

Chinese Docs Now Licensed

Governing body regulates practitioners; nutrition bars debated

Just as local doctors have long been required to earn a licence before they can greet patients, so will British Columbians who practise **traditional Chinese medicine**. The province is the first to require that all "TCM" practitioners be licensed by the **College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists**.

HEALTH NOTES

The self-regulatory body was created three years ago by the provincial government, but the first group of graduating students and working practitioners to be licensed received their papers on June 13. The move holds TCM doctors up to professional and ethical standards, and aims to enhance public safety. Besides intensive education and exams, doctors of TCM must attend a four-year series of safety courses and carry at least \$1 million in malpractice insurance, according to the Burnaby-based college.

Chinese medicine focuses on prevention by encouraging a healthy diet and regular exercise, including tai chi and *qi gong*, to maintain **health**. It uses herbs and acupuncture to treat disease while looking at the underlying causes.

Lorne Brown, a registered TCM practitioner in Vancouver, has a special interest in women's health and sport-related injuries. He says TCM emphasizes balance.

"It's about keeping the body in a balanced environment to reverse disease and live with vitality," Brown says on the line from his West Side office. "It involves acupuncture, herbs, diet, lifestyle; when the body is in a balanced state, it tends to function optimally," Brown notes, adding that you don't have to be Asian to practise or follow the medical system. (Many patients are surprised when they learn he's Caucasian, he says.)

More people are turning to TCM to enhance conventional treatments. As reported in the *Straight* earlier this year, **Stephen Lam**, chair of the **British Columbia Cancer Agency** lung-tumour group, received a US\$4-million grant from the Bethesda, Maryland-based **National Cancer Institute** to study the use of Chinese herbs to prevent lung cancer.

• **GAIL JOHNSON**