest in acupuncture since 1999.

More people are also jumping into the business. From seven colleges offering acupuncture classes six years ago, there are now 14.

Mainstream general practitioners are also placing their trust in TCM.

Mr O'Farrell said: 'We now know that nearly 50 per cent of general practitioners refer some of their patients to complementary medicine. This would not have been so a few years ago.'

The popularity could be illustrated by the queues at the Gateway Clinic and the fact that there is a four-month waiting list.

The clinic's team of five acupuncturists and 25 volunteers tends to 400 patients a month.

The clinic started out about a decade ago by using acupuncture to treat HIV patients. Gradually, it gained a reputation for treating such cases, as well as helping in the detoxification process of drug addicts and the treatment of Hepatitis C patients.

These days, it has diversified its services.

Mr Dominique Joire, manager and senior acupuncturist at the clinic, told The Straits Times: 'Other than our regular HIV patients, most of our referred patients suffer from chronic illnesses like migraines and backaches. Doctors tend to send in people they don't know what to do with.'

Mrs Malika Harrak is one such patient. For years, she had been suffering from backaches, some so severe that she had trouble getting up from a chair.

She said: 'I tried everything. I've seen doctors, I went for physiotherapy. But after several sessions, the physiotherapist said to me: 'I really don't know what to do for you anymore'. So she referred me to get some acupuncture and after only about six sessions, I was feeling much better.'

To regulate the growing TCM practice, two working groups - one on Chinese herbal medicine and one on acupuncture - have submitted recommendations to the government. The regulations are expected to go into operation by late 2005.

Meanwhile, the Gateway team is planning to push for the expansion of its services to other hospitals in Britain.

**SECTION:** World

**LENGTH:** 609 words

**LOAD-DATE:** December 22, 2003

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Chinese medicine goes posh**

May 27, 2001, Sunday

Tee Hun Ching

TRADITIONAL HEALING

If you think seeing a Chinese physician means going to a dinky medicinal shop, you'll reel over when you see these posh **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** centres

THEY might be called **Traditional** **Chinese** **Medicine** (TCM) centres, but there is nothing traditional about the way they look.

Push open the doors to Ngee Ann **Traditional** **Chinese** **Medicine** Centre and TCMS Healthcare, and you will be greeted by muted lighting, plush carpeting and blasts of cool air.

The latter even boasts a prime-district address with its 1,800-sq ft set-up at Paragon in the hip Orchard Road shopping belt.

Aping the style of posh Western medicine clinics is one way the two new-economy and non-profit TCM outfits hope to reel in the younger, English-educated crowd, the demographic slice that is most unfamiliar with Chinese herbs and **acupuncture.**

Mr Richard Lee, honorary secretary for philanthropic society Ngee Ann Kongsi, says of Ngee Ann TCM Centre at Balestier Road: "We wanted to do a Chinese version of Mount Elizabeth's specialists clinic: traditional ways of preparing medicine but with modern convenience."

Mr Peter Law, manager of seven-month-old TCMS Healthcare, says that the young today place their trust in Western medicine as the standard of TCM so far has been erratic, with no yardstick to measure the physicians by.

But under the Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Bill passed in November last year, Chinese sinsehs will have to be registered to practise starting from next year.

Adds Mr Law: "We hope that by offering a higher standard of TCM, we can give the public a wider choice."

Quality is imperative for both operators, who hire only top physicians from China who must be "professors or lecturers", says Mr Law.

TCMS Healthcare, which is co-managed by the Parkway Group Healthcare, selects physicians trained in Nanjing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, one of the pioneers and leaders in TCM education in China.

The physicians also make their rounds at the three hospitals under the Parkway Group -- East Shore, Gleneagles and Mount Elizabeth -- if there are requests from patients there.

Ngee Ann TCM Centre, on the other hand, is staffed by three veteran doctors from Beijing's renowned Xi Yuan Hospital of China Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

These include the hospital's chief physician and its head of the gynaecology department, who are here on short stints.

They will be replaced by peers of a similar standing when their attachments end.

Although they practise TCM, all the top TCM professionals in China are also trained in Western medicine, which allows them to combine the two approaches in their work.

Says Professor Jiang Kun, who heads the gynaecology department at Xi Yuan Hospital: "Not all illnesses can be treated by TCM. And the Western approach alone may not be better in all cases. They should complement each other, just as how you need two legs to walk."

Adds general practitioner Huang Fei, who is a physician and acupuncturist at Chinese Medical Hospital of Suzhou: "We know how to read X-rays, blood test results and so on because of our training in Western medicine. There is no such thing as one is better than the other. As long as an illness can be cured, that's good."

Dr Fei Guo Quan, an acupuncturist at TCMS Healthcare who is a consultant acupuncturist at Suzhou TCM Hospital and a lecturer at Nanjing University of TCM, was expecting resistance when she was first posted here.

She says: "Many people in China don't believe in TCM. They trust Western medicine, where your problem can be solved with one jab or one pill. Surprisingly, the level of acceptance here is wider than I expected."

Technology plays a big part in the daily operations of the two clinics.

Ngee Ann TCM Centre invested $10,000 in a Chinese medicinal brewing machine, which extracts the essence of the prescribed herbs and packs them in sterilised pouches, saving patients time and hassle.

The dispensing machine at TCMS Healthcare, on the other hand, packs medicinal herbs in powder form into handy sachets which patients then empty into hot water.

Says Mr Lee: "The traditional way of preparing Chinese medicine takes a lot of time and effort. The young, in particular, don't even know how to go about doing it. The machine saves them that hassle."

Response to both clinics has been very encouraging so far.

About 800 to 1,000 patients have been dropping by Ngee Ann TCM Centre every month since it opened in November last year, while TCMS Healthcare sees about 500 consultations a month.

But the specialists at Ngee Ann TCM Centre hope that more people will tap their expertise.

Says Prof Jiang candidly: "I head the gynaecology department back home. But over here, most of the patients come to me with common ailments such as the flu. Of course we can treat that, but I feel under-utilised."

Both operators view each other as collaborators rather than competitors.

Says Mr Lee: If you have more professional TCM centres offering quality healthcare, the standard of TCM in Singapore will improve. And everyone stands to gain from that."

**SECTION:** Sunday Plus, Pg. P6

**LENGTH:** 861 words

**LOAD-DATE:** May 29, 2001

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Powdered medicinal herbs will be packed at TCMS Healthcare into handy sachets, which patients then empty into hot water. No more excuses for skipping your doses.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Govt to limit involvement in Chinese medicine for now**

March 21, 1995

Budget debate: \* Day 4

THE Government will set up an **acupuncture** research clinic in the Ang Mo Kio Community Hospital, but its involvement in other aspects of **Traditional Chinese Medicine** (TCM) will be limited for now.

Health Minister George Yeo said **acupuncture** experts from China and the World Health Organisation will be roped in to help define research areas and identify the conditions under which this treatment would be clearly useful. He noted that **acupuncture** was already a well-accepted and regulated field in the West.

"In Singapore, you get needles poked in all parts of your body and there is no legislation, no regulation whatsoever."

But he was cautious about having the Government move into other aspects of TCM, pointing out that no country has regulated the industry.

Even in China, where there are top TCM universities, the Government regulates with "a light hand".

In Singapore, his ministry's expertise on the subject was limited. And local practitioners had, till lately, resisted working together in a coordinating committee.

He noted that the regulation of the medical profession in the West through ministers and regulatory bodies was a fairly recent practice. They all started as self-regulated professions.

"We should encourage the TCM practitioners in Singapore to go the same way. And even if we decide to legislate, we'll do it step by step."

BG (NS) Yeo was responding to four MPs who called for a more hands-on approach in dealing with TCM to protect the many Singaporeans who turned to Chinese herbs and Chinese sinsehs. Health GPC chairman Loh Meng See (Kampong Glam GRC) called for a TCM Council to be set up for more accountability, while Mr Lau Ping Sum (Ang Mo Kio GRC) called for minimum standards of entry into the profession.

Mr Loh and Mr Peh Chin Hua (Jalan Besar GRC) also noted that foreign charlatans were practising TCM in private homes, hotel rooms and even in HDB estates.

Replying, the minister acknowledged the "sterling service" provided by the TCM community, and noted that it was also being practised increasingly in the West.

The way ahead for Singapore was to study the experiences of China, South Korea, Taiwan, Hongkong and Japan and see what could be done to improve training and standards here. The minister also said that a committee headed by his junior minister, Dr Aline Wong, was drafting a report following its trip to China, where it met several TCM groups.

"I think, towards the end of the year, we should be able to produce something for public discussion. But this is not something that I want to rush into." For now, he suggested the TCM community police itself, including identifying charlatans, setting minimum standards for entry, training, auditing and certification.

BG Yeo also said there were difficulties in integrating Eastern and Western medicine in Singapore, as called for by Mr Peh.

There has been little real scientific integration of East and West in medicine so far, he noted, as Western medicine took an analytical approach, while TCM was a holistic one.

TCM's role

"We should look squarely into the matter and find ways and means to resolve the differences, rather than try and avoid it. As pointed out by Minister BG George Yeo, in the course of treatment, some cancer patients also take Chinese herbs. They do not reveal this to the physician or oncologist because some Western-trained doctors are sceptical about Chinese physicians' medical treatment."

-Mr Peh Chin Hua (Jalan Besar GRC).

"I believe TCM has a role to play. It can complement Western medicine. But to date, the ministry has adopted a very detached stance. It has encouraged the various TCM associations to amalgamate, set standards and self-regulate. I think one question we have to ask ourselves is whether the development of TCM is beneficial to Singaporeans. If the answer is "yes', then I think the Government should take a more pro-active role."

-Dr Wan Soon Bee (Brickworks GRC).

**SECTION:** Parliament; Pg. 18

**LENGTH:** 960 words

**LOAD-DATE:** March 22, 1995

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Four MPs called for a more hands-on approach to TCM to protect Singaporeans who use Chinese herbs and sinsehs.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

August 22, 2007 Wednesday

**Acupuncture - over to the West;**

**Medical acupuncture, based on Western medicine, is practised by medical doctors here. Lee Hui Chieh finds out more**

**SECTION:** MIND YOUR BODY - IN THE KNOW

**LENGTH:** 578 words

With the increasing acceptance of **acupuncture** in mainstream medicine, a new form known as medical **acupuncture** has developed.

Medical **acupuncture** is practised by medical doctors, and it is based on conventional Western medicine principles, rather than on **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM) theory.

The **acupuncture** needles are stuck at any point within an **acupuncture** area, rather than the fixed and specific **acupuncture** points that TCM-trained acupuncturists use.

As more studies indicated the benefits of acupuncture, doctors developed a more scientific version known as medical acupuncture, which does not use TCM theory.

Dr Kong Keng He, a senior consultant at Tan Tock Seng Hospital's (TTSH) rehabilitation medicine department, explained that it was 'very hard' for doctors to reconcile Western medicine with the philosophical concepts of TCM.

'But there's enough scientific evidence to indicate how acupuncture works, so we can practise acupuncture without relying on TCM theory,' said Dr Kong, who also heads TTSH's Complementary Integrative Medicine Clinic and practises medical acupuncture there.

In TCM, any disorder and its symptoms, such as back pain, is the result of an obstruction of the body's qi - or energy circulation.

When the energy channels, known as meridians, are blocked, according to the theory, there is an imbalance of elements inside the body, causing illness.

TCM acupuncture relieves illness and pain by clearing the clogged meridians, and restoring the body's energy flow and balance.

This is done by sticking fine needles at the relevant acupoints in the body. The body has numerous acupoints, each of which serves a specific and different function, even though one point may be just 1cm away from another.

In Western medicine, however, back pain may be explained by say, a crooked spine pressing on neighboring nerves.

The scientific explanation for how acupuncture works?

The acupuncture points are located within nerve-rich areas in the body. Inserting needles stimulate the nerves to produce chemicals known as neurotransmitters, which then instruct the brain to produce other substances that relieve the pain.

A needle stuck into a nerve-rich region should be able to achieve this purpose, so it is not necessary to pick a fixed point as a TCM-trained physician would, Dr Kong said.

Since nearly a half century ago, Western medicine has also come up with the concept of trigger points, or weakened points in muscles that develop over time, causing people much pain.

Even when doctors inject these trigger points with empty syringes, the pain goes away.

About 80 per cent of trigger points correspond to acupuncture points, said Dr Kong, so a form of acupuncture has long been practised in Western medicine.

Mr T.H. Tan, a 72-year-old retiree, tried medical acupuncture at TTSH in May, after suffering constant back and leg pain with no known cause. He said the pain persisted for more than a month despite painkillers: 'It was so bad that I couldn't lift up my right leg to get into cabs when I wanted to go out.'

After five acupuncture sessions at TTSH, his leg pain has disappeared and he is more mobile. His back still aches sometimes, especially just after he wakes up, but the pain has lessened significantly.

Asked how he felt about having undergone a non-traditional and less-known form of acupuncture, he said: 'I have no confidence in TCM physicians, and I find a Western-trained doctor in a hospital more reliable.'

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

December 25, 2014 Thursday

**Tune up with traditional Chinese medicine**

**SECTION:** MIND YOUR BODY; Cover Story

**LENGTH:** 432 words

A massage is a good way to destress and the **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM) approach offers a little more than a technique to relieve stress.

Tuina therapy, or Chinese therapeutic massage, uses the same principles as **acupuncture**, except that hands and fingers are used instead of needles, said Ms Poh Yu Min, a TCM physician at Raffles **Chinese** **Medicine** at Raffles Hospital.

The massage is done to remove blockages along the pathways or meridians of the body, and stimulate the flow of qi or energy, she said.

But tuina therapy is not for everyone. For instance, people with suspected fractures and elderly people with osteoporosis should not try it as their bones may get injured in the process, said Ms Poh.

It is also not recommended for those with tumours, tuberculosis, bone infections or severe heart and lung disease. In such cases, Chinese herbal medication and acupuncture will be a better choice of treatment, she said.

For the rest of us, Raffles Chinese Medicine offers a TCM Acupuncture Package for Sub-Health ($254.65 for four sessions) and a Relieve Your Work-related Stress And Pain With TCM package.

The latter includes four sessions of stress-relief acupuncture and six sessions each of stress-relief meridian acupressure, general musculoskeletal pain management and tuina massage therapy. Prices for this package vary, depending on whether you need herbal medicine, for instance.

Individual tuina sessions are $50, while the pain management sessions start from $55 each.

IN A STATE OF SUB-HEALTH.

The treatments are aimed at addressing sub-health, or the grey state, which is defined in TCM as a borderline state between being healthy and being ill. You will need to first consult a TCM physician to see if you are suitable for them. This consultation costs between $40 and $50.

"If left unattended, the sub-health state gradually weakens the body's immune system and allows pathogens - infectious agents or germs - to attack the body easily," said Ms Poh.

"In today's society, the main causes of sub-health are occupational stress and undesirable lifestyle habits or behaviour," she added.

People who constantly feel tired, depressed, agitated or suffer from insomnia, poor memory, aches and shortness of breath, may be in a state of sub-health, she said.

At Raffles, sub-health is managed with a combination of herbal medicine to boost immunity, and acupuncture to relieve aches, insomnia and other related symptoms.

Several other hospitals, including Singapore General Hospital, National University Hospital and Tan Tock Seng Hospital, also offer TCM treatments.

Joyce Teo

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Try Chinese herbs to beat that flu**

February 27, 2000

Lea Wee

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

They can give the body a great boost to immunity against diseases, but before taking them, better consult a Chinese physician or herbalist.

"PREVENTION is better than cure" is also a popular saying in **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine.**

**Traditional** **Chinese-medicine** practitioners have been using Chinese herbs, along with **acupuncture** and massage, to boost the immune system's ability to fight diseases for over 4,000 years.

But, before taking any of these herbs, most of which can be bought over the counter at **Chinese** **medicine** shops, you should find out its uses either from the shop's herbalist or consult a Chinese physician, says Ms Kwek Mei Lin, 37, a Chinese physician with 10 years of experience.

Let them know if you are also taking Western medication, she says.

This is so that he can avoid giving you herbs that have a similar effect on the body.

"This can compound the effect and may have adverse results," she says.

Even if the effects of the Western and Chinese medicine do not clash, it is best to take them at least two to four hours apart, she adds.

A survey last June of 700 parents at the KK Women's and Children's Hospital points to the worrying trend that 37 per cent of parents give their sick children over-the-counter Chinese medicine, usually without consulting a Chinese physician, but on recommendations of friends and relatives.

Usually, the Chinese physician prescribes Chinese medicine according to the following three factors:

A "heaty" (yang) herb raises your body temperature and improves blood circulation, but this is not recommended for those prone to sore throats and ulcers.

A "cooling" (yin) herb is for those who need to hydrate their body. But this is not for those prone to cold hands and feet, a bloated stomach and diarrhoea.

Those that fall in between are known as average (zhong) herbs.

\* THEIR VARYING TASTES

Tastes can sometimes be categorised according to the herb's use.

For instance, herbs used for strengthening the body (bu) often taste sweet (tian).

Those for colds and to improve blood circulation often have a pungent, peppermint-like (xin) taste.

Those to remove excess water from the body (for instance, removing a heavy and bloated feeling) are often bitter (ku).

Herbs used to relieve heatiness and phlegm tend to be saltish (xian) while those for preventing diarrhoea, sweatiness and thirst are often sourish (suan).

Some herbs have more than one taste. For instance, ginseng tastes sweet and slightly-bitter.

Even though these names are the same as those of Western medicine, they refer to quite different organs.

The heart system includes the "thinking" part of the brain (si xiang), tongue and blood circulation.

The liver system is responsible for the emotional part of the brain (qing xu), blood storage and eyes.

The spleen system includes digestion and prevention of internal bleeding.

The lung system is responsible for qi (for normal functioning and building up the immune system) and breathing.

The kidney system is responsible for reproduction, general growth and development, the bone and joint system, the ability to breathe deeply, hair growth and water circulation.

Over the next month, Sunday Plus will run a series on the 4,000-year-old practice of traditional Chinese medicine.

Next week's series will focus on herbs that can also be used as food, and the following week will zero in on traditional Chinese massages.

The series is supported by the Office for Continuing Education at the National University of Singapore, which runs a seven-week course for the public to raise their awareness about this ancient form of healing.

Those interested can call the NUS Office for Continuing Education on 874-7956 or 338-8400 or e-mail: oceadm1@nus.edu.sg

**SECTION:** Sunday Plus; Sunday Plus Health; Pg. 5

**LENGTH:** 677 words

**LOAD-DATE:** February 28, 2000

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

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**1058**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

October 23, 2008 Thursday

**Prick me for beauty's sake;**

**Acupuncture, the ancient Chinese medical procedure, is increasingly being used for aesthetic reasons and to treat problems like infertility and hair loss**

**LENGTH:** 899 words

Since ancient times, **acupuncture** has been used to treat ailments. Now, there is beauty **acupuncture**.

**Acupuncture**, a **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM) practice, is well known for treating illnesses by the insertion of needles at specified sites of the body. Many people here go for such treatment for ailments such as arthritis and back pain.

Now, people are also turning to the acupuncturist for aesthetic matters such as skin problems, weight management and hair loss.

Ms Qiau Tien Ru, a senior acupuncturist at the National University Hospital's acupuncture clinic, said that in TCM, obesity problems result from an imbalance within the body caused by the malfunctioning of the 'spleen and liver systems'.

In this respect, she said, TCM's understanding of these organs differs from the concept of the liver and spleen in Western medicine. So are the prescribed treatments.

For weight loss, Ms Wang Xiao Lan, a TCM consultant physician at Raffles Chinese Medicine, said that acupuncture stimulates the meridians or invisible energy pathways to unblock the passage of blood so as to enhance digestion and increase one's metabolism.

She said such treatment can be used to suppress appetite but stressed that it does not cause diarrhoea or involve any starvation diets.

Ms Qiau said beauty acupuncture is becoming more popular. Here, acupuncture is used to help improve the skin condition by promoting blood circulation, stimulating the formation of more collagen and rebalancing the whole body.

When Ms Cheryl Siew, 32, returned to Singapore from a two-week holiday in the United States earlier this year, she began to suffer from a bad case of acne. Her face became red and blotchy and there were a lot of acne and blackheads around her chin area.

A friend recommended that she consult Dr Koh Chin Aik at Specialist Traditional Chinese Medicine Centre.

Ms Siew, a business development manager in the training industry, said that she believed in traditional Chinese medicine and was happy to see the TCM practitioner.

At each visit, Dr Koh, who holds a doctoral degree in acupuncture from Heilongjiang University of Chinese Medicine, performed acupuncture on her upper back. He also prescribed herbal remedies for her to drink.

At the end of five sessions, Ms Siew's skin had cleared considerably.

Explained in TCM terms, the causes of acne appear to be not just skin deep. Both Dr Koh and Ms Qiau said that acne is often due to the accumulation of 'damp heat' which rises from the organs and causes blockage and subsequent eruptions of acne.

They said acupuncture can be used to target the causes of the heat accumulation, resulting in the acne condition clearing up.

Acne patients are also advised to avoid 'heaty' food. Ms Qiau said that fried, spicy and fatty foods are regarded in TCM as 'heaty' foods that can trigger pimples.

Ms Tang Yue, a TCM physician at Eu Yan Sang Specialist TCM Centre, said people with acne problems tend to have 'heaty' body constitutions and these foods therefore exacerbate the condition.

She added that on hot days, one should drink cooling Chinese herbal beverages such as chrysanthemum tea or dandelion tisane.

Dr Chee Yew Wen, the medical director of Wen and Weng Medical Group, said he does not dispense advice on 'heaty' or 'cooling' foods to patients with skin problems because these concepts do not exist in Western medicine.

He has had patients who consult him after the alternative medicine treatments they tried for conditions such as acne and hair loss proved ineffective. Generally, however, he does not discourage patients from following Eastern medicine practices as long as there is no harm.

Dr Chee said: 'Eastern medicine has a long history and many people are deeply rooted in their cultures.

'I prefer proven results from scientific trials but I respect other people's beliefs and decisions with regards to alternative medicine.'

With regard to one's hair, Ms Tang said that in TCM, the condition of the hair is viewed as a direct reflection of the condition of the blood, liver and kidney. Thus, hair thinning or hair loss may be caused by problems such as spleen-stomach deficiency, kidney and liver deficiency, as well as heat and dampness accumulation in the body.

Serene, a 43-year-old housewife, saw Dr Koh for a bald patch at the back of her head. About the size of a 10 cent coin, it had been a recurrent problem since her late 30s.

Dr Koh performed acupuncture on her bald patch as well as on her neck and prescribed herbal medicine. Serene's hair grew back.

But when asked if she would recommend acupuncture for people suffering from hair loss, she laughed and said that she would only recommend it to people with a high threshold for pain like herself.

'The pain from the needles was not unbearable but it's certainly not for the faint-hearted,' she said.

WHAT IT CAN FIX.

Obesity: This results from an imbalance in the body caused by the malfunctioning of the spleen and liver systems. Acupuncture stimulates meridians to unblock the passage of blood to enhance digestion and metabolism.

Acne: Often due to the accumulation of 'damp heat'. Acupuncture targets causes of the heat accumulation.

Patients should also avoid 'heaty' food like spicy and fried ones.

Hair loss: May be caused by spleen-stomach deficiency, kidney and liver deficiency or heat accumulation.

Acupuncture targets these problems and is used with herbal medicine.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Get to know Chinese medicine**

October 19, 1999

Joanne Lee

The Office for Continuing Education at NUS is to hold a seven-week course to educate members of the public about **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** or TCM.

YIN and yang, ginseng and cordyceps, herbs and tonics -the mysteries of **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM) will soon be revealed when a public education programme is launched next month.

