

## RELAX – YOU NEED(LE) IT

Opening Up to Acupuncture at the Tiffani Kim Institute

By Elizabeth Heiberger

Normally, I wouldn't subject myself to lying in the heat, blindfolded, with needles sticking out of my face, hands, arms and knees; it's just generally not my idea of a good time. In this case, however, I gladly welcomed Jeanie Lee Bussell, MSOM, LAc, a licensed acupuncturist at the Tiffani Kim Institute, to help me relax with needles. Acupuncture needles, that is.

Although I had never received acupuncture before, I wasn't too nervous when I walked through the doors of the Tiffani Kim Institute. Any latent fears quickly dissipated as I was ushered into their Place of Peace, a dimly lit room with relaxation beds and soft music, and offered a cup of kiwi pear tea. I relaxed and filled out a patient form, looking forward to the rest of my visit. As Jeanie prepped for my first time under the needles, she noted that it would be a slightly longer appointment. "Generally the first appointment is a little bit longer than follow-up treatments," she explained. "My first treatment will take about 45 minutes to an hour [with a] diagnostic interview. Chinese medicine is not about treating just illness. It's about treating the person as a whole."

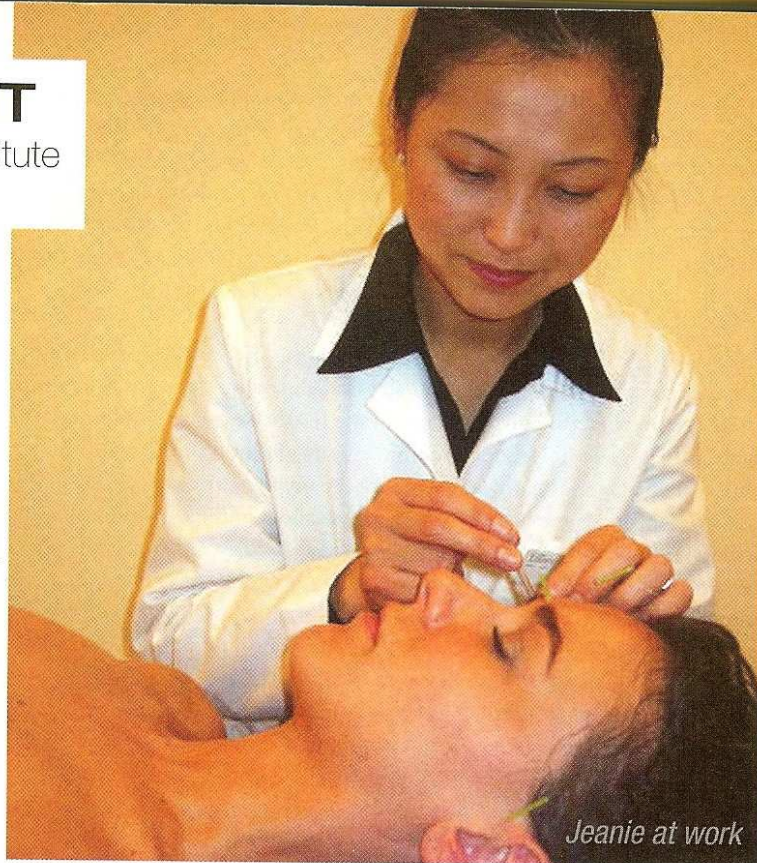
And treat my whole person she did. Acupuncture isn't sticking needles in random spots on the body – there's definitely a method. During the diagnostic interview I felt more like I was in a doctor's office than at a spa as Jeanie asked me questions ranging from how I was sleeping to whether my periods were painful. She looked at my tongue (color and moistness are needed for a diagnosis), then led me through exercises for correct breathing.

I really started to feel like I was at a spa when Jeanie massaged the base of my neck with a little lavender oil. Following this, she applied pressure to certain points on my hands, arms and knees, asking me if it hurt or not.

"I do the assessment, wipe the areas and then I put the needles in," she explained of her steps. "The number of needles and the amount of time you will retain the needles will differ depending on the condition of the person. It's hard to say, but (the needles stay in) about 20 minutes a treatment. An average practitioner uses anywhere from four to 20 needles in a treatment. It depends; it's condition-specific, person-specific."

I've never been a fan of needles – who is? – but Jeanie reassured me, "Acupuncture needles are extremely thin." To demonstrate, she picked up an 18-gauge hypodermic needle shaft and began filling it with acupuncture needles; about seven acupuncture needles fit into the hypodermic needle. "When it's inserted into the body, most people follow with a question: 'Is it in?' A lot of female patients tell me it doesn't hurt as much as waxing or plucking their eyebrows."

With this new information about needles, I felt confident and relaxed. Jeanie inserted needles into the same spots tested earlier for pain and also one between my eyes. When the needle on my face was inserted I felt a slight prick, but not enough to be considered painful. As she moved to pick up another needle I asked, "Is it still there?" I couldn't feel anything that would suggest a needle between my eyes. Jeanie laughed and assured



Jeanie at work

me it was. The rest of the insertions were just as painless as the first. With the needles in place, a heat lamp was positioned over my abdomen, flooding my body with warmth. Jeanie offered an eye pillow to block the light, turned on a relaxation tape, dimmed the lights and left me for 20 minutes during which, according to acupuncture history, my energy flow would move towards harmony.

As Jeanie explained to me earlier, "In Chinese medicine, disease, illness or discomfort is due to the disruption of the energy flow called the Qi [pronounced 'chee'], or the life energy in the body. When this Qi is flowing in harmony without interruption, the body functions optimally. But when this Qi is out of balance – maybe due to a person's poor diet and lifestyle, a negative attitude, environmental factors or physical trauma – this disruption manifests into various symptoms like headaches, menstrual irregularity or insomnia. But for some it could be as severe as manifesting into cancer. What acupuncture does is brings this Qi flow into balance so it creates optimal health."

Although I didn't have anything specific for acupuncture to target, at the end of my session I felt very relaxed. I had no pain at the needle sites and couldn't even tell where they had been. If you're contemplating acupuncture, go for it. And trust me, it doesn't hurt. ■

### FINDING A PRACTITIONER

- Visit [www.nccaom.org](http://www.nccaom.org) or [www.ilaaom.org](http://www.ilaaom.org) to find a practitioner
- Ask about certification and licensure
- Ask about success/experience in treating certain disorders

### ABOUT JEANIE LEE BUSSELL

*"I grew up with oriental medicine. My grandmother was a practitioner and whenever we had illness we got needles and we got herbs. I think what makes me different [from other practitioners] is that my primary training comes from Western medicine. I was in radiation medicine for seven years before I practiced Chinese medicine. I trained in the U.S. and I did the advanced training and internship [for Chinese medicine] in China."*

Jeanie is one of the top fertility acupuncturists in the Midwest and specializes in Women's Health. She recently co-authored the book *Fully Fertile: A 12 Week Holistic Plan for Optimal Fertility*.

