

## News in Brief

Editorial Staff

### New Mexico Court Program Teaches Value of *Tai Chi*

Lawbreakers in Santa Fe, N.M. now have an alternative to spending time behind bars. Thanks to the efforts of a local judge and a doctor of Oriental medicine, a new sentencing program has been developed that lets young offenders use therapies such as tai chi and acupuncture to combat aggressive behavior.

"Traditional anger management courses weren't working," explained Municipal Court Judge Frances Gallegos, who developed the program after consulting with Mark De Francis, DOM. Dr. De Francis works as a psychologist for the state's Department of Corrections, and believes violent offenders can benefit from *tai chi* and meditation. Gallegos added that one of the goals of the class is to get offenders to think twice about committing a violent act the next time they are in a precarious situation.

According to De Francis, *tai chi* allows people to achieve a sense of calm and learn to control their impulses. Those who practice it find an "inner opponent" to do battle with, which allows the offenders to reflect on their past actions.

"You're trying to go slower than your impulses tell you to go," he said. "It's good for people, whether they're in trouble or not."

The 12-week program is held in the lobby of the courthouse, which is filled with candles and mirrors for the occasion. Participants meet twice a week, with each session lasting two hours. During a session, participants serve each other herbal tea containing kava kava, meditate and perform *tai chi* movements, before concluding with an acupuncture treatment for relaxation. The class costs \$180, and is paid for by the offenders.

The *tai chi* sessions and acupuncture treatments are part of a larger alternative sentencing program to established anger management classes. Offenders who would prefer not to learn about the benefits of Oriental medicine have a second option: participating in a community service program that involves picking up trash.

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### AT Columnist Awarded NIH Research Grant

Neil Demarse, MS, LAc, a 2002 graduate of Pacific College of Oriental Medicine and author of the "Research Corner" column for *Acupuncture Today*, has received a grant of more than \$50,000 from the National Institutes of Health to study the presence of pesticides in Chinese herbs. Demarse will conduct his work at Baruch College in New York with biochemist Chandrika Kulatilleke, using various methods to analyze pesticide levels in herbs imported from China.

Demarse credited Dr. Carl Miller, academic dean and chair of the department of basic and biomedical sciences at Pacific's New York campus, with developing his interest in herbal research.

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(Dr. Miller) really inspired me to get into it," Demarse said. I wanted to get more involved in research because there's not a lot of research in alternative medicine, and the people who are doing the research are the (practitioners of allopathic medicine), who don't know anything about (alternative medicine."

Demarse and Kulatilleke will use two main methods to analyze herbs: gas chromatography, which evaporates small amounts of herbs to measure their atomic properties, and nuclear magnetic resonance, which measures the quantity of hydrogen and carbon to determine the structure of molecules so they can be compared to those of pesticides.

Currently, Mr. Demarse is attending the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, where he is enrolled in a doctoral program in genetics. Although he is taking a break from herbal research, he plans to continue practicing acupuncture and writing articles about complementary and alternative medicine.

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#### Vietnam, Mexico Reach Accord on Acupuncture Center

On Aug. 11, the governments of Mexico and Vietnam reached an agreement that allows for the establishment of a new acupuncture center in the Mexican state of Zacatecas. Officials from both countries were on hand to sign the agreement, including Zacatecas Governor Ricardo Monreal; Rogelio Cardenas, rector of Zacatecas University; and Nguyen Tai Thu, a professor and director of the Vietnam Acupuncture Institute.

Under the agreement, Vietnam's central acupuncture hospital will provide expertise and acupuncture supplies to Mexico, and will coordinate with Mexican doctors to expand opportunities for treatment of the citizens of Zacatecas, particularly drug addicts and disabled children. The new center also plans to offer postgraduate training courses in acupuncture for Mexican health care providers at Zacatecas University.

At a ceremony publicizing the accord, Governor Monreal applauded Vietnam's achievements in the health care sector, and expressed his pleasure over the budding relationship between the two countries.

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#### New Appointment to Arkansas Board

Janet Parks, DOM, was appointed to the Arkansas Board of Acupuncture and Related Techniques by Governor Mike Huckabee in August. She replaces Dr. Jacqueline Pereira, and will serve on the board until July 31, 2005.

Dr. Parks graduated from the International Institute of Chinese Medicine (IICM) in 2002, and operates a clinic in Rogers, Ark. Before enrolling at IICM, she held a variety of positions in the business and public service sectors, and was also a member of the Peace Corps.

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#### Singapore Zoo Turns to Acupuncture to Save Komodo Dragons

The Komodo dragon is the world's largest lizard. Fully grown, a Komodo can reach nearly 10 feet in length and weigh more than 200 pounds, with long claws and serrated teeth that are used to capture and eat their prey.

While Tirto and Chewek, a pair of Komodos who reside at the Singapore Zoological Gardens, aren't quite that large, they are nevertheless impressive specimens. Tirto, an eight-year old male, measures nearly eight feet long and weighs 94 pounds, while Chewek, a seven-year old female, is only slightly smaller.

Even Komodo dragons can fall prey to illness, however. Approximately five months ago, Chewek began showing signs of a neurological disorder. She salivated excessively; had difficulty swallowing and eating; appeared disoriented; and walked in circles constantly. Six weeks later, Tirto, who was kept in the same enclosure as Chewek, began showing similar symptoms.

Handlers at the gardens became concerned that an intestinal parasite was spreading among the Komodos and causing nerve damage, so they put the dragons on a series of steroid injections and vitamin therapy. When those treatments proved ineffective, they turned to Dr. Oh Soon Hock, an acupuncturist and veterinarian who works at the gardens, to relieve the nerve disorder and improve circulation.

The Komodos were treated with acupuncture and Chinese medical therapy twice a week for three weeks. According to Dr. Oh, the results were rather dramatic.

"After I applied the first dose of Chinese medicine, the next day Chewek became active, could catch food and swallowed. That encouraged me," he said. Acupuncture had a similar effect on Tirto. Vincent Tan, a spokesperson at the gardens, said that Tirto "is now more relaxed and is beginning to enjoy his treatments."

To rule out the possibility of a virus or other type of disease-causing organism, both dragons are being kept under observation. An official at the gardens added that the Komodos will receive antibiotics and undergo MRI scans to determine if they have suffered any significant nerve damage.

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