Organised by the National University of Singapore's Office for Continuing Education (OCE), which usually runs computer and language courses, the seven-week basic course aims to raise awareness about the 4,000-year-old practice and clear up misconceptions.

Participants will learn about TCM's holistic approach to health and understanding diseases, **acupuncture**, Chinese massage therapy, common herbs and anti-ageing tonics.

The course will be conducted in Mandarin, but the OCE has plans for future courses to be in English.

It will be held once a week on Saturday afternoons. The cost will be $ 250 per person, or $ 200 for senior citizens above the age of 60.

About 50 people will be accepted for the course, which will be taught by experts from the Association for Promoting Chinese Medicines, Singapore Chinese Medical Studies and other institutes.

The Association for Promoting Chinese Medicines is one of two local groups that run a six-year part-time acupuncture accreditation programme, which is recognised by the Ministry of Health.

The association's president, Mr Sia Bak Chiang, said that people need to know more about TCM because it was getting more attention recently.

"With the Government and media paying more attention to TCM, more people want to know the benefits and whether it really works," he said.

The idea for the course was mooted by Haw Par Corporation's president and chief executive, Dr Hong Hai, an adviser to the OCE.

An ardent believer in TCM, he said such a course would help more people make informed choices about whether or not to seek TCM help for their ailments.

"If people decide after the course that TCM doesn't work for them, they won't lose anything. But if they decide that it does, then they may gain something and live happier lives," he said.

The Health Ministry, which will register all acupuncturists by next year, will do the same for all TCM practitioners in three to five years' time.

The OCE will also launch a more advanced acupuncture course in three months' time. Led by Associate Professor Lee Tat Leang, chief of anaesthesia at the National University of Singapore, it will teach Chinese physicians and doctors trained in Western medicine about acupuncture in anaesthetics and therapy.

Those interested in the basic awareness course may call the OCE at 874-7956.

COURSE: Raising the public's awareness

BASIC course in traditional Chinese medicine:

\* Content: TCM's holistic approach to health and understanding diseases, acupuncture, Chinese massage therapy, common herbs and anti-ageing tonics. \* Period: Seven-week course to be held once a week on Saturday afternoons. \* Language of instruction: Mandarin. Future plans for courses to be in English. \* Cost: $ 250 a person. $ 200 for senior citizens above 60. \* Size: About 50 people will be accepted. \* Organisers: The National University of Singapore's Office for Continuing Education.

**SECTION:** Home; Pg. 34

**LENGTH:** 547 words

**LOAD-DATE:** October 19, 1999

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Information on traditional Chinese medicine would help more people decide whether or not to turn to such medicines, which can be bought over the counter in shops, to cure their ailments.

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**1060**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Coming: Laws on Chinese medicine**

August 17, 1999

Joanne Lee

Common exams, a regulatory board and registration are some of the moves to weed out bad practitioners

ROGUE acupuncturists may soon be weeded out now that plans for a **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM) regulatory board and a standard **acupuncture** examination are in the pipeline.

The Attorney-General's Chambers is now looking at a draft of the law that will regulate TCM. A temporary board and **acupuncture** exam syllabus may also be unveiled by early next year.

These changes will not only formalise the registration of acupuncturists by the middle of next year, they may also outlaw ill-trained practitioners by barring them from practising at a later stage.

Speaking to The Straits Times yesterday, Parliamentary Secretary (Health) Chan Soo Sen said the aim was to register all TCM practitioners in three to five years' time.

Non-acupuncturists may also be required to sit for examinations by 2002.

And a professional council may also be set up later to oversee the 1,807 TCM practitioners here, he added.

Over the weekend, he met the Singapore Traditional Chinese Medicine Organisations Coordinating Committee (STCMOCC), which was formed in 1995 as an umbrella body for the eight TCM groups here.

He said higher standards were needed because many people, including the young, now seek acupuncture and therapeutic massage for pain resulting from golf and tennis games.

However, many TCM practitioners learn the trade informally and their skills are passed from generation to generation.

This gave rise, he said, to "black sheep whose misconduct undermined the image of the TCM community and patients' interests".

The new examination, he said, will ensure that the public is protected from them. Those who fail it will have to attend classes to upgrade their skills.

But experienced practitioners may be exempted from taking it.

Preparations for the classes were now being made and experts from China were reviewing the curriculum, he said.

Pitched at a diploma level, the examination will meet the standards set by the STCMOCC's six-year TCM course.

It may be conducted in English and other languages as not all acupuncturists are Chinese.

"As long as practitioners are willing to practise, they will be given every chance to do so," Mr Chan said.

The Ministry of Health is planning a mission to China and Hongkong in October to learn from their experiences.

Mr Chan said he hoped that the STCMOCC would help the ministry to chart the future of TCM here.

The TCM community has, in recent years, been plagued by in-fighting between the different schools of thought.

The method of pricking the skin with a needle, for example, is a contentious issue as it differs from school to school.

Mr Chan said: "It is my hope that they can look beyond their differences and work together to raise the image of TCM and put the public interest first."

**SECTION:** Home; Pg. 21

**LENGTH:** 482 words

**LOAD-DATE:** August 17, 1999

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

June 20, 2017 Tuesday

**Facial acupuncture: Pin cushion for beauty;**

**Forget Botox. Facial acupuncture is being offered to treat cosmetic and health issues**

**BYLINE:** Prisca Ang

**SECTION:** MIND & BODY

**LENGTH:** 894 words

When people think of **acupuncture**, they usually imagine long, fine needles being inserted into their hands or legs. The face, with its delicate skin, is one of the last body parts which come to mind.

Despite this, facial **acupuncture** can help to resolve cosmetic and underlying health problems, said **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM) practitioners.

Eu Yan Sang physician Anita Pee said it is a customised treatment based on the person's condition and offers a holistic approach to managing skin problems.

She said: "Facial acupuncture aims to achieve good skin by improving the body's constitution and adjusting the internal environment of the body."

The company introduced this treatment at selected clinics in April. Acupuncturists are registered with and regulated by the TCM Practitioners Board under the Ministry of Health.

By stimulating acupoints on the face, as well as related acupoints on the body - such as the hands and legs - acupuncture increases blood circulation to the face. This improves the skin's radiance and promotes collagen production to fill fine lines, said Ms Pee.

According to TCM theory, the facial acupoints are part of channels known as meridians, which link the surface of the body to the internal organs and other body parts. Ms Pee said: "In TCM, the body is seen as a whole and skin problems reflect disharmony within the body. Thus, skin conditions are treated by addressing not only the visible symptoms, but also the root cause of the problem."

For example, skin pigmentation is often associated with poor qi (vital energy) and blood flow to the facial region, or deficiencies in the spleen and kidneys. Needles are therefore inserted into selected acupoints which help to promote the smooth flow of qi and blood, as well as strengthen the spleen and kidneys, said Ms Pee.

She added that facial acupuncture can also help to resolve issues such as dark eye bags, acne, dull skin, wrinkles and a puffy face, as well as stimulate circulation in the area for better skin complexion.

A suggested treatment plan would be 12 sessions, once or twice a week. Prices start from $68 per session at the firm's selected clinics. It also offers its facial acupuncture service at the Grand Hyatt's Damai Spa, at $158 per session. Each session lasts about half an hour, excluding consultation.

Meanwhile, a facial acupuncture session costs about $100 at Raffles Chinese Medicine (RCM), the TCM arm of Raffles Medical Group, said RCM physician Ong Fang Ying. The clinic has seen patients in their 20s to 30s. But most of her customers are women in their 30s to 50s, she added.

RCM has been offering the treatment for more than eight years. Ms Ong said that treatment plans vary - some patients need 10 to 20 sessions to see results, while others need only five to six.

Ms Pee said some people are concerned that facial acupuncture is painful and worry if they will be able to resume normal activities after the session. But the procedure is simple and relatively painless.

However, despite the purported benefits of facial acupuncture, the treatment is not for everyone.

Facial acupuncture is not suitable for people with skin infections, open wounds, tumours, bleeding disorders, serious health conditions and acute diseases. In cases of severe acne, acupuncture will be focused on body acupoints, rather than the face.

Also, acupuncture has still not been scientifically proven.

Undergraduate Sheryl Lim, 24, said that facial acupuncture helped to get rid of the acne on her face. She went for the treatment once a month, over half a year. She said: "My pores are still oily but the pimples disappeared after one to two weeks. I would go back again for aesthetic purposes."

When I was asked to try out a free facial acupuncture session by Eu Yan Sang, I was hesitant, to say the least.

I was apprehensive about having needles stuck into my face. Surprisingly, the treatment was simple and painless.

When I entered the treatment room in Damai Spa at Grand Hyatt, I was greeted by physician Anita Pee.

The session started with a detailed consultation. Ms Pee asked me many questions, and checked my tongue and pulse. This allowed her to diagnose my body condition and constitution, based on TCM theory.

She said I had high levels of heatiness associated with my stomach and liver, and this would be treated during the session.

I changed and removed my make-upbefore I lay down on the acupuncture bed and waited rather nervously.

When the treatment started, though, I began to relax. This was despite 11 needles, each about 0.2mm in diameter, being inserted into acupoints on my forehead, temples, cheeks and lower facial area.

Needles were also stuck into my hands and feet.

Ms Pee adjusted the needles and administered electro- acupuncture, where electricity is passed in pulses to provide stimulation of acupoints.

There was a dull ache in the acupoints on my foot. She said this meant that blood circulation had been stimulated.

The insertion of the other needles was slightly ticklish, without much pain.

The needles were left in my skin for half an hour. When they were removed, a facial massage was done with a jade roller. I enjoyed this.

I could not feel any tangible benefits from the session, but I slept very well that night - whether it was from the facial acupuncture or fatigue due to the sleepless night before, I could not tell.

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The Straits Times

**4 Chinese experts in traditional medicine to teach in S'pore**

December 24, 1993

THE Chinese Physicians' Training College here has, for the first time, invited professors from China to teach at the college.

Four professors from the Guangzhou College of **Traditional** **Chinese** **Medicine,** who are specialists in **acupuncture,** anatomy and internal **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine,** will be in Singapore next year to teach these courses.

Speaking in Mandarin, Mr Lee Kim Leong, principal of the training college in Toa Payoh, said: "With this agreement, we hope to upgrade the standards of traditional Chinese medicine here.

"In future, our physicians here can also visit Guangzhou to share knowledge in their own fields of specialisation.".

Professor Qiu He Ming, vice-president of the Guangzhou College of Traditional Medicine, led three other professors to sign an agreement with the training college for a long-term exchange programme yesterday.

Prof Qiu and his team were also invited here to evaluate the standards of the College.

Said Prof Qiu in Mandarin: "The college has adequate facilities, such as its vast library collection of 20,000 books.

"Its systematic teaching methods also guarantee the quality of physicians."

He added that trainee physicians studying at the college also get useful practical training treating patients at the Chung Hwa Free Clinic in Toa Payoh.

This clinic is run by the Singapore Chinese Physicians' Association.

The training college was set up here in 1953. Already, 1,200 students have graduated.

Students undergo a five-year training stint which adds up to about 3,300 hours of study.

Chinese physicians here can also pursue a more advanced qualification in traditional medicine in China's colleges. The more popular colleges are in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Nanjing.

Said Mr Lee: "We hope that with both our hard work and the support of the Guangzhou College, the college here can give a more co-ordinated form of training for Chinese physicians."

**SECTION:** Home; Pg. 21

**LENGTH:** 627 words

**LOAD-DATE:** December 25, 1993

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**1063**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**TCM makes inroads into health care system;**

**Full complement of traditional medicine offered at AMK Hospital**

February 18, 2005 Friday

Judith Tan

FOR the first time, patients at Ang Mo Kio Hospital will be able to have **acupuncture** in the wards, when a full-fledged **Traditional** **Chinese** **Medicine** (TCM) centre opens there.

The place is a collaboration between the hospital and the Singapore College of **Traditional** **Chinese** **Medicine.**

The new set-up, called the Hong Hua TCM Medical Centre, will offer consultation and a form of massage called tui-na as well, and its practitioners will be allowed to prescribe licensed Chinese medicinal products from April.

It is the first time the full complement of TCM is being offered in a public medical institution. TCM clinics at others, such as Tan Tock Seng Hospital, offer acupuncture at most and this has to be done at the clinic.

This is the closest collaboration yet between Eastern and Western medicine, said Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan yesterday. And if it takes off successfully, such centres may make an appearance in other hospitals.

But they will be considered a separate entity from the hospital, and the TCM practitioners have to be given the green light from the patient's Western doctor to go into the wards.

The clinic can also see walk-in cases who will not need a doctor's referral.

Ang Mo Kio Hospital's chief executive, Dr Chong Weng Chiew, said the revised requirements will mean a more coordinated management of patient care under both Eastern and Western medicine.

However, Mr Khaw said, this co-existence does not mean the two practices are integrating. Even the Chinese themselves do not believe this is possible.

'During the 1980s, Beijing was pushing it and everybody merrily went along, trying to integrate the East and the West. Ten years later, according to the Nanjing TCM University, their conclusion was it doesn't work.

'To use a Chinese expression, zhong xi he bing, liang bai ju sang (integrating traditional Chinese and Western medicines will result in both sides losing out).'

But, that does not mean the two cannot co-exist or collaborate, he said.

Indeed, to achieve a harmonious situation between Western-trained and Eastern-trained doctors, there has to be better understanding between the two. Such understanding helps develop mutual respect.

As part of the deal, the hospital's doctors will be trained in areas of TCM treatment, while the Chinese physicians will be taught evidence-based research in TCM herbs.

Dr Chong said: 'With this strict criteria and assurance of quality, we'll be able to give our patients the very best of both the East and the West.'

His hospital was the first here to have an acupuncture research clinic, which it set up in 1995, as part of a move by the authorities to ensure good practice and evaluate the potency of acupuncture.

A year later, Hua Mei Acupuncture clinic of the Tsao Foundation opened at Alexandra Hospital. Last month, the Singapore Anti-Tuberculosis Association opened its first TCM clinic in Jurong. It plans to have three more by the end of the year.

Though the TCM treatment in the wards will be limited, it will be a bonus to patients like Madam L.S. Goh, a retiree, who fractured her hip and asked for acupuncture because 'I have faith in the treatment' as it helped her frozen shoulder.

She has been having it every day at the hospital's acupuncture research clinic except over Chinese New Year.

'Now I can take very small steps with the help of a walking stick. During physiotherapy, I'm able to climb one or two steps,' said the 70-year-old.

**SECTION:** Prime News

**LENGTH:** 577 words

**LOAD-DATE:** February 17, 2005

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

January 17, 2007 Wednesday

**Painkiller with sticking points;**

**Is acupuncture really as effective as its supporters claim? Shelagh Mahbubani finds out**

**SECTION:** MIND YOUR BODY - IN THE KNOW

**LENGTH:** 718 words

In 1991, the frozen body of a 5,300-year-old man was found in the Alps.

A close look by scientists threw up a remarkable find: tattoo marks at traditional **acupuncture** points on his body.

This led them to deduce that the man - who appeared to have suffered from arthritis and was about 45 when he died - used a type of **acupuncture** to relieve pain.

More than five millennia later, people around the world still rely on **acupuncture** - a major component of **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM) - to fight pain and illness.

Acupuncture involves inserting thin, metallic disposable needles into certain points of the body.

These needles are then turned by hand or stimulated by a machine.

The aim is to restore the body's balance of qi, or 'life force' in Chinese.

Ms Dora Ng, head acupuncturist of complementary integrative medicine at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, said: 'Qi flows in the body to keep us going, and it must be kept in good balance.'

If the energy flow is interrupted or becomes unbalanced, people fall ill, believe TCM doctors and practitioners.

Ms Ng said that acupuncture can have any one of six effects:

>>Pain relief through raising the level of endorphins, a painkiller released by the body;

>>A feeling of sedation;

>>Adjustment of the body's homeostasis - or the balance of opposing systems such as respiration rate and body temperature;

>>Enhancement of the immune system;

>>An anti-inflammatory result; or

>>An anti-allergy effect.

Acupuncture is useful when treating conditions such as muscular pains, joint pains, nerve pains and migraines, said Dr Yeo Sow Nam, a pain management specialist at Mount Elizabeth Hospital and the director of pain management services at Singapore General Hospital (SGH).

Dr Cui Shu Li, senior principal acupuncturist at SGH, added that it is also effective against insomnia and anxiety.

The World Health Organisation lists several conditions which can be treated by acupuncture, including rhinitis, headaches and facial palsy.

However, there are many sceptics, too.

In 2005, Germany's Technische Universitat released the results of a study which showed sham acupuncture to be just as effective as the real thing.

In sham acupuncture, needles are inserted into patients' bodies, but not at the pressure points traditionally used to treat the condition involved.

Researchers studied 302 migraine patients who either received acupuncture, sham acupuncture or no treatment at all.

The result: 51 per cent of those in the acupuncture group had a 50 per cent drop in migraine frequency, while 53 per cent who received sham acupuncture reported the same effect.

The study's authors speculated that the sham acupuncture appeared to have worked because of the placebo effect - the patients believed they would get better, so they did.

They also suggested that putting needles into the body causes pain relief, regardless of where they are placed.

But Dr Yeo Sow Nam, of Mt Elizabeth Hospital and SGH, said that acupuncture - practised in China since 2,500BC - has shown to be effective in many studies.

Though he's a believer in the benefits of acupuncture, he backs 'multi-modal' treatment.

For example, he might advise a patient with back pain to do stretching and strengthening exercises in addition to acupuncture.

At the Hua Mei Acupuncture and TCM Centre, practitioners insist that patients follow the instructions of their Western physicians in addition to the treatment they provide.

TCM traditionally uses treatments such as cupping and moxibustion as a complement to acupuncture when treating pain.

Cupping involves placing heated cups of different sizes on the body.

Moxibustion is a procedure where heat from a lighted medicinal stick is applied to needles inserted into the body.

But acupuncture does have its limitations.

It cannot correct deterioration in the body, but can only relieve the resulting symptoms, warned Ms Dora Ng.

Dr Cui Shu Li also cautions not to undergo acupuncture when 'excessively fatigued, hungry or emotionally upset.'

The choice of acupuncturist is also crucial.

Dr Yeo cited the case of a patient who nearly died when an acupuncture needle was inserted into his lung.

He advised patients who do not know how to pick an acupuncturist to consult their Western medicine general practitioner or the Singapore College of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

May 1, 2018 Tuesday

**Acupuncture scoring points with hospital patients;**

**Shift seen in attitude towards TCM, not only among Chinese patients but also in a good mix from non-Chinese backgrounds**

**BYLINE:** Tan Shu Yan

**SECTION:** MIND & BODY

**LENGTH:** 1489 words

There's nothing unusual about needles being used in hospitals, as anyone who has had an injection would know. However a different kind of needle treatment is getting the attention of hospital patients these days - **acupuncture**.

The younger generation, in particular, seems increasingly open to opting for **acupuncture** therapy at hospital as a complement to conventional treatment, say hospital acupuncturists.

This shift in attitude towards **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM) practice is seen not only among Chinese patients but also in a good mix of patients from non-Chinese backgrounds, they add.

**Acupuncture** services are offered at public hospitals like Tan Tock Seng Hospital and National University Hospital, as well as at private hospitals like Raffles Medical and private clinics like those run by Eu Yan Sang. Some places, such as Singapore Thong Chai Medical Institution, give free TCM consultations.

In Singapore, TCM is carried out by TCM physicians accredited by the TCM Practitioners Board under the Ministry of Health (MOH).

"There is now a reversal, of acceptance of alternative or complementary treatment by the younger generation who are looking for a natural and safe treatment," said Dr Richard Tan, principal resident physician at Alexandra Hospital, which is operated by Sengkang Health.

What to expect during a hospital acupuncture session In Singapore, acupuncture services can be found in public and private hospitals to complement conventional Western treatment.

The Straits Times visited one such clinic run by Sengkang Health in Alexandra Hospital recently to observe how acupuncture is practised in a hospital setting.

Dr Richard Tan, principal resident physician at Alexandra Hospital, is also a registered traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) physician. He said patients have to be assessed by their physician to see if acupuncture is suitable for them.

Those who cannot sit still or have easily torn skin are examples of those who might not be suited for this treatment, he added.

Each session, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes, begins with the patient describing his ailment. The physician will then determine the pain points to be needled, and the patient might be asked to lie down on a clinic bed or stay seated for the procedure,he said.

Needles used are the same as the ones used in private acupuncture clinics. They are extremely fine, measuring from 0.12mm to 0.35mm in diameter - much smaller than injection needles, said Ms Tan Weii Zhu, TCM physician at Raffles Chinese Medicine.

Needles usually go only a little beyond the surface of the skin. According to the British Acupuncture Council, practitioners are usually guided by the sense of contacting the energy of the patient, and this might be achieved at relatively superficial levels just beneath the skin.

An infrared lamp is placed near the area of pain to allow heat to be conducted through the needles for enhanced circulation.

A machine that produces a small electric voltage is also connected to crocodile clips attached to the acupuncture needles inserted in the skin.

This sends a small electric current through the needles, which can restore health and well-being, according to TCM theories.

Tan Shu Yan.

Ms Melissa Ong, an acupuncturist at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH), said around 40 per cent of the patients who seek acupuncture at the public hospital are non-Chinese and under 25 years old.

Ailments treated in hospital using acupuncture are most often musculoskeletal in nature, such as neck, back and shoulder pains, said Dr Tan.

Ms Tan Weii Zhu, a TCM physician at Raffles Chinese Medicine Tan said pain in the joints and muscles, fertility issues and stress-related conditions like insomnia and headaches are the most common conditions seen for acupuncture treatment at her clinic. "The youngest acupuncture patient that I've encountered is six years old and the oldest is 94," she said.

The six-year-old girl had muscular aches in the arms and legs after too much physical activity, she recalled. Despite an apprehension of needles, the therapy was relatively painless for the child, and she felt better afterwards, Ms Tan added.

The Singapore Government began regulating the TCM industry in 2000, when the TCM Practitioners Act was passed in Parliament.

Under the act, all TCM practitioners have to be registered with the TCM Practitioners Board. The process began the following year (2001) - starting with the registration of acupuncturists. This was followed by TCM physicians in 2002.

Today, there are 1,396 acupuncturists certified under the Board.

In 2005, the MOH allowed licensed hospitals and nursing homes to have full service TCM clinics - including acupuncture, tuina and herbal medicine services - to be co-located on their premises. The TCM clinic must, however, be clearly distinct from the conventional medical services.

So far, having acupuncture services in hospital has offered patients some benefits.

It has, for instance, made it easier for TCM physicians to access the patient's medical background before performing acupuncture, and to speak to the doctor who treats the patient. The TCM physician can then peruse the patient's test results and ensure that he can safely receive acupuncture treatment.

If the patient's health records reflect that he has an artificial heart valve or metal pacemaker, for instance, then he would not be considered for acupuncture because of the electrical currents that will pass through the needles.

"A physician practising acupuncture in hospital could have better communication with the patient's other healthcare providers in the same hospital, and at the same time have access to tests and radiological results," said Ms Ong.

At Alexandra Hospital, the in-house acupuncture clinic can provide treatment in the wards, which is more convenient for patients, especially those who are bed-bound.

The service is run by Dr Tan, who is trained in both Western and TCM, and has been practising acupuncture for 10 years.

One theory behind how acupuncture works is the "gate theory", where the needles can stimulate a release of chemicals in the body that helps to reduce pain, said Dr Tan.

He believes that TCM and Western medicine operate on fundamentally different principles. The former is more observation-based, and the latter is theory-based.

And while there are tried and tested Western medication for specific conditions, individuals respond to these drugs differently.

