

Eastern medicine gains in popularity

by MATT GEIGER

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Dane County is brimming with western medical clinics, but eastern practices have found a home here as well.

Without ever leaving Middleton, residents can visit a business that in some ways is much like those that have existed in China for millennia, where whole herbs and plants are ground on site to make capsules and tea. A place where acupuncture is practiced by people who have intimately known the technique for most of their lives.

Beijing Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine on University Avenue combines the rigors of diverse medical training with a grass roots understanding of health.

The clinic ended up in Middleton almost by chance in 1997, but the ensuing decade saw the business quickly grow as Americans became increasingly open to different types of health management.

The clinic is run by the husband and wife team of Jonathan and Leaf Song, both of whom bring formal training and a homegrown knowledge of eastern Medicine from their roots in Mainland China.

Dr. Leaf Song is a graduate of the China Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Beijing and started her clinic at Longyou Hospital in 1982. Dr. Jonathan Song received his Chinese Medicine degree in 1983 from Zhejiang College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and a western medical degree in 1988 from Peking Union Medical College.

The couple came to Wisconsin so Jonathan could work in the University of Wisconsin system. When Leaf was looking for possible locations near the school where she could open a private practice, one jumped out at her.

"It was on University Avenue, so I thought it looked like a good place since he was working at the University," she recalled.

While both Leaf and Jonathan's professional experience is extensive, their understanding of how to care for the human body and mind stretch back to early childhood. As a young girl, Leaf used to massage her grandmother. Conventions called for a piece of elephant tusk and special oil, but as a child, Leaf used the more economical combination of a spoon

and regular cooking oil. Such experiences gave her a head start in the field.

"I was in medical school and many of the things [they were teaching us] I had already learned from my grandmother," she recalled.

"In China, it is a family thing – here people think [eastern medicine] – is mysterious," she continued. "The thing I compare it to here in America is chicken noodle soup; even when people don't know exactly how it works, they still learn it from their family." She added that both acupuncture and herbal medicine strive toward the same goal, and are often used in combination to attain optimal results.

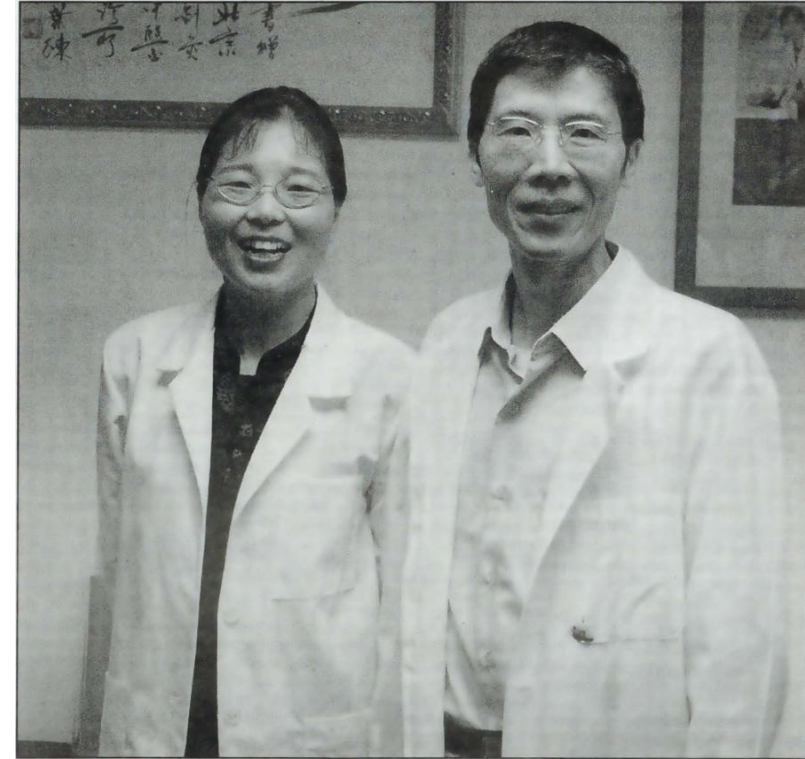
"Acupuncture works from the outside, and herbal medicine works from the inside," Leaf said. "They work together."

The needles used for acupuncture range from half an inch to three inches in length, but they are minute in girth and are placed in the body in a way that results in little or no discomfort. People use acupuncture and herbal medicine to treat an array of ailments, ranging from muscle and joint pain, neurological and physiological illness, reproductive disorders and respiratory issues to gastro-intestinal malfunctions.

The basic principle behind acupuncture is that experts can free up the flow of energy within the body. Sometimes it is simple – sometimes someone [says] their wrist hurt[s] and it can be fixed right away, with one needle," Leaf explained. "Sometimes it is more complicated." Acupuncturists work to adjust the needles and find the crucial points that help alleviate pain.

"If energy is blocked, it can open you up," Leaf said.

The clinic includes a wide array of herbal supplements and teas in addition to acupuncture facilities. "Herbal medicines are very good at making you balanced. If you are too hot, they release heat, if you are too cold, they heat you up. If your kidney energy is weak, they strengthen it," Leaf said. While acupuncture and herbal medicine are intended to help cure ailments, they are also part of a well-rounded approach to



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overall health, she said. "We always learned that herbal medicine isn't medication; it is just part of food, and it can prevent a lot of problems, from colds to cancer," Leaf said.

She added that Americans seem, in her experience, to encounter more pain than their eastern counterparts. Part of it is a result of diet, and part is attributable to the ability to handle stress, she said.

"Here, people usually go to the doctor and take a bunch of medication, but you also need to do as much as you can to actually be healthy," Leaf said. "People forget that if you get better, you won't need all that medication."

"Chinese medicine is like a puzzle; you have to see what fits best," she continued. "In America, the doctor says you have a lung infection and this is the thing you take, but with herbal medicine, 10 people will never have the same formula."