

# Acupuncture Making Progress in Ireland

## UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN TO OFFER NEW HIGHER DIPLOMA

Editorial Staff

From its origins in Asia some 3,500 years ago, acupuncture has grown to become an accepted form of health care throughout North America. The number of acupuncturists currently practicing in the U.S. has grown dramatically in the last ten years,<sup>1</sup> and research has shown acupuncture to be effective in treating a variety of medical conditions such as nausea, substance addiction and carpal tunnel syndrome.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the advances the profession has made in much of the world, some areas are hesitant to accept the benefits acupuncture has to offer. One country in which acupuncture is still struggling to gain credibility is Ireland, a nation whose medical council has traditionally regarded alternative therapies with much skepticism.

Officials at University College Dublin, however, are taking a more enlightened approach. This February, the school's faculty of medicine announced that it had approved in principle a new higher diploma acupuncture program, marking the first time that acupuncture will be taught in an Irish university.<sup>3</sup>

The program will be coordinated by the college's school of physiotherapy at Mater Misericordiae Hospital in Dublin. It will be offered to doctors and physiotherapists with a minimum of two years of postgraduate experience who wish to use acupuncture as an adjunct to other therapies for sports and soft tissue injuries.

Among those in favor of the new program are Paul McCarthy, a licensed acupuncturist who has taught acupuncture courses in Ireland and runs a number of clinics near the university. "Any recognition is better than none at all," said McCarthy.

School officials were quick to note that the introduction of an acupuncture diploma does not mean that UCD will begin offering degree programs in other forms of healing.

"It is not an entry degree, nor entry training, and we are not linking up with any other groups in Ireland or elsewhere," said professor Conal Hooper, an associate dean of medicine at the university. "The aim is to provide academic training for health care professionals in the use of an established therapeutic discipline."

According to Dr. Geoffrey Chadwick of the Centre for Medical Education, there is no formal tuition on alternative or complementary techniques at the university. Nevertheless, he is one of a growing number of health professionals who believe that doctors should be introduced to other forms of care (such as acupuncture) to gain more insight and make better treatment decisions for their patients.

"Inevitably, a medical faculty is going to be cautious about including such courses in the curriculum until the techniques have been shown to be effective," said Dr. Chadwick. "But, in

reality, doctors need to know about them."

### *References*

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