For example, a particular fever medication might work more effectively for some than others.

Similarly, if someone has back pain, they might respond well to painkillers like paracetamol, while others might require an additional source of pain relief such as acupuncture, said Dr Tan.

Therefore, each person should opt for the treatment that is most suitable for him, suggested Dr Tan.

For 34-year-old M. Hanif, acupuncture was not on his mind when he was diagnosed temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorder in January this year.

The disorder causes tightness of his jaw muscles and affected daily functions like talking and eating.

He was prescribed the usual painkillers, but the medicine did not help him much.

Mr Hanif also knew full well the side effects of taking excessive medication - he works as a doctor at Sengkang Health. After finding out about Dr Tan's clinic, which had about 100 patient visits last year, he decided to give it a go.

"I felt acupuncture is generally quite safe if done properly, in the sense it's not something that you take internally," he said.

At his fourth acupuncture session on April 10, Mr Hanif said he felt the treatment had enabled him to move his jaw with more ease.

During the session, he had 13 needles inserted in various parts of his body, including his legs, wrists and behind the ears.

"Initially I thought that it might be very painful... It doesn't feel like a prick... (but) like an achy sensation," said Mr Hanif.

Acupuncturist Ms Ong noted that the more significant sensation is not pain, but that of "soreness, heaviness, numbness and sometimes a current like sensation".

"These sensations are important as they indicate that the acupuncture points are being stimulated," she said.

However, some TCM methods offered in private acupuncture clinics are not as commonly found in public hospitals. These include moxibustion (the burning of herbs near the skin), fire cupping, meridian scraping therapy and bloodletting.

This is because hospitals are cautious about the risk of infection and skin bruising.

In general, Dr Tan advised against going straight for acupuncture therapy - instead, the patient should get diagnosed and treated by a Western doctor first. Acupuncture can then come in as a complementary treatment, such as to relieve pain.

"Alternative medicine means it's either or - it is exclusive," said Dr Tan "But acupuncture is complementary, which means we integrate TCM into conventional medicine."

**LOAD-DATE:** April 30, 2018

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Acupuncture is now more widely accepted and has found a place in several hospitals and clinics, complementing Western medication and the way doctors treat their patients.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**He's an expert in needlework;**

**A West African doctor, trained as a general practitioner of Western medicine, tells Elaine Young why he used only traditional Chinese medicine on his baby son.**

May 11, 2005 Wednesday

Dr Boubacar Thiemako Diarra is so committed to and convinced by the practice of **acupuncture** that needles were the only 'medication' his son received in his first year, whether for fever, diarrhoea or any other ailment. 'As a physician, I didn't want to risk any side effects with Western medication with my baby,' the TCM practitioner said.

Dr Diarra was born in the West African country of Mali but, for the past decade, has practised **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM).

The 40-year-old trained as a general practitioner and was sent to China for the first time in 1984 for further training. Once there, he found he wasn't learning anything new in Western medicine, and thought he could learn a lot more from **Chinese** **medicine.**

He said of that time: 'I switched and went through my medical qualifications in Chinese medicine and then started working there.'

The French-speaking Dr Diarra did not have problems studying at the Guangzhou University of TCM, as he had learnt Mandarin at the Beijing University of Language.

He is so proficient in it that, in fact, he would lapse into Mandarin during our interview at the Spa Botanica on Sentosa, before translating what he said into English for my benefit.

Integrating two or even three languages is something Dr Diarra does naturally, the same way he integrates Chinese and Western medicines.

He explained: 'Studies we have done in stroke and other diseases are that if you put the two medicines together, you can get a better result and the quality of life of the patient improves.'

The branch of Chinese medicine that blends effortlessly with Western is acupuncture. It involves inserting needles into certain points on the skin, called acupoints, along energy channels in the body known as meridians. These are connected with particular organs in the body. Dr Diarra said that there are 361 acupoints in the body, but at most times, only 72 of those are used.

Most people know of someone who has been to the acupuncturist for help with weight loss or to give up smoking, but the World Health Organisation recognises 48 conditions that benefit from acupuncture. Those include stroke rehabilitation, menstrual pain, facial palsy, insomnia, rheumatic arthritis, urinary incontinence and menopause syndrome.

Dr Diarra said that to make acupuncture work, the general population has to know more about its uses. For example, 'if you have menstrual pain, then to be rid of it completely, I recommend you come to me one week before your period'. A lot of women go to him only when the pain starts and although he can relieve it at that stage, why suffer the pain in the first place?

That goes for many conditions, like headaches, back pain and digestive problems.

When it comes to pain relief, the pain should lift within five minutes of the acupuncture treatment starting. Sometimes, it's immediate. 'Studies have been done in China, and in the United States, that show acupuncture can reduce the need for high doses of morphine, the strongest painkiller, by 53 per cent,' noted Dr Diarra.

He is also keen to point out how acupuncture can aid in stroke recovery: 'Singapore has one of the highest stroke incidences in the world and if you combine acupuncture with Western medicine, it would help a great deal in rehabilitation.'

Such is Dr Diarra's conviction, that as well as his own baby, he has also persuaded other parents to allow him to use acupuncture on their newborns for upper respiratory infections.

His wife is also his patient. He used acupuncture to correct her myopia.

It took one month of her keeping acupuncture needles in her ears, changing to a new set every three days.

Dr Diarra has been in practice for many years, and says that, as doctors in training, they had to give each other acupuncture so that they knew how it felt.

He advised: 'If you are having acupuncture done for the first time, you won't be able to tell if it is being done right, whether the needle is being put in the right place or not.'

He says that if it's been done correctly, you shouldn't feel the needle once it's inserted.

On insertion, you may feel a mild sensation, but that should pass quickly. The needles used vary in length and thickness and are usually made of stainless steel.

The amount of needles inserted varies too, as not just the affected body part will be treated.

Dr Diarra says the practice of acupuncture, now thousands of years old, has changed over the years because now people are realising that as well as treating pain and particular conditions, it can be used as a general balancing treatment for well-being.

To find a registered acupuncturist, go to www.moh.gov.sg and click on 'Healthcare Professionals Search', and then 'TCM Practitioners'.

Dr Diarra, unfortunately, can't oblige as he is now back in Yunnan training doctors in integrated medicine.

**SECTION:** Mind Your Body - Living Well

**LENGTH:** 809 words

**LOAD-DATE:** May 10, 2005

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Second acupuncture clinic planned**

March 16, 1996

Budget debate: Day 5

A SECOND **acupuncture** clinic may be set up at Alexandra Hospital soon to allow the elderly to have access to **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** or TCM.

The first **acupuncture** research clinic was opened at Ang Mo Kio Community Hospital last year.

The Senior Minister of State for Health, Dr Aline Wong, said this in Parliament yesterday, noting that TCM has a role in Singapore's health care system. She added, however, that the question was how to raise its quality.

She said that, although a number of recommendations had been made in the report by the Committee on Traditional Chinese Medicine last year, the ministry could not rush to implement them.

It had first to build up its own expertise. Also the various TCM organisations had to come together to raise standards.

She was replying to Mr Chay Wai Chuen (Brickworks GRC) and Dr Wan Soon Bee (Brickworks GRC), who had urged the Government to act more quickly on this issue.

On the other hand, Dr Tan Cheng Bock (Ayer Rajah) wanted the ministry to adapt a more cautious approach.

Dr Wong said that there was now a coordinating committee of TCM organisations which was looking into three main areas:

- Improving training, including how to upgrade the present five-year part-time course into a six-year, part-time diploma course,

- Listing the existing number of TCM practitioners. It was also carrying out a survey of members of its own and other organisations to see what kind of training was needed.

- Looking into questions of professional ethics, charges, the doctor-patient relationship and how to discipline errant members.

She also stressed that TCM's role was to complement Western medicine, not to replace or to provide an alternative to it.

Dr Wan had also suggested that the ministry allow suitably qualified TCM practitioners from other countries to practise in Singapore, arguing that it would help to raise the standard of TCM here.

A Health Ministry spokesman told reporters that the ministry had already allowed graduates from six leading China universities to practise in non-profit organisations here if they wished.

These universities were the Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Guangzhou and Chengdu TCM universities, as well as the China Academy of TCM in Beijing.

In the meantime, the ministry has also set up its own TCM unit to supervise and co-ordinate the implementation of the committee's recommendations.

It also formed a unit which will list medicines, license products as well as the retailers, distributors, manufacturers, exporters and importers of Chinese proprietary medicines.

Reports by Pang Gek Choo, Ng Wei Joo, Leong Ching Ching, Walter Fernandez, Chung Tsung Mien and Eliza Teoh.

**SECTION:** Parliament; Pg. 30

**LENGTH:** 680 words

**LOAD-DATE:** March 18, 1996

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

July 3, 2009 Friday

**Yishun Polyclinic makes its mark in acupuncture**

**LENGTH:** 298 words

A POLYCLINIC in Singapore has become popular with patients needing **acupuncture**.

Yishun Polyclinic is the first of 18 such clinics to offer this traditional Chinese needle therapy. Previously, **acupuncture** was available only in **Traditional** **Chinese** **Medicine** (TCM) clinics and at some hospitals. Yishun Polyclinic has treated more than 1,200 patients since the service was launched in October last year - and demand is growing.

Four acupuncturists operate the clinic using only one consultation room and two beds. Plans have been drawn up for more rooms and beds.

Most of the patients who go through this therapy for pain relief have joint and lower back problems. They are assessed and referred to the acupuncturists by a polyclinic doctor or general practitioner. Walk-ins are not accepted.

The acupuncture service is meant to complement Western medicine, said Dr Angelia Chua, a senior family physician and certified medical acupuncturist, who started the programme.

Patients get an 'East meets West' treatment: Alongside acupuncture, they are given Western remedies like painkillers.

Almost half the patients are below 50. Many of the older patients are treated for knee pains, while the younger ones usually complain of migraine. They have been responding well to the treatment. Those who do not show improvements after treatment are referred back to their doctors.

Dr Chua attended a TCM and acupuncture course in China under the sponsorship of a Health Manpower Development Plan (HMDP) award in 2006.

The National Healthcare Group, which Yishun Polyclinic comes under, gave out HMDP awards to another 189 health-care workers on Wednesday. The awards, worth $5.7 million in total, enable doctors, nurses, health science professionals and administrators to further hone their expertise.

APRIL CHONG

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

May 20, 2010 Thursday

**Finger therapy;**

**Applying pressure on specific points on your body can help relieve pain. APRIL CHONG reports**

**LENGTH:** 298 words

**Acupuncture** is typically associated with **Traditional Chinese Medicine** (TCM) practitioners.

There is also acupressure, which one can easily try on oneself without **acupuncture** needles.

It can be as simple as kneading one's shoulders or pressing a sore spot. Acupressure is based on the same principles as **acupuncture**. Both TCM branches have been practised for thousands of years.

They work on relaxing muscles so that congested meridian points in the body are relieved and energy can flow, said Ms Dora Ng, the head acupuncturist at Tan Tock Seng Hospital's (TTSH) complementary integrative medicine department.

In acupressure, pressure is applied on acupoints along the meridian flow which are paths of energy within the body, MsNg said.

Examples of acupoints include the back of the head below the first spinal bone and the shoulder midway between the neck and arm.

It is easy to try acupressure on yourself when you are, say, watching television or when you need a quick pain fix.

A common do-it-yourself method is to exert firm pressure on an acupoint using the fingers or palm. You can also clench the fists lightly and pound the spot rhythmically, said Ms Seah Ai Wei, a TCM physician at Thomson Chinese Medicine.

You can even lie down or sit against a tennis or golf ball pressed against sore spots in the back or shoulder where the muscle is knotted, said Dr Kong Keng He, a senior consultant and head of complementary integrative medicine at TTSH.

But not everyone should try accupressure on themselves.

Pregnant women and the elderly who are weak or undergoing medical treatment and those with sensitive skin, fractures or severe osteoporosis should not try it, Ms Seah said.

The gallery above showcases some common problems you can alleviate with do-it-yourself accupressure.

aprilc@sph.com.sg

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

April 18, 2008 Friday

**Age-old therapy gets modern twist;**

**At Tan Tock Seng Hospital, laser beams and electrical impulses are used in acupuncture**

**BYLINE:** Lee Hui Chieh

**LENGTH:** 532 words

DOCTORS here have begun offering modern versions of **acupuncture** that bear little resemblance to the millennia-old therapy used in **traditional** **Chinese medicine.**

The latest incarnations include a 'needleless' procedure that uses a low-powered laser beam, instead of **acupuncture's** characteristic needles.

Another - a device inserted in the ear that shoots electrical impulses into the brain - offers acupuncture on the go.

Both treatments, meant mainly for people with chronic pain, are now offered by the Complementary Integrative Medicine Clinic at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH). The clinic provides alternatives to Western medicine.

Portable ear acupuncture is done by sticking an acupuncture needle into the ear, which contains many nerves.

The needle is connected to a tiny battery-powered computer, which is taped behind the patient's ear. A small electrical current is sent down the needle at regular intervals over three to four days.

As in traditional acupuncture, the needle and electricity stimulate the nerves into sending signals to the brain to release pain-numbing chemicals into the body.

Studies in Austria, where the device was invented, have shown that it does as well as traditional acupuncture in providing relief for chronic back and neck pain.

Dr Kong Keng He, who heads the TTSH clinic, said the device can reduce hospital trips for patients, many of whom usually need three sessions a week.

He said: 'It's very inconvenient for working adults to come to hospital frequently.'

The clinic has treated more than 10 patients since it started using the device in the past year or so.

One of them, 65-year-old executive Ann Choo, woke up one morning in July 2006 with pain shooting down her lower back and right leg.

Despite exercises, massages and three sessions of traditional acupuncture, the pain persisted. But after three days of using the device, the pain disappeared, she said.

The clinic has started a trial on 15 patients to see how well the device works here and if the local climate causes any problems.

In the last two years, TTSH has also treated patients in its satellite rehabilitation ward in Ang Mo Kio-Thye Hua Kwan Hospital with 'needleless' acupuncture that uses a low-powered laser beam, instead of needles.

The clinic plans to offer such laser acupuncture to the general public in two months.

It is meant for young children and people who fear needles, or have heightened sensitivity to pain, Dr Kong said.

One such patient, Ms Dorothy Teo, 59, suffers from lupus, a condition that sometimes makes her extremely sensitive to pain. But she needs acupuncture to ease her severe joint pains, also brought on by lupus.

She said: 'When I'm hypersensitive, even opening my eyes is painful. So, laser acupuncture is good.'

With laser acupuncture, she needs to take just one painkiller daily, instead of three different types.

Therapy using the ear device costs $120 to $150, while an acupuncture session, with or without laser, costs $50 to $70.

MANAGING PAIN

'I was almost incapacitated by the pain. Traditional acupuncture might have worked, but I just didn't have time for 10 sessions.'

EXECUTIVE ANN CHOO, 65, on how portable ear acupuncture provided pain relief.

**LOAD-DATE:** April 17, 2008

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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**1071**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Pioneer batch sits for test on acupuncture**

June 2, 2001, Saturday

Mak Ying Kwan

From Jan 1 next year, acupuncturists need to pass the test to qualify for registration in order to practice.

A PIONEER batch of 300 acupuncturists went through an hour-long test yesterday to be assessed for their knowledge and skills in the practice.

They were doing this because by Jan 1 next year, those who wish to practise **acupuncture** in Singapore must be registered with the **Traditional Chinese Medicine** Practitioners Board (TCMPB).

The **acupuncture** appraisal, held at the Chung Hwa Free Clinic in Toa Payoh, was to see if the acupuncturists qualified for registration, said Dr Wong Kum Leng, registrar of the TCMPB which organised the assessment.

It is conducted in both English and Mandarin and will be continued today and tomorrow.

One of the acupuncturists, Madam Nancy Wong, 24, a mother of a six-month-old baby, said her participation in the appraisal marked the first time she has left her baby's side.

Madam Wong graduated from the University of Technology, Sydney with a bachelor's degree in health sciences (acupuncture) in 1999.

She has been practising acupuncture for a year, but stopped temporarily after giving birth in November last year.

Like Madam Wong, those who sat for the appraisal have some knowledge of acupuncture and were exempted from the basic qualifying exams, but they had to be tested for their practical knowledge.

To ascertain the competence of such practitioners, the appraisal tested them in three areas: a written test on case analysis, and practical clinical assessments which assessed them on acupuncture techniques and the location of acupuncture points on the human body.

When asked how she prepared for the appraisal, Madam Wong said, "I studied the curriculum textbook every day for two weeks, three hours each day."

Others were not so well-prepared. Mr Sim Seow Khai, who is in his late 60s, said he had been too busy with home renovations to study for the exam.

"I had no time to prepare. So I just had a positive attitude and did the best I could."

Even though she was well-prepared, Madam Wong was a bundle of nerves during her practical assessment. "I was shaking. The three examiners were looking at my work. I don't know if I missed out anything in my answers," she said.

Those who do not pass this appraisal will have another chance at it next month.

After it was over, a tired Madam Wong said all she wanted was to go home and be with her baby girl -- and keep her fingers crossed that she had done well.

**SECTION:** Home, Pg. H9

**LENGTH:** 416 words

**LOAD-DATE:** June 4, 2001

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Undergoing assessment by the examiners, Madam Wong indicates the acupuncture points in the test's practical segment.

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**1072**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**More research into acupuncture**

March 23, 1996

Koh Buck Song

SGH to start unit and Alexandra Hospital to set up clinic. Koh Buck Song reports.

THE Singapore General Hospital plans to set up an **acupuncture** research facility, in another sign that **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** is increasing its presence at hospitals here.

Dr Charles Ng, chairman of the medical board at SGH, said the unit, when formed, would focus on research rather than provide regular clinic services, "until such time, data is collected to prove that **acupuncture** has value".

Dr Lim Shih Hui, an SGH neurologist researching epilepsy, added that the aim was to find out whether a combination of Western and traditional Chinese medicine was better than either form alone.

"The purpose is not to prove that one is better than the other," said Dr Lim, who is also a member of the research committee at the first acupuncture clinic at Ang Mo Kio Community Hospital.

The clinic has seen more than 450 patients since it opened last September.

Over at Alexandra Hospital, deputy medical director Dr Chay Swee On confirmed it was preparing to set up Singapore's second acupuncture clinic, and was looking into the necessary administration.

The Senior Minister of State for Health, Dr Aline Wong, announced this in Parliament last Friday during the Budget debate.

Dr Chay said he hopes to see acupuncture become "a useful adjunct" to Western treatments such as physiotherapy and heat treatment.

"We should keep an open mind and give it a chance," he said.

At Tan Tock Seng Hospital, acupuncture has in fact been used for some time to treat pain but not cure illnesses. Dr William Chan, head of rehabilitative medicine there, said acupuncture has been used at the hospital's pain clinic.

It is administered by an acupuncturist under strict medical supervision by a doctor, according to Health Ministry guidelines. Only 50 new cases are taken on each year.

Dr Chan said studies had shown clearly that acupuncture works for benign types of pain, such as chronic muscle strain.

Most studies from China, he noted, were not comparative but limited to specific cases. They also did not do enough to remove a patient's own bias towards the treatment, making it hard to measure the "pure effect" of acupuncture.

There was no reason why Tan Tock Seng Hospital should not expand its use of acupuncture if there was a demand, he added. These and other moves would be consistent with Health Minister George Yeo's vision that the ideal approach was to integrate Chinese and Western medical practices.

Meanwhile, there is a month-long queue for treatment at the Ang Mo Kio Community Hospital's acupuncture research clinic, said administrator T. K. Udairam. The clinic's two Chinese acupuncturists, Professor Zhao Changxin and Madam Cui Shuli, handle some 60 treatments a day. Only those suitable for research are accepted.

Prof Lee Tat Leang, who chairs the eight-member research committee, said the strong interest was understandable, as the clinic was seen to have a "Sisir stamp" of quality.

Patients could also see that, if anything went wrong, there was an avenue for complaint if they went to the clinic rather than to a Chinatown sinseh. Prof Lee, who is head of of the department of anaesthesia at the National University Hospital, reckoned that it would take at least five years for Chinese physicians here to be certified and the practice of traditional Chinese medicine regulated properly.

Emphasising that his committee's research might not yield conclusive results, he said it would take at least two years to compile findings.

He acknowledged that some doctors objected strongly to acupuncture, but noted that there was enough evidence to show that it had "quite definite efficacy" in treating chronic pain.

Research projects being undertaken now will look at whether acupuncture can help smokers quit, whether it reduces epileptic seizures in patients, helps post-stroke patients recover some functions and how useful it is in the treatment of lower back pain and pain that results from osteo-arthritis, a degenerative joint disease.

Such research, he said, focused on specific ailments and findings could not be extrapolated to be applied to other types of conditions.

"It will take five to 10 years of devoted study to produce anything more definite," he said.

**SECTION:** Life; Life at Large; Pg. 5

**LENGTH:** 1027 words

**LOAD-DATE:** March 25, 1996

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Chinese physician Lee Kim Leong using acupuncture for a patient's sprained shoulder.

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**1073**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

December 13, 2009 Sunday

**Acupuncture for backache;**

**Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) experts answer your queries in this fortnightly column. Remember, you should not self-medicate. Always consult a practitioner. Send your questions to mailto:stlife@sph.com.sg**

**BYLINE:** Gerard Yeo, Sinseh Says

**SECTION:** LIFESTYLE - PULSE

**LENGTH:** 351 words

I experience severe back pain which is sometimes aggravated by walking. Can **acupuncture** help?

Back pain usually originates from the muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, bones, joints and other structures in the spine.

The pain may be sudden and it can be chronic or intermittent. It can also be localised or radiate to other parts of the body and the intensity often ranges from dull to piercing and burning.

Other symptoms include numbness and a tingling sensation in the affected area. If the condition persists after three days, seek medical attention immediately.

Back pain is due to a deficiency in the functions of the liver and kidney, insufficient kidney 'yang', as well as liver and kidney 'yin'. Poor 'qi' and blood circulation and pathogenic factors such as wind, cold, heat and dampness are also responsible.

Acupoints such as shenshu and weizhong from the bladder meridian of foot-taiyang are used to relieve back pain and strengthen the kidney's function, while weiyang is used to dispel wind and cold.

Chinese medicine such as desertliving cistanche (roucongrong) and morinda root (bajitian) are prescribed to increase liver and kidney 'yang', while talc (huashi) and bamboo shavings (zhuru) are used to dispel dampness. Ground dragon (dilong) and black snake (wushaoshe) help dispel wind, while Chinese angelica (danggui) and hirsute shiny bugleweed herb (zelan) improve circulation of 'qi' and blood.

In addition, milkvetch root (huangqi) and medicinal changium root (dangshen) assist in the production of 'qi' and blood.

Processed rehmannia root (shudihuang), fleeceflower root (heshouwu), glossy privet fruit (nuzhenzi) and white peony root (baishao) help increase liver and kidney 'yin'.

Avoid bad posture such as slouching. Sleep for at least eight hours daily to help the production of 'qi' and blood. This nourishes your muscles and joints, as well as strengthens your immune system. Keep warm because it improves blood circulation and prevents cold and dampness from affecting your back and joints.

Information provided by Lim Lay Beng, a TCM physician at YS Healthcare TCM Clinic in The Adelphi.

**LOAD-DATE:** December 12, 2009

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**1074**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**qi whizz;**

**We get your queries answered by Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) experts in our fortnightly question-and-answer column. But remember, you should not self-medicate. Always consult a practitioner first. Please send your questions to stlife@sph.com.sg**

July 11, 2004 Sunday

Teo Cheng Wee

What is **acupuncture**, what are its benefits and what ailments are best treated by it?

