

Acupuncturist puts fine point on helping patients feel better

BY REPPS HUDSON

Of the Post-Dispatch

Name: Xinsheng Jiang, aka "Dr. Ginger."

Age: 52.

Job: Self-employed acupuncturist.

Duties: Jiang's main task is to insert fine acupuncture needles at specific points on a patient's body along one of 12 meridians to release the energy — the *chi* — that has been blocked for some reason. This is in keeping with the Chinese medical theory of restoring the balance between the yin and the yang, the two life forces in the body.

Blocked energy may cause depression, headaches, lower back pain and other illnesses and ailments. The remedy has its critics because it does not take the empirical approach of Western medicine, with surgical intervention and prescription drugs. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has said acupuncture needles are legitimate tools of medicine.

The Encyclopedia Britannica says this of acupuncture, which dates before 2,500 B.C. in ancient China: "Western visitors have witnessed ambitious (and ordinarily painful) surgical operations carried out on fully conscious Chinese patients locally anesthetized only by acupuncture. . . . Chinese assertions that acupuncture can actually cure disease defy rational clinical practice and have yet to be substantiated by Western medical researchers."

Nonetheless, Jiang believes the practice can solve most patients' problems. She has several hundred patients who see her



Xinsheng Jiang treats Glenda Gabriel for headaches with acupuncture.

LAURIE SKRIVAN/POST-DISPATCH

ST. LOUISANS AT WORK

regularly. She charges \$35 to \$40 for each treatment, which lasts 30 to 60 minutes.

When she treated this reporter for a mild headache about 10 days ago, Jiang followed her procedure of taking the pulse, checking the color and coating of the tongue and asking a few questions about my present health. (She also likes to see diagnoses by Western-style doctors.)

She had me take off my shoes and socks and lie face up on a body-length table. She then began swabbing my hands, arms and face with alcohol and inserting the needles. I felt her insert only a few of the 18 she placed from the top of my head to my feet. The rest were as though she were pressing her thumb against my skin.

Jiang left and returned about 10 minutes later, twisted each needle to stimulate it and left again. The next time she

returned, she quickly removed the needles, asked me to turn face down and began vigorously massaging my back. Normal treatment would be followed by a five- to 10-minute massage along the spine. On the same morning, two middle-aged men with sore knees and a middle-aged woman with an irregular heartbeat were being treated.

Hours: Jiang works about 50 hours a week at two stores she owns with her husband: Oriental Ginseng and Gift, 8146 Olive Boulevard in University City, and Oriental Ginseng and Gift (South), 4600J Chippewa Street, in St. Louis. She's at the Olive store Tuesday and Thursday and the south city store Wednesday and Friday. She also works half days Saturday and Sunday when she has appointments. She's off Monday.

Dress: One day recently, Jiang wore tan slacks, a green blouse buttoned at the neck, flats and a white cotton smock.

Equipment: Jiang's basic equipment is sterile needles made in China in four lengths and packaged in groups of 10: ½-inch, 1-inch, 1½-inch and 2-inch. She may use a Chinese-made electromagnetic lamp to produce infra-red-like waves to enhance treatment.

Pay: Jiang refused to tell her income. The usual range is \$35,000 to \$100,000 a year.

Professional: American Society of Acupuncturists; National Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Alliance; Diplomate in Acupuncture and Diplomate in Chinese Herbology from the National Commission for the Certification of Acupuncture and

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