

# Healing across the centuries

by Catherine Portman-Laux | November 14, 2013 12:42 pm

Ron Hershey, nationally board-certified in both acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, makes certain that patients visiting his Croton and Cold Spring offices understand the advantages and limitations of both.

“Acupuncture is not a sham,” he says in opposition to the procedure’s detractors. “Nor is it a magical cure.” Both acupuncture and herbal medicine, he notes, have “the longest clinical trial history – close to 5,000 years. Does it work for every condition that people have? Of course not. No medical treatment can claim that.”

One acupuncture patient feels he received a magic cure, however. “The man had a severely debilitating case of interstitial cystitis, which caused him to have painful but incomplete urination up to 50 times daily,” Hershey says. “After a course of acupuncture, his urination completely normalized. Honestly, I was astonished at the success of the treatment. I hadn’t been sure whether I’d be able to help, and the fact that I did solidified my faith in this form of medicine I’d only recently begun to practice.”



Acupuncturist Ron Hershey holds model used to point out acupuncture channels of vital energy.

Hershey finds that children respond quickly to short-term acupuncture and herbal medicine “much more quickly than adults.”

“Frequent respiratory infections top the list of reasons that children seek treatment,” he says. He has found acupuncture helpful for babies with sleep problems, noting that some infants wake up 12 to 15 times a night. “A few acupuncture treatments can balance the nervous system so that a normal sleep pattern is restored,” he explains.

Hershey was already a husband and father when he decided on a career change from his original work in editing documentary films to “something that would allow me to help people.”

Although it meant returning to school for four years, he persevered, sharing baby sitting responsibilities with his wife, Lisa Alcott, a pediatric nurse. Upon graduating from the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine in Manhattan, he received a master’s degree in traditional Oriental medicine and co-founded a practice in Croton that he now operates there and in Cold Spring as East Mountain Acupuncture.

The youngest of three brothers, at age 8 he felt compassion for his father, agonizing from sciatica, and massaged the suffering man, making him feel much better, he recalls. It was while he was working in films that he studied shiatsu, a form of Japanese acupressure massage, which became a stepping stone to his future career.

Hershey spent his childhood years in Pleasantville. The family relocated in time for him to attend Rhinebeck High School and go on to Middlebury College, earning a B. A. in French cum laude as a Phi Beta Kappa.

The Rotary Foundation saw promise in the young graduate and provided a fellowship for him to attend the Belgian National Film School in Brussels. Returning home, he went to work in film editing in Manhattan, mostly on documentaries, including Bill Moyer’s landmark series, “Healing and the Mind,” which catapulted alternative medicine toward a mainstream audience for the first time, Hershey says.

That was when a compulsion to help others kicked in and he left the film field to embark on studies for his new career.

Hershey is a former board member of the Acupuncture Society of New York. He reflects that the western medical world “has come a long way in appreciating the contributions of holistic treatments” and notes that acupuncture is now covered by some health insurers.

In what passes for their leisure, the Hersheys enjoy visiting their vacation home in Maine.

*Challenging Careers focuses on the exciting and unusual business lives of Hudson Valley residents. Comments or suggestions may be emailed to Catherine Portman-Laux at [cplaux@optonline.net](mailto:cplaux@optonline.net).*

**Source URL:** <http://westfaironline.com/59126/healing-across-the-centuries/>

---

Copyright ©2013 **Westfair Communications** unless otherwise noted.