



Pins and Needles

Acupuncture, an ancient Eastern method of treating ailments, is stickin' it to modern medicine

By Aaron Meier
 THE BATTALION

Western medical practitioners usually use needles, to inject vaccines into crying children, draw plasma from poor college students or sew stitches after surgeries. Eastern medicine, however, employs the traditionally fear-inducing needle in a science known as acupuncture.

Acupuncture attempts to correct various bodily ailments using needles placed in specific locations on the body. Dr. Nancy Wang, a state medical board certified acupuncturist, practices at the China Acupuncture Clinic in College Station. She said the needles are placed about one-half inch below the surface of the skin. A typical session utilizes 10 to 20 disposable needles.

Wang said most first-time patients are apprehensive. "The first time most patients come in, they are very nervous about the needles," Wang said. "There is little to no pain when the needles are inserted. Most patients say they don't feel a thing."

After inserting the needles, Wang attaches electrodes to them. A low-level electrical current is then passed through the needles. Wang said the current stimulates the body's natural functions such as digestion and hormone production. The electrical stimulation lasts at

least 20 minutes but can last longer, depending on the ailment.

After the needles are removed, the patient receives an acupressure massage. Unlike a traditional kneading of the entire body, an acupressure massage involves rubbing the body and applying firm and quick slaps to certain pressure points.

Acupuncture's 3,000-year-old history began in China. The science then made its way across Asia and arrived in Europe in the 17th century. Although looked upon as quackery by some skeptics, acupuncture has steadily gained acceptance among Western doctors as a valid form of treatment since the '70s.

The science of acupuncture can be employed to treat a variety of ailments and problems. The ancient practice helps alleviate chronic pains such as migraines and back pain. People suffering from conditions such as arthritis, asthma and hypertension can also benefit from acupuncture treatments. Most commonly though, acupuncture helps people quit smoking and assists in weight loss.

Wang said using acupuncture to

quit smoking is often successful.

"Some patients have tried for years to quit smoking," Wang said. "As a final try, they come here. Sometimes they quit smoking after one visit, and the rest quit after their third session. Acupuncture has a 95 percent success rate for smokers."

The validity of acupuncture has been confirmed by not only the thousands of years of practice in Asia but also by modern science.

"Needling the acupuncture points stimulates the nervous system to release chemicals in the muscles, spinal cord and brain," writes The Chinese Pain Center in Hacienda Heights, Calif. "These chemicals will either change the experience of pain, or they will trigger the release of other chemicals and hormones."

Acupuncturists prefer to describe the science they practice in the traditional terms of the Yin and the Yang, represented by a circle divided into two parts. The Yin, the dark half of the circle, represents the negative energy of the body, while the Yang, the lighter portion of the circle, represents the positive energy.

Wang said the goal of all Chinese medicine, including

acupuncture, is to bring the Yin and the Yang into balance.

"If you have too much Yin, you are 'cold' and likely to get sick," Wang said. "If you have too much Yang, you are 'hot' and will have other problems."

In order to achieve the Yin-Yang balance, traditional acupuncturists say an energy called "Qi" flows along pathways in the body called meridians.

"This Qi is the vital energy, which gives life to all living matter," said Ralph Alan Dale of The Acupuncture Education Center. "In a way, the Qi conduits resemble those of the vascular or nervous system."

Optimally, the Qi flows freely along the meridians, feeding the various body parts. However, the energy occasionally becomes blocked, causing body parts to be deprived of the Qi. Representatives at The Chinese Pain Center said classical acupuncturists believe the needles open up the blockages, allowing the Qi to flow freely and re-establishing the Yin-Yang balance.

Wang, who has been practicing in College Station for nine years, said the therapeutic benefits of acupuncture offer just as much as the medical ones.

"The people who use acupuncture enjoy many benefits of a long full life," Wang said. "They look and feel younger. They are stronger, and they stay healthier."

"There is little to no pain when the needles are inserted. Most people say they don't feel a thing."

Dr. Nancy Wang
 Certified acupuncturist

Artwork by Tim Moog

► People in the News

Mitchell, daughter reunite and rebond

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Joni Mitchell, who recently reunited with her daughter, says she gave the child up for adoption 32 years ago because being single, poor and pregnant in '60s Canada was tantamount to being a killer.

"The main thing at the time was to conceal it," the folk singer said Tuesday in the Los Angeles Times. "The scandal was so intense. A daughter could do nothing more disgraceful. It ruined you in a social sense. You have no idea what the stigma was. It was like you murdered somebody."

Mitchell, who was a 20-year-old unwed art student at the time, reunited earlier this month with Kilauren Gibb.

Now mother and daughter are discovering their similarities — both shoot pool and married musicians, though Gibb is separated from her husband.