**Acupuncture** is a technique in which thin needles are inserted into specific points on the body to treat illnesses.

This helps modulate the flow of 'qi', or the body's life force. 'Qi' flows through the body via meridians or channels. If one's 'qi' is not flowing well or is blocked, it may result in pain or illness.

By inserting these needles at specific acupoints located throughout the body, the acupuncturist helps to strengthen the flow of 'qi', or remove blockages in the meridians, thus allowing 'qi' to flow smoothly again.

Although it looks painful, there is only a brief prick as the needle enters the skin. There may be numbness, aching, swelling or a tingling sensation. But even children have gone through it with little fuss.

Generally, eight to 10 sessions are prescribed for patients. Each session lasts for about 20 minutes.

Acupuncture is most effective in relieving pain from migraine, arthritis, sprains or pain in the joints.

Another area where it has worked well is post-stroke management - to help stroke victims regain movement of their limbs. Success rates vary, depending on the severity of the victim's stroke.

Acupuncture can also help problems like insomnia, menstrual cramps, gastric pain and weight loss.

My husband and I have been unable to have a child for the last two years. Can TCM help us?

In TCM, couples who have been sexually active for two years without using contraceptives are considered infertile.

If they come to seek help for this, we will first ask the wife to see a gynaecologist to do a full medical examination, so as to find out the cause of infertility. The husband is also advised to do a check-up, to see if there are problems with his sperm.

In reality though, quite often these couples who come to us have already done such check-ups and have tried other methods of conceiving.

Once the couple comes back to us with the medical report, we will analyse it to see how we can help them.

For example, while infertility could be due to reasons like ovulation problems, in TCM's holistic approach, we may trace these to other problems, such as stagnation of the 'qi' in the liver, or kidney 'qi' asthenia (weakness). Through TCM medication, we can then help the couples with these other problems.

It is hard for us to say which herbs are suitable for this, as each case is different and thus the prescriptions can be really varied.

Information provided by Mr How Sek Kwong, head of the acupuncture research group at Singapore Thong Chai Medical Institution, which offers free medical treatment for all; and Dr Tan Siew Buoy, TCM physician and head of the infertility research group at the institution. For enquiries, call 6733-6905.

**SECTION:** Lifestyle

**LENGTH:** 466 words

**LOAD-DATE:** July 10, 2004

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

August 22, 2007 Wednesday

**Acupuncture at the hospital;**

**This traditional form of treatment is carving out a niche in mainstream Western medicine. Lee Hui Chieh visits hospitals to find out more.**

**SECTION:** MIND YOUR BODY - IN THE KNOW

**LENGTH:** 826 words

Eighty-one-year-old Low Chwee Neo is undergoing **acupuncture** to ease her back and knee pains, not in a **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM) clinic, but in a Western hospital - Raffles Hospital.

And she was referred to the acupuncturist by her orthopaedic surgeon, no less.

She said: 'I don't trust acupuncturists in other places, only those accepted by a hospital.'

Yes, acupuncture is digging a niche in mainstream Western medicine.

But how big a niche? Well, besides Raffles, two other hospitals here - National University Hospital (NUH) and Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) - offer acupuncture in-house for pain management. Their doctors refer patients to the acupuncturist just like they refer them to other health-care professionals such as physiotherapists or medical social workers.

An indication of acupuncture having gained more than a toe-hold in the hospitals:

NUH's Acupuncture Clinic sees 80 to 90 new referred patients every month; Of the more than 1,000 patients treated at TTSH's Complementary Integrative Medicine Clinic every month, about half are referred, the other half, walk-ins; Over at Raffles' TCM centre, the three acupuncturists treat about 40 patients a day, about a third of which are referred by their doctors.

A further indication of acupuncture's growing acceptance here: Some hospitals where doctors do not refer patients for the traditional needle therapy also have TCM clinics on site.

Alexandra Hospital, Changi General Hospital and the Institute of Mental Health have TCM clinics on their premises, which take in walk-in patients.

Even doctors recognise this ancient Chinese art enough to have gone for training and certification in it, so they can practise it on their patients.

Two of the six acupuncturists at TTSH, and one of the four at NUH, are doctors.

With acupuncture having been proven effective in clinical trials, rheumatologists have been referring their arthritic patients for treatment, as have orthopaedic surgeons for those with back pains, neurologists for those with migraines, and oncologists, their cancer patients, said Ms Dora Ng, a former nurse who is now TTSH's head acupuncturist.

Some patients ask for referrals; some go for it because they are unwilling or have been deemed unsuitable for surgery or medication.

Acupuncture is being used in tandem with Western medicine and treatments.

For instance, orthopaedic surgeon Lim Lian Arn of Raffles Hospital refers a patient or two with non-specific muscular pains each week, but supplements acupuncture with physiotherapy and medication.

Acupuncture has been around for thousands of years, he said, and has been shown to have 'more than a placebo effect'.

Professor Lee Tat Leang, a senior consultant from NUH's Department of Anaesthesia and a trained acupuncturist, agrees.

The hospital's Acupuncture Clinic has received 'positive feedback' from doctors who have referred their patients for treatment, he said.

Though there is little to show that acupuncture is 'better' than other methods of treatment, evidence does show that it is effective for patients with certain conditions, said Dr Lau Tang Ching, a consultant rheumatologist at TTSH.

'If patients don't want to take Western medicine, you still need to help them relieve pain,' he said.

However, doctors have also seen the limitations of acupuncture: Dr Lim at Raffles Hospital, for one, said many of his patients show some improvement after treatment, but then hit a plateau, after which there is 'no complete resolution of pain'.

The other limitation is that acupuncture involves at least a few sessions, which adds up to more inconvenience and cost for patients, compared to medication, said Dr Lau.

But he recommends it anyway if patients ask for it or if medication has not worked.

As doctors refer their patients to acupuncturists for pain management, the reverse is happening too, when serious underlying ailments are suspected.

Raffles' TCM centre sends 10 to 15 patients to the hospital's doctors every month, said its manager and acupuncturist Seah Ai Wei.

She cited an example of a walk-in patient who asked to be treated for diarrhoea, but ended up being referred to a doctor when the acupuncturist saw that it was no ordinary stomach upset.

It turned out to be colon cancer.

For 81-year-old Madam Low, acupuncture once a week for two years has eased the pain in her left knee and her back, and also enabled her to put off surgery on both.

She had her right knee done four years ago, but does not want to go through another operation:

'The doctor told me acupuncture is not a permanent cure, but I'm trying to postpone surgery for as long as possible. I'm not keen because of my age, and my first experience was quite traumatic. It's very painful when you are cut for surgery.'

With acupuncture, she can now bend her left knee, and stand after lying down and walk to the toilet, when she couldn't before.

She said: 'The pain is still there, but it's more bearable and I can tolerate it.'

E-mail: huichieh@sph.com.sg

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

September 12, 2010 Sunday

**Acupuncture for sweaty palms;**

**Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) experts answer your queries in this fortnightly column. Remember, you should not self-medicate. Always consult a practitioner. Send your questions to stlife@sph.com.sg**

**BYLINE:** Gerard Yeo, SINSEH SAYS

**SECTION:** LIFESTYLE - PULSE

**LENGTH:** 370 words

My teenage daughter has sweaty palms and feet and perspires easily. She has seen a TCM physician and was prescribed medicine but there is no improvement. Can **acupuncture** or tui-na massage help her?

Excessive perspiration, sweaty palms and feet are caused by a deficiency in the functions of the lung and liver, insufficient heart and kidney 'yin' and poor 'qi', and blood circulation. Excessive cold and/or heat in the digestive system and pathogenic factors such as heat, fire and dampness also play a part.

One reason your daughter's prescription of Chinese medicine did not work could be the duration of treatment. It takes between two and three months to see an improvement when treating sweaty palms.

Other reasons are diet, lifestyle and a wrong diagnosis. For the treatment to be effective, it is usually complemented with acupuncture and cupping therapy.

Chinese medicine such as largehead atractylodes (baizhu), atractylodes rhizome (cangzhu), Indian bread (fuling), pinellia tuber (banxia) and talc (huashi) are prescribed to dispel dampness and strengthen the digestive system.

Medicinal changium root (dangshen), milkvetch root (huangqi), white peony root (baishao) and processed rehmannia root (shudihuang) increase 'qi' and blood and strengthen the liver and kidney.

Common anemarrhena rhizome (zhimu) and Chinese wolfberry root-bark (digupi) are used to dispel fire and heat, while oyster shell (muli) controls sweating and reduces liver fire.

Acupuncture points such as hegu, fuliu, houxi and yinxi are used to reduce sweating and strengthen the digestive system and balance the body's 'yin' and 'yang'. Feishu and yuji are used to reduce lung heat, while zhigou, taichong and yanglingquan are used to dispel liver fire and dampness.

Cupping therapy stimulates 'qi' and blood circulation and helps dispel the pathogenic factors.

Your daughter should exercise regularly to strengthen her immune system and regulate her body temperature. Empty the bowels every day and sleep by 10pm to increase 'yin' and reduce body heat. Abstain from cold drinks and spicy and sour food to prevent a build-up of internal heat and dampness.

Information provided by Ms Lim Lay Beng, a physician at YS Healthcare TCM Clinic, The Adelphi.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

March 1, 2017 Wednesday

**Good to mix TCM, Western treatments**

**SECTION:** FORUM

**LENGTH:** 111 words

I was heartened to note that medical professionals are taking up opportunities to widen their knowledge and skills (More docs and dentists sharpen up on **acupuncture;** Feb 1).

**Acupuncture** is often viewed as part of **traditional Chinese medicine** only. But over the years, it has gained popularity among Western medical professionals.

It is right to view such a practice as an individual skill to help the society.

I believe more people will benefit from such cross cultural references in medicine.

We should definitely continue to cultivate an open mindset towards both Western and Eastern medication in our younger generation.

Raena Leang Ju Qin,15, Secondary 4 student

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Exams waived for 60% of acupuncturists**

April 12, 2001, Thursday

ROUGHLY six in 10 **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** practitioners who perform **acupuncture** will get their licences without having to attend classes or sit for examinations. Under new Health Ministry rules, anyone practising **acupuncture** will need to be registered by Jan 1 next year. So far, the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Board has received 1,595 applications for registration. Nearly 960 were fully exempted from having to go for more classes and examinations, based on their qualifications and experience. But of these, 246 were granted provisional registration, which means that they can practise as registered members and in two to three years' time, will be assessed to see if they qualify for full registration. Another 21 per cent were granted partial exemptions. These practitioners would have to take either an exam or courses to beef up their knowledge before applying for the licence. About 7 per cent of applicants will have to sit for an examination to get their licence. Most of them would also have to attend an upgrading course. These courses and exams will be run throughout the year. The applications of the remaining 12 per cent are being considered. This is because they could be non-Singaporeans, or they may not be practising acupuncture in Singapore. The applications for those with previous court convictions or those who need to submit more information are also pending, but the results should be out in a few weeks. Said Dr Wong Kum Leng, the registrar of the TCM Board: 'This covers practically all of them. The response has been very good.' He explained that the courses and exams conducted this year would not be repeated next year, which would have a different national exam.

**SECTION:** Pg. 1

**LENGTH:** 287 words

**LOAD-DATE:** April 13, 2001

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

August 11, 2011 Thursday

**Acupuncture will not cure cataracts**

**SECTION:** MIND YOUR BODY; Q & A Feature; ASK THE EXPERTS

**LENGTH:** 278 words

**Q: My 76-year-old dad has cataracts in both his eyes.**

**The doctor said that they are not ready for surgery yet. My dad visited a traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) practitioner for acupuncture on his eyes in the hope that his condition can be improved.**

**I do not wish to see him wasting his energy, time and money on something that does not work.**

**Can acupuncture really help to improve cataracts? If not, can it be beneficial in other ways, such as by preventing age-related macular degeneration'**

A There is no good scientific evidence to support the use of acupuncture for treating eye diseases, be it cataract or age-related macular degeneration.

Age-related macular degeneration causes the macula - the centre of the retina - to deteriorate.

A cataract is formed when the usually clear lens of the eye becomes cloudy, blocking light from entering the eye and causing vision to become blurred over time.

Acupuncture will not eliminate a cataract or reduce the severity of the condition.

The only method to treat a cataract is through surgery.

Cataract surgery is now very advanced and is generally very safe and effective. Visual recovery is usually relatively fast.

Modern intraocular lenses may also help to reduce a person's need for spectacles.

So patients need not wait for the cataract to be very severe or the vision to be very bad before undergoing cataract surgery.

If your father's cataracts are troubling him, then he would probably benefit from cataract surgery. He should be assessed by an eye specialist.

**DR LEONARD ANG**

medical director of The Singapore Medical Group's The Eye & Cornea Transplant Centre and Premium Lasik Surgery Clinic

**LOAD-DATE:** August 10, 2011

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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**1080**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

June 29, 2018 Friday

**East meets West in new treatment for dry eyes;**

**Study combining acupuncture and eye drops on patients achieved best results**

**BYLINE:** Khoe Wei Jun

**SECTION:** HOME

**LENGTH:** 423 words

The results of a new collaboration involving Western and **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** could prove to be a sight for sore eyes - literally.

Researchers tested a technique using eye drops and **acupuncture** to treat a common condition called "dry eye", which causes redness and inflammation around the eyes.

Some 150 dry eye patients aged 40 to 85 were split into three groups of 50: one group was given eye drops and acupuncture, one was given eye drops and herbal medicine, and one received eye drops alone.

After eight 20-minute sessions of treatment over 30 days, the group which received eye drops and acupuncture recorded the biggest improvement, of 88 per cent.

Acupuncture was applied to patients' legs, hands and face.

Results were measured by a high-tech device with a camera and diagnostic instrument to observe the patients' corneas, as well as through interviews and questionnaires. No negative side effects were observed.

The study was part of a three-year collaboration between the Singapore Eye Research Institute (Seri) and Singapore Chung Hwa Medical Institution (SCHMI). The project received almost $290,000 in funding from the Ministry of Health's (MOH) TCM Research Grant over three years.

Optician Tan Hwa Moi, who participated in the tests, said: "The needle feels like an ant bite and after that, I think it feels OK."

The study's principal investigator and principal clinician scientist at Seri, Associate Professor Louis Tong, said: "Dry eye is very much a condition that stems from modern living.

"Most adults are prone to this due to poor dietary habits, lack of proper sleep and exercise, as well as prolonged computer use."

He added that it is impractical to treat all dry eye cases in hospitals, and there needs to be a "community approach" to manage the condition while alternative treatments should be considered.

The study's principal collaborator, Dr Pat Lim, said: "TCM ophthalmology was established more than a thousand years ago and we believe by integrating the strengths of Western and traditional Chinese medicine, we can develop the ultimate solution for serving our eye patients in the near future."

Mr Liew Siaw Foo, board chairman of SCHMI, added: "We also hope that integrated medicine can be adopted as the new direction for healthcare services in Singapore, thereby providing patients with the most convenient and therapeutic advantages."

The future evaluation of the study will depend on the funding received. Currently, dry eye patients can undergo private treatment at institutions like SCHMI.

**LOAD-DATE:** June 28, 2018

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Madam Tan Hwa Moi undergoing acupuncture treatment as part of the clinical trial to treat dry eyes. The study was part of a three-year collaboration between the Singapore Eye Research Institute and Singapore Chung Hwa Medical Institution.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**In shorts**

June 15, 2001, Friday

9 IN 10 PASS **ACUPUNCTURE** TEST.

MORE than nine out of 10 of the acupuncturists - the first batch to go through the **acupuncture** appraisal - have passed the test.

In all, 301 candidates went through the one-hour practical assessment of their knowledge and skills in the discipline and all but 22 passed.

They had to be appraised to qualify for registration with the **Traditional Chinese Medicine** Practitioners Board.

From January next year, only registered acupuncturists will be allowed to practise here.

The 22 who failed will get a second chance, together with 60 other candidates, to take the acupuncture appraisals on July 14 or July 15.

But if they fail again, they must sit for the Common Acupuncture Qualifying Examination in October. This is a full examination consisting of two written papers plus clinical assessments.

MAXWELL FOOD STALLS IN DEMAND.

MORE than 1,000 vendors want to rent cooked-food stalls at the newly-refurbished Maxwell Road Food Centre.

But there were only 14 cooked-food stalls and three kiosks available.

Successful bids for the 9-sq-m stalls ranged from $3,289 to $5,390 per month, while a single 18-sq-m stall fetched $10,080, said the Ministry of the Environment.

The winning bids for the kiosks ranged from $4,338 to $6,388 a month.

The existing stallholders who used to pay $160 a month before the food centre was renovated will soon have to pay more, to "reflect the better facilities in the upgraded centre".

Details of their new rents will be announced soon.

FREE SUNWAY LAGOON VOUCHERS.

MORE than 100,000 Sunway Lagoon Theme Park vouchers valued at about $1.3million will be given away at the Tuas second link today.

The tickets will be handed out on a first-come first-served basis to all vehicles passing through the second link's Tanjung Kupang toll plaza from 5 pm.

The vouchers can be used on any day until Aug 31.

Located 20 km from Kuala Lumpur, the theme park has several adventure and water rides.

Linkedua, the private company in charge of managing the second link, said that the collaboration with Sunway Lagoon was the company's way of showing its appreciation to the link's users.

**SECTION:** Pg. 1

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**1082**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

February 12, 2011 Saturday

**Pinning down acupuncture: It's a placebo**

**BYLINE:** Andy Ho, Senior Writer

**SECTION:** REVIEW - OTHERS

**LENGTH:** 929 words

THE Singapore Medical Association (SMA) desires that doctors here be permitted to refer patients to **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM) practitioners.

If this suggestion is accepted by the Singapore Medical Council, I believe the practice of evidence-based medicine - and patient interests - will suffer a blow.

Of late, some doctors seem to have embraced even disproven remedies. Take, for instance, a review of **acupuncture** research that appeared last July in the New England Journal of Medicine. This highly respected journal is one of the most widely read by doctors across specialities.

In Acupuncture For Chronic Low Back Pain, the authors reviewed clinical trials done to assess if acupuncture actually helps in chronic low back pain. The most important meta-analysis available was a 2008 study involving 6,359 patients, which 'showed that real acupuncture treatments were no more effective than sham acupuncture treatments'.

The authors then editorialised: 'There was nevertheless evidence that both real acupuncture and sham acupuncture were more effective than no treatment and that acupuncture can be a useful supplement to other forms of conventional therapy for low back pain.'

First, they admit that pooled clinical trials of the best sort show that real acupuncture does no better than sham acupuncture. This should mean that acupuncture does not work - full stop. But then they say that both sham and real acupuncture work as well as the other and thus is useful. Translation: Please use acupuncture as a placebo on your patients; just don't let them know it is a placebo.

The authors trotted out the same conclusion after they reviewed an important German trial which also showed acupuncture to be merely a placebo.

In any randomised and blinded clinical trial of any mode of treatment for any condition, the finding that the treatment is no better than a placebo always leads to one conclusion only: It is therapeutically useless. Acupuncture, it would seem, is excepted from this rule.

A final study chosen for review was a 'pragmatic' trial that was bereft of any use because, as the authors said, 'neither providers nor patients were blinded to treatment. Therefore, a bias due to unblinding cannot be ruled out'. In fact, such a 'trial' is inherently biased.

Then, as spinmeisters, the authors concluded with a flourish: 'Acupuncture... has not been established to be superior to sham acupuncture... However, (it) may be more effective than usual care, (so) it is not unreasonable to... incorporate acupuncture into... the management of chronic low back pain.'

Balderdash!

I should add that I am not criticising TCM per se. Only acupuncture, a facet of TCM, albeit its most dramatic, is being scrutinised here. Chinese herbology must be analysed on its own merits.

Interestingly, although acupuncture may be TCM's poster boy today, the Chinese physician in days of yore would have looked askance at it. Instead, his practice and prestige were based upon his grasp of the Chinese pharmacopoeia.

Acupuncture was left to the shamans and blood letters. After all, it was grounded, not in the knowledge of which herbs were best for what conditions, but astrology.

In Giovanni Maciocia's 2005 book, The Foundations Of Chinese Medicine: A Comprehensive Text For Acupuncturists And Herbalists, there is a chart showing the astrological provenance of acupuncture. The chart shows how the 12 main acupuncture meridians and the 12 main body segments correspond to the 12 Houses of the Chinese zodiac.

In Chinese cosmology, all life is animated by a numinous force called qi, the flow of which mirrors the sun's apparent 'movement' during the year through the ecliptic. (The ecliptic is the imaginary plane of the earth's orbit around the sun).

Moreover, everything in the Chinese zodiac is mirrored on Earth and in Man. This was taught even in the earliest systematised TCM text, the Yellow Emperor's Canon Of Medicine, thus: 'Heaven is covered with constellations, Earth with waterways, and man with channels.'

This 'as above, so below' doctrine means that if there is qi flowing around in the imaginary closed loop of the zodiac, there is qi flowing correspondingly in the body's closed loop of imaginary meridians as well.

These meridians run from head to toe to form a network interlinking 361 points on the skin. But why are there 361 points? Since the earth takes three minutes under 24 hours to rotate 360 degrees on its axis, the sun appears to revolve through 361 degrees on the ecliptic every 24 hours. Hence 361 points. This factoid alone is sufficient to nail down the acupuncture-astrology linkage.

Since qi flows around in a closed loop, needles can be inserted at one of these points far removed from your site of pain to rechannel qi. If done well, this supposedly can cure your spot of trouble.

Note that not only is acupuncture astrological in origin but also the astrology is based on a model of the universe which has the earth at its centre. This geocentric model was an erroneous idea widely accepted before the Copernican revolution.

Today, no one believes the earth is at the centre of the universe. But the ancient Chinese saw this geocentric principle organising all of nature as well. From its accompanying astrological system, acupuncture was birthed.

So should doctors check the daily horoscopes of their patients?

Interestingly, although acupuncture may be TCM's poster boy today, the Chinese physician in days of yore would have looked askance at it. Instead, his practice and prestige were based upon his grasp of the Chinese pharmacopoeia.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Painless and needle-free acupuncture**

March 19, 2000

Leong Weng Kam

Electronic magnetic radiation is used in treatment.

A RUSSIAN doctor and an Armenian radar scientist have come up with a painless way to perform Chinese **acupuncture** -without using needles.

Instead, the patient is treated using a machine which produces electronic magnetic radiation.

Dr Mikhail Teppone, from Russia, and Dr Romen Avagyan, from Armenia, call the technique Extremely High Frequency Puncture. It integrates **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM) with modern Western science.

Magnetic radio waves from a micro generator moderated by a transmitter sends qi -or energy -to the acupoints of a patient, without contact with his or her body.

Said Dr Teppone, 42: "The effect is the same as poking a needle through the skin of the patient."

He presented the new acupuncture method yesterday at the start of the two-day Fifth International Congress of TCM and Acupuncture at the Hilton Hotel.

Dr Avagyan, 55, told The Sunday Times that both he and Dr Teppone started developing the technique more than 10 years ago.

The latest model of the machine, called the Artsakh device, was developed only two months ago in Britain, where both of them work.

"We are ready to market the technology in a big way now," said Dr Teppone, who brought a set here to demonstrate.

Costing between US$ 2,000 (S$ 3,400) and US$ 3,000 each, he said the machine is widely used in Russia and several Eastern European states. It has just been introduced to Britain and Germany, he added.

Dr Avagyan said they are looking for Singapore partners to manufacture the machine and market it to China and other parts of Asia.

The executive chairman of the congress, Chinese physician and acupuncturist T. T. Ang, said the electronic magnetic radiation method of acupuncture would be good for those who are afraid of needles and pain.

More than 150 people from over 30 countries are attending the congress, which is organised by the Chinese Nature-cure Institute which promotes TCM, acupuncture, taiqi and qigong exercises in Singapore.

