

AT WORK

Christina Loden took her mother in for acupuncture treatments and was amazed at how well she felt afterward.

Loden, a former accountant, studied for a master's degree in acupuncture and ancient Chinese medicine, and she now practices acupuncture in Torrance.

Brad Graverson
Staff Photographer



Pinpointing pain relief

Acupuncturist touts alternative medicine

By Muhammed El-Hasan
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About eight years ago, Christina Loden watched how her mother became increasingly desperate because she could not find a doctor to cure her digestive problems.

So Loden's mother tried an acupuncturist, who was able to relieve the sick feeling she felt after each meal.

Amazed, Loden left her accounting career to pursue acupuncture. She eventually earned a Master of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine degree from Yo San University in West Los Angeles.

Today, the 30-year-old Playa Vista resident runs Holistic Alternatives Acupuncture in Torrance. She has practiced acupuncture professionally for about two years.

What does your job entail?

The way I practice, I really look at a person from the inside out. So during the initial consultation, I'm looking to the key things like how stress is translated into their body. Every single person has a pattern and once you figure out that pattern, you move to acupuncture, cupping and herbal therapy.

What is cupping?

Cupping involves little glass cups that you heat up and it creates suction on the person.

How do acupuncture and cupping improve a person's health?

It helps to promote the circulation of *qi* and blood throughout the body.

What is *qi*?

Qi is basically the energy force within you that's keeping you moving forward.

What do your patients come here to treat?

Pretty much anything and everything. I've had some really interest-

Find out more

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ing cases. I've had people come in for shingles. Most people come here for anxiety, depression, stress-related problems. And there's always the pain, shoulder pain, back pain, arthritis. Cold and flu, that's a big one lately. Usually that is treated with minimal acupuncture, but more herbs.

Doesn't the sight of needles create stress in your patients?

A lot of people who come in here are afraid of needles. But they're desperate. They get to the point where they're so desperate that a little bit of fear isn't going to stop them. A lot of patients are dragged in by their spouses. But once that first needle is put in and there isn't the pain like with a shot, they're fine.

Where do you place the needles to treat anxiety?

Needle placement is really individualized. Say five different people come in with anxiety or depression. These five different people could have five different manifestations of anxiety and five different reasons for anxiety. So from a Chinese-medicine perspective, if the anxiety is caused by a heart imbalance, then I place the needles along the heart meridian, which runs along the arm from the pinkie. There are also other points that help balance whatever organ system that is out of balance.

What's the best part of your job?

Seeing people get well.

And the worst part?

A lot of people come in and they want a quick fix without realizing the change they need to make in their lives. It could be diet, like incorporating more vegetables into their diet.

How long is an acupuncture session?

It really depends. For an initial treatment, I spend more time explaining it and getting into the patient's history. So an hour and a half to two hours. After that, the recurring visits are about an hour.

How much do you charge?

I charge for initial visits \$160. I have a special right now of 50 percent off for new patients. And the recurring visits are \$80. We're starting to take insurance, but insurance is mostly for pain issues.

Do you do acupuncture on yourself?

I've done acupuncture on myself. But it always works better if you have a partner. So I get one of my old classmates to do it. It's kind of hard to do it on yourself because it can be hard to reach.

Do your patients bleed from the needles?

Sometimes. It's not very common. Depends on the place. Sometimes the ear will bleed a little bit.

Are there any side effects of acupuncture?

Sometimes it leaves you sleepy like you want to take a nap. That happens to me, so I sleep really well at night. Some people feel a little tingle at the point and that doesn't happen very often. But you can just rub the area.

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