

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

holistic healing

AS MORE PEOPLE CHOOSE TO TAKE A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO THEIR HEALTH RATHER THAN RELYING ON CONVENTIONAL MEDICINE TO CURE THEIR AILMENTS, **SUE DANDO** EXPLORES SOME OF THE ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES ON OFFER AND ASKS: DO THEY WORK?



Sukh Paddha

The complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) industry is big business, with a global market size that was estimated at \$2.27 billion in 2020 and expected to reach \$404.66 billion by 2028*. One area that has mushroomed in recent years

is therapy for chronic health conditions such as back pain, frozen shoulder and sciatica.

It's easy to see why, as people find themselves turning to alternative therapies when conventional medicine either hasn't worked or hasn't been prioritised by an increasingly burdened, underfunded NHS.

At the heart of the CAM approach is the concept of treating the body holistically — as a whole — rather than viewing problems in isolation. In simple terms this means that while a specific area may become the primary focus of pain, the effects will be impacted to some degree throughout the body.

“Each system in the body does not work alone, be it the internal organ system, muscles or nervous system. They all work together to provide

optimal body functioning,” explains Sukh Paddha, owner and senior practitioner at holistic specialists Bodisync (bodisync.com). “Modern medicine or what is often termed ‘mainstream’ often focuses on treating just the area of complaint without balancing the rest of your body. However, the food we eat, the thoughts that go through our mind, the flow of energy around our body, the conditions we live and work within, the way we use our mind and body, all affect our health and mobility.”

The biggest obstacle advocates of CAM face is that of efficacy. Does alternative therapy actually work? For every story you hear about how someone found it life-changing, the chances are that someone else will dismiss it as snake oil.

HOLISTIC HEALING TREATS THE WHOLE BODY



“The majority of medical doctors are quite dismissive of alternative medicine, and many are positively hostile towards it,” Sukh says. “Doctors say publicly this is because there is no scientific proof that alternative medicine actually works. This is the case even now when we are seeing that one of the most important developments in health care in recent years has been the remarkable growth of complementary medicine in all westernised countries. Alternative therapy is now seen by many as an effective, safe and natural form of healthcare which can coexist and work alongside conventional medicine.”

Research is slowly emerging to suggest that some alternative therapies may be an effective complementary treatment for a variety of symptoms and conditions. Indeed, the National Institute for Health And Care Excellence recommends acupuncture for long-term chronic pain, and, unlike most complementary therapies, it is sometimes available on the NHS through GP surgeries or physiotherapists. However, studies into CAM are often sketchy and more high-quality research is needed to confirm their effectiveness. In the meantime, the NHS recommends that you talk to your GP before trying any complementary or alternative treatments.

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Acupuncture

One of the better-known alternative healing therapies, acupuncture has its origins in ancient Chinese medicine and has been practised for thousands of years. Treatment involves the insertion of fine needles into specific points on the skin to regulate the flow of 'qi' along pathways in the body known as 'meridians'. Once inserted into the subcutaneous connective tissue at these very specific points, advocates say it helps balance, slow down or stimulate certain energies and provides healing. Sometimes acupuncture needles are inserted for just a second or two, or you may be left to rest for a while before the needles are removed. Many people feel deeply relaxed during the treatment, and most have a course of treatments rather than one-off sessions. Advocates of acupuncture find it useful for problems such as backache, tension headaches/migraine and musculoskeletal conditions.

acupuncture.org



Cupping

This therapy involves suctioning small areas of the skin with glass, plastic or silicone cups that have been heated prior to treatment. When the hot cup is placed onto the skin, the air inside cools and creates a vacuum that draws the skin and muscle up into the cup. This in turn stimulates blood flow and is believed to aid recovery from a number of problems, including back, neck and shoulder pain, headaches, migraine and joint pain. The skin may turn red or show slight bruising after the session. Advocates believe cupping also helps with relaxation and wellbeing, and that it can work as a deep-tissue massage.

britishcuppingsociety.org »

*Source: Grand View Research Inc.

“Manipulating muscles helps to release locked-in tension.”