**SECTION:** Home; Pg. 36

**LENGTH:** 340 words

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**1084**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Most acupuncturists exempt from exams**

December 30, 1999

Joanne Lee

ABOUT two-thirds of the 1,100 acupuncturists now practising here will not need to sit for qualifying examinations when the Ministry of Health (MOH) starts registering **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM) practitioners from the middle of next year.

The remaining one-third, who do not meet certain criteria, will have to pass the common test set by a new TCM Practitioners' Board to be registered.

Revealing the criteria for registering on Tuesday, MOH said anyone who has been practising **acupuncture** continuously since July 1985 is exempted from the proposed Common **Acupuncture** Qualifying Examination (CAQE).

Others who are also fully exempt are those with degrees from recognised TCM universities in China, including:

\* China Academy of TCM, including the Beijing College of Acupuncture and Orthopaedics \* Beijing University of TCM.

\* Shanghai University of TCM \* Nanjing University of TCM.

\* Chengdu University of TCM, and \* Guangzhou University of TCM.

Other mainland universities, and those in Hongkong and Taiwan, will also be considered. Locally-trained acupuncturists with five-year part-time diplomas obtained before July 1990 from approved TCM training schools are also exempted from the examinations.

Others with less practising experience will be granted provisional registration. The rest will have to either undergo an appraisal process or pass the CAQE.

These criteria are valid only until Jan 1, 2002. After that, only those with degrees from recognised institutes will be registered, and only those with valid practising certificates will be allowed to practise.

Parliamentary Secretary (Health) Chan Soo Sen announced that a TCM Practitioners' Board will be set up by the middle of next year which will function like the Singapore Medical Council.

It will regulate the TCM industry and its practitioners, conduct examinations, and run a nine-month Acupuncture Upgrading Training Course.

Said Mr Chan: "This is necessary to ensure public safety ... It will also raise ... standards and enhance its professional image."

The CAQE and upgrading course, to be administered by one of the local TCM schools, will be in Chinese. But Dr Wong Kum Leng, TCM director at MOH, said arrangements will be made for those not proficient in Chinese.

He added that the board will discuss whether to recognise TCM degrees from countries like Germany, Australia and the US. MOH plans to register all TCM practitioners by 2002.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

February 24, 2011 Thursday

**A prickly issue;**

**Those trained in acupuncture and Western medicine nail cause of conflict**

**BYLINE:** Melissa Pang

**LENGTH:** 812 words

AT A specialist clinic in Paragon Medical, it is not unusual to see patients seated in the waiting area with needles poking various parts of their bodies.

Ear, nose and throat (ENT) surgeon Tan Nam Guan is also an acupuncturist, and he administers this alternative medicine to his patients as a treatment option. 'I never promise that **acupuncture** will treat them 100 per cent, but that it may help.'

Dr Tan is one of 97 doctors here who are certified acupuncturists, according to the **Traditional Chinese Medicine** Practitioners Board (TCMPB).

Although 88 of these doctors hold valid practising certificates, it is not known how many of them actually use acupuncture as a form of treatment. Among the Western-trained doctor-acupuncturists are three licensed TCM physicians.

TCM practitioners incorporate the use of herbal medicine and acupuncture to treat patients, while acupuncturists can practise only acupuncture. It takes a part-time course of seven years to be a TCM physician and a one-year part-time course to be an acupuncturist.

In 2006, the Singapore College of TCM, a privately run institution, launched an English-language graduate diploma for Western-trained doctors keen to be acupuncturists. The part-time course attracted 49 doctors, all of whom graduated the following year. In 2008, 22 doctors took up the course and passed; the number dropped to 12 in 2009.

The course teaches the theoretical and practical aspects of acupuncture and how to use it to manage diseases. Doctors have to complete clinical attachments and sit a test by the TCMPB.

Acupuncture made the news earlier this month, when Straits Times senior writer Andy Ho wrote an opinion piece questioning the Singapore Medical Association's proposal to permit doctors here to refer patients to TCM practitioners. He cited a study that found real acupuncture treatments to be no more effective than sham ones, and said that acupuncture was based on astrology. A debate in the Forum page ensued, with physicians and patients from both camps speaking out.

Dr Derrick Aw, a dermatologist who practises acupuncture at National University Hospital (NUH), commented that it may not achieve the gold standard of scientific evidence to be positioned as a first-line or efficacy-credible form of treatment.

'But it remains a safe option for patients who seek complementary modalities of treatment for their chronic conditions,' he said.

Those qualified in both Eastern and Western medicine point out a lack of understanding of TCM as the main cause of conflict.

Dr Tan said: 'Previously, there was a high chance I would have said the same of TCM. But the training I received helped me to appreciate and understand acupuncture. I believe they may have a different perspective if they have undergone TCM training.'

It is a view shared by Dr Swee Yong Peng, a general practitioner and a qualified TCM physician. Dr Swee, who teaches a compulsory two-day TCM module at the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School, said the subject may not interest all students, but it is nevertheless an 'eye-opener' for those who appreciate an explanation of another mode of treatment.

Whatever their view, doctors cannot ignore how more patients are turning to acupuncture as a complementary treatment or for help on ailments that Western medicine has no answers for.

One of them is private banker Charlie Bigard, 27, who suffers from sinusitis which leaves her with migraines and a perpetually blocked nose. 'Acupuncture alleviated my headaches while Western drugs helped clear the nose,' she said.

Clinics like Tan Tock Seng Hospital's Complementary Integrative Medicine (CIM) centre have seen a 10 per cent year-on-year growth over the last three years. The clinic is manned by two doctors trained in acupuncture and five TCM physicians. Last year, it had 21,000 visits by patients, said its head Kong Keng He.

These East-West physicians stressed the importance of acupuncture as a complement to Western medicine.

'Acupuncture is seen as a complementary treatment at the CIM clinic. Most patients would have been evaluated by a medical doctor before seeking acupuncture treatment,' said Dr Kong, who is a doctor-cum-acupuncturist.

Dr Tan emphasised that he uses his knowledge of Western medicine to diagnose patients, while acupuncture is meant to augment treatment.

A Ministry of Health spokesman said doctors are free to study TCM to become qualified TCM physicians or acupuncturists, but the two fields are separate.

Registered doctors can combine acupuncture with Western medicine, but combining TCM and Western medicine in the same clinic is not allowed as it would be 'misleading to patients'. The doctor would have to set up a separate TCM clinic to be regulated by the TCMPB.

'Patients then make a conscious choice about whether they are coming for a Western doctor consultation or a TCM consultation,' said the spokesman.

melpang@sph.com.sg

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Embracing TCM;**

**Now, Traditional Chinese Medicine is being used in tandem with Western medicine**

March 13, 2005 Sunday

Judith Tan

WHEN housewife Chionh Bee Lian, 53, had a stroke a year ago, she went through the same regime most stroke patients here do.

She was admitted to the Singapore General Hospital, had a CT scan done of her brain to see the damage, was given medication to dissolve the clot which had caused her stroke and then rehabilitation to restore movement to her paralysed left side.

When she felt she wasn't recovering quickly enough, she asked to start a course of **acupuncture** at the Ang Mo Kio Community Hospital.

A friend who'd also had a stroke had improved remarkably after undergoing **acupuncture** there.

At her request, SGH discharged her and referred her to the community hospital. After a week of treatment, Madam Chionh was able to stand on her own.

'If you were to look at me today, you wouldn't believe that I had suffered a stroke a year ago,' she said.

If this had happened 10 years ago, she probably wouldn't have got the referral. Madam Chionh would have had to seek the alternative treatment on her own.

In 1994, there was little contact, let alone a formal arrangement, between Eastern and Western medical institutions. Traditional Chinese medicine was by and large practised in the shadows, well away from the scientific discipline called Western medicine. There was little acceptance of it by the mainstream medical community.

As Dr Tommy Cheng, a professor in pharmacology at the Yale University School of Medicine in the United States, put it: 'When you dabble in Traditional Chinese Medicine, alternative medicine or other folk medicines for that matter, colleagues in the profession tend not to take you seriously. You are deemed as second class, someone who is backward in thinking and application.'

Aside from popular perceptions that TCM belonged to an older, more superstitious time, the lack of regulation meant that trained doctors often had to clean up after poorly trained practitioners.

According to a Ministry of Health (MOH) survey in 1994, Government and restructured hospitals in Singapore reported 154 cases of complications arising from TCM treatment between August 1994 and January 1995.

These included improper treatment of fractures, allergic skin reactions, severe infection, bad treatment of diabetes, and hepatitis induced by medication.

Around that time, moves began to be made to regulate the industry and also boost the standards of TCM practice. TCM physicians had to be qualified and registered with the MOH; a college was established to train them, and tougher rules were introduced for Chinese Proprietary Medicine.

These required products to be labelled, and every consignment to be tested by an accredited laboratory.

Ten years on, TCM is making real inroads into the mainstream Western medical community.

While TCM has always been available to the public - in 1994, nearly one in two Singaporeans (45 per cent) turned to it at one time or another - it is only a few years ago that acupuncture began to be available for outpatients in one or two hospitals.

The latest collaboration between AMKH and the Singapore College of Traditional Chinese Medicine takes contact to a new level.

From next month, the hospital will have a full-fledged TCM medical centre on its premises, offering acupuncture, remedial massage (tui-na) and herbal cures.

Recently, a breakthrough congress was held here which saw 500 professionals from both the Western and Eastern traditions coming together to share information on the latest research.

Helping the resurgence of TCM was not just the internal moves made to improve the profession, but also external trends which saw traditional therapies being embraced, on the one hand, as promising cures were discovered among them; and on the other, as people became disillusioned with the shortcomings of Western medicine.

Sure, TCM faced a setback in 2002 when actress Andrea de Cruz suffered liver failure and another woman died after taking Slim 10, a herbal slimming product that was contaminated with pharmaceuticals.

But rising healthcare costs and recent high-profile controversies of Western drugs and their side effects - as in the four arthritis drugs, Vioxx, Bextra, Celebrex and Aleve, linked to heart troubles and strokes - have driven people to turn to alternatives.

In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration now considers acupuncture a viable alternative to conventional medicine.

In June last year, it set out guidelines to manage the botanic drug industry which oversees the approval of herbs for therapeutic uses, including in conjunction with mainstream treatments.

Professor Hui Ka Kit, director of the Center of East-West Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles, said: 'This resurgence of traditional medicines, of which traditional Chinese medicine is the most popular, is also indicative of America's increased interest in wellness and in more personal control of health.

'Despite its ancient nature, TCM shows that it possesses essential features that compensate for the weaknesses of Western medicine.'

In a nutshell, the holistic approach of traditional medicine, in contrast with modern medicine's focus on curing specific illnesses, is gaining favour with doctors and patients alike.

The gift of Western medicine is to impose a rigorous scientific framework on researching herbs and compounds.

This meticulous process allows active ingredients to be isolated and tested under conditions which will draw consistent results each time.

Already, several prestigious medical institutions worldwide are conducting research on Chinese medicines and how it applies in the scientific arena.

At the three-day inaugural International Congress on Complementary and Alternative Medicines last month, some 60 papers were presented, of which 34 were research on compounds which could be used in the treatment of a whole range of conditions, from cancer to heart disease.

One of these was a substance, dubbed PHY906 by its Yale researchers, which was first described 1,800 years ago.

The researchers first began studying if the substance, traditionally used to ease gastrointestinal problems, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, could also relieve similar symptoms in people receiving chemotherapy for cancer.

To their surprise, PHY906 not only helped deal with those side effects, but it also appeared to slow down tumour growth.

Prof Cheng, who refused to divulge what the compound was, said: 'Preliminary results look encouraging and we want to further explore.'

Another major clinical trial conducted in China found that red yeast rice, used extensively in Chinese cooking as food colouring for dishes such as Peking duck and char shao, cuts the risk of heart attacks in subjects with heart disease by more than half.

The Chinese study involved about 5,000 patients, aged 18 to 75, from 65 hospitals all over the country.

Because of the research, xuezhikang supplements have now been reformulated as an alternative to cholesterol-lowering drugs, statins.

There is a Singapore connection.

Wearnes Biotech Medicals, a Singapore company, provides the main raw materials that go into Hypocol, an off-the-counter dietary supplement, and Lipascor, a prescription drug, for sale outside China.

In Singapore, too, research is being conducted on TCM herbs.

Scientists from the National University of Singapore have found that the chrysanthemum flower used to brew tea contains an anti-oxidant which attacks cancer cells.

The team, led by Assistant Professor Shen Han Ming, found that the anti-oxidant, luteolin, killed cancer cells in colon, breast and cervical cancers in the laboratory.

It now intends to take the study further by conducting tests on animals.

The scientific approach to researching Chinese cures has extended to the training of doctors.

Increasingly, Western-trained doctors are taking adjunct qualifications in alternative medicines like TCM, though it would be much less common for crossovers to occur the other way.

For TCM to be acceptable, it seems, it has to be built on a foundation of Western science.

And so it will be at Ang Mo Kio, where patients will have to be referred by Western-trained doctors to their TCM colleagues if they think they will benefit from those alternative treatments.

This is a model which Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan thinks can be exported to other hospitals, even the larger acute hospitals, if it takes off at the community hospital.

Mr Khaw prefers not to call this an integration of Chinese and Western medicine. Rather, he says, they should co-exist, each with its own role to play.

Even in China, which has 95 per cent of the world's integrated care hospitals, according to the World Health Organisation, TCM is used mainly as an adjunct.

Said research professor Xu Ling from the Beijing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine: 'Most commonly, Chinese therapies are prescribed to patients wanting to reduce side effects and pain associated with their Western treatment.'

It is greatly in demand though; nine out of 10 of her patients ask for integrated care, she says.

That was what Ms Zhai Yujuan received at the Beijing Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

She was suffering from Guillain-Barre syndrome, an inflammation of the peripheral nerves which causes fatigue, loss of sensation, inability to control muscles.

When three months of Western medicine at the Peking University Third Hospital failed to improve her bed-ridden state, a desperate Ms Zhai opted for the alternative and was transferred to the Beijing facility.

There she was able to continue her Western treatment, as well add Chinese massage, acupuncture and herbs to her prescription.

Mr Karlo Berger, founder of Integrative Medical Alliance in the US, says such integration 'enhances the ability for caregivers of different backgrounds to communicate and coordinate their care for a patient under their joint care'.

Over the last 10 years, an increasing number of Western medical educational institutions and hospitals in the US have been including the use of TCM - specifically acupuncture - in their curriculum and treatment modalities.

The challenge is to increase the Western content of TCM curricula so that TCM practitioners can participate more fully in a healthcare system in which both are offered.

Said Mr Khaw: 'To achieve a harmonious situation between Western-trained and Eastern-trained doctors, there has to be better understanding between the two.

'Such understanding helps develop mutual respect.'

And mutual respect leads to better care. Whether one calls it integration or co-existence, this embracing of TCM and other alternative therapies by Western medical science is likely to gain new ground.

As scientific papers were read at the congress, a roundtable gathered to thrash out issues of regulatory control, intellectual property rights and commercialisation of TCM.

Summing up, Prof Cheng said: 'A new paradigm is emerging. While previously Western-trained doctors thought nothing of TCM, today, I believe TCM is going to be part of mainstream medicine in the treatment of complicated diseases such as diabetes, cancer and degenerative illnesses. Chinese medicine and herbs can indeed provide the key information to the development of future medicine.' -- Additional reporting by Vanessa Mulquiney.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

May 3, 2012 Thursday

**Can acupuncture relieve nerve compression'**

**SECTION:** MIND YOUR BODY; Health Help; ask the experts

**LENGTH:** 249 words

**Q: I am a 67-year-old man. I constantly feel aches and numbness in my left leg. I used to do light exercises, such as walking in the evenings for about half an hour. I have stopped exercising since the aches started more than a year ago. Two months ago, I went for an X-ray at a hospital and was told that my spinal bones number four and five were not aligned due to degeneration. I was given painkillers but my condition has not improved. My friends advised me to go for traditional Chinese medicine acupuncture treatment. What should I do?**

**A:** You probably have a condition called spondylolisthesis L4/5, where the fourth lumbar vertebra slips forward in relation to the fifth lumbar vertebra.

This causes nerve compression and you may experience numbness, cramps, tingling and weakness in your legs.

As your condition did not improve with pain medication, I would suggest getting a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the lumbar spine to see the degree of nerve compression.

After that, you may go for physiotherapy and acupuncture.

These should be carried out over a period of two months to see if they work.

If they do not work, doctors may suggest a nerve injection to reduce the inflammation and swelling of the nerve.

Surgery is recommended as a last resort.

**ADJUNCT PROFESSOR HEE HWAN TAK, medical director of the Singapore Medical Group's Centre for Spine & Scoliosis Surgery at Paragon Medical and the SMG Orthopaedic Group at Paragon Medical and Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre**

**LOAD-DATE:** May 2, 2012

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Acupuncture can be used together with physiotherapy to treat nerve compression in the spine. -- PHOTO: NTUC HEALTHCARE

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

January 16, 2011 Sunday

**Eye twitches when under stress;**

**Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) experts answer your queries in this fortnightly column. Remember, you should not self-medicate. Always consult a practitioner. Send your questions tomailto:stlife@sph.com.sg**

**BYLINE:** Gerard Yeo, Sinseh Says

**SECTION:** LIFESTYLE - PULSE

**LENGTH:** 336 words

I am a 49-year-old female and have been experiencing involuntary twitching around my left eye for the past three years. The condition is aggravated when I am under stress. Western doctors whom I have consulted told me this is a common problem, and that I should reduce my caffeine intake. Can **acupuncture** and **Chinese** **medicine** help?

Eye twitching, medically known as blepharaspasm, refers to any abnormal contraction or twitch of the eyelid. It is a neurological disorder involving involuntary and sustained contractions of the muscles around the eyes.

Without treatment, symptoms sometimes last for a few days, then disappear. However, in most cases, the twitching is chronic and persistent.

The condition is due to insufficient 'yin' of the liver and kidney, a deficiency in the function of the spleen and stomach, excessive liver yang and weak 'qi' and blood circulation. Pathogenic factors such as heat, dampness and wind also play a part.

Acupuncture, tui-na massage and cupping therapy can improve your condition by strengthening your organs and dispelling the pathogenic factors.

Chinese medicine such as Chinese angelica (danggui), processed rehmannia root (shudihuang) and white peony root (baishao) are prescribed to strengthen the liver and kidney as well as increase production of blood.

Incised notoptergium rhizome or root (qianghuo), divaricate saposhnikvia root (fangfeng), peppermint (bohe), stiff silkworm (jiangcan), gambir plant (gouteng) and tall gastrodia tuber (tianma) dispel dampness and wind as well as reduce twitching.

In addition, milkvetch root (huangqi), Indian bread (fuling) and largehead atractylodes rhizome (baizhu) are used to strengthen the spleen and stomach and increase 'qi'.

Avoid caffeine and irritants such as bright light that may trigger the twitching. Wear sunglasses if you are sensitive to sunlight. Lightly massaging the area around your eyes can also enhance blood circulation.

Information provided by Ms Lim Lay Beng, a TCM physician at YS Healthcare TCM Clinic in The Adelphi.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**It isn't just stress when your head aches**

February 20, 2000

Lea Wee

IN **TRADITIONAL Chinese medicine,** the body is treated as a whole, says Ms Kwek Mei Lin, 37, a Chinese physician with 10 years of experience.

The physician has to run through a whole gamut of factors -- from the patient's internal systems to his external environment, and his peculiar constitution, before deciding on the treatment.

"There is no fixed method," says Ms Kwek, who is a member of the Association for Promoting **Chinese** **Medicines.**

It is one of two local groups that run a six-year, part-time **acupuncture** accreditation programme, which is recognised by the Health Ministry.

Ms Kwek also teaches TCM at the National University of Singapore's Office for Continuing Education.

To come to a diagnosis, the Chinese physician relies on four main techniques, she says.

They are wang (to observe), wen (to listen and smell), wen (to question) and qie (to read the pulse).

The internal systems of the body are carved up into five broad groups:

<solbox> The heart system, which includes the "thinking" part of the brain (si xiang), blood vessels, small intestine and tongue.

<solbox> The kidney system, which includes the analytical part of the brain, reproductive system, bones and joints, bladder and ear.

<solbox> The lung system, which embraces the skin, big intestines and nose.

<solbox> The spleen system, which includes the stomach, muscular system, hands, feet and lips.

<solbox> The liver system, which has the gall-bladder, ligaments, eyes, emotional part of the brain (qing xu) and fingernails in its fold.

All the systems in the body are inter-related, and influence one another, says Ms Kwek.

"If there is something wrong with your intestines, the problem can come out as an itchy skin or insomnia," she says.

External factors, such as climate and your working environment, also play a role.

Those living in cold climates, or who work in an air-conditioned room, may suffer from dry skin and throat, and acute pain in the joints.

A warmer, and more humid environment, however, may give rise to more complaints of sore throat and swollen joints, which feel more hot and heavy than painful.

A job that requires you to talk a lot may explain your dry throat and hoarse voice. A highly-stressful job may cause you to feel tired and make you unable to sleep well.

On top of these internal and external factors, the physician also has to keep in mind the peculiarity of each person's body.

"No one body is similar to another," explains Ms Kwek.

One of the most common concepts used to explain this difference is the famous yin-yang concept.

"Everything has two opposing sides to it, so does the human body," she says.

Thus, you have the "hot" type of flu (what is called fong re), and the "cold" version.

In "hot" flu, you get sore throat and your phlegm is yellow and thick.

The body feels more hot than cold, your tongue is reddish and the pulse beats faster than normal.

In "cold" flu, however, your throat is only a bit scratchy, and your phlegm, colourless and watery.

The body feels more cold than hot, the tongue looks normal and the pulse is slower than usual.

The joints are also more likely to ache.

The list of different types of flu runs on.

Says Ms Kwek: "Under the "hot' flu, you also have the "moist' and "dry' types. There are at least four other different types.

"The human body is a very complicated organism."

<solbox> If you have any questions on this topic, please e-mail them to stlife@sph.com.sg. We will get the expert to answer them next week.

**SECTION:** Sunday Plus; Sunday Plus Health; Pg. 6

**LENGTH:** 593 words

**LOAD-DATE:** February 22, 2000

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** A point to remember is that there is no fixed method of treatment.

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**1090**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

March 29, 2009 Sunday

**Acupuncture clears the air;**

**Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) experts answer your queries in this fortnightly column. Remember, you should not self-medicate. Always consult a practitioner. Send your questions to stlife@sph.com.sg**

**BYLINE:** Gerard Yeo, SINSEH SAYS

**SECTION:** LIFESTYLE - PULSE

**LENGTH:** 333 words

My nose is often blocked due to the deviation of my nasal septum. Can TCM improve my sense of smell and minimise inflammation in my nose?

The nasal septum is a bone structure in the centre of the nose which separates the airways and nostrils.

A deviated septum occurs when this bone shifts from its position and obstructs the passage of air through the nostrils.

This may cause the sufferer to experience sinusitis, infection and nose bleeds.

This condition is caused by a deficiency in the functions of the lung, spleen and kidney, as well as excessive heat accumulated in the lungs. A weak immune system and pathogenic factors such as wind, cold, heat and phlegm also play a part.

Chinese medicine, acupuncture, cupping therapy and tui-na massage can improve your condition by strengthening your organs and dispelling the pathogenic factors.

Chinese medicine such as Dahurian angelica root (baizhi), biond magnolia flower (xinyi), grassleaf sweetflag rhizome (shichangpu), Manchurian wildginger (xixin) and cablin patchouli herb (huoxiang) are prescribed to relieve nasal congestion and to improve one's sense of smell.