"There's a definite umbilical cord that was never cut," Gibb said.

MacDowell says no to oil pipeline

FRENCHTOWN, Mont. (AP) — Andie MacDowell and 300 neighbors jammed a public hearing to protest plans to run an oil and gas pipeline through their pristine Nine-mile Valley community.

MacDowell, known locally by her real name, Rose Qualley, said at Monday's hearing it was "difficult to comprehend how you could even contemplate" running the pipeline over a mountain pass inaccessible for six to eight months each year, even by snowmobile.

A leak could go undetected for all of those months, the actress said. And that does not consider the 91 streams and creeks to be crossed in the Nine-mile, or the risk to habitats for wolves, grizzly bears and bald eagles.

Yellowstone Pipe Line executives say they will use the power of eminent domain — condemnation of land — if private landowners refuse to allow the pipeline to cross their property. The line is planned from refineries in Billings to Moses Lake, Wash.

Students know Madonna has class

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands (AP) — The Dutch must love Madonna — they are lining up by the dozens to get into Madonna 101.

Fifty students signed up Monday at the University of Amsterdam for the pop culture course examining Madonna's lyrics, voice and films.

"As a media phenomenon, she's really intriguing," 28-year-old Monique Tolks, who's doing her doctorate on the entertainer, said in Tuesday's De Telegraaf newspaper.

The four-credit course also examines Madonna's persona as a sex symbol, her religious beliefs and her media presence.

"Even a college course about this megastar attracts massive press," music professor Hannah Bosma said as Dutch television crews packed a hall for the debut lecture.

"In her genre she's good," said Mario Licht, 25, a third-year student. "Most of all it's something to dance to."

Ex-wife Kennedy rejects annulment

BOSTON (AP) — The ex-wife of Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy says she has appealed the Catholic Church's decision to grant them an annulment.

Sheila Rauch Kennedy wrote in her upcoming book that she cannot accept the annulment because she took their 12-year marriage seriously. The Boston Globe reported Tuesday.

College years offer best experiences in life

High school — what a torturous, horrible and maniacal experience. Whoever said high school was the best time of their life must have either been the most popular person at their school or high on some type of illegal drug. There are people out there who truly believe the four years they spent in high school were the best years of their entire life. Most of those people are 19 or 20 years old and obviously haven't experienced much.

Sports Editor



Kristina Buffin
 Senior Journalism major

These are the guys who can't stop talking about how their game-winning touchdown won the state championship and what a hero they were. These are the girls who have memories of cheering on their boyfriends scoring the game-winning touchdown, going to pep

rallies, buying the latest, coolest clothes, talking about all of their great friends and trying to see who can be the most fake and two-faced. These people must have been delusional.

High school was a time where everyone went through their "awkward" years together and lived through the hell of growing up. Guys' voices cracked, girls had to go through developing breasts and dealing with "girl problems." This wasn't fun. If it was supposed to be — what a sick joke.

Sure, there are the people who talk about high school with great affection, still reminisce about all the great things they did and how popular they were. These people obviously never experienced college life. It is in college where people have

the opportunity to branch out, grow and find out who they really are. It is in college where people meet the friends they will keep for the rest of their lives. It is college memories which will be shared with children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren.

In high school, people's goals are to be the most popular person in the school, accumulate as many friends as possible, even if you don't like them, and aspire to be prom queen or king. I am not bitter about my high school experience, but I truly believe it was the worst time of my life. While people kept telling me to cherish the time in high school, I wanted to yell at them, "Are you smoking crack?" After all, how good could high school be?

During the summer before I came to Texas A&M, I hoped college would be significantly better — luckily, I was right. Another bonus, at least for me, was that I could make a clean break. After going to high school in Califor-

nia, I knew the odds of running into one of my high school chums at A&M was slim to none. Unfortunately, some people on this campus are not as lucky.

College is a time of freedom. Sure you have to study, get good grades and prepare for the future. But these four, five and sometimes six years are a time to make long-lasting friendships, do things you thought you would never do and discover who you are.

For example, in high school, I never did anything that was exciting. Sure, I went on camping trips with friends, went to parties and hung out. But what high school kid has the opportunity to randomly drop everything and drive to California on a whim for spring break?

In college, most people learn that you have to work to achieve things — you are not just handed things on a silver platter. If you do not have the money to go out, you have to sit at home, or run up your credit card beyond its limit.

College students learn the value of money because if you don't have it, you have to get a job or take up shoplifting. It is hard to say what will be the best years of your life — it is different for everyone. But how can someone say that a certain period of their life, a time before anything interesting happens to them, is and will be the best years of their life? Live your entire life first, and then decide. Your life will be as good as you make it.

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