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Chinese medical practice opens

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Jay Heaverlo, 35, has spent years studying an ancient form of medical treatment that is fairly new in Western culture.

He practices traditional Chinese medicine, a combination of acupuncture and use of herbal medicines which he custom mixes for each patient.

Heaverlo, an Iowa native, set up Midwest Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine about four months ago in Urbandale.

Here's what he told us about himself and his practice.

Q. Please explain what you do here?

A. I practice traditional Chinese medicine: acupuncture; herbal medicine; lifestyle counseling; massage, *tui na* (a Chinese manipulative therapy). I specialize in oncology-complementary medicine and pain management.

Q. What is your background?

A. I grew up in Norwalk. I left for the Air Force in 1990 when I was 18. I traveled around the world and ended up in San Francisco - I had friends from Iowa there - and I went to school at Laney College in Oakland, Calif., for undergraduate school in science. I went to the Academy of Chinese Culture and Health Sciences (in Oakland) for my master of science degree in traditional Chinese medicine. That is a four-year program and about 3,000 hours of training, and I had to sit for the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine board exam to become a licensed acupuncturist.

After school, I went to China, where I studied in hospitals and in the private practices of elder doctors there. That was more specific work for oncology. I returned from China to New York City, to the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, to do more complementary oncology.

Q. What is complementary oncology?

A. I can enhance conventional cancer treatment as well as relieve the effects of radiation and chemotherapy treatments. It's aimed at being complementary, rather than an alternative. It can increase blood cell counts, relieve nausea and vomiting and neuropathies - tingling or lack of sensation in the limbs. I wouldn't go through conventional cancer treatment without Chinese medicine, they are so integrated.

I'm also going to hospice to do this. It's more about comfort than treatment there. Acupuncture is extremely well known for pain management. It can also relieve the mind so people can deal with

emotional stress. It's not uncommon to treat family members as well.

Q. Talk more about the herbal medicine part of your practice.

A. Traditional herbal medicine has been practiced more than 6,000 years in China. It's a complete health care system that can treat pain, skin diseases to gastrointestinal problems, menstrual irregularity, menopause and cancer treatments and more.

Treatments depend on the person and the condition. We traditionally use formulas designed for the individual patient, so it will change from patient to patient and from week to week with each patient.

There are four to 20 herbs in each formula. I mix it and give a bag of it to the patient, who takes it home, and cooks it with water in a clay pot over heat to reduce it. They strain it and drink the tea that is left over in the morning and in the afternoon.

It's really excellent treatment for colds and flu. It's one of the most immediate effects we see.

Q. What are some of the herbs you use?

A. About 90 percent of the herbs are twigs, seeds, roots, dried fruits, leaves - maybe 10 percent are animal products such as oyster shells, cicada skins - those are extremely effective for eczema and skin problems. I use a combination of four to 20 herbs in each formula. Traditionally, 500 to 600 herbs are used. In a practice, about 300 to 400 are traditionally used. I have 250 to 275.

One thing that has benefited me is that I studied the Chinese language about seven years and I translate a lot of the formulas from Chinese. That opens hundreds of years of treatment to me.

Q. Where do you get your herbs?

A. From a Chinese herb company in Oakland. After I got my license, I worked for them as a consultant. I got to know the company and their product really well. The reason I chose to buy from them is their adherence to a good manufacturing practices standards. They follow Australian standards, which are the highest standards in place for measuring for pesticides and heavy metals and they are sulphur-free. This company does extensive third-party and inhouse testing of its products.

Q. Talk about acupuncture. Does it hurt?

A. When it's performed properly, it's virtually pain-free. I use tiny needles about as thin as a single hair. The needles can be placed throughout the body, not necessarily where the pain is. For migraines, we put them in the hand, feet, legs. We use anywhere from four to 16 needles and let them sit in place about 20 to 30 minutes. Most people fall asleep during that time. There are no side effects.

Q. How long do treatments take?

A. The first treatment takes longer because I do an extensive patient history - that takes about an hour and a half. The next treatment is about 45 minutes.

Q. **How many acupuncturists are in the metro area?**

A. There are nine licensed practitioners of acupuncture. This is a big concern in Iowa - other practitioners can do acupuncture with as little as zero to 200 hours, but it's important to see "LAC" -

licensed acupuncturist - so you know you're going to get a complete and safe treatment from someone who has education and experience.

With herbal medicine, you really want to make sure the person is trained, too, because you're putting something in your body and you're using it to treat something, so you know it's potent enough to create an imbalance if you don't use the proper formula.

Q. Who are your patients?

A. I'd say over 40 percent of my patients are over the age of 70. I've treated age 2 to age 90, for migraines to burning pain down the side of the leg and knee pain.

Q. What does it cost and does insurance pay for it?

A. Herbs costs \$10 to \$15 for a week. The cost is \$60 for an acupuncture treatment. If you're over 60, I charge \$50. I give a discountd price of \$35 for a second treatment within a week. There are plans that cover acupuncture, but it depends on a person's insurance. Medicare, as of now, does not pay for it.

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