Baical skullcap root (huangqin), white mulberry root-bark (sangbaipi) and cape jasmine fruit (zhizi) rid the lungs of heat, while thunberg fritillary bulb (zhebeimu) and heartleaf houttuynia herb (yuxingcao) reduce mucus and phlegm.

Chuling (zhuling), coix seed (yiyiren) and oriental waterplantain rhizome (zexie) reduce inflammation, while tangshen (dangshen) and largehead atractylodes rhizome (baizhu) improve your immune system.

You should abstain from cold, spicy and oily food as they create heat and dampness, which weaken your immune system. Instead, take porridge and vegetables such as radish and winter melon as they reduce dampness and phlegm.

Exercises such as taiji, yoga and brisk walking, together with sufficient sleep, improve your immune system and prevent cold and flu.

Information provided by Ms Lim Lay Beng, a TCM physician at YS Healthcare TCM Clinic at The Adelphi.

**LOAD-DATE:** March 28, 2009

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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**1091**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

February 4, 2007 Sunday

**A taste of his own medicine;**

**It's French cooking- meets-TCM at Red White & Pure, Eu Yan Sang's new store concept**

**BYLINE:** Sarah Ong

**SECTION:** LIFESTYLE - TASTE

**LENGTH:** 426 words

AMERICAN chef Raphael Gamon got interested in **acupuncture** and **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM) when he was a boy.

His father, who had converted to Buddhism, was interested in both and that rubbed off on him. Encouraged by his Dad, he began to read books on the topics.

And although he later enrolled in cooking school in Switzerland, he never lost interest in them.

Now, 28 years later, the Swiss Culinary Academy graduate is fusing TCM with his French culinary skills.

The 44-year-old heads the kitchen at Red White & Pure, a new $5-million spa, shop and restaurant outlet in VivoCity mall. It is run by the Eu Yan Sang group, which deals in health-care and TCM products.

The chef, who worked in Thailand before coming here, gives interesting twists to familiar dishes like Chicken Cordon Bleu ($20.50++), usually a boneless, breaded chicken breast stuffed with ham and Swiss cheese.

His version is stuffed with blue cheese, dates and wolfberries. More commonly known by the Chinese name gou qi, wolfberries is said to improve eyesight. Red dates, often used in Korean and Chinese medicine, are believed to alleviate stress.

For dessert, there is Birds' Nest Ice-cream ($10.50++), a delicate treat which is said to improve the complexion.

Chef Gamon describes the experimental process of coming up with the recipes as 'more error than trial', and says that the menu took about six months to finalise, with help from consultant herbalist Lee Jok-Theng.

The chef, a bachelor, says he often cooks for his friends and always incorporates Chinese medicinal herbs in his dishes.

'Cooking is a lifestyle, and I treat my TCM ingredients with great respect,' he says.

It is the kind of vibe Eu Yan Sang wants to create in the 10,300sqft store, which is spread over two levels.

Aside from the spa, which offers massages and acupuncture, there is also a shop that sells TCM products like American Ginseng, a 17m-long bar serving beverages such as tonics spiked with ginseng and ginkgo biloba, a terrace for drinking wellness teas and a 68-seater restaurant.

The sleek decor, with clean white walls and walnut-wood furniture, is quite different from the group's more traditional TCM stores.

As Mr Richard Eu, the group's chief executive, puts it: 'It's not just another medical hall.'

He says the aim is to help people relax and counter stress and environmental pollution in an urbane setting.

'We're bringing TCM's philosophy about balance to people in a language they can understand.'

Red White & Pure is located at 02-141 VivoCity. Tel: 6827-0118.

Opening hours: 10am to 10pm daily.

**LOAD-DATE:** February 3, 2007

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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**1092**

734 of 995 DOCUMENTS

The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Hair apparent;**

**Acupuncture and some herbs can fight hair loss. As for making it grow back...**

June 27, 2004 Sunday

Teo Cheng Wee

WE GET your queries answered by **Traditional Chinese Medicine** (TCM) experts in our fortnightly question-and-answer column.

Experts from the Public Free Clinic, Chung Hwa Medical Institution, Singapore Thong Chai Medical Institution, Eu Yan Sang and the Ngee Ann TCM Centre will answer your queries.

But remember, you should not self-medicate. Always consult a practitioner first.

Some hair treatment centres say they use Chinese herbs to cure hair loss. Is there truth to it? Can TCM help with male-pattern hair loss? We don't know what herbs the centres use to treat hair loss, so we cannot comment on the effectiveness of their treatments.

There are several herbs that can be prescribed for hair loss, but the most common one is the fleeceflower root (heshouwu).

Acupuncture can also be helpful in treating hair loss, by stimulating blood circulation to the head.

Furthermore, as hair loss can be a result of a weak body - one that is too 'heaty' or too 'cool', or has poor blood circulation - it can be helpful to change your lifestyle to avoid activities that weaken your body.

Bad lifestyle habits include smoking, drinking or staying up late.

But having said that, hair loss often comes with ageing and it is unrealistic to expect to get back your lush crown of hair with treatment.

It is probably more realistic to expect treatment to reduce hair loss rather than stimulate hair growth.

Is it true that TCM has fewer side effects than Western drugs?

Practitioners believe so.

One important factor is that TCM uses natural herbs while Western drugs use chemicals. As herbs are natural, they are better processed by the body and give fewer side effects.

The use of herbs is one that is well-researched and studied in TCM. It is one of the fundamentals of TCM and it is crucial for physicians to know the different uses of herbs and how they interact with one another.

This allows us to use the different herbs to 'play off' one another. Some herbs, for example, may be poisonous on their own, but when combined with other herbs, they 'neutralise' each other.

Others enhance the effect of one another. For example, in treating 'heatiness', the gypsum (shigao) has a quick but short-lived 'cooling' effect while the common anemarrhena rhizome (zhimu) has a slow but longer-lasting effect. We can thus combine the two for the best effect.

Furthermore, in TCM, we have to examine and determine each person's inherent body composition to decide which herbs work best for him.

What's good for one person may not be for another. That is somewhat different from a Western approach, where one drug is used for everyone, like paracetemol.

All these contribute to TCM having fewer side effects, compared to Western medicines.

Information provided by Ms Lim Nai Siang, TCM physician and secretary of the research department at the Singapore Chung Hwa Medical Institution. The clinic offers free TCM treatment for the poor. For enquiries, call 6251-3304.

**SECTION:** Lifestyle

**LENGTH:** 504 words

**LOAD-DATE:** June 26, 2004

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Wooing the stork with acupuncture**

July 8, 2001, Sunday

Manasi Rajagopalan

More non-Chinese professionals from abroad are turning to **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** to treat infertility.

THOSE seeking traditional Chinese medical treatments for fertility now include better-educated and younger non-Chinese professionals.

According to doctors at two Chinese medical clinics that specialise in such treatments, people are flying in from Norway, Australia and the United States for treatment.

In total, the clinics treat about 250 people a month and about 10 of these are foreigners. There are more men who seek treatment, about 200 a month, compared to the 50 or so women.

And foreigners are generally less suspicious and less cynical than locals about the treatments, said Dr Tan Kian Seng, head of the male fertility clinic at Chung Hwa Free Clinic.

All his patients suffer from low or no sperm count and almost all have tried Western remedies -- from popping pills to participating in programmes at hospitals.

Dr Tan pinpointed stress as a rising cause of impotence, especially among his younger clients.

Before his patients start on a programme with Chung Hwa, they have to undergo a series of tests to determine the quality of their sperm.

The clinic uses a combination of acupuncture and Chinese herbs, which are prescribed individually.

They also have to consume 10 kinds of herbs, many of which are imported from China, twice daily.

It takes six to 10 months to get results. So,after six months, patients have their sperm count examined again.

The fertility clinic opened in 1994 and has extremely restricted hours, opening only on Saturdays between 7 pm and 9 pm in the evening.

Every week the clinic gets 40 to 50 patients, mostly Chinese but occasionally Malay or Indian. Once, Dr Tan had an Israeli patient who heard of the clinic from his colleagues.

Once their wives get pregnant, the patients obviously do not come back, said Dr Tan. So the clinic has no way of knowing how many couples have succeeded in having babies.

Staff at the Thong Chai Medical Institution have a better idea of how their fertility treatments for women are going -- there have been 560 babies born under their programme so far.

Dr Tan Siew Buoy, who has been with the clinic since it started in 1986, said most of her patients, including those from Australia and Japan, heard about the clinic through friends.

The four practitioners at the clinic check patients according to the rules of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM); everything from a person's breath, skin colour and even voice can tell them about her state of health.

Women are required to drink a concoction of about 10 herbs four times a day and they return once a week to the clinic for a check-up. On average, it takes patients five months to a year and a half to conceive.

Dr Tan Siew Buoy says that poor blood circulation, weight problems and kidney problems are common reasons for infertility in women.

The average age for women who come to the clinic is 33.

Both doctors said that patients using TCM do not suffer from any side effects; there are no food restrictions and it is not dangerous. In fact, both agreed that the herbs have unexpected benefits, such as making a person stronger or giving them a better complexion.

Dr Tan Kian Seng pointed out that while in-vitro fertilisation can cost thousands of dollars, the cost at the free clinic is only $2. Not a bad deal.

**SECTION:** Home, Pg. 28

**LENGTH:** 567 words

**LOAD-DATE:** July 18, 2001

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Using acupuncture and Chinese herbs, Dr Tan treats male impotence at Chung Hwa Free Clinic.; Patients given Chinese herbs to treat infertility suffer no side effects and may even enjoy unexpected health benefits, say the two doctors.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

November 26, 2007 Monday

**Western-trained docs get TCM diplomas**

**BYLINE:** Lim Wei Chean

**LENGTH:** 366 words

**ACUPUNCTURE**, 'woolly'?

Some of the 49 Western-trained doctors who began a course on this aspect of **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM) were certainly sceptical about what it could do.

But yesterday, all 49 graduated convinced of its benefits, with some even having incorporated it into their treatments.

Dr Swee Yong Peng, the vice-principal of the Singapore College of Traditional Chinese Medicine where the doctors were trained, said the school, in starting the year-long graduate diploma class for acupuncture in English, had worried about how to get the doctors to overcome their prejudices about TCM.

So it has been a 'pleasant surprise' to see that they could not only understand, but also agreed with its principles, he said.

The top student of the class, dermatologist Derrick Aw said: 'You have to leave all your Western teachings at the door when you learn TCM. It is a totally different approach.'

General practitioner Helena Wong, who sees TCM and acupuncture as complementary to Western medicine, agreed.

She said: 'For patients who are allergic to drugs or have chronic pain, a needle or two in the right spot may do the trick better.'

Senior Minister of State for Information, Communications and the Arts Balaji Sadasivan, the guest of honour at the college's graduation ceremony, said: 'Western doctors trained in acupuncture will have the professional capabilities to apply different modes of treatment for the same medical problem.'

Last year, while he was Senior Minister of State for Health, he saw this pioneer batch of doctors begin their class.

Dr Swee said interest in this course is growing, with some enquiries coming in from Malaysia and Indonesia.

The college will also run public forums in English on the benefits of TCM from next year.

WHOLE NEW BALL GAME.

'You have to leave all your Western teachings at the door when you learn TCM. It is a totally different approach.' MR DERRICK AW, dermatologist, and the top student of the class.

MORE OPTIONS.

'Western doctors trained in acupuncture will have the professional capabilities to apply different modes of treatment for the same medical problem.' DR BALAJI SADASIVAN, Senior Minister of State for Information, Communications and the Arts.

**LOAD-DATE:** November 25, 2007

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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**1095**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

March 10, 2019 Sunday

**Fine for TCM practitioner whose patient was burnt**

**BYLINE:** Felicia Choo

**SECTION:** HOME

**LENGTH:** 269 words

A **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM) practitioner has been fined $3,000 and censured after a patient suffered burns during **acupuncture** treatment.

Mr Koh Chin Aik had applied needles to the patient's left calf and asked his assistant to ignite a dried herb on the needle's tips at his Kreta Ayer Road clinic.

But during the treatment to improve blood flow - known as moxibustion - both Mr Koh and his assistant left the room to attend to another matter, and ashes from the herb dropped on the patient's calf, causing the burns in May 2017.

The patient, who has since recovered, complained to the TCM Practitioners Board.

After an investigation and hearing, the board concluded that Mr Koh had failed to exercise responsibility and appropriate care, take adequate precautions when administering the therapy and take adequate steps to prevent the burns.

It also found that his moxibustion procedure was not one of the appropriate and generally accepted methods of TCM treatment, while his management of the patient's care amounted to professional negligence.

The board noted that he showed remorse for his conduct and was a first-time offender. Mr Koh, who works at the Specialist Traditional Chinese Medicine Centre, must also pay the inquiry's costs.

"Based on the findings... the mishap could have been avoided had adequate care and safeguards been put in place," said the board, urging all registered practitioners to regularly review their practices to minimise the risk of burn incidents.

"The board... would not hesitate to take appropriate disciplinary measures against any errant TCM practitioner," it added.

**LOAD-DATE:** March 9, 2019

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

March 7, 2010 Sunday

**Pain in the heel;**

**Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) experts answer your queries in this fortnightly column. Remember, you should not self-medicate. Always consult a practitioner. Send your questions to stlife@sph.com.sg**

**SECTION:** LIFESTYLE - PULSE

**LENGTH:** 350 words

My wife experiences acute pain in her left heel. Western medication does not hep and she has tried **acupuncture** to no avail. Are there other ways TCM can help?

Heel pain includes plantar fasciitis (an inflammation of the thick connective tissue on the sole of the foot that is linked to the heel), heel bursitis (an inflammation of the fluid-filled sac, or bursa, at the back of the heel bone), achilles tendinitis (an inflammation of the large tendon that connects the calf muscle to the heel) and heel spur,?a hook that forms on the bone at the back of the foot.

It is due to a deficiency in the functions of the liver and kidney, as well as bad circulation of blood and energy. Pathogenic factors such as wind, cold, heat, dampness and phlegm are also responsible. Chinese medicine, cupping therapy and moxibustion (heat therapy) can alleviate your pain by strengthening your organs and dispelling the pathogenic factors.

Chinese medicine such as processed rehmannia root (shudihuang), common yam rhizome (shanyao) and barbary wolfberry fruit (gouqizi) are prescribed to strengthen the kidneys, while white peony root (baishao) and liquorice root (gancao) will strengthen the liver and reduce pain in the affected area.

Danshen root (danshen) and safflower (honghua) can improve qi and blood circulation, while divaricate saposhnikvia root (fangfeng) and incised notoptergium rhizome (qianghuo) will dispel wind and dampness. Bile arisaema (dannanxing) and Indian bread (fuling) can also reduce dampness. In addition, Chinese angelica (danggui) and suberect spatholobus stem (jixueteng) will increase production of blood and improve circulation.

Keep your feet warm at all times. Wearing socks can prevent pathogenic factors such as wind, cold and dampness from entering your heel.

Avoid long-distance running, especially downhill or on uneven surfaces, because it will add pressure on the heel and aggravate the inflammation.

Always warm up before exercise and wear comfortable shoes with a good arch support.

Information provided by Ms Lim Lay Beng, a TCM physician at YS Healthcare TCM Clinic in The Adelphi.

**LOAD-DATE:** March 6, 2010

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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**1097**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

August 23, 2017 Wednesday

**TCM's creature comforts**

**SECTION:** BIG PICTURE

**LENGTH:** 120 words

This may look like a questionable science experiment, but this furry pair are just patients at the Shanghai TCM (**traditional Chinese medicine)** Neurology and **Acupuncture** Animal Health Centre in China.

The clinic specialises in acupuncture and moxibustion - a form of heat therapy - treatment for animals suffering from aches and various ailments.

Specialist Jin Rishan told Reuters that the centre has treated more than 2,000 cats and dogs since it opened four years ago. Each session costs 260 yuan (S$50) and lasts for about 45 minutes.

The centre said about 80 per cent of its patients have shown some improvement after treatment.

"Making a paralysed and dependent dog stand up is our ultimate goal," the specialist added.

**LOAD-DATE:** August 22, 2017

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

February 16, 2011 Wednesday

**Caregiver's experience with TCM**

**SECTION:** ST FORUM - ONLINE STORY

**LENGTH:** 125 words

WITH reference to Dr Andy Ho's article on Saturday ("Pinning down **acupuncture**: It's a placebo"), I would like to share my experience with **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM) as a caregiver of a stroke patient.

TCM was a strongly recommended treatment by other people who had suffered strokes as well.

The physicians we visited all exhibited an understanding of Western medication and complemented it with Chinese medication and acupuncture.

None advised acupuncture on its own.

Logical explanations were given for the treatments. They were not based on astrology or the Zodiac.

Visiting any doctor or fortune teller could be a form of placebo too and it is not fair to label TCM as a sham, bearing in mind it has been around for hundreds of years.

Ling Liwei

**LOAD-DATE:** February 15, 2011

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

February 19, 2011 Saturday

**Objectivity must underscore medical treatment**

**SECTION:** ST FORUM - ONLINE STORY

**LENGTH:** 317 words

I AGREE with Mr See Yi Xiang's letter on Wednesday that **traditional** **Chinese medicine** (TCM) and Western medicine are based on different philosophies ("Determining the efficacy of **acupuncture**"), but that does not negate the value of clinical trials in determining the former's efficacy.

The primary aim of a clinical trial is to determine whether a particular treatment really works. It achieves this by striving to establish an environment in which potential biases and errors are controlled to ensure that any effect is attributable to the treatment alone. It is designed so that the results are not skewed by chance and error, as prevalent in anecdotal evidence.

Clinical trials do not "justify" a particular philosophical system, but aim to find out the truth about a treatment. In fact, the history of evidence-based medicine is peppered with unexpected results from trials - where the results have turned traditional wisdom on its head.

In the case of acupuncture, multiple well-designed trials have been run to determine its efficacy in different conditions. In most trials, acupuncture was delivered by certified practitioners treating patients as they normally would. Despite this, acupuncture has not been shown to consistently deliver benefits above that of placebo for the treatment of chronic lower back pain.

This result has nothing to do with the underlying philosophy of acupuncture, but is merely a statement that in the treatment of lower back pain, acupuncture performed by a certified practitioner does not consistently provide any benefit over a placebo.

As health practitioners, it is crucial to deal with this result in an appropriate manner. If we know full well that a treatment does not confer any benefit, can we ethically recommend it to our patients, thus bringing burdens of cost upon them, and exposing them to the risks of the treatment, such as pain and infection?

Dr Tan Sing Chee

**LOAD-DATE:** February 18, 2011

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

January 2, 2011 Sunday

**Reduce stroke risk with fruit;**

**Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) experts answer your queries in this fortnightly column. Remember, you should not self-medicate. Always consult a practitioner. Send your questions to mailto:stlife@sph.com.sg**

**BYLINE:** Gerard Yeo, Sinseh Says

**SECTION:** LIFESTYLE - PULSE

**LENGTH:** 299 words

My 70-year-old father recently had a stroke and is bedridden. He is able to move his limbs slightly and can recognise us. Can **acupuncture** help him and, if so, at which stage?

A stroke is the rapid loss of brain function due to a lack of blood flow caused by blockage or leakage of blood. This leads to an inability to move one or more limbs on one side of the body. The condition may also cause an inability to understand and formulate speech or impair one's vision.

Besides acupuncture, your father should take small meals with no more than 4g of salt daily. He should also take less sugar but more vegetables and fruit.

Acupuncture is commonly used to treat conditions caused by stroke, such as paralysis, speech impairment, swallowing problems and depression. Acupoints such as jinjin, yuye and tianzhu are used to treat loss of speech by enhancing the tongue's movement, while fengchi, jiquan, chize and hegu are used to treat muscle weakness, numbness and mobility of the hands.

Acupoints such as weizhong and sanyinjiao are used to improve muscle strength and mobility of the legs, as well as alleviate numbness.

Head acupoints such as baihui, sishencong and fengchi are used to enhance blood flow to the brain and speed up recovery. They also help in slowing down loss of memory, as well as enhance one's motor function.

TCM treatment should start as soon as possible as the first three months after getting a stroke is an important period in assessing whether there is a possibility of improving motor skills such as walking.

Your father should avoid smoking, drinking alcohol, coffee and tea, as well as eating spicy food to prevent further clotting of blood, which could lead to another stroke.

Information provided by Ms Lim Lay Beng, a TCM physician at YS Healthcare TCM Clinic in The Adelphi.

**LOAD-DATE:** January 1, 2011

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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**1101**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

October 27, 2016 Thursday

**Introduce priority queues at medical institutions**

**SECTION:** FORUM

**LENGTH:** 227 words

I have been taking my elderly mother to a **traditional Chinese medicine** clinic this past month.

She suffers from dementia, and her condition has deteriorated recently, resulting in the need for her to pay regular visits to the clinic for **acupuncture** treatment.

However, the lengthy waiting times have brought about much stress due to her unstable mental condition.

She is prone to creating a ruckus during the wait, or may even change her mind and decide to refuse treatment while waiting.

This is rather problematic, as it means that she would not be able to reliably receive the treatment she requires, a potentially serious problem.

I strongly suggest the establishment of priority queues for those who have immense trouble waiting for extended periods of time.

These would include patients with severe dementia or debilitating mental or physical conditions which cause them to be incapable of enduring long waits.

I strongly suggest applying such an initiative broadly to all healthcare institutions, including clinics and hospitals, in particular those serving the aged.

With Singapore's rapidly greying population, there would be progressively more patients who suffer from severe dementia.

As part of the country's move to make healthcare more accessible to the community, it is necessary to introduce priority to those who need it.

Jenny Tan Lay Yong (Madam)

**LOAD-DATE:** October 26, 2016

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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**1102**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Man's 2-year ban from practising acupuncture stays**

September 9, 2005 Friday

Selina Lum

HE COMPLETED the course and passed the exam, but 52-year-old Mr Tang Kin Hwa is barred from practising as an acupuncturist for the next two years.

The **Traditional Chinese Medicine** (TCM) Practitioners Board suspended him after it found that Mr Tang had submitted a document containing a forged signature and lied in an application form.

Mr Tang appealed to the High Court but Judicial Commissioner Andrew Phang upheld the board's decision.

In his written judgment, released last week, the judge also sent a warning to other TCM applicants: Stick to documentation procedures or face disciplinary sanctions.

'Much depends on the actions of the applicants themselves - in particular, their commitment towards the practice of TCM as a calling and not merely as a business,' he said.

Mr Tang applied to be registered as an acupuncturist in March 2001, claiming he was a full-time TCM physician at the ECM Chinese Medical Centre.

He also submitted a certificate of employment, signed by a Justice of the Peace (JP) and purportedly co-signed by the clinic's owner, Dr Tan Kia Choo.

Dr Tan complained to the board, which convened an investigation committee. It found that Mr Tang could not have been practising full-time as he was working as a manager at the clinic.

Mr Tang argued that while he was doing administration work, he was simultaneously on standby. He also alleged that three members of the committee were biased.

The committee recommended his registration be cancelled. This would have meant he would have had to wait at least three years before he could apply again.

However, the board found him guilty of improper conduct and suspended him for two years instead.

The judicial commissioner noted the forged signature had no legal effect on the authenticity of the document and was, in fact, redundant as a JP had already signed it. But he found Mr Tang responsible for the forgery.

He said there was no basis for the allegations of bias.

He also noted that it was imperative that the framework of TCM practice be observed 'scrupulously' to maintain and enhance the standards necessary for the development of the industry, as well as the interests of patients.

He also had some advice for Mr Tang. 'If the appellant is truly committed to the practice of TCM, he should persevere. And that entails looking with hope ahead rather than lamenting about what ought to be left behind,' he said.

