



GUELPH MERCURY

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# Looking for relief

## Homeopathic practitioner advised changing diet

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### GUELPH

Angel Ottema had tried everything to relieve the overwhelming fatigue, the weak muscles and burning pain of fibromyalgia — a pain she said “is like battery acid running through your body all the time.”

She tried physiotherapy, acupuncture and massage.

She consulted a surgeon to learn whether her condition was connected to previous back injuries.

“They gave some relief,” said the 35-year-old Guelph woman, “but they would never last. I tell you, being sick and tired is wearing me out.”

Then she found Heather Caruso, a Guelph practitioner of homeopathy, who altered Ottema's diet and gave her back her life.

Before being diagnosed Ottema said she had no zest for life, no energy, and was subject to bouts of depression. Two years after following Caruso's rigorous regimen, Ottema teaches dance lessons, runs her household, and feels 100 times better.

“I still have flare ups, but the times when things go well are greater than when they don't. I think what I like most is that I have some control in my life again. That's a biggy for me,” she said.

Caruso, who's practised in Guelph for five years, said about a third of her clients suffer from constant pain of some sort with chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia and rheumatoid arthritis topping the list.

What homeopathy does, in simple terms, is alter the diet to allow the body to work more effectively at fighting disease.

“Everyone is different, but in general, Canadians eat a poor diet, with high amounts of fat and sugar. That makes the system more acidic and prone to inflammation,” Caruso explained.

Swelling puts pressure on joints and tissues and often leads to pain. The first thing medical doctors do is put patients on anti-inflammatories, Caruso said.

“I go at it from a different perspective,” she said.

Caruso rhymed off a list of herbal remedies, that help the body heal (arnica and ruta), reduces muscle spasms (magphos) and reduces inflammation (hypericum). A diet that includes fatty fish with Omega 3 acid, such as salmon, less animal fat and more fruits and vegetables helps reduce inflammation as well, she said.

It's hard work following this doctor's orders. While many people living with chronic pain don't want to take medication because it can cause nausea and muddled thinking, the onus is on Caruso's patients to make the dietary changes themselves.

“It is a long-term treatment,” Caruso said. “After six months about 80 per cent of my patients find relief if they follow the plan. But a lot won't make the dietary changes and that's a shame.”

Caruso acknowledges there are skeptics who dismiss homeopathy as unscientific, unproved, and unregulated.

“Some doctors don't like what I do and refuse to treat their patients who also see me. But most are open to it and are willing to share results. In the end, if a patient feels less pain, that's all that matters.”

## This is the last of a two-part series on chronic pain



Sherman Lai, a practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine demonstrates acupuncture.

## Acupuncture needles stimulate the body to produce pain killers

### GUELPH

It may be hard to wrap one's head around the idea that sticking needles in your body can actually reduce chronic pain, but Dr. Sherman Lai said there's sound science behind the ancient Chinese practice.

The practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine, who's been in Guelph since 1986, said acupuncture is gaining popularity and legitimacy as western scientific research is able to explain the ancient eastern claims.

Lai cited several University of Toronto studies that show when properly placed, acupuncture needles stimulate the body to produce pain killers (endorphins) and anti inflammatories, thereby allowing the body to heal itself. The eastern theory is based on the body's energy flow, called 'chi.' When that energy flow is blocked, it causes pain. When unblocked, chi energy can flow and enhance healing powers.

“Nothing speaks louder than clinical results though. It's very effective for patients suffering from chronic pain, injury or accidents, and cancer pain. For some acupuncture works like magic, but it's not magic of course. The basic principle is to heal the body without being invasive,” Lai explained.

Lai gave the example of a patient who had suffered lower back pain for 15 years. The patient had tried drugs and chiropractic treatments and was facing the prospect of exploratory surgery to find the root cause.

“He came here and after 12 treatments his 15-year-old pain was gone.”

Acupuncture is very effective in treating physical injuries and post-surgical pain Lai said, but chronic pain caused by fibromyalgia and arthritis requires herbal medicines and dietary changes as well.

“Often the underlying problem is in the digestive system,” Lai said. “Certain foods can trigger pain.”

Lai said that because acupuncture is not a regulated profession in Canada, “there are a lot of people not qualified to practise, and that diminishes the profession as a whole.”

Lai is currently working with the Ministry of Health to set the scope of practice, required training and regulations around the profession. On his desk is a model of the human body with points on the head connected to points on the feet through a circuitry of nerves called meridians.

Certain pain can be treated locally — that is, by inserting the acupuncture needles around the site of the pain — but other conditions respond to pressure applied at remote points. That's why it's sometimes necessary to insert the needles in the feet, even though the pain is in the head.

Of the 5,000 patients on his roster, Lai estimated a quarter suffer from chronic pain.

“Most people will go to their medical doctor first. When they run out of options, then they try other alternatives. That's why we get the worst cases at our door.”

“The skeptics don't bother me,” Lai said. “They're converted very easily when their pain goes away.”

## Hypnotherapy incorporates the body, mind and spirit

### GUELPH

Of all the alternative therapies people use to combat chronic pain, hypnotherapy is perhaps the least understood.

What most people know of hypnosis is what they see on TV — if it's not a hypnotist/ showman pulling someone on stage getting them to cluck like a chicken, it's some poor unsuspecting sitcom character who's inadvertently put under a ‘spell,’ with madcap results.

Mar Gabourie cringes at the suggestion.

