

The Healing Point

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Acupuncture has been part of Chinese medicine for 2000 years and involves inserting fine needles into specific points on the skin or applying other techniques to acupuncture points to bring about healing.

The Principal of Melbourne Holistic Healthcare Clinic in Hampton, Rick Donald, says acupuncture is slowly gaining acceptance in Australia.

"We're getting more and more referrals from practitioners of traditional medicine," Dr Donald said.

"In China, it is used to treat virtually any medical condition.

"But in Australia, it is mostly used as a conjunctive treatment, often with traditional medicine." He said acupuncture was used to treat problems such as back pain, tennis elbow and whiplash, as well as digestive problem and infertility.

Danny Traum, of North Balwyn's Medical Acupuncture Clinic, who is also convener of Monash University's Graduate Certificate in Medical Acupuncture, said acupuncture was founded in a belief in an energy force called qi (pronounced "chee").

"The principle is that energy flows through the body along 12 meridians – one for each organ system," he said.

"The meridians are paired, and inserting needles into particular acupuncture points can balance the flow of energy between the two." Dr Traum said the process was painless because the needles were so fine.

The patient might feel mild tingling, warmth or heaviness, he said.

As well as needles, acupuncture can include cupping (using suction to bring qi and blood to the acupuncture point), Chinese herbs and laser.

He said it was important to choose a qualified acupuncturist, registered with the Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association, who used sterilised disposable needles.