Mr Tang has since left the clinic and now runs a health-screening business. He said: 'I won't leave this industry because this is my passion.'

The board's lawyers, Rajah & Tann, said the ruling was an important decision that recognises TCM as an important part of medical services in Singapore.

'This is also the way towards gaining public confidence in the practice of TCM,' they said in a statement.

**SECTION:** Singapore

**LENGTH:** 470 words

**LOAD-DATE:** September 8, 2005

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

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**1103**

862 of 995 DOCUMENTS

The Straits Times (Singapore)

March 12, 2012 Monday

**Call for more research in traditional medicine**

**SECTION:** SINGAPORE

**LENGTH:** 327 words

SINGAPORE is lagging behind other countries when it comes to research into **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine,** said Minister of State for Health Amy Khor yesterday.

She said countries such as the United States and Australia are conducting studies in related fields, including **acupuncture,** despite their shorter history of using Chinese remedies.

'We should be open to conducting more research in traditional Chinese medicine treatment,' she told a symposium at Nanyang Technological University.

She said this is an important way to gain public confidence in traditional therapies, and will help consumers to make informed choices.

Professor Hong Hai, a professorial fellow and traditional Chinese medicine physician at the university, said the lag in research is due to inadequate funding.

'We have people who are able to do it,' he said. 'I think some encouragement and better funding could result in better quality research and more research being done.'

The symposium was attended by more than 120 people, including industry players and allied health-care professionals.

Dr Khor also lauded the community for making an effort to keep its skills and knowledge up to date.

For example, organisations such as the Singapore College of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Eu Yan Sang have been holding regular courses and workshops to enhance standards in the industry.

Nanyang Technological University students get a foot in the door through internships at hospitals.

Six in 10 of the pioneer batch of 58 graduates from its double-degree programme in Chinese medicine and biomedical science have secured jobs in industries related to traditional healing. The rest opted to continue their studies or join other professions such as teaching.

Student Teo Chun Huat, 24, said: 'We are worried about finding jobs as the market is saturated but, with more external collaborations and research, I think more options will be open to us.'

**JANICE TAI**

**LOAD-DATE:** March 11, 2012

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Mr Teo Chun Huat, 24, and Ms Wong Ching Kheng, 23, study biomedical sciences and traditional Chinese medicine at Nanyang Technological University. Six in 10 of the pioneer batch of 58 graduates from the double-degree programme have secured jobs in industries related to traditional healing. -- PHOTO: MARK CHEONG FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

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**1104**

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

August 25, 2013 Sunday

**TCM centres see more children;**

**Parents turning to them, especially for conditions for which Western medicine has no treatment**

**BYLINE:** Priscilla Goy

**SECTION:** NEWS; Home

**LENGTH:** 535 words

One would think this place in Kembangan was a preschool or tuition centre, as it is usually crowded with children and their parents on a weekday night.

But they are actually waiting their turn at Yu Guo Chinese Physician **Acupuncture** and Physiotherapy, a **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM) clinic offering tui na or Chinese therapeutic massage.

As soon as the clinic opens for its evening session at 6.30pm, its seven massage beds fill up. Many of the patients are babies and toddlers receiving tui na or Chinese therapeutic massage for conditions such as coughs and colds, or colic.

Although much of TCM has yet to be scientifically proven, more parents are turning to it, especially in cases for which Western medicine has no treatment, like colic, or if they think their children are not getting better after seeing a general practitioner.

Yu Guo and Herbal-Basic TCM Clinic are two clinics mentioned often in online forums such as KiasuParents and SingaporeMotherhood.

Set up in 1986, Yu Guo sees an average of 100 children every weekday, an increase of 15 to 20 per cent from five years ago. On Sunday mornings, it is open for just 31/2 hours, during which time it sees about 90 young patients.

Herbal-Basic TCM Clinic was set up in 2010 for adults and children, but switched to become a TCM paediatric clinic in 2011. At the time, it had about 100 child patients a week. Now it has 300.

Other TCM centres such as Eu Yan Sang and Econ Chinese Medicine are also reporting an increase in young patients.

Ms Koh Yan Yock, a physician at Yu Guo, said the clinic also offers acupuncture and prescribes medication if it is needed.

Tui na is particularly popular among parents of infants and toddlers as it is non-invasive.

She said: "Parents have become more educated on its benefits. Some prefer this as it does not involve medication or injections."

Tui na, which literally means "push and grasp", aims to establish a more harmonious flow of qi (energy) through massage and hand manipulation techniques applied on various pressure points of the body. This is expected to allow the body to heal itself naturally.

Mr Benjamin Tan, director of Herbal-Basic TCM Clinic, said parents often seek help for colic, a condition in which a baby cries a lot usually at night, for unknown reasons, and common ailments like cough.

Fees for a tui na session typically range from $25 to $45.

Parents told The Sunday Times they see TCM as a complement to rather than a replacement for Western medicine.

Housewife Janet Ting took her three-year-old son for tui na when he was just two months old, when she was desperate to find something that would help his colic. She said he began to sleep better after a few sessions.

"I don't want my child to take too much medicine. But for peace of mind, I still take him to Western doctors. TCM is more of a supplement," said the 37-year-old.

Likewise, sushi chef Edwin Lim, 43, who took his son Clarence, 10, for tui na on Thursday to treat a cough, still goes to Western doctors, though he said the tui na was also effective.

Clarence, with one hand being massaged and another holding a piece of homework, said: "The tui na is quite comfortable, and not that ticklish."

goyshiyi@sph.com.sg

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Acupuncturist group wants tests in English**

September 6, 1999

Joanne Lee

With future English-speaking practitioners in mind and to put the practice on par with Western medicine, they make proposal to the ministry

THE Singapore **Acupuncture** Association has formed a sub-group to ask the Ministry of Health to look at non-Chinese interests in the regulation of **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM).

Led by Mr Justin Morais, 67, an ethnic-Indian acupuncturist, the committee has written to the ministry pushing for the proposed acupuncturist examinations to be conducted in English.

The ministry had indicated previously that it would consider having English tests.

But talks with the Singapore Traditional Chinese Medicine Organisations Coordinating Committee (STCMOCC) -the umbrella organisation for TCM associations -have continued to be conducted in Mandarin, much to the chagrin of ethnic minority practitioners.

The proposed examinations are part of a wider plan to register all acupuncturists here and regulate TCM.

Of the estimated 1,807 TCM practitioners here, only about 10 are non-Chinese. But such practitioners say the ministry should have an English test despite the small number.

Mr Sundardas Annamalay, 36, who has been practising for 13 years, said that acupuncture is not considered a science here, unlike in countries such as the United States, Britain, Germany and Australia.

He said: "If we want to be on par with Western medicine, it has to be treated as a science and not a culture."

He pointed out that even acupuncture research centres in China offered tests in English and Chinese.

The proposed tests, he added, would not affect the existing crop of ethnic minority practitioners as they had already passed similar tests, some of which were held in Chinese.

"If the test were to be carried out in Chinese only, then future generations of English-speaking practitioners will suffer," he said.

An English test would also ensure that acupuncture does not die out with the current generation of physicians, said acupuncturist John Yeo, 43.

He said that a Chinese-only test will discourage English-speaking people from learning and seeking acupuncture treatment.

He said: "For acupuncture to remain relevant, the ability of physicians to communicate in English is very important, as more patients are speaking English.

"If it is limited to the Chinese-speaking practitioners, everybody will lose out."

**SECTION:** Prime News; Pg. 4

**LENGTH:** 398 words

**LOAD-DATE:** September 7, 1999

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Mr Morais treating national footballer Kadir Yahaya. More non-Chinese are seeking the acupuncture treatment.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

August 25, 2013 Sunday

**Fancy a tui na for your baby'**

**SECTION:** NEWS; Home

**LENGTH:** 96 words

People often think that only the elderly visit **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM) clinics for tui na.

But here is three-month-old Jeth Chua, enjoying his first Chinese therapeutic massage under the hands of a therapist at Yu Guo Chinese Physician **Acupuncture** and Physiotherapy.

Jeth's parents belong to a growing group of people here who are turning to TCM to treat their babies and toddlers - especially in cases for which Western medicine has no treatment, like colic, or if they think their children are not getting better after seeing a general practitioner.

Full report Home

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Trigger unhappy;**

**Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) experts answer your queries in this fortnightly column. Remember, you should not self-medicate. Always consult a practitioner. Send your questions to stlife@sph.com.sg**

February 27, 2005 Sunday

Teo Cheng Wee

I'm a woman in my early 50s. I suffer from 'trigger finger'. The third finger of my right hand cannot be straightened. My doctor says this can only be cured by operating on the hand as injections have proven ineffective. Can **acupuncture** treat this condition? How many sessions are needed?

Trigger finger is the locking of a finger in a bent position, caused by a constriction of the sheath that surrounds the tendon.

It's usually caused by the inflammation of the thin lining along the sheath, which can be the result of repeated movements.

Acupuncture can help with this condition by reducing the swelling of the sheath, but its effectiveness will depend on when you seek treatment.

It's better to do so as soon as possible. In that case, five to six sessions could be enough to regain movement in the finger.

If you come more than six months after the condition has occured, you may need more sessions.

However, if there is no improvement after two months, surgery may be the only option.

Research has recently shown that chrysanthemum helps to prevent cancer. What other herbs and plants have anti-cancer properties?

There are many Chinese herbs with anti-cancer properties. They can work in several ways: increasing your body's resistance, getting rid of the body's heatiness and toxins and improving blood circulation.

Chrysanthemum can help clear heatiness and toxins in the body.

Another common plant with anti-cancer properties is barley, which has been shown to reduce the size of tumours.

Glossy ganoderma (lingzhi) and Indian bread (fuling) are also well known in this aspect.

It's believed that consuming white carrot (bai luobo in Mandarin) cleanses the body of toxins. It's also said that consuming it neutralises any medication one is taking. Is there any truth to these beliefs?

Yes, white carrot can cleanse the body of toxins. It helps with digestion by ridding the large intestine of toxins and is said to have anti-cancer properties.

It also improves the flow of one's 'qi', dissolves phlegm and can cure coughs. If your mouth is dry, drinking blended white carrot juice can help.

As for neutralising medication, it's true to some extent.

Due to the cooling property of white carrot, it may not be suitable for those with a weak or 'cool' body constitution.

If their intestines are weak, they can get diarrhoea if they take too much white carrot.

As such, those who're weak and taking herbs to strengthen their body may find the effect of those herbs being cancelled by the consumption of white carrot.

Information provided by Mr Ang Ah Keng, an acupuncturist at the Singapore Chung Hwa Medical Institution, and Ms Lim Nai Siang, a TCM physician and secretary of the research department at the institution. The clinic offers free TCM treatment for the poor. For enquiries, call 6251-3304.

**SECTION:** Lifestyle - Others

**LENGTH:** 473 words

**LOAD-DATE:** February 26, 2005

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**Needles and traditional medicine**

June 9, 2000

Salma Khalik

Acupuncturists will need to be well-versed in TCM to be registered. Some will need to go for courses

THE Health Ministry wants acupuncturists here to be well-versed in the basics of **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM).

This will help them treat patients in a holistic manner and be qualified to decide if **acupuncture** alone is best for a patient or if it should be combined with other traditional remedies.

This is why a nine-month part-time course, designed to help about 30 per cent of practising acupuncturists get their registration, has a large dose of basic TCM knowledge.

The course will be conducted by the two TCM schools here.

By Jan 1, 2002, all acupuncturists in Singapore need to be registered. Those who have been practising since July 1985 or have recognised qualifications, such as a degree from select universities in China, qualify for registration.

Those with less experience or training either need to go for an appraisal or attend the course and pass the Common Acupuncture Qualifying Examination.

The course will include the body's systems, like the blood and kidney systems, and various causes of diseases and their symptoms.

Dr Wong Kum Leng, TCM director at the ministry, said about 300 of the roughly 1,100 practitioners will need to sit for the examination, which will be in Chinese.

Besides the 300, there are others who may have to go only for an appraisal.

The soon-to-be-formed Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board will decide who will be registered automatically and who will be required to pass the appraisal or examination.

Dr Wong added that the non-Chinese-speaking acupuncturists will have to study the various subjects on their own, but provisions will be made for them to sit for the test.

He pointed out that as there had been no need for registration in the past, some practitioners may not have written records of their practice.

However, as the acupuncturist community is small, and most people know each other, it will be possible to establish how long they have been in the business.

Dr Wong described the registration of acupuncturists as the first step towards raising the standards of traditional practices. Next on the agenda will be registration of all TCM practitioners.

REGISTRATION: For all practitioners

BY JAN 1, 2002, all acupuncturists here need to be registered. Those who have been practising since July 1985 or have recognised qualifications qualify for registration.

Those with less experience or training need to go for an appraisal or attend the course and pass the Common Acupuncture Qualifying Examination.

**SECTION:** Home; Pg. 63

**LENGTH:** 438 words

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

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Basics For Acupuncturists -- The Health Ministry wants acupuncturists trained in the basics of traditional Chinese medicine before getting registered. (Page 54); A basic knowledge of traditional remedies will help practitioners provide more holistic healing. (Page 63)

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The Straits Times

**Better image has drawn more people**

May 7, 1994

Ho Sheo Be and Sit Yin Fong

BOTH the Singapore Chinese Physicians' Training College (SCPTC) and Institute of Chinese Medical Studies (ICMS) now have higher entrance requirements for anyone intending to enrol in their training courses.

The courses are five-year evening programmes and there is no age limit. They involve studies of **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine and acupuncture.**

Prospective students must have a full A Level certificate. GCE O Level holders, who may be accepted for a one-year preparatory course, must at least have credits in any five subjects, including Chinese.

Lecturers in SCPTC are all graduates of the college, but Life! understands that instructors from China may be used in the near future.

At ICMS, lecturers are experienced physicians from here and China, says Madam Lee Kait Ying, 57, the college's principal.

THE tuition fees at SCPTC are $ 80 a month, so the whole five-year course works out to $ 4,800, while students in the ICMS pay $ 35 per month.

The higher entrance requirements have not deterred people, who range from 18 to 50 years old, from pursuing a career in Chinese medicine.

Mrs Gan Yeow Sing, 49, who has a PhD in food technology from the University of New South Wales, Australia, is a second-year student in SCPTC. She wants to apply her skill in laboratory research in biology to study some 3,000 types of Chinese herbs.

The wife of an engineer, Mrs Gan has time on her hands as illness forced her to resign from teaching in a secondary school here. She is now a housewife.

"In my case, it is my interest in Chinese traditional medicine and herbs that led me to this training college. But I am not sure though whether I want to practise full-time," she says.

Miss Chua Ah Eng, 33, is a mechanical engineering graduate from Ngee Ann Polytechnic and a full-time planner in an engineering company. Also a second-year SCPTC student, she says she joined the college because of "her interest in Chinese culture and medicine".

"Besides, I want to take better care of my health, which is now good. I see no difference between the sexes in the study of medicine. Women walked out of the kitchen a long time ago."

**SECTION:** Life; Cover Story; Pg. 2

**LENGTH:** 534 words

**LOAD-DATE:** May 9, 1994

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

January 5, 2011 Wednesday

**TCM: A need to note changes?**

**SECTION:** REVIEW - EDITORIAL

**LENGTH:** 437 words

A LITTLE commotion over definition that has broken over the practice of **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM) should be calmed before confusion undermines what is regarded as a treatment alternative for certain medical conditions. One begins on the understanding that as TCM has a state-sanctioned role in health-care choices - mainly in **acupuncture** and herbal preparations - its practice and statutory monitoring should enjoy the confidence of consumers. This is important as there are as many as 2,400 registered TCM physicians here, about one-third the number of conventionally-trained doctors. It appears that some practitioners are styling themselves as specialists and billing patients more than 'generalists' do.

Despite patient unhappiness, fees should not be the bone of contention. What is crucial is that the public be left in no doubt about the extent of competency of TCM physicians across disciplines. As an example, there would be reason to be wary about those who claim to treat certain cancers or neurological disorders. Yet TCM has a long tradition of acceptance, in common with the folk wisdom of other old civilisations in Asia, the Middle East and the Andes.

Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan has moved quickly to assert that there is no such person as a TCM specialist, and that movement towards a specialists' register will be slow, if found to be feasible. Physicians who continue to present themselves as specialists, for whatever medical condition, can expect to be disciplined, even de-registered. The 2000 Act that mandated TCM practice expressly prohibits descriptions other than as a TCM physician. That, it would seem, is that.

But it is not straightforward. The minister's reprimand tacitly addresses public concern about excessive charging, as an effect of misrepresentation. It happens that TCM enjoys good custom among older people and the Chinese-educated, and even beyond this demographic. Sooner or later the public will make known its need for descriptional guidelines to assist them in the choice of TCM physicians to see for specific afflictions. It is a choice patients are entitled to make. It is pointed out by trade groups, such as the Specialist Traditional Chinese Medicine Centre, that those who trained in China study specific fields of treatment. They are, for practical purposes, 'specialists'. Many Singaporean physicians hold accredited Chinese qualifications.

The Health Ministry should take its time to consult the profession and review legislation if need be, to take note of the changes in TCM practice that have occured since it was examined for inclusion in public-health policy.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

May 28, 2011 Saturday

**Getting to the heat of the matter**

**BYLINE:** Andy Ho, Senior Writer

**SECTION:** REVIEW - OTHERS

**LENGTH:** 858 words

NOTING that I had been laid low again by my recurring lumbago, my sister gave me some self-heating 'moxa' pads which she had bought when she was last in Seoul.

They were as good as real moxibustion, she said, referring to a form of therapy in **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM) that uses heat generated by burning a herb to stimulate **acupuncture** points.

The small, spongy herb used is called mugwort or Artemisia vulgaris. The therapy is called moxibustion, meaning combustion of moxa, a monicker derived from the Japanese mogusa (with the 'u' very short, thus mogsa or moxa).

The Korean self-heating pads were bags of moxa, charcoal and an oxygen-sensitive system. When a bag is opened and the ingredients shaken, the system heats up. Within minutes, the bag is a comfortable 70 deg C or thereabouts and stays like that for hours.

Applied to acupuncture points, it supposedly heals what ails one. Applied to sore muscles directly, it definitely affords some pain relief.

In classical moxibustion, the idea is to use heat to warm certain acupuncture points to stimulate the circulation of the qi or life force, so it flows freely around in your body. In TCM, if qi flows freely, health obtains. If the flow is blocked, however, ill health results.

The aim in TCM is to get qi flowing smoothly again in a sick person and moxibustion is one mode of doing so.

Sometimes a therapist puts a small cone of processed moxa on an acupuncture point and lights it up. But just before the moxa actually burns down to the skin, he deftly pinches it away.

The heat thus generated penetrates into the acupuncture point to do its magic. A Seoul National University of Technology study published in the Journal of Mechanical Science and Technology last year reported that this heat penetrates 5mm into the skin.

In past times, some therapists would actually allow the moxa to burn down to the skin, which would blister and heal with scarring. An 18th century eyewitness account written by Engelbert Kaempfer called Moxa in China and Japan noted that moxa powder about as much as half a grain of rice was burned directly on the skin. (It was this treatise that gave the technique its present name in English.)

Because moxibustion was easier to do than acupuncture, it became widely used as folk medicine so much so that Kaempfer said he met no Japanese who did not have some moxa scarring.

Another method currently used is to burn moxa fluff wrapped around the ends of acupuncture needles already inserted into the skin. These metallic needles conduct the heat down into the relevant acupuncture points.

Otherwise, a (non-smokable) moxa cigar is lit and the smouldering stick held near to the appropriate acupuncture points or around acupuncture needles if already inserted. This is maintained for a few minutes until the skin turns red.

But does it work? There are to be found in the Western and East Asian medical literature many studies addressing this issue in a variety of conditions. There have also been several systematic reviews of such studies.

In the last few years, researchers from the Korea Institute of Oriental Medicine have done several systematic reviews of these studies that looked at the effectiveness of moxibustion in stroke rehabilitation, hypertension, ulcerative colitis, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, diabetes, asthma, cancer and constipation.

The Korean reviews were published in various journals and all said that the quality of the primary studies was so bad, methodologically speaking, no firm conclusions could be drawn.

This unflattering conclusion is akin to that of a 2009 study published in Trials that looked at the methodological shortcomings of clinical trials published in Chinese journals. Scientists from Chengdu, Hong Kong and Ottawa working together located 1,685 studies of TCM therapies said to be randomised controlled trials.

They interviewed the authors only to find under 7 per cent were truly randomised controlled trials. Most of these Chinese researchers did not know how to design a rigorous clinical trial, they said.

The study concluded 'that so many non-randomised controlled trials... published as randomised controlled trials reflected the fact that peer review needs to be improved' in Chinese research.

So the fairest thing that can be said about moxibustion at this juncture is that we have no proof yet that it works.

This is sad since it has been used for at least well over a millennium. We know this because, a century ago, some Buddhist manuscripts discovered in a cave at Dunhuang along the Silk Road in north-western China were found to contain sketches of the human body. These turned out to be moxibustion charts dating from the Tang dynasty (AD618 to 907). The charts are now held in the British Museum.

Hopefully, we will not have to wait another century for Chinese science to ascertain if moxibustion actually works.

andyho@sph.com.sg

In classical moxibustion, the idea is to use heat to warm certain acupuncture points to stimulate the circulation of the qi or life force, so it flows freely around in your body. In TCM, if qi flows freely, health obtains. If the flow is blocked, however, ill health results.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

October 8, 2006 Sunday

**Ooh, ouch, it hurts;**

**Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) experts answer your queries in this fortnightly column. Remember, you should not self-medicate. Always consult a practitioner. Send your questions to stlife@sph.com.sg**

**BYLINE:** Gerard Yeo

**LENGTH:** 648 words

I sprained my right shoulder recently and went to a sinseh for tui na. I also have heart murmur (mitral valve prolapse). When she massaged my upper arm, I experienced some pain.

The pain intensified when she massaged my shoulders, and I became dizzy and broke out in a cold sweat.

Should those with heart murmur avoid **acupuncture** and other forms of therapy?

You may have experienced dizziness and cold sweat because of the pain. It may also be due to nervousness if you are undergoing tui na or acupuncture for the first time.

Other factors involve a lack of rest, hunger, high blood pressure and insomnia.

You should inform your physician of your heart condition so that he can take that into consideration while treating you. There are certain manipulations and acupuncture points like nei guan, which are used to strengthen the heart.

It is common for patients with heart murmur to receive both acupuncture and tui na, depending on the severity of their condition.

Physically weak patients and those with severe heart and lung disease should not seek tui na as a form of treatment.

You should also avoid tui na if you have a drinking, bleeding or skin problem.

For weak or first-time patients, it is advisable to lie down during treatment.

My hands and feet are constantly cold, even at room temperature. When I am in an air-conditioned environment, my fingernails sometimes turn blue. I am generally healthy but experience frequent colds.

I am also allergic to things such as perfume and dust. I had cysts removed from my ovaries three years ago and was told that my poor circulation contributed to the condition. How can TCM help me?

Your problem is likely caused by a deficiency in yang qi, resulting from a lack of heat energy and decline in the body's function and metabolism. It could also be due to a deficiency of the lung, spleen and kidney's function as well as poor qi and blood circulation.

Pathogenic factors like 'cold' and 'dampness', an improper diet and/or chronic diseases like gastritis and chronic cough may also play a part.

Chinese medicine, acupuncture and tui na can alleviate your symptoms by warming and restoring the yang qi and enhancing the function of the organs. They can also improve the qi and blood circulation and dispel pathogenic factors.

You should maintain a healthy lifestyle with proper diet and regular exercise. Avoid cold drinks as well as oily and sour foods as these will affect the function of the digestive system in absorbing the nutrients and converting them into qi and blood.

