

Acupuncture Makes the Cover of Newsweek

Chinese Medicine, Herbs Also Highlighted

By Editorial Staff

If a picture is worth a thousand words, how much is it worth to be on the front page of a popular magazine? The acupuncture profession may soon know that answer, as the editors of *Newsweek* have devoted 30 pages of its December 2, 2002 issue to a special report entitled "The Science of Alternative Medicine," featuring a cover photo of a young woman receiving acupuncture.

"The Science of Alternative Medicine" contains over a dozen articles devoted to a variety of alternative therapies, with contributions from some of the country's leading medical researchers. The first article in the report, "Now, 'Integrative Care,'" by Geoffrey Cowley, opens with the story of Carol Green, a student who considered enrolling in medical school but changed her mind. "I was interested in integrating Eastern and Western philosophies and finding a common language," Green said. Instead, she enrolled at the New England School of Acupuncture. Today, Green has a thriving practice that includes referrals from Western-trained physicians, including internists, orthopedic surgeons and psychiatrists. "Why should people use just one modality?" she asks. It's a good question that Western medicine doesn't have a ready answer for.

Cowley's article discusses the rise in the use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), which was documented in a 1993 study by Dr. David Eisenberg. Eisenberg's study found that 34% of all U.S. adults received at least one "unconventional" therapy in 1990. A follow-up study conducted by Eisenberg in 1998 found that CAM use rose an additional 25% between 1990 and 1997. This increase in CAM use was a driving force behind the creation of the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, and has led to dozens of large clinical trials designed to assess the effectiveness of certain therapies.

While NCCAM conducts large-scale trials, individual researchers are studying the physiological effects of acupuncture and other therapies. Cowley cites the work of Dr. Zang-Hee Cho, a professor of radiology at the University of California, Irvine, who is using functional magnetic resonance imaging to examine the effects of foot acupuncture on brain activity. "We used to think these were mysterious energies," said Cho, "but not anymore."

By examining CAM trials, scientists will gain a better understanding of which therapies work, whether they're safe, and who is most likely to benefit. The research being conducted now, it is believed, could revolutionize America's approach to health and well-being. As Cowley notes in his conclusion, "What's at stake is not just the status of some individual therapies, but the whole meaning of health care."

Newsweek's cover story, "Learning from China," presents an evenhanded view of the effectiveness of Chinese medicine. "Modern science is starting to verify that some of these age-old remedies really work," writes Anne Underwood, adding, "The evidence is promising enough that Western researchers have begun looking to China for potential new therapies." Underwood's article contains a brief description of the concepts of traditional Chinese medicine, including qi, acupuncture meridians, the Five Elements and the Seven Emotions, and compares the number of adverse events caused by Chinese herbs versus prescription drugs.

Among the other highlights in "The Science of Alternative Medicine":

- In "Ginkgo on Your Mind?" Mary Carmichael discusses the latest research on ginkgo biloba, a Chinese plant believed to improve memory and ward off the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.
- David Noonan's article "For the Littlest Patients" focuses on the growing number of researchers who are conducting studies to see which CAM therapies work best on children, and includes a photograph of a 15-year old boy receiving cupping to relieve back pain.
- Claudia Kalb provides two stories: "A Natural Way to Age" and "How to Lift the Mind." The first article discusses alternatives to hormone replacement therapy, with an emphasis on soy isoflavones and black cohosh; the second describes several natural methods Americans have pursued to treat anxiety and depression, including herbs, acupuncture and exercise.
- Three well-known researchers - Drs. Ted Kaptchuk, David Eisenberg and Anthony Komaroff - entertain the power of suggestion in a guest article, "Pondering the Placebo Effect." By examining the placebo effect, scientists can better map the connection between mind and body, and identify specific

pathways through which mental factors can alter disease symptoms.

Interspersed through the report are six short articles authored by clinicians at Harvard Medical School. "Easing the Treatment" looks at the role CAM therapies can play in the management and treatment of cancer. "Ways to Heal Your Heart" examines the effectiveness of vitamins and supplements in preventing cardiac disease. "Options for Arthritis Pain" explores potential remedies for osteoarthritis, including glucosamine; chondroitin; herbs; and acupuncture. "Beyond the Backache" compares the costs and effectiveness of several therapies for back pain. "Natural Mood Remedies" discusses the pros and cons of using natural remedies for anxiety and depression. And "Finding Out What Works" probes the challenges researchers face when determining whether a particular therapy is effective.

Newsweek's special report concludes with a brief guide, "Yoga and Massage: If It's Physical, It's Therapy." The guide contains photos of the most popular yoga poses, along with descriptions of different yoga and massage techniques.

The impact of *Newsweek's* special report holds tremendous promise in having the American public recognize the value of acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine. According to the World Press Group, *Newsweek* is one of the most widely read publications in the world. It is distributed in more than 190 countries and six languages, and has a weekly circulation of approximately 4.4 million (3.85 million in the United States).



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