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RADIO SCIENCE UNIT

THE OTHER MEDICINE 1.

RADIO 4

TUESDAY 21/09/04 2100-2130

PRESENTER: ANNA FORD

**CONTRIBUTORS: JULIA FARRANTS
DIANE SEYMOUR
ANNA REWILAK
JOHN MORRISON
ROGER COOTER
GEORGE LEWITH
MICHAEL BAUM
BEN GOLDACRE
DAVID JEWELL**

PRODUCER: RAMI TZABAR

NOT CHECKED AS BROADCAST

MUSIC

ACTUALITY - SHIATSU CLASS

Try and imagine just having all your favourite hills and ...

FORD

At the Shiatsu college in North London

FORD

My exploration of the CAM phenomena started with Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire which has become a honey-pot for alternative new-age life-styles and more recently of many complementary treatments. It began attracting like-minded liberal thinkers in the early '70s, some of whom set up communes on the moors, then bought up dirt cheap property. It's new-age appeal grew and now it sparkles with new life and dozens of cafés, health food stores and alternative practitioners of every kind.

ACTUALITY - JULIA FARRANTS AND PATIENT

[Knocking]

Come in.

Hi.

Hi Mabe, come and take a seat.

Thank you.

So how have you been doing this week?

Oh pretty good in general, yeah. I've been quite busy, so I'm getting a little bit tired. But generally I'm doing really well, I think I just need a bit of maintenance to keep me going.

Yes good. You're still managing to do everything that you've got to do - still managing to stay in work?

Oh absolutely, I'm really enjoying my job and I'm able to do other stuff as well. But you know me, I tend to push the boundaries a little bit, so ...

Yes, have you got any symptoms this week, any sore throat, swollen glands?

A little bit, a little bit of sore throat when I wake up in the morning maybe but no swollen glands this week, no.

FORD

Mabe has come to see her 'doctor' - Julia Farrants - she's got ME. This sounds like a normal GP appointment, but Julia is not GP anymore, she grew tired of what she felt she could offer her patients in general practice so gave it up to retrain as an acupuncturist.

ACTUALITY - JULIA FARRANTS WITH PATIENT

Okay, can you stick your tongue out please?

Sure.

Okay, so it's quite red at the tip, so that'll tell me you've got a lot of emotional issues going on at the moment and once more - it's looking much better than it was though.

The tongue body is nice and thick, the coating is not too thick, the cracks are in the right place, so that's quite - you're doing quite well.

FARRANTS

The places where the needles are put are known as acupuncture points

SEYMOUR

Taking a full holistic case is not an ideal, it's absolutely a practical necessity based on the basic principles of homeopathy. If you don't take a full case which will cover psychological, physical and in the case of children developmental things - it could be learning difficulties, a whole range of things - you will not have a proper case. And the remedy, which is the homeopathic medicine you give, will not be accurate. So we don't have any choice - we have to give our patients a considerable amount of time, a lot of focus, go into it in great detail and listen very, very carefully, observe very, very carefully.

FORD

So if I were a patient coming to you what sort of questions would you ask me in the first interview?

SEYMOUR

In the first interview I'd be asking what you're particularly concerned with right now and take a lot of details around that. Then I would open it out into a wider picture of your general health. And then into areas which I think a lot of people find very unusual in going to seek help in healing which is you ask questions which are getting to know people as a whole - we don't treat conditions or particular illnesses or particular psychological problems, we treat whole people. It can be very helpful for the homeopath and it can be a good indication of the right remedy to find out things like, for example, what kind of weather people find particularly unpleasant or pleasant can give you an indication. So that we ask a lot - we ask about appetite, how warm and cold they are, how they sleep and even if they're not problems they can still provide us with very useful information.

FORD

Diane, how would you say that attitudes to homeopathy have changed over say the last decade?

SEYMOUR

I think people know more - I seem to have to give less explanations. And people come with assumptions to a certain degree about how homeopathy works and their expectations match what we can do better, which is a great relief I think. Because I welcome sceptics, I think it's a good thing, I think people should be sceptical about anything that they're spending time and money on and also involves their health and their happiness - they should be sceptical. On the other hand I have a dread of people who are zealously enthusiastic about homeopathy and I think that can lead them to have inappropriate expectations - we're not in the business of magic bullets here at all.

