



Dispelling myths over Chinese medicine

Get to the point on acupuncture

by DAN CARRIER

EASTERN medical practises have become increasingly fashionable since the late 1960s – and people in Britain are reaping the benefits of traditional Chinese medicines that have developed over thousands of years.

Acupuncturist Alex Maas, a 30-year-old practitioner from Gospel Oak, has studied in Chinese and Vietnamese hospitals as well as at the renowned London School of Acupuncture, based at the University of Westminster, where he currently works as an assistant clinical supervisor. He is now setting up a practice in Gospel Oak to run alongside his established clinic in Pimlico. Increasingly used alongside conventional medicine acupuncture is used to treat a variety of illnesses.

Common conceptions of acupuncture are based around inserting needles into the skin, a painful sounding, but actually painless, experience.

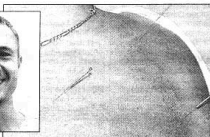
Alex told the New Journal: "When I first tried acupuncture, in 1990, I thought it would

be painful, but that wasn't the case.

"We use needles as fine as a strand of hair which are inserted into the points on the body to stimulate the body's own healing response and to restore its natural balance."

Acupuncturists understand a detailed 'map' of channels that run through the body. Energy – known as Chi – flows through the channels and by placing needles at certain points on the body, an acupuncturist can stimulate the flow of chi, allowing the body's own healing mechanisms to cure the problem.

Alex said: "Disruptions in the flow of chi are associated with illness and pain, which may relate to anxiety, stress, anger, fear or grief, or a poor diet, hereditary factors and infections. The system Alex practises focuses on a holistic approach, which aims to



Alex Maas is setting up an acupuncture practice in Gospel Oak

improve the patient's overall well-being as well as dealing with specific symptoms.

He said: "There is little point in just trying to help someone with one symptom. The key to acupuncture is to help someone feel balanced in, ideally, every aspect of their life and make sure the illness does not return time and again."

When a patient comes to see Alex, he will ask about current symptoms. He said: "I also discuss diet and sleep patterns, and the patient's medical and close family history."

"During treatment, patients can experience a heaviness in the limbs and a pleasant feeling of

relaxation. Everyone is unique, thus the number of treatments depends on the individual's constitution, and the duration and severity of the problem.

"Some change is usually felt after five treatments, but often sooner."

"By treating the whole person, the aim is to recover the equilibrium between the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of the individual," he said.

■ The Panakeia clinic, where Alex currently practises, can be contacted on 020 7730 9977.

■ The British Acupuncture Council can be contacted at www.acupuncture.org.uk.