

Beacon News, The (Aurora, IL)

Puncturing the pain

When traditional cures fail, patients seek alternatives

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Section: VOICE **Page:** D1 **By:** Angela Fornelli

Caption: Karen Cipowski-Smith receives heat therapy treatment from licensed acupuncturist Mavis Bates at Bates' clinic, Inner Harmony **Acupuncture** and Oriental Medicine in Aurora. Bates was providing both **acupuncture** and preparing a form of heat therapy known as moxibustion (moxa for short). Cipowski-Smith decided to try **acupuncture** at the beginning of this year to relieve fatigue and stress.

Patient Karen Cipowski-Smith had **acupuncture** applied to her feet to relieve foot pain at Inner Harmony **Acupuncture** and Oriental Medicine in Aurora. Mavis Bates seems to be everyone's last resort. And everyone's savior.

"What do you do if your doctor can't do anything for you? You've had an MRI, blood tests done, and nothing was wrong but you still didn't feel good?" the acupuncturist said. "That's when people come to me." While many people question the effects of **acupuncture**, Bates has relieved dozens of patients from menstrual cramps, allergies, migraines, and even more serious chronic conditions like diabetes and arthritis. She has helped people quit smoking, lose weight and stop snoring.

"My first patient was a migraine patient, and she stopped coming because she didn't get any more headaches," Bates said.

As one of only a few acupuncturists in Aurora, Bates was nervous about opening her practice, Inner Harmony **Acupuncture** and Oriental Medicine, in a suburban area where the ancient Chinese practice might not be as accepted as it is in urban areas, she said. But since she opened almost a year ago, she's seen such an influx of patients that she's opened a second treatment room at her office on Lake Street.

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Bates said while Western medicine is ideal for emergency injuries and bacterial problems, **acupuncture** has proven helpful for pain relief, chronic illnesses, addictions and women's health issues.

"We love our Western doctors. We run to them when we have pneumonia or broken bones and need surgery," Bates said. "But most Western doctors accept the fact that there are some gaps."

Filling the gaps

One of Bates' patients, for example, found relief from her periodontal disease after her dentist told her the only option was to extract the tooth. The Aurora woman, Lynn Furnish, had been seeing Bates for weight loss and asked if there was anything the acupuncturist could do to help heal her deteriorating tooth to avoid its removal.

Bates used needles in Furnish's cheek and neck to increase circulation and fight the infection.

"My gum will be healed enough to not need to get my tooth pulled," Furnish said. "It's helped heal it faster, and the pain certainly has gone away."

Often, people come to Bates after finding little success from conventional medications and procedures. The acupuncturist has treated several women who were having trouble getting pregnant even after going to fertility clinics, she said.

One patient went to a cardiologist for heart palpitations but found no relief. Bates placed tiny needles in the man's ear and under his wrists, which are on the body's "heart channel," as well as on **acupuncture** points that are for relieving stress and calming the spirit.

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"I treated him one time, and he came back and said he had the best week he's had in a year," Bates said. "He said he had a better rhythm and was more relaxed."

Treating pain, addictions

Bates' treatments have helped relieve pain associated with many common ailments - including menstrual cramps, menopausal symptoms, migraines, arthritis and muscle soreness - by treating the body system at the root of the problem.

For people with seasonal allergies, for example, Bates works with the lung and kidney. According to Chinese theory, the spleen produces phlegm which goes into the lungs, which means poor digestion leads to phlegm in the lungs and mucus in the nose and sinuses.

The acupuncturist has also helped many people quit their addictions.

"There are five points (on the body) to treat chemical dependencies," she said. "Smoking and weight loss are similar - we use many of the same points because they are both addictive behaviors."

There are several points on the ear that calm the spirit and help with will power, she said. When it comes to smoking, Bates first determines why the person smokes and also helps treat the anger and irritability that comes with quitting.

"Sometimes people smoke to calm down. Sometimes people smoke for stimulation," she said. "So the needles try to replace what the cigarettes do for you so it masks the withdrawal system."

Bates has also found success treating other odd or minor issues. One of Bates' patients was able to stop snoring after only a few visits.

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Because snoring is related to phlegm, Bates treated his neck with a machine that generates a very low dose of electricity, which tightens the muscles in the throat to keep the throat open and help the cells heal.

"He said he was already breathing better before I was even finished treating him," Bates said. "He doesn't snore anymore."

Gaining popularity

According to a survey by the National Certification Commission for **Acupuncture** and Oriental Medicine, nearly 1 in 10 adults have received **acupuncture**, and 60 percent said they'd consider it as a treatment option. Bates said the incidence of adverse side effects is substantially lower than that of other medical procedures.

Bates, an Aurora resident of more than 30 years, left her job as a technical manager and programmer for Lucent Technologies to attend the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine in Chicago and receive her Master's of traditional oriental medicine. She also received a Doctor of Naturopathy at the Clayton School of Natural Healing.

Bates said she enjoys knowing that she is helping people restore their "inner harmony."

"Patients walk in and look like they are living lives of quiet desperation, and maybe they're a little depressed," she said. "When they walk out of here, they're smiling."

For information, contact Bates at Inner Harmony **Acupuncture** and Oriental Medicine, 412 N. Lake St., Aurora, (630) 605-9244, or go to www.myinnerharmony.com.