

Mind and body

Complementary treatments reviewed by ANNE WOODHAM

MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Where can you find renewed purpose in life?, we asked in an article on centres of well-being (March). The question struck chord; hundreds of readers contacted the retreats mentioned, enquire about a few days away from it all. This year's programmes include Finding The Inner Child, Circle Dancing, t'ai chi and more. Contact The Grange (0691-623495) or The Cenacle Retreat House (0428-604412). Other Christian retreats are listed in *The Vision* (22c, inc p&p) from the National Retreat Association, 24 South Audley, London W1Y 3DL (071-495 3534); non-denominational retreats to be found in *Open Centres* from Avils Farm, Lower Stanton, St Quintin, Chippenham, Wilts SN14 6DA (0249-728202); £4 for two years' subscription. *If you've been to a retreat, we'd like to hear about your experience. Write to Anne Woodham, GH, 72 Broadwick St, London W1V 2BP.*

MENOPAUSE RELIEF

A gentle form of osteopathy – one woman compared it to someone blowing on her spine – may be effective in relieving menopausal symptoms. In a study of 30 women published in *Complementary Therapies In Medicine*, osteopaths Caroline Cleary and James Fox, who developed the new 'low-force' manipulation, found that not only was the technique particularly successful with hot flushes, insomnia, migraine, and neck and back pain, but that testosterone levels fell, indicating a reduction in stress. "Over the

years we become unconscious of pain in strained joints," explains Caroline, "but this physical stress leads to emotional stress. By taking it away, the body can relax." Most patients respond after five half-hour weekly treatments, she says. Contact their practice in Bushey, Herts (081-950 0727) for more details. Meanwhile a new book, *Beat The Menopause Without HRT* by Maryon Stewart of the Woman's Nutritional Advice Service (Headline, £10.99), suggests self-help strategies with nutritional supplements and diet (recipes included).

ANOTHER MIRACLE SUPPLEMENT?

The latest so-called miracle supplement is Coenzyme Q10, said to boost energy and help prevent conditions ranging from cardiovascular to gum disease. Also known as ubiquinone, the substance is found in the parts of our body cells responsible for energy production. The liver manufactures Q10 from foods such as meat, eggs, oily fish and green vegetables. According to manufacturers, those likely to lack Q10 include vegetarians, people suffering from stress whose immune system may be depressed, people with high energy requirements and the elderly, whose livers are less efficient. But the jury is still out among scientists, says Professor Anthony Diplock, of Guy's Hospital. Some heart specialists in the US and Denmark swear by it; others are less convinced. Watch this space.

CHECKING OUT CHINESE MEDICINE

'Stick out your tongue,' says Dr Lily Hua Yu. She hands me a mirror. 'See those cracks and scalloped edge, your hormonal system is out of balance.' I leave with a prescription for *dong quai* and ginseng capsules from the herbal dispensary.

Dr Lily Hua Yu practises Chinese medicine at London's AcuMedic

Centre, where illness is ascribed to an imbalance in the bodily flow of qi (life energy); the tongue is one of several diagnostic tools that reveal where it is blocked or depleted. Treatment consists of acupuncture, herbal medicine and, where necessary, referral to a Western doctor.

Concerned at potential damage

to patients from unqualified practitioners in Britain (fewer than 100 are thoroughly trained in China, he says), AcuMedic's director Benny Mei has invited Beijing professors to London later this year to introduce traditional Chinese medicine to Western health professionals. Contact AcuMedic on 071-388 6704.

FROM THE HEART

How fast you recover from heart disease can depend on the care you receive from your partner, according to an American Psychiatric Association report. While too much cosseting can discourage you from making changes in diet and exercise, not enough can leave you depressed and anxious. Women may be more at risk of the latter; families resent a wife and mother who abandons them to go walking and cuts sugar and fat from their meals. As a result, some American cardiologists now include 'healthy interactive skills for couples' in rehabilitation programmes.



ANNE WOODHAM is the author of the *HEG Guide To Complementary Medicine And Therapies*. She has written widely on health and is married with two children