



RH graphic/JACK HARPER

Alternative health seeks a complete lifestyle change

Rhema Muncy
Special Sections Reporter

When Kathy Zietz walked away from her doctor's office with a harsh diagnosis earlier this year, she started researching alternatives to invasive surgery for her menstrual prob-

lems. As a nurse working in critical care at Medical Center of the Rockies, her high-stress job only compounded her health issues. After a lot of consideration, she joined several of her co-workers who were receiving acupuncture therapy. Four months of working with her regular physician and Ann-Marie Yeager, MSOM, registered acupuncturist and Chinese medical doctor, set Zietz on a steady path to holistic health.

"Having an alternative to surgery was really important to me," Zietz said. "You can only do so much with western medicine. If we all had an open mind,

there could be some other therapy to explore for a lot of different diseases."

Ruthie Weyant, another Medical Center of the Rockies IC nurse, utilizes acupuncture to balance her many life roles of single mom, student, caregiver and part time worker.

"Acupuncture is my major time out, a time to center myself," Weyant said. "It involves the mind, body and spirit. Eastern medicine incorporates things you can't explain but work."

■ See ALTERNATIVE/Page 15



Right, Ann-Marie Yeager, L.Ac., MSOM and owner of Good Health Acupuncture & Chinese Herbs, Inc. gives patient Ruthie Weyant her weekly acupuncture treatment. Weyant works as a nurse in the IC unit of Medical Center of the Rockies and receives acupuncture treatment with a group of nurses. Patients see Yeager for a wide variety of health issues, including injury healing, women's and men's health, insomnia and the pursuit of holistic health. Yeager uses Chinese Medicine methods to identify problems and aid the body in repair.

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Doctor Ann-Marie Yeager inserts needles into the arms and legs of Ruthie Weyent. The acupuncture process includes 30 min. of rest with the needles.

ALTERNATIVE

From Page 14

Many people in Loveland are turning to a blend of eastern and western medicine to meet their individualized health care needs.

"I enjoy treating patients who were in the same position as I was," said Yeager, owner of Good Health Acupuncture & Chinese Herbs. "I didn't have any will to live, I didn't have any hope, I didn't know if I was ever going to get any better. When patients say they have everything wrong with them, in Chinese medicine we can make sense of it."

Many alternative health practices start with viewing the body as energy based.

"In Chinese medicine, we deal with energy in the body called Qi," Yeager said. "It flows through channels and meridians in

certain directions. If there's any kind of pain, that means there is stagnation or blockage of energy. With acupuncture and sometimes herbs, we can get that stagnation and blockage to flow. We also deal with the energetics of the organs. We can still deal with the energetics of the organ even if it's not there."

Lori Finnicks, RPh, is a pharmacist and hormone consultant for Good Day Pharmacy. She began her career strictly in western medicine, but she now encourages her clients to consider alternative health practices.

"Chinese medicine can help patients deal with stuff from the inside out," Finnicks said. "The Chinese medicine field can help augment western medicine."

In the quest for complete healing, Finnicks encourages clients to be aware of everything happening in the body.

"We are trying to get to the root of a problem instead of just putting a band aid on it," Finnicks said. "It's not a quick fix. It took



Sage Holistic Health doctor Kathryn Plummer, ND, gives patient Channing Meyer a massage treatment for lower back pain. Plummer and business partner Dee Koloski ND, LAc, utilize different alternative methods in their practice. Koloski and Plummer team up to help each other's patients through acupuncture and Chinese medicine. They also educate people to keep healthy and stay out of the doctor's office.

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ALTERNATIVE

From Page 15

you awhile to get here and it will take you awhile to get back, but you have to be patient."

Kathryn Plummer, ND, and Dee Koloski ND, LAc, of Sage Holistic Health work to educate people about holistic approaches to lifestyle changes.

"It's really difficult to change a mind set, because this is the philosophy of how we have all grown up — you get sick or you don't feel good and you take something," Plummer said. "But it may not be what is really helpful. You don't feel sick because you are lacking a pill."

Medical practices at Sage Holistic Health focus on training people to maintain their own health and stay out of the doctor's office.

"We try really hard to show people how to use natural remedies that are available to everybody," Koloski said.

Eastern medicine philosophies focus heavily on the doctor and patient relationship.

"This is a partnership," Koloski said. "We are sort of like coaches. In the process of the patient doing the work, that's when their perceptions change and they realize they can't just take something when they feel bad, they have to prevent it from happening in the first place."

This relationship begins with

accessible medical professionals.

