

### SHIATSU

For the past 9 years, the Ki Kai Shiatsu Centre has been working in the field of substance misuse, providing treatment for current and ex-drug users, in a variety of settings. Through this work it became apparent that Shiatsu is very popular amongst people accessing help with drug problems, invariably more popular than counselling and second only to free prescription drugs.

Through his work at the Centre, Chris Osborne (Getting out of our heads - Shiatsu and Substance Abuse - Shiatsu Society News - Winter 1998) states that there are a number of core issues in substance misuse. He believes that for many people, brought up to deny pleasure as a primary orientation in life, or simply lacking the experience of it, drugs can offer (for a while) life enhancing experiences of fun. He states that clients recognise the same sense of pleasure from Shiatsu and thus whilst in treatment, the receipt of wholesome, guilt free pleasure can often be a first experience. He also believes that where drugs are used as an emotional coping strategy, Shiatsu can provide, when the drug use stops, a very effective way of learning to process emotions because it involves re-embodiment and grounding.

Chaotic drug use provides a profoundly dehumanising and damaging lifestyle. Using Shiatsu to touch in a non-abusive and non-judgemental way can have a profound effect. Opiates and other drugs are powerfully analgesic, thus many users become accustomed to living without pain. This can be a major obstacle to becoming drug free and Shiatsu helps to recreate the natural chemical pathways for pain control. It also increases body awareness and increases the options for moving and using the body differently.

The conclusions that Chris Osborne draws about the use of Shiatsu are as follows:

- **Shiatsu is not a treatment for addiction but can form an effective part of the response to it.**
- **It is most effective when people are drug free or nearing the end of their drug using careers.**
- **Current and ex-drug users like Shiatsu because it is pleasurable, which arguably is the best reason for doing anything.**

- Evidence for the effectiveness of complimentary therapies in improving substance misuse outcomes is limited. This is largely due to the lack of studies rather than due to the existence of evidence which disproves their effectiveness.
- There is widespread agreement that the availability of some complimentary therapies (in particular Shiatsu and auricular acupuncture) increases attendance at specialist services; this may then act to improve engagement with other interventions of proven efficacy.

### HOMEOPATHY

Homeopaths believe that Homeopathy is a scientific method of treatment. The homeopathic method is very precise, and when criticised for basing their method on non-quantifiable and non-measurable symptoms, homeopaths reply that the precisely observed symptom is still the most accurate measure of disease and health. They also believe that modern medicine is not scientific in its most important aspect, the prescription of a remedy. Homeopathy's apparent weakness consists in its reliance on symptomatic data for evidence about the patient's health and the course of his disease. Its strength lies in the usually unambiguous indication of the remedy. A complete picture of the patient's symptoms will point to one remedy and one remedy only. Confronted by a given symptom pattern, a group of homeopaths will all prescribe the same remedy. Homeopathy is based around the principal that all illness is "general", representing the curative effort of the whole body and does not recognise the existence of local illness. Illness is always general and the patient can never suffer from more than one illness at a time, however many local manifestations this one can yield (Coulter H, 1980).

**TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE (TCM)**

TCM has been evolving for over 3000 years. Like Western medicine TCM has a sophisticated and internally logical methodology which allows the process of diagnosis and treatment to be applied systematically. TCM treatments will vary according to the state of the individual patient, although there are broad based herbal formulae for general complaints. In the field of substance misuse TCM is most associated with the treatment of chronic liver conditions, in particular the treatment of those with hepatitis C. There is in fact a complete chapter dedicated to TCM in Matthew Dolan's Hepatitis C handbook (Dolan M, 1998).

There has been little research into the efficacy of combining TCM with mainstream medicine. The medical profession seems generally resistant to this avenue of approach and appears to be reluctant to conduct clinical trials. This may be partly due to the cost and the fact that herbalists are not in a financial position to underwrite such trials in the same way that drug companies do for medicines. However there are some encouraging signs: doctors at two central London hospitals are now trying to set up trials into standardised adjunct Chinese Herbal Therapy for patients taking interferon and interferon plus ribavirin (Dolan M, 1998). TCM can also be used to treat many other residual health problems associated with long term substance misuse as well as providing herbal remedies for detox, and cessation of cravings.

**ACUPUNCTURE**

The general purpose of acupuncture is to unblock the meridians and restore organ function. It is certainly becoming more popular in the West with many hospitals now using acupuncture. It is the most researched form of Chinese Medicine and it has been shown to work.

Acupuncture involves the insertion of fine metal needles into focal points of the body where the Qi (energy flow) can be adjusted. Over thousands of years the Chinese have observed the interconnection of the energy channels and the internal organs of the body and discovered the key locations to effect change in the internal condition. The best recognised form of acupuncture used in the field of substance misuse is auricular (ear) acupuncture used primarily for detox. Many agencies working with those that use drugs and alcohol have workers trained in the practice of ear acupuncture. The training is relatively simple and can be undertaken over a relatively short period.

**CONCLUSION**

The use of complementary therapies in the treatment of substance misuse is an under-researched area. However anecdotal, subjective evidence from clients suggests that a programme of therapy which includes elements of less traditional medicine and massage are beneficial. There is widespread agreement that the availability of some complimentary therapies (in particular Shiatsu and auricular acupuncture) increases attendance at specialist services, and this is reason enough to support their continued place amongst the range of interventions available.