FORD

In later programmes, we'll explore the real value of the therapeutic relationship which is currently being subjected to scientific trials. We'll also look at homeopathy in more detail, as well as the other members of the so-called "big five" - osteopathy, acupuncture, chiropractic and herbal medicine.

But in Hebden Bridge, all manner of therapies are available, some at the less scientifically plausible though no less popular end of the scale. I went to the Hope Centre - where as well as Yoga classes and reflexology, it offers clients crystal

healing. Patients sit in a circle of crystals, laid round them on the floor. The crystals are chosen specifically to deal with their condition and vary according to their ailment. One of the healers is Anna Rewilak.

REWILAK

That's my doctor's bag - I have everything in here.

FORD

And your other life tucked away in a cupboard is it?

REWILAK

It's such a [indistinct words] I do offer medical holistic medical consultations also. Kainite. I mean these are not - they're changed weekly - they're not - the same pattern doesn't last every week.

FORD

But the crystals keep their efficacy do they?

REWILAK

Indeed.

FORD

For ever and ever?

REWILAK

Ever and ever if they're looked after.

FORD

What do you do to look after them?

REWILAK

Well as you can see these are stored, they're actually stored in a crystal circuit, you have to cleanse them and there are m (e) Tj0.06 Tc (Tj0 Tc (A) Tj-0.135Tj0.3 (n) Tj0.06 Tc () Tj0) Tj0.06

PATIENT

Well I know that antibiotics don't work, that it suppress symptoms, but for deeper problems that the West medicine doesn't have a cure for there are other methods of treating. So particularly something like a back ache, there's not very much in the West - Western medicine other than some sort of painkillers that will help someone, whereas there are a lot of things that one can do for oneself or through an alternative practice that will heal the problem.

PATIENT

I was recovering from a slipped disc and he was introduced to me as a back specialist and he helped me a great deal. And then it developed from there and I was at the time travelling a lot and getting very run down and I think for me that's the great learning from him is firstly that everything is connected, where you think you have a pain it's actually originating from somewhere else. And secondly, most things you can do something about and you can help yourself before you get ill.

LEWITH

I think there's certainly a pull factor away from orthodox medicine and the perceived lack of sympathy in orthodox medicine towards CAM. But most of CAM use is a push factor.

FORD

George Lewith practises acupuncture, herbalism and homeopathy in Southampton, where he's also a CAM researcher. He believes CAM offers something positive that patients really want from their healthcare system and increasingly feel they can't get elsewhere. And he says they may continue to use CAMS even though their symptoms are not always improved.

LEWITH Tf0 -p28 Tf0 -13.2 TD -0.08Tj0.

spiritual support. So they will learn that somewhere, it's usually a long way away in some exotic place, there is a miracle cure. And so they will go seeking the miracle cure. I have enormous sympathy for these individuals but I have no sympathy at all for these charlatans who offer miracle cures.

FORD

So far we've heard some of the charges levelled against orthodox medicine, but do those criticisms hold up and is medicine in the orthodox field changing?

GOLDACRE

My name's Dr Ben Goldacre, I'm a doctor working in a hospital and I write a column called *Bad Science* for the Guardian about pseudo science in all forms of life, but particularly alternative therapies and the cosmetics industry.

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FORD

Dr David Jewell is a GP and editor of the British Journal of General Practice. He's cheerfully old school in his utter scepticism of the efficacy of CAMS but thinks he can guess why orthodox practitioners may sometimes end up recommending them.

JEWELL

I've worked alongside people who practise conventional medicine, known lots of people including my own next door neighbour who's a very keen homeopathic doctor, and the only acceptable position for a sceptic is to say well if you can prove to me that it's worthwhile doing we'll takeo la

we'll explore the debate about the science behind complementary and alternative medicine, and look at some of the implications of this patient led movement.

MUSIC

LEWITH

It's not a new gene, it's not a new antibiotic, it's not Professor Fleming finding penicillin in St. Mary's outside Paddington, drifting in through the London air, it's very different. And it's about this battle, this process of who owns health.