

Health Zone

By Amber Graafland and Erica Davies

IT was with some trepidation that we made the journey to meet acupuncturist Robert Ogilvie.

Somewhere between Bond Street and Queensway in London our idle talk turned to nervous chatter. By the time we hit Notting Hill we were both asking why on earth we were volunteering ourselves as human pin-cushions.

Having shown no signs of bravado in the past, and both being last in the queue at school for our various injections, we wondered what we were in for.

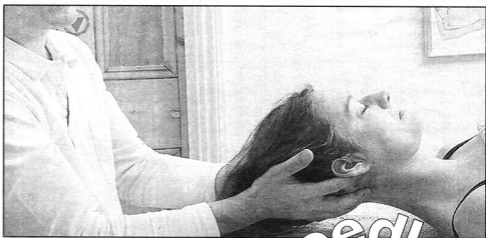
But on stepping into the tranquil, deep-blue surroundings of Robert's treatment rooms, our fears soon started to ebb away.

When there still wasn't a needle in sight after 30 minutes of talking about general health and lifestyle, we realised that our preconceptions could not have been more wrong.

Acupuncture is an ancient art that's widely misunderstood. It's not just about sticking a load of needles in someone and healing them. It has been practised for more than 5,000 years.

Shen Nung, the father of Chinese medicine, believed the body had an energy force running throughout it known as Qi (pronounced Chee) and consisting of all essential life activities.

A person's health is influenced by the flow of Qi in the body, in combination with Yin and Yang - opposite forces which,



Pains and needles

Trawlers
in training

WEEK 5
Acupuncture

when balanced, work in perfect harmony.

Illness is believed to occur if the flow of Qi is insufficient, unbalanced or interrupted as the balance of Yin and Yang is disturbed. Acupuncture works by restoring this balance.

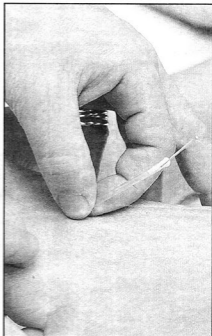
Qi travels throughout the body along 14 meridians which run vertically up and down the body.

The acupuncture points are locations where the meridians come to the surface of the skin.

The most surprising part of Robert's treatment - which is called integrated TCM and five-element acupuncture - was how few needles were used. And there was no pain.

Heat and Chinese herbs can also be used. Applying heat to acupuncture points is called Moxibustion, and although it sounds scary it is relaxing, soothing and deliciously warming.

The whole treatment was nothing like we had imagined and focused much more on verbal therapy than we expected.



THE VERDICT

What it's good for: Arthritis, insomnia, migraines, multiple sclerosis, menopause, neck and back pain and other conditions - check the Website: www.acupunture.com

Cost: £70 for the first two-hour treatment, £40 for every hour after that.

Fun Factor: Describing it as fun is going a bit too far. But it's incredibly relaxing.

Will we be going back? We've already booked another session with Robert.

Erica: "I was really surprised by how much it affected me. Robert seemed to pick up on several of my medical concerns."

Amber: "It cured me of a cold I hadn't been able to shake off for two weeks."

Rating: 9/10.

Contact: Acupuncture Association: 01747 861151; Robert Ogilvie: 0181 969 5262.