

Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture

by Julie Glassman

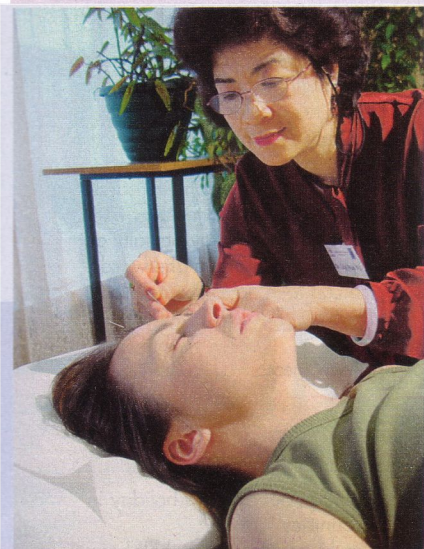
Whether you're suffering from incessant hot flushes, back pain or even something more serious, acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine might bring relief and help you to get on with your life. But with so many Chinese health shops on the high street, and many people claiming to be qualified in acupuncture or prescribing Chinese herbs, how do you know where to go, who's safe and whether it will actually work?

DOCTOR Lily is a **Chinese Medicine Practitioner** with over 30 years at the Acumedic Centre in London and as a specialist in fertility problems, a collage of baby photos adorn her desk, sent from the hundreds of delighted couples she's helped to conceive.

To arrive at her diagnosis, Dr Lily asks about medical problems, eating habits, state of mind, sleep and living environment.

"We also get information from observing vitality, complexion and the tongue, and feeling the pulse," she says. "The tongue acts like a mirror of the internal organs. It never lies."

Depending on the "syndrome" diagnosed, a course of treatment will be prescribed comprising weekly acupuncture and herbs. Herbs act as a tonic for the organs and promote the flow of Qi, clearing any blockages. And Chinese acupuncture acts on both Qi blockages and disease and pain. Chinese acupuncture without herbs can be an effective treatment. However Chinese doctors may recommend both for the best possible outcome. You should start to see results after a month or two of treatment.



■ Contact: general.info@acumedic.com or 020 7388 6704 or visit www.acumedic.com

"I was more alert and vibrant"

Two years ago, Penny Robinson, 56, a music producer manager, was diagnosed with advanced colon cancer, and sickness during the chemotherapy halted her treatment.

Penny had seen Dr Lily several years before on her GP's recommendation to help treat a fibroid rather than have surgery. "This seemed very unusual advice from a GP," reflects Penny. "After three months, the fibroid, previously the size of a grapefruit, had shrunk to the size of a pea. I didn't need an op."

So Penny decided to use traditional Chinese Medicine again, this time to combat the debilitating sickness so she could complete the chemotherapy. But her oncologist advised her against it, unsure of its effect on the chemotherapy. "I disregarded her advice, and went to see Dr Lily," says Penny, "I then went back on a different course of chemotherapy and also radiotherapy, and carried on taking the Chinese herbs Dr Lily prescribed."

"She also gave me acupuncture every fortnight, which improved my sleep and my appetite and made me more relaxed. The herbs, I believe, boosted my immune system. I was a lot more alert and vibrant."

Her oncologist had warned her of the probability of major hair loss, but only three small clumps fell out, almost unnoticeable.

"My oncologist said I was her star pupil," enthuses Penny. "She was amazed by the difference in me, and even admitted afterwards that there may be something in this Chinese medicine."

Available on the NHS?

Western Medical Acupuncture treatment practised by a fully trained GP or consultant is also available on the NHS, through GP or consultant referral and through some private medical insurance.

Traditional Chinese Medicine is not currently practised by the NHS, and doctors with limited knowledge of it may be nervous about recommending it. But with the state regulation of Chinese Medicine practitioners scheduled for 2008, this is likely to change.

Costs:

- For acupuncture: £20 to £50 a session
- Chinese herbs can sometimes be expensive – and can cost up to £100 for a month's supply.