I'm a 43-year-old woman and suffer from severe pre-menstrual syndrome, which makes me irritable two to three days before my period. I also tend to experience severe headaches on the first day. My menstrual cycle has always been regular, but in the last two years, it has been occurring more frequently - about every 25 days instead of the 28-day cycle. It also lasts longer - about seven days instead of five. What should I do?

Your problem is likely caused by 'liver-fire', a stagnation of 'liver-qi' and insufficient 'kidney-yin'. This leads to the impairment of the chong and ren meridians which regulate the menstrual cycle.

Chinese medicine, acupuncture, moxibustion (a type of heat treatment where Chinese herbs in the form of a stick are lit and the heat generated is brought near the affected area) and tui na can reduce 'liver-fire', remove the stagnation of qi and replenish yin as well as nourish the kidney.

You should consult your physician to identify the cause and receive proper treatment. Also, maintain a healthy lifestyle with sufficient rest.

Do not eat cold food as it will retard qi and blood circulation. You should also avoid spicy food which will reduce yin. Keep warm to prevent catching a cold or flu as a woman's immunity is weaker during her period.

Information provided by Ms Lim Lay Beng, a TCM physician at YS Healthcare TCM Clinic in The Adelphi.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**About 1,000 Chinese physicians here -most trained locally**

October 7, 1995

Dawn Tan

Report on **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine**

CHINESE physician Lee Kim Leong has been seeing patients with rheumatism, strokes, and heart and psychiatric problems for 25 years.

The 60-year-old acupuncturist treats about 50 to 80 patients daily in his clinic, most of whom go through outpatient treatment, for at least one to two months.

One of his regulars is Mr C.L. Chua, 45, an engineer who is receiving **acupuncture** on his hips after an operation.

The treatment will stimulate his nerves and improve his circulation, said Mr Chua, who still finds it painful to walk.

Mr Lee, who runs a full-time solo practice, and Mr Chua are typical of the Chinese physician and his patient.

A MINISTRY of Health survey, on the practice of traditional Chinese medicine here last year, estimated that there were about 800 to 1,000 Chinese physicians here, three-quarters of whom are male.

Two-thirds are aged between 40 and 59, and 76 per cent have at least 10 years' experience.

Like 74 per cent of the Chinese physicians here, Mr Lee is locally-trained. He went through a four-year part-time course in the Singapore Chinese Physicians' Training College after secondary school.

But Mr Lee, being well known, sees four to five times more patients than the average practitioner, who treats about 10 to 20 patients a day.

OVERALL, about 10,000 patients visit Chinese physicians daily. Their treatment is confined to outpatient care, forming 12 per cent of the total daily outpatient attendance.

The most commonly prescribed treatment is Chinese medicine in the form of tablets, pills and mixtures. Acupuncture is the next most widely used treatment.

On why he chose a Chinese physician over a Western-trained doctor to treat the pain in his hips, Mr Chua said in Mandarin: "My parents and grandparents believed in Chinese medicine. Whenever I had aches or sprains, I would go to a Chinese physician rather than a Western-trained doctor.

"But when I get a flu or a cough, I would go to a Western-trained doctor."

His reply was typical of the 2,530 respondents, aged between 18 and 64, in the same survey.

They preferred traditional Chinese medicine to Western medicine for sprains, aches and pains but would rather consult a Western-trained doctor for a cold and other types of illnesses and injury.

The study found that about 45 per cent of Singaporeans had consulted a Chinese physician at some time in their lives and 19 per cent did so in the past year. Half of them were aged between 40 and 49 and 55.9 per cent have no formal education.

**SECTION:** Home; Pg. 25

**LENGTH:** 654 words

**LOAD-DATE:** October 9, 1995

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Chinese physician Lee Kim Leong uses acupuncture, the second most widely used treatment in traditional Chinese medicine, on a patient with a sprained shoulder. -Picture by CHEW SENG KIM.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

October 1, 2016 Saturday

**Woman to get $50k for TCM session gone wrong;**

**She had third-degree burns after treatment and was warded in hospital for a month**

**BYLINE:** Jalelah Abu Baker and K.C. Vijayan Senior Law Correspondent

**SECTION:** TOP OF THE NEWS

**LENGTH:** 1004 words

A 70-year-old woman who suffered third-degree burns on both legs following treatment at a **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM) clinic will receive $50,000 in damages.

Housewife Chow See Mui first visited the Annie Tiang TCM Clinic in East Coast Road in August 2014 with her daughter. They bought two packages and health supplements costing more than $3,000. The packages were for **acupuncture** and tuina, a Chinese therapeutic massage.

But during a session on Sept 4, 2014, persuaded by TCM practitioner Xia Rongrong, Madam Chow underwent moxibustion. This involves placing the base of a mugwort - a small, spongy herb-cone - on the skin and burning the tip that is not in direct contact with the skin.

According to court papers, Ms Xia claimed the treatment would promote general health, and was painless, harmless and risk-free.

However, it landed Madam Chow, who had only minor aches before the treatment, in hospital for a month with a $95,000 bill, which she managed to claim from her insurance company.

A clinic staff member administered the treatment. In her lawsuit, Madam Chow said she felt extreme pain but was told to bear with it as the treatment was harmless and the pain would subside shortly.

She developed blisters the same day. Madam Chow's children called Ms Xia and her husband Joseph Yap, also a TCM practitioner, to tell them her condition was worsening.

The couple maintained that the pain would subside without medical attention. On Sept 10, six days after the treatment, Mr Yap went to Madam Chow's home to check on her, and said again that she did not need medical attention, giving her acupuncture instead.

But the pain persisted. A few days later, Madam Chow went to Gleneagles Hospital, where she was diagnosed with third-degree burns and warded for a month.

After her discharge, she found out a pain in her neck was caused by a plastic piece inserted into her neck during acupuncture. It failed to dissolve as she had been told it would. She had it surgically removed in December 2014.

When she brought her claim against the clinic, Ms Xia and Mr Yap, the owners and directors of the clinic, its insurer NTUC Income Insurance Co-operativeinitially offered her over $36,000 for both her damages and legal costs.

But she decided to take the claim to court through lawyer Raj Singh Shergill in October last year.

In her court papers, she claimed damages on the grounds of negligence and breach of contractual duty of reasonable care and skill. She also sought aggravated damages from the practitioners, for not just causing her burns but also deterring her from seeking medical attention, thus prolonging her pain.

The case was resolved last month after the court mediated between both parties. Madam Chow turned down an offer of extra money by the practitioners, offered in return for confidentiality.

Past cases involving TCM physicians

June 2016

A 53-year-old traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) physician and acupuncturist was fined $5,000 and suspended in June by the TCM Practitioners Boardfor three months after misdiagnosing a 15-year-old pregnant patient.

Ms Wu Liping had prescribed the teen herbal medication that might have harmed her and her unborn baby. Ms Wu, then working at Shenzhou Chinese Physician Clinic in Jurong East, had diagnosed the patient's condition as hormonal imbalance after she missed her menstruation for five months.

August 2015

An 81-year-old TCM physician who issued medical certificates (MCs) to students without properly assessing their condition was suspended in August last year for three months. She was also fined $2,000.

Ms Cheong Thiam Mui issued 122 MCs to 109 students of a private academy over about three months from December 2013 to March 2014 while working as a TCM physician and acupuncturist at Cheong's Clinic in Burlington Square in Bencoolen Street.

Treatment not common, say practitioners

Moxibustion, a traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) treatment, involves the burning of a spongy herb called mugwort.

In direct moxibustion, the herb, which is dried into thin strips called moxa, is rolled into the shape of a cone or cylinder and placed on the skin.

The end not touching the skin is burnt. The moxa is expected to be removed before the burning portion touches the skin.

In indirect moxibustion, the moxa stick or cone is kept at a distance from the skin.

While indirect moxibustion is widely accepted and used, the direct treatment is not common, said Ms Tjioe Yan Yin, a TCM physician at Nanyang Technological University's Chinese Medicine Clinic.

"Direct moxibustion will definitely cause burns. Some people accept it because they believe that burning stimulates the blood. They expect the burn to recover."

When done right, moxibustion is expected to relieve pain from ailments such as rheumatism, she said.

In indirect moxibustion, physicians have to ensure that the moxa is about 3cm to 4cm away from the skin to prevent burns, and check that the heat generated is not too high.

Mr Chong Shaw Fong, 69, a TCM practitioner of 42 years, said he does not provide the treatment any more.

"Some patients' skin may not be suitable for this treatment, for example, if they have diabetes and are taking aspirin," said Mr Chong, who runs a medical hall in Upper Cross Street.

The treatment requires absolute attention and concentration to prevent injury, he said.

He has heard of cases of patients getting burnt but these are rare. "Young people may not trust the treatment but the elderly like it as they are desperate for pain relief," he said.

Jalelah Abu Baker

Madam Chow, who said she still has residual effects from the burns, said: "There is a sense of vindication, but my concern remains that no one else in their elderly years, or any person for that matter, should suffer my fate."

Mr Yap said the clinic staff member who carried out the treatment had been working there for about four months and had "accidentally" burned Madam Chow's leg during moxibustion. "As a manager, I will claim responsibility. I am very sorry about this," he said.

**LOAD-DATE:** September 30, 2016

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**GRAPHIC:** Madam Chow showing injuries on her right thigh from the moxibustion treatment, and (above) a photo of a burn injury near her right knee.

Madam Chow showing injuries on her right thigh (above) from the moxibustion treatment, and a photo of a burn injury near her right knee. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

**New acupuncture clinic opens at hospital**

September 17, 1996

Sharon Vasoo

ALEXANDRA Hospital has set up a clinic offering services for alternative medicine. This will help ease the three-month waiting list at Ang Mo Kio Community Hospital to see an acupuncturist.

At a soft launch yesterday, Alexandra Hospital's medical director, Dr Aw Tar Choon, said the demand for such services was popular, especially among the elderly, so the extra facility would be a bonus for those who preferred **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM).

In March, the Senior Minister of State for Health, Dr Aline Wong, said TCM had a role in Singapore's health-care system. However, she stressed that its role was to complement Western medicine, not to replace or provide an alternative to it.

The new clinic, which has two acupuncturists from Shanghai, will be officially opened by the end of the year and more details about its services will be released later.

Yesterday, a Hospital Help Desk for the Elderly manned by 16 senior citizen volunteers was also launched at the hospital by the National Council of Social Service.

The MP for Kampong Glam GRC and Chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Health, Mr Loh Meng See, was the guest of honour.

Although the council hopes to set up more of such services in other hospitals, it is looking for more people to come forward to volunteer their services.

The council's elderly services senior manager, Mr S. Chandra, said: "There is no monetary incentive, so it's difficult to get people involved. We hope more retirees will come forward to help. It would be ideal because, being senior citizens themselves, they understand the needs of the aged sick better."

With the new service, elderly patients from various Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWO) are dropped off at the desk, where a volunteer sees to their needs and takes them to their destination.

Veteran volunteer Aw Teck Chin, 74, who has done more than 15 years of community work, said: "I wish more people would come forward to help out. I tried persuading my friends but they would rather play mahjong."

**SECTION:** Home; Pg. 21

**LENGTH:** 480 words

**LOAD-DATE:** September 18, 1996

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Mr Loh Meng See taking a ride around Alexandra Hospital yesterday. -LIANHE ZAOBAO picture.

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

March 8, 2012 Thursday

**Red dates for good digestion;**

**The dried fruit is believed to boost the digestive system and help with blood production. Joan Chew reports**

**SECTION:** MIND YOUR BODY; Living Well; herbal help

**LENGTH:** 894 words

You would have snacked on red dates during Chinese New Year, when they are eaten in the wish for a 'sweet' year ahead.

The red date is also prized by the Chinese for its medicinal properties.

Also known as the Chinese date or jujube, it is used in **traditional Chinese medicine** (TCM) to boost the digestive function of the body.

It is also believed to nourish the blood and qi (energy) and calm a person's spirit, said Ms Zhu Ping, a senior TCM physician at Hua Mei **Acupuncture** and TCM Centre. The centre was set up by elderly-welfare group Tsao Foundation.

The red date originated in China, where it has been cultivated for more than 4,000 years in the Shanxi, Hebei, Henan and Shandong provinces, she said.

It is now also grown in India, Russia, the Middle East, southern Europe and the United States.

The deciduous red date tree grows between seven and 10 metres high and produces a cherry-sized fruit that is a drupe, or stone fruit, in its first year.

The immature fruit is green but its skin turns a dark red as it ripens, encasing the sweet white flesh. It is edible fresh, dried or candied with honey.

The fruit can be picked fresh or left on the tree to be picked when it has dried. It does not require sulphur preservatives, unlike other dried fruits.

Dried red dates are sold at $0.85 for a 100g packet or $1.89 for a 150g packet at supermarkets here.

They are eaten as they are or often used in steamed and stewed dishes and desserts.

In TCM, the stomach and spleen work together to convert food into qi.

Good circulation of blood and qi is believed to be required for good health.

When a person overeats, it puts a strain on the digestive system and will result in qi deficiency in the spleen and stomach, said Ms Zhu.

Conversely, a person who eats too little does not receive sufficient nutrients for qi to be produced in the spleen and stomach.

Qi can also become weak in a person who has a stressful lifestyle or a chronic illness such as diabetes.

Aside from the typical signs of qi deficiency, such as fatigue, a weak voice and tendency to sweat easily, a person with qi deficiency specifically in the stomach and spleen will also experience loss of appetite, loose stool and abdominal discomfort.

These point to a sluggish digestive system that should be strenghtened with red dates, said Ms Zhu.

TCM practitioners also believe red dates nourish the spleen's qi so that ample nutrients are transported to the muscles and tissues, thereby strengthening the limbs. This is beneficial for stroke patients who have weak limbs, they believe.

When the spleen is not functioning well, it does not produce enough blood and this indirectly affects the functions of the heart.

Insufficient blood in the body will lead to a deficiency in yin, the aspect of the body that is responsible for moistening and cooling the organs. A balance of yin and heat-linked yang in the body is also needed for good health.

A heart with yin deficiency is not able to provide a stable resting place for the spirit, explained Ms Zhu.

This happens, say, in a woman going through menopause, who may feel irritable or depressed, cry easily and have insomnia, she said.

Consuming red dates would help to nourish the blood and keep the emotions stable.

As they possess slightly 'warm' properties, red dates are not suitable for people who exhibit 'heaty' symptoms such as sore throats, red tongues, mouth ulcers and dry stool, said Ms Zhu.

Women with heavy periods - another sign of 'heatiness' - should refrain from eating red dates until their menstrual period is over, or they risk losing more blood, she added.

While it is safe to eat red dates regularly, one should eat no more than 20 a day to avoid an overactive spleen and stomach, she advised.

In Western medicine, however, red dates have no bearing on menopausal symptoms, which are caused by the declining level of the female hormone oestrogen, said Dr Peter Chew, senior consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at Gleneagles Hospital.

At an optimal level, oestrogen stimulates the synthesis of a feel-good chemical called serotonin.

When the oestrogen level drops during menopause, so does that of serotonin, resulting in mood swings and depression.

Dr Chew said there is no known food which can induce the brain to produce serotonin.

Medication can relieve the symptoms of menopause. But some women forgo this, using exercise and their own coping skills to get by, he added.

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**Pork ribs soup with red dates**

(Serves two to three)

**INGREDIENTS**

10g wild black fungus

8 dried red dates

250g pork ribs

3 slices of ginger

1 tbs Chinese rice wine

Salt to taste

**METHOD**

Soak the black fungus in cold water until it is softened. Remove the pedicel (stalk) of the black fungus before shredding it into smaller pieces.

Rinse the dried red dates and remove the seeds, if any. Rinse the pork ribs and cut them into smaller pieces.

Fill a pot with 1 litre of water. Put all the ingredients in the pot and bring the water to the boil.

Use a spoon to skim off the foam on the water surface. Add the Chinese rice wine and allow the soup to simmer on low heat for two hours. Add salt to taste before serving the soup hot.

Source: Ms Zhu Ping, a senior traditional Chinese medicine physician at Hua Mei Acupuncture and TCM Centre

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The Straits Times (Singapore)

December 5, 2009 Saturday

**TCM From sunset to sunrise industry;**

**Younger set drawn to traditional cures, now seen as complementary to Western medicine**

**BYLINE:** April Chong

**LENGTH:** 654 words

TRADITIONAL medicine and treatments, once considered dying out, are making a comeback.

These traditional cures, long used by older people, have staked a place in the future by winning over users in their 20s and 30s. The roots of such medicine and treatments, such as **acupuncture,** are mainly Chinese, though one in 10 people here goes for traditional Malay or Indian medicine.

The demand for such cures has pushed up imports of traditional herbs and drugs. Imports from China, the core distributor of **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine** (TCM) products, leapt 63 per cent in the last five years to hit US $35 million (S $48 million) here last year.

Riding on this boom, manufacturers of these products have begun making them in Singapore. A third of the almost 9,000 products here now have made-in-Singapore labels. About $4.5 billion in Singapore-made traditional medicine and health supplements have found their way to Africa, America, Europe and the Middle East.

Mr Lim Swee Say, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, speaking at the opening of the first Traditional Medicine Expo yesterday at the Suntec convention centre, noted that as many as three in four people here have tried some form of alternative medicine.

The days when traditional medicine comprised dubious or vile-tasting concoctions are long gone.

The industry has moved with the times and begun marketing its products as complementary to Western drugs, pitching them at younger users, he said.

For example, ICM Pharma is one home-grown drug company that, after having manufactured Western medications and creams for 40 years, has launched an 'East-meets-West' range of TCM products.

It now produces, for example, joint-health capsules blending Chinese herbal compounds with glucosamine.

Its chief executive, Mr Koe Khoon Poh, said: 'The newer generation may not be able to accept traditional medicine. Why not make it more modern with packaging and scientific production methods?'

Tong Jum Chew, another home-grown TCM maker, uses contemporary packaging and has clean rooms in its factory, in line with international standards.

It opened its first retail outlet in Tampines this year. Set up to look like a regular chain pharmacy and with a resident Chinese physician on hand, it has attracted customers of all ages, said its general manager, Mr Gerald Tong.

He added that many of its customers seek alternative treatments for lifestyle diseases like high blood pressure and diabetes. Not all of them are Chinese. A Malay teenager was in the shop recently, looking for help for her acne problem, Mr Tong said.

Mr Lim credited the rise in Singapore's traditional medicine sector to the worldwide interest in complementary medicine, which marries Eastern and Western cures, and the growth of TCM in China.

He added that the regulation of TCM drugs, practitioners and training, especially in the last few years, has also boosted customer confidence.

The seven-year-old TCM College in Singapore has trained about 1,350 people and enrolment is on the rise.

More than 2,000 Chinese physicians are registered now, nearly nine in 10 of them local residents, with the number expected to grow, said Mr Lim.

And with Singapore's strong brand name and reputation for quality manufacturing, the Republic can build a niche as a manufacturing centre for traditional medicine products, he added.

Medicine aside, traditional treatment methods are being dispensed in clinics, and hospitals - even the private ones - have also set up TCM clinics.

Mr Lee Tiong Sa, who chairs the Singapore TCM Organisations Committee, said: 'We used to think of TCM as a sunset industry, but we're now seeing the sun rise.'

With a common market in Asean being opened, providing more avenues for cooperation, he is upbeat about the sector's growth prospects.

The expo runs until tomorrow. It features 90 exhibitors from Singapore and the region showcasing herbs, traditional medicine and health equipment.

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The Straits Times

**Sinsehs: Feeling the winds of change**

May 7, 1994

Ho Sheo Be and Sit Yin Fong

There was a time when Chinese physicians here were grey, old men. Today, they are not only younger and better educated, but many of them are also women, HO SHEO BE and SIT YIN FONG report on Pages Two and Three.

TO MANY people, the word sinseh conjures up the image of a grey-haired man frowning as he feels the patient's pulse.

But contrary to the common belief that old men dominate the profession, more than half the students pursuing part-time courses on **traditional** **Chinese** **medicine and acupuncture** in two colleges here are below 40 years old.

The change has taken place over the past 10 years in the Singapore Chinese Physicians' Training College (SCPTC), says Mr Chia Kim Lee, 43, a graduate of the college and its executive secretary. He adds, however, that the shift went unnoticed until now.

The SCPTC was set up in 1953 by the Singapore Chinese Physicians' Association (SCPA), today a 48-year-old body with a membership of 1,000. It takes in an average of 100 students annually.

The other college, the Institute of Chinese Medical Studies (ICMS), has for the past five years seen younger students making up the majority of the intake, says Madam Lee Kait Ying, 57, its principal.

The college records an average of 20 students per year and was set up in 1973 by the Association for Promoting Chinese Medicines (APCM), today a 43-year-old organisation with 300 members, including sinsehs and medical hall owners.

Students from both colleges are from all walks of life. Says Mr Lee Kim Leong, 58, SCPTC's principal: "This is a sharp contrast to some 40 years back when most of our students were helpers in Chinese medical halls run by their own families.

"Now, about one-third of the students have undergone tertiary education."

He adds that the change came about because of higher entrance requirements. SCPTC and ICMS require students to have at a full A Level certificate. (See other story)

Says Mr Tan Pit Lian, 58, vice-president of SCPA: "In the '50s, primary school leavers became Chinese sinsehs after being trained by experienced masters. But now we believe that highly-educated students can grasp better the profound concepts of Chinese medicine, fare better in the examinations and, subsequently, as physicians."

He tells Life! that 65 per cent of the students SCPTC accepted last year are professionals such as teachers and engineers. A dentist who wants to combine Western and Chinese medicine graduated from the college two years ago, he says.

Mr Lee has also noticed an increase in the number of students who speak English fluently. Almost 90 per cent of students in SCPTC are bilingual, he says.

"More non-Chinese have sought consultation from Chinese sinsehs over the past five years. At least five Indonesians visit my clinic every day. Being able to speak English helps us to communicate with these patients effectively," he says.

Why do tertiary-educated individuals and professionals aspire to become Chinese sinsehs? Mr Tan, who owns a clinic, says the reason is because of the profession's better image.

"Many schools, private companies and organisations now accept medical certificates that we give to our patients. The government is also currently planning to register Chinese sinsehs," he says.

Chinese sinsehs have indeed been getting more attention. Just two months ago, Health Minister Brigadier-General (NS) George Yeo suggested that Chinese sinsehs, who currently do not come under the purview of the ministry, be registered.

Last month, Mr Peh Chin Hua, an MP for Jalan Besar GRC, urged the two colleges to unite and form a central body to improve their standing in the community.

Government attention has cast a bright new light on the practice, says Madam Tsao Su Hua, 36, a student of SCPTC. The Taiwanese housewife sees a possibility af synthesising traditional medicine and Western practices. She gained confidence in Chinese medicine after it helped her to conceive her first child, she adds.

Meanwhile, Mr Lee Chwee Hock, 35, a graduate from SCPTC, says practising Chinese medicine is something worthwhile. Adds the project engineer and a volunteer at the Chung Hwa Free Clinic which was established by SCPA in 1952: "It is something I can continue to do even after my retirement."

He attributes the increasing interest in the profession to the opening up of China.

He adds: "Countries interested in doing business in China want to learn more of its culture, including its medicine. Everyone tends to follow the giant."

**SECTION:** Life; (Cover Story); Pg. 1,L2

**LENGTH:** 1067 words

**LOAD-DATE:** May 9, 1994

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**GRAPHIC:** Young people below 40 years old predominate in classes at the Singapore Chinese Physicians' Training College. (Page L1); Now that Chinese medicine has a better, more professional image, more better-educated people are showing an interest and taking up courses in it. (Page L2) sinsehs are women"

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