“Everyone comes here with something they want to release,” said Gabourie, a certified clinical hypnotherapist who has operated her clinic, Journey Back Home, in Guelph for six years. “Hypnotherapy is gentle, respectful, deeply relaxing and very effective for people who suffer from chronic pain. It's a holistic approach that incorpo-

rates body, mind and spirit,” she said.

The mind is a powerful tool, Gabourie explained, and it can overcome many challenges with the right prompting and conviction.

For those with chronic pain, Gabourie sees two symptoms. “There's the real, physical pain accompanied by suffering, and the suffering makes the pain more intolerable. Here, I work with both aspects.”

The mind has different levels of awareness, Gabourie said. There's the conscious mind, where dreams, hopes and desires are held; the critical mind, where we hold our beliefs, our doubts and our day-to-day thinking; the subconscious mind, usually beyond our awareness; and the primitive mind, that kicks in during emergencies — ‘fight or flight’ thinking.

In hypnosis, Gabourie delves past the conscious and critical mind and taps into the sub conscious,

“like drilling for oil,” she said. It's in the sub-conscious mind where you can plant the suggestions of the conscious desires. For those with chronic pain that desire is to reduce or eliminate the pain.

Gabourie first sets her clients at ease and clarifies their reason for coming. Once the client is in a relaxed state, she begins the main work of the session, planting the seeds of positive change.

Each session is tailored to the client, but Gabourie gave a hypothetical example.

“I would have my client visualize the pain and describe it to me. Perhaps it looks like a red hot poker. Then I'd ask what less pain would look like. Maybe an orange poker. Then yellow, then green and so on. As they work through this, their pain is reduced.”

Then, she went on, she'd have the client move the pain around — from deep inside the head, for example, closer to the surface and finally right out

of the body.

She ends the session with a positive, affirming statement, something like, ‘I am in control of my pain.’

“It really is about the power of positive thinking. I plant the suggestions but it's up to the client to make it happen,” Gabourie said.

Throughout the session the client breathes slower, the heart rate slows, muscles relax and pain diminishes. There are three critical steps the client must take to ensure continued success — to accept the illness, to let go of the resentment, and to choose a positive affirmation.

When pain recurs, the client learns to put themselves in a relaxed state, visualize a lesser pain, move it around and take control again.

“We're all so busy out there, but our answers are always right here,” said Gabourie, pointing to her heart.

## Getting the most out of your brown bag lunch

How many of us pack a lunch every day? Many parents take the time to pack a healthy lunch for their kids but fail to pack one for themselves.

Breakfast starts your day off right but your “lunch-box” has the potential to keep you going all day long. Think of your “brown bag” as your fuel for the day. If your schedule permits you can try spreading out your lunch over the day instead of eating it all at once.

A large lunch will often leave you feeling tired and sluggish especially if you are drawn to vending machines, greasy cafeteria food or drive-throughs. A packed lunch gives you the flexibility to have a mid-morning snack, a small lunch and an afternoon snack to bridge the gap



HEIDI SMITH

NUTRITION FOR THE LONG RUN

until dinner.

Spreading out your lunch will speed up your metabolism, boost your energy and help control your hunger before dinner.

So what stops us from packing a lunch? Some of the top obstacles are time, energy and creativity. If you seem to run out of time in the morning, get in the habit of packing your lunch the

night before. Save on effort by putting leftovers from dinner straight into lunch sized containers.

Many people suffer from what I call sandwich “burn-out”. Just the thought of a soggy tuna sandwich is enough to discourage anyone from making their lunch the night before. You may want to pack your sandwich filling separately from the bread to keep it fresh.

If you need a break from the mainstream packed lunches there are many tasty alternatives to sandwiches. Soups, salads and wraps add an element of variety. To get the much needed protein in your lunch you can by-pass the high fat, salt-laden cold cuts and cook some extra meat at dinner. Protein will keep

you full and satisfied throughout the day.

Other ideas include boiled eggs, mini cans of tuna, sardines (for fish lovers!), crab pieces, roasted soya beans (less fat than nuts), dried soups with at least 7-10 grams of protein (check out Presidents Choice: Too Good To Be True soups), skim milk cheese strings, cottage cheese and yogurt.

Spread your protein sources over the day as well. A balanced snack with protein at 3 p.m. will do a world of good for your energy level.

For example, mid-morning have some melon and cottage cheese and at lunch try a curry chicken wrap (chopped chicken breast, light mayo, curry powder and cut up grapes on a whole

wheat tortilla). Accompany the wrap with some green beans to munch on. Later have an afternoon snack of apple and dried soyanuts.

If you are like most people, the veggies get left behind at lunch hour. Baby carrots are fast and easy, however they can get boring.

Try packing some interesting veggie variety such as: green beans, snow peas, sweet peas, grape tomatoes, peppers (pack a knife in your lunch if you don't have the time to cut it up at home), wedges of cabbage or cucumbers. Add pre-washed baby spinach to wraps or add a little feta cheese and pre-washed lettuce for a quick salad.

Last but not least, save the sugars for a treat. Granola bars,

puddings, fruit roll-ups, fruit “drinks”, sugared rice cakes, cookies and “dunkaroos” are all examples of high sugar foods that are best saved as a dessert. If eaten in isolation as a snack they may give a quick boost in energy followed by an energy crash.

With a few new ideas and a little extra effort the night before, you'll reap the benefits of a revitalized lunch for a high energy day. Bon Appetite.

• Heidi Smith is a registered dietitian consulting out of the Health and Performance Centre at the University of Guelph. She is the author of the book “Nutrition for the Long Run — A Nutrition Handbook for Runners, Walkers and Active individuals”