

Eagle Cap Wellness expands current clinic, opens new site

By Ellen Morris Bishop
Wallowa County Chieftain

Acupuncture, which originated in China more than 2,000 years ago, is one of the oldest existing therapies in medicine—and one of the newest in Wallowa County. It's also one of the fastest growing medical practices here, with four acupuncturists in the county offering treatments for a full spectrum of medical needs, from eliminating wrinkles to reducing chronic physical pain to managing stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as treating internal medical issues.

Acupuncture is in such great demand here that Eagle Cap Wellness has moved to larger quarters in the EM&M Building at 117 East Main Street in Enterprise. And they have opened a second, walk-in clinic in Joseph. That facility, at 4 South Main Street, Joseph, is open only on Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and offers “walk-in acupuncture,” with no appointment necessary. The catch, or maybe the advantage, is that your treatment will be in an open room with up to four other people present, and in varying stages of their individual session. While that doesn't afford much privacy, some studies suggest that acupuncture in a group setting may actually enhance or amplify the effect of individual treatments. The other advantage is that each treatment costs only \$25.

Licensed acupuncturist Jamie Slagel, MACOM, LAC, opened Eagle Cap Wellness in 2016 with a small, one-room studio inside Belle Salon. Slagel is a 2014 graduate of the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine, holding a masters degree (MACOM) in acupuncture and oriental medicine. She fine-tuned her formal education here with studies and practice at Nan-



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Acupuncturist Jamie Slagel, MACOM, LAC, applies thin acupuncture needles to a patient's arm for treatment of anxiety.

ging University in China. “In China, the hospitals offer specialized acupuncture more than traditional medicine,” Slagel said. “You can walk into a hospital or clinic, and find a wing dedicated to acupuncture for specific kinds of internal medicine, or cosmetics, or psychological needs. There's less of what we consider here, and the pharmacological offerings are more oriented toward herbal medicines.”

Demand for her services mushroomed. And so when the Enterprise City Hall moved out of their temporary quarters and into their new building, Slagel saw an opportunity to expand. Eagle Cap Wellness took their space (117 East Main Street), adding three new treatment rooms. With more space, Eagle Cap Wellness added a second acupunc-

turist, Julia Collins, who is also a graduate of the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine. Collins brings a talent for Yoga and certification in Shiatsu massage to the practice, along with a deep interest in caregiving, hospice and the benefits of acupuncture and herbal medicine for an aging population. “When I was going to medical school, I was a caregiver for a man who had been injured when a car ran into his bicycle,” she said. He became a paraplegic as a result. “It was a very moving experience, and it inspired me to think and learn more about caring for people who needed more help.”

With two acupuncturists on staff, Slagel wanted someone with a complementary background. She found that in Bonnie Wickwire, a board-certified chiroprac-



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Essential oils and herbal medicines are important components of treatments at Eagle Cap Wellness.

tor and naturopath, who had been working at Winding Waters' Holistic Health and Healing Clinic. Wickwire brings more than 25 years of experience, including teaching at Portland's colleges of Naturopathy and Chiropractic. She is an expert at soothing tired backs, realigning painful spines, and prescribing herbal medicines that can extinguish pain, soothe digestive upsets, and calm frayed nerves.

“We have a really extensive stock of herbal medicines here,” Slagel said. People can come by, talk with us, and pick up all kinds of supplements instead of ordering from the Internet. We take pride in the quality of our supplements and are trying to have a comprehensive and thorough pharmacy.” Some of the bottles sport labels in Chinese. Slagel pulled one of them off the shelf and pointed to the ingredients, listed in English on the back. “This one has some scorpion in it,” she said cheerfully. “It helps treat Bell's Palsy.”

To most of us, the idea

of sticking needles into our arms, face, ears, back or neck hardly seems like a way to reduce pain or treat anxiety. And yet it works. “Some of the high school athletes use acupuncture and cupping to help them recover after an event,” Slagel said. “It's really pretty popular.” Other applications of acupuncture include dental pain, headaches, including migraines, and the pains associate with labor and childbirth. “We encourage people to reach out to us for whatever might be ailing them,” Slagel said.

Acupuncture is based on the ancient Chinese principle that energy (qi) flows through our bodies along pathways known as meridians. By inserting very thin needles into these meridians, the flow of energy can be rebalanced to alleviate pain, establish a more positive energy in the brain, thus alleviating stress, anxiety and depression, or just get excessively tight muscles to relax. A more Western understanding of the process is that acupuncture points are actually places where inserted nee-

dles stimulate nerves, muscles, and connective tissues, and the body's production of stress-relieving hormones known as endorphins.

However acupuncture works, the procedure is generally painless — with occasional very minimal pain—when the needles are inserted or removed. They are virtually un-noticeable while they are there. Slagel and Collins do their work and then allow their patients to lie comfortably and quietly for exactly 27 minutes before returning to remove the needles painlessly. That is the precise time required for the qi to be optimally balanced, Slagel said.

While conventional medicine may still harbor some reservations about the true effectiveness of acupuncture, many studies indicate that it works for a wide variety of ailments, especially for those who take it seriously. For example, the National Institute of Health reports that “... acupuncture may help ease types of pain that are often chronic such as low back pain, neck pain, and osteoarthritis/knee pain. It also may help reduce the frequency of tension headaches and prevent migraine headaches. Therefore, acupuncture appears to be a reasonable option for people with chronic pain to consider.”

And a comprehensive study of acupuncture's effectiveness for treatment of depression, published in the prestigious Journal of Affective Disorders concluded that “...acupuncture was an effective treatment that could reduce the severity of disease in patients with depression.”

The increased popularity of acupuncture in Wallowa County suggests that many people here find it beneficial. With growing options and opportunities for treatment, this ancient medicine is going to be here for a long time to come.

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