



Healed by the China syndrome; Why thousands are depending on Oriental massage technique Tui Na to ease pain and cure illness.(Features)



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YOU may have tried aromatherapy, reflexology, shiatsu or even acupuncture - but the chances are you won't have heard of Tui Na.

Although the ancient form of massage was first used 2500 years ago, Tui na has only started to catch on as a complementary practise.

But its new-found popularity is hardly surprising, given the benefits it can bring.

Tui Na is used to treat a wide range of conditions including arthritis, sciatica, pre-menstrual tension, stress and emotional problems. It can also treat sports injuries and is favoured by the Chinese Olympic team.

It can even help you lose weight as the vigorous massage movements used decrease appetite and help to break up fat.

As well as treating pain, Tui Na should leave you feeling energised. It can also have a profound emotional effect and many people cry at the end of the massage.

If you just want to be pampered, Tui Na is probably not for you. It's a serious therapy and most people find it very rigorous, although any soreness wears off quite quickly.

The Chinese use it for conditions which we would normally treat by a visit to a physiotherapist, osteopath, or chiropractor. They also use the treatment as an alternative to medication.

Tui Na means "push and grasp" and involves a range of manipulation techniques vigorously applied. It is based around the life- powering energy which the Chinese call Qi (pronounced "chee").

All aspects of bodily function depend on the flow of Qi through the tissues and there is a network of 12 paired meridians, or pathways, along which this flow occurs. There are specific Qi points along these meridians where pressure, needles (as in acupuncture) or heat can affect the flow.

When the flow of Qi is disturbed, we become ill, so it is important to maintain balance. Tui Na helps this.

A Tui Na practitioner focuses on the meridians and Qi points and massages them to remove all blockages to the flow.

Mariette Lobo, 45, is a Complementary Medicine Practitioner from Glasgow who spent 20 years in broadcasting before changing her career three years ago. She was introduced to Tui Na after winning a scholarship to the BodyHarmonics school in Cheltenham under the tuition of Tui Na expert Maria Mercati.

As well as being a master practitioner in Tui Na, Mariette is also trained in reflexology, aromatherapy and Reiki healing.

She said: "For me, Tui Na is all about rapport. It's a partnership between myself and the clients.

"We discuss lifestyle, diet and possible stresses and, if I think they need other treatments, I'll refer them on to other practitioners, such as a hypnotherapist. I'm not interested in being a Jack of all trades and master of none."

Mariette stresses that well-being is more than just a physical state. She believes body and mind work together to deal with daily life.

Mariette was born in Africa, although her parents are both from South India and she moved to Edinburgh as a child. Her cosmopolitan background has helped make her aware of the benefits of complementary medicine.

She explained: "Indians are massaged from when they are small babies and, in Africa, I learned a lot about local medicines.

"I have also experienced the benefits of complementary medicine in my own exploration of the best possible healthcare."

Mariette feels that her practises should be incorporated with traditional medicine. She is currently working with a cancer support group and would like to collaborate with Glasgow's GPs by offering alternative therapy clinics.

She said: "I feel I can offer a means of really helping their patients.

"I could also bring about great changes in the level of health in the workplace. Offering Tui Na as a way of relieving pressure and increasing well-being at work could be very useful."

From the end of this year, Mariette hopes to be working with children. She said: "Childhood is often where the problems start. Especially these days when children carry heavy bags and sit hunched over computers with the wrong type of seating."

Mariette is delighted when her clients feel better as a result of Tui Na, but won't accept any credit.

She added: "I see myself as a kind of facilitator or a catalyst. What I really do is enable people to bring about the changes for themselves."

Fellow practitioner Michael Doran, 37, regularly swaps treatments with Mariette and also studied Tui Na at the BodyHarmonics Centre.

Michael used to be a musician, but changed his career after he met a Chinese doctor at a health fair.

He's been practising Tui Na for a year now and is building up a thriving business.

His main practise is based at the Chinese Medicine and Healthcare Centre in Leith, Edinburgh, although he also works from various hotels.

He said: "My aim is to focus on using Tui Na as a way of making people feel better. I've been getting excellent results, although the time it takes to bring about a cure depends on how long people have had the complaint.

"There's no pressure on anyone to come back. In fact, if they don't it's generally because I've helped them deal with their problem, which is very satisfying."

As well as helping other people through Tui Na, Michael feels that he reaps the benefits, too.

He said: "It makes me feel very energised. It's a deep massage, which requires a lot of movement, so it's invigorating."

Michael was fully converted to the powers of Tui Na after his own back problem was improved by this style of massage.

He said: "It was a breakthrough for me when my teacher worked on my back. It made so much difference.

"I think this style of massage is going to become a more popular - simply because it works. People who come to me say they can't believe how much better they feel."

FOR details of Michael Doran's treatments, contact the Chinese Medicine and Healthcare Centre, 24 Bernard Street, Edinburgh EH6 6PP. Tel: 0131- 554-7888 or 0131-554-6076. Charges start from around [pound]30.

FACTFILE ON TUI NA

YOUR practitioner will take a full case history to build up a picture of your symptoms and lifestyle so make sure you own up to all your bad habits.

A FULL body Tui Na is rarely performed. Usually just the problem presented by the

patient will be treated.

FOR maximum benefit it is recommended that you have several treatments in succession.

WEAR loose cotton clothing for the treatment, such as a T-shirt and jogging pants.

SESSIONS can last from between 30 and 90 minutes and cost between [pound]30 and [pound]40.

FOR details of Mariette Lobo's treatments in Glasgow and Edinburgh call the Health and Vitality clinic on 0141 339 1878. Her charges are between [pound]30 and [pound]40 but she does operate a sliding scale and will also consider trading a massage for some gardening or DIY at her home.

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