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Acupuncture treatment

photo by Chris Fritchie

Au Natural Healthcare Therapies

By Jennifer Nelson

WITH RISING HEALTHCARE costs and the increase of “super bugs” on the minds of virtually every American, more and more people seem to be searching for healthcare alternatives. Many of these searches lead to natural care, including chiropractic, acupuncture, massage, rehabilitation and holistic medicine (herbal treatments and practices that include mind, body and soul). While a decade ago most people were skeptical about such treatments, the use of these natural practices – also called “complementary” and “alternative medicine” – is much more common today.

In a 2002 study by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) and the National Center for Health Statistics, 36 percent of adults surveyed said they used some form of complementary and alternative medicine in the last

12 months and 54.9 percent said they believed complementary and alternative medicine combined with conventional medicine would help in their situation. The study found that this natural care was used most often to treat back pain, head colds, neck pain, joint pain, anxiety and depression.

The media is also picking up on the increased use of natural care. On March 25th, *Good Morning America* discussed a new study that implies a link between receiving a neck adjustment by a chiropractor and lower blood pressure. Last fall, a number of morning shows featured a story on acupuncture and its effect on back pain and another story about its effect on pregnancy.

WHY THE NEW INTEREST?

Many reasons explain why people are turning more to natural care, including rising healthcare costs and

more accessible research through the Internet. Jana Dillon Ward, ATC, LAT, LMT, is part of the ACM Health Solutions practice in Plano and has almost 15 years of massage therapy experience and nearly 20 years in athletic training. She attributes the increase in the use of natural care to our consumer-driven society.

“Patients are starting to look for more answers than medicine and surgery,” says Ms. Ward. “Not to say that those things aren’t helpful – there are times when medicine and surgery are very necessary and very helpful. But people are looking for things outside of traditional medicine because that field seems to treat symptoms while people are often looking to treat the causes.”

WHAT DOES NATURAL CARE OFFER?

Dr. Brian Dillon, DC, of ACM Health



Brian T. Dillon, D.C. performing a neck adjustment
photo by Chris Fritchie

in acupuncture and Chinese herbology.

“One of the reasons natural care works so well is that it goes to the root of the problem and looks at the whole body to figure out where the body is out of balance,” he explains. “And if we put the body back in balance, it will naturally take care of itself.”

Mr. Homoky has experienced the benefits of natural care firsthand through his son, which is what drew him into the practice. When Mr. Homoky’s son was born, as he puts it, “He was basically born allergic to this world.” Doctors couldn’t find any solutions other than to avoid the things that prompted an allergic reaction and use medication to regulate allergens he couldn’t avoid. So that’s what the Homoky’s did. They made sure their son avoided troublesome foods. “We cooked everything from scratch and no one could give him any food unless we approved it or it came from our house,” said Mr. Homoky.” His son also used a nebulizer three or four times a day and took various medications for his allergies.

Around the time their son was four years old, they learned of a treatment called Nambudripad’s Allergy Elimination Treatment (NAET), which is a “non-invasive, drug-free, natural solution to eliminate allergies of all types and intensities using a blend of selective energy balancing, testing and treatment procedures from acupuncture/acupressure, allopathy, chiropractic, nutritional and kinesiological disciplines of medicine,” according to www.naet.com. After only three months, Mr. Homoky could see an improvement in the health of his son. After a year, his son was virtually allergy-free and liberated from the use of a nebulizer, steroids and other medications.

PRACTICAL WAYS to ensure your natural care provider is reputable:

- Check out credentials, including where he or she received training and what kind of certification the professional has acquired.
- Ask friends, family and co-workers for recommendations.
- Confirm professional has a license and how long in practice.
- Determine types of treatment the professional is qualified to perform.
- Ask for a complimentary consultation.
- Check with local hospitals, physicians and professional organizations for recommendations.

Solutions, is a magna cum laude graduate of Cleveland Chiropractic College. He explains the difference in traditional medicine and natural care boils down to the focus of the treatment.

“The majority of our treatments go toward the causes, not just masking the symptoms or abating the symptoms,” says Dr. Dillon. “For example, in chiropractic care, a lot of our focus is on the spine because if the nervous system that exits the spine is interfered with for any reason, wherever the nerve goes—whether it ends at a muscle, nerve, gland or an organ—those tissues cannot function optimally because the nerve isn’t functioning optimally—it’s being interfered with at the spinal level. So that’s why we focus so much on the spine—to treat the cause.”

Steve Homoky, L.Ac., another partner at ACM Health Solutions, received a master’s degree in Oriental medicine from the Dallas College of Oriental Medicine and is nationally board certified

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Despite stories like the Homoky's, skeptics still exist when it comes to natural care, often because of the lack of research. NCCAM's website (nccam.nih.gov) states that "while some scientific evidence exists regarding some complementary and alternative medicine therapies, for most there are key questions that are yet to be answered through well-designed scientific studies."

So why does a lack of research exist, given that some of these natural treatments have been around for thousands of years? Ms. Ward believes it is because of the subjectivity of the natural treatments.

"One reason why the medical community is having a hard time with natural therapies is that it is difficult to go study 100 people who receive a hot stone massage and have similar results with each person," says Ms. Ward. "It may be that each one of those people, even if they have a similar problem, needs a different kind of massage technique to treat his or her problem.

If a doctor goes in and gives penicillin, though, it's either going to work or it's not going to work. So it's difficult for the medical community to accept what we do because hard evidence, facts and studies are difficult to produce."

A lot of the results are anecdotal... We've had folks come in here walking with walkers and canes who don't need them anymore.

"It is because a lot of the results are anecdotal," adds Dr. Dillon. "You will hear a lot of stories about people who now have no more migraines. We've had folks come in here walking with walkers and canes who don't need them anymore. So there are a lot of tremendous things that happen within

these walls. It's pretty amazing stuff."

"I have one patient who is seeing me for food allergies and environmental allergens," says Mr. Homoky. "She came in yesterday and was so happy because she ate peach yogurt for the first time in years and now she can drink hot chocolate. So it's those kinds of things that make it worthwhile and prove that these treatments do work."

ARE YOU CONSIDERING NATURAL THERAPIES?

If you are considering using natural care, it's important to be informed about your treatment and the specific research that has been done. You can visit www.fda.gov and www.ftc.gov to research treatments and supplements. The NCCAM also encourages those using natural care that it is still necessary to consult and discuss all of your treatments, including complementary and alternative medicine, with your healthcare provider.

Jennifer Nelson is a freelance writer living in Frisco.