Bowen therapy

Bowen therapy is a non-invasive technique of manipulating muscles and ligaments to help release tension in the body. Practitioners use their fingers or thumbs to gently manipulate and roll specific points on the body to help it balance, repair and reset itself. Bowen therapists work on the fascia, the connective tissue that wraps around muscles, which they believe can become twisted and cause pain — often somewhere else as the body compensates for the original injury. Bowen therapy is said to be useful for treating persistent complaints such as backache, frozen shoulder and sports injuries that conventional medicine hasn't healed.

bowen-technique.co.uk



Japanese integrated medicine

This form of therapy is a holistic and complementary approach to managing health and involves focusing on treating the body as a whole, with the 'integrated' nature at the heart of the concept. According to advocates of Japanese integrated medicine, it allows the body to be balanced on a physical, internal and emotional level. It uses the combination of a wide range of treatments which include gentle, hands-on massage to release locked in tension, traditional Japanese acupuncture, nutritional advice and Japanese Sekkotsu, a non-surgical method for correcting joint mobility and improving posture.

Due to the integrated nature of the therapy, practitioners believe it is able to help with many conditions and it is said to be useful in treating symptoms including joint and muscle pain, digestive issues, stress and muscle tension.

japaneseintegratedmedicine.com



Roling

Roling is the hands-on pressure and stretching of the deeper layers of the body's fascia — the connective tissues that surround the body's muscles — to create alignment and balance in the body. Sessions usually take the form of ten one-on-one treatments that follow a specific plan, moving through different body parts and muscle groups with methodical rigour and loosening the fascia to help flexibility. It is said to be useful for conditions like chronic pain, RSI and arthritis. Rolfers say that this form of therapy takes a more long-term approach than many clinical treatments, and encourages change in things like posture, alignment and breathing that can equip a person with the tools to prevent pain from recurring.

rolfinguk.co.uk

When choosing a CAM therapist it is important to consider the following:

- 1 Unlike conventional medicine, the CAM industry is largely unregulated. This means it's legal for anyone to practise treatments, even if they have no, or limited, formal qualifications.
- 2 Many types of CAM have voluntary registers, some of which are accredited by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA) or professional associations that practitioners can join if they choose. Organisations with PSA-accredited voluntary registers include the British Acupuncture Council and the Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council.
- 3 The NHS stresses the importance of talking to your GP before trying CAM if you have a pre-existing health condition.
- 4 Don't be afraid to ask a CAM practitioner for documentary proof that they're a member of their professional association or voluntary register, and for documentary proof that they're insured.



ROXY KOO LE LIEVRE, 53, SHARES HER EXPERIENCE OF ACUPUNCTURE AND CUPPING AND DESCRIBES HOW ACUPUNCTURE HAS HELPED ALLEVIATE HER MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS.

“After a neck injury seven years ago, I tried all sorts of conventional treatments and even had some sessions with a chiropractor, but then a friend suggested acupuncture as another option. I consider myself to be a very grounded person and I was a bit sceptical, but I decided to go with a clear mind and see what would happen. And it definitely worked for me. More recently, around two years ago, I began to suffer from menopause symptoms. I noticed I was sweating in the middle of the night, I was waking up at 3am and I had insomnia. My joints were aching and I felt like I had a black cloud over me. So I talked to my acupuncturist and she devised a whole treatment for me, working on my body's pressure points. I have been seeing her every month ever since and have found I don't need to take any conventional medicine like HRT or painkillers or anything for insomnia or bloatedness. For some reason it just works.

“At the beginning of each session we discuss how I am feeling and then she treats me accordingly. When I'm having a treatment, I feel like I want to sleep. It's very relaxing and almost as if my body is recharging. But then the following day I begin to feel the benefit of the session. Sometimes I top a session up with cupping, especially during Covid when I was working from home and began having problems with tension in my back and shoulders from

“For some reason it just works!”



sitting at my dining room table all day. The cups are heated and the suction brings a lot of blood to the back and improves the circulation, which can cause a little bit of bruising, but it's so relaxing and I feel so tired during the session. It's amazing. I have also had acupuncture on my face for wrinkles — it helps with circulation and collagen and relaxes the facial muscles.

“I know some people find it difficult to believe in these therapies and think, 'Oh, she's crazy!' and I agree, it is weird, but I swear by them. My husband was very sceptical. He was suffering from sciatica and tried lots of things and nothing worked so I just said to him, 'I know you don't believe in it, but go for it'. So he went and the next day he said, 'Oh my God, it works!'” ■