"I don't wear a white coat, I don't sit behind a huge desk — this is team work," Plummer added. "If you want me to just do all the work, there is a problem. I can be the expert of natural health, but you are the expert of you. Together we will figure out a plan."

Many alternative health practitioners strive to work with area doctors.

"Alternative medicine works very well with the western medical community," Yeager said. "Doctors have been very open to referring their patients to receive acupuncture."

Keeping patient health as the first priority fosters open communication between the two worlds of western and eastern medicine.

"We want every provider to know what we are doing," Koloski said. "We are sitting on the fence of conventional and unconventional. We will refer people if we find something that is abnormal. Our education has to do with training us to know where our limitations are."

Finnick believes in the possibility of east meeting west.

"Once western medicine starts to see the pursuit of the quality of life with patients and the success of that, they are more willing to actually work with patients who want to pursue some of that," she said.

THE PURSUIT OF HOLISTIC HEALTH

• Acupuncture

Both Yeager and the doctors of Sage Holistic Health start new patients with an extensive medical history and symptom discovery session.

"I gather information and incorporate things that they can



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Quiet gong sounds are often used in alternative medicine.

ALTERNATIVE

From Page 16

do on their own at home," Yeager said. "I want this to make sense to them so they will be able to moderate their results. They don't have to come in here and change everything about their life to get better."

Acupuncture can be used as a preventative medicine, not just as a last resort.

"I love it when my patients come in once a month for a tune up," Yeager said. "There doesn't have to be something wrong. Acupuncture is a cumulative affect and it can take time to get them better."

The cycles for treatment can start anywhere from three times a week to once every couple of months, depending on the symptoms and needs for maintenance.

The main patient fears Koloski encounters as an acupuncturist revolve around needles.

"You may or may not feel the needle go through your skin," she said. "Sometimes it's a dull, aching feeling. Sometimes it's a sensation going up and down the limb and it will sort of come and go. The sensations gradually dissipate. A lot of people literally fall asleep — it deeply relaxes. You can have a really profound release. These kinds of treatments are working on that physical body but also touching emotions. People will get different responses."

For Zietz, the use of clean and sterile methods was very important when she considered acupuncture therapy.

"Just being a nurse and always being on heightened alert, knowing that the needles used were one time use

and one client only was my number one," she said.

Yeager's relaxing office creates a space for people to unwind and experience a mini-vacation. Clients plug into relaxing music and let the needles do the restorative work.

"When I tap the needle in, there can be a little redness around the needle, which either means heat is being released from the body or chi is going into the area," Yeager said. "We don't have to necessarily go into the area of pain to treat the area of pain. For example, if someone had knee surgery or a sprained ankle, those areas are going to be very inflamed, so I wouldn't want to go right into that area. So I might go to the opposite side. I can treat totally

from the elbows, knees and below to treat back pain."

Yeager sees patients for a wide variety of reasons. Some of the hottest trends in acupuncture are fertility, insomnia and allergy treatments.

"People want a quick fix and acupuncture really isn't a quick fix," she said.

• Naturopathic Medicine

With roots in holistic philosophy, naturopathic medicine utilizes traditional therapies and the most current advances in modern medicine to treat a broad range of health conditions. Naturopathic doctors are trained as general family practitioners who address the underlying cause of disease through effective, individualized natural therapies that integrate the healing powers of body, mind and spirit, according to the Sage Holistic Health Web site.

Koloski and Plummer began Sage Holistic Health after they both graduated from the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Ore.

"She does massage, I do acupuncture, we are both naturopathic doctors," Koloski said. "We work on each other's patients all of the time. Naturopathic medicine is a holistic view of life focusing on wellness, not a lack of symptoms. It is a ground up look to redefine your state of health."

Getting patients to think beyond treating symptoms takes time.

"Their perceptions change as they start feeling better," Koloski said. "A lot of times we have to negotiate with people. If their diet consists of Poptarts and a Pepsi for breakfast, we will get them to eat an apple a day and add something."

Individualized treatments at Sage Holistic Health often incorporate herbal remedies, massage and acupuncture.

ALTERNATIVE HEALTH CONCERNS

Insurance is a large concern for many patients considering alternative medicine. Many insurance companies don't cover preventative medicine yet.

"I really think insurance companies could actually save money in the long run if they would allow coverage for some of these things," Finnick said. "Insurance is hard with alternative medicine. Anything with prevention is kind of backwards medicine. When patients push it, if their doctors aren't on board, they will seek out other practitioners."

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Herbs and supplement regimes are often a major part of alternative health practices.

