

TCM the ultimate rebalancing act

Yang Di

Around the world, women and men are flocking to clinics and spas offering traditional Chinese medicine therapies such as *tui na* massage, reflexology, acupuncture, cupping, and herbal remedies.

The sudden widespread global fascination with Chinese derived treatments can also be seen in an increasing number of branded spas and wellness centers based on the TCM philosophy.

The spa treatments of CHI, The Spa at Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts has moved ahead of its peers by embracing the ancient Chinese philosophy of the five elements, in which metal, water, wood, fire and earth are in balance with the positive *yang* and negative *yin* energy within the body.

Another big brand Mandara sees China moving too, with Chinese traditional treatments indelibly influencing spa menus the way traditional Thai massage and Javanese Lulur have in the past.

Outside China, for example, Chuan Spa Hong Kong and Chuan Spa Melbourne function as a forum for guests to learn more about TCM and its role within the spa environment today. Each individual treatment has been carefully formulated to optimize the five elements that form TCM's core.

At one of the world's best destination spas Chiva-Som, located in Hua Hin, Thailand, TCM trainer Ken Rosen has diagnosed many guests using traditional Chinese methods.

"We are seeing more and more TCM-inspired philosophies and therapies within spas worldwide," said Dr Buathon Thienarrom, the holistic conscience for Six Senses Spas, and also the founder of Sukkasart Hua

Hin Co Ltd.

How has TCM — said to have been founded 4,000 years ago in China — become such a global hit?

"TCM has become more accepted and sought out worldwide as people have found out that TCM's holistic view of preventative treatments is often superior to the modern approach of cure in this 'overmedicated' society," she added.

Thienarrom herself has developed an integration of healing methods to formulate her own healing technique called ZenNaTai, which is an integrated therapeutic treatment based on TCM and emphasizing the functional channel located on the front part of the body which stores the yin energy hidden deep within the interior body.

People starting to understand that the most effective cure for stress is not to be found on the shelves of the local pharmacy, but deep within ourselves.

"The modern Spa has developed a prevailing mood for the holistic approach to life,"

Thienarrom said. "The trend is going from pure relaxing treatments towards holistic healing. The Chinese way of healing is relaxing, and it has obvious results."

The vision of Spa in which its emphasis is on the individual's total well-being and stress-busting therapies that "balance the body, mind and soul" and share the same philosophy with TCM on some degrees.

For those not in the know, TCM is a complete medical system that has diagnosed, treated, and prevented illness for more than 4,000 years based on five interdependent branches: exercise, nutrition, acupuncture, herbal formulas and massage.

TCM has its origins in ancient Taoist philosophy,

which views a person as an energy system in which body and mind are unified, each influencing and balancing the other, according to Thienarrom.

TCM believes the human body comprises two opposing yet mutually dependent halves — ying and yang. When the balance is broken it causes blockages in the flow of qi (energy of life force) along the body's pathways or meridians. The five elements — fire, water, earth, air and wood — also work to track the body's harmony.

"TCM is based on being proactive rather than reactive," said TCM practitioner Ken Rosen, who delivered a speech at the recent ISPA conference in Shanghai. "Because TCM is interested in how the body operates optimally, its value for the spa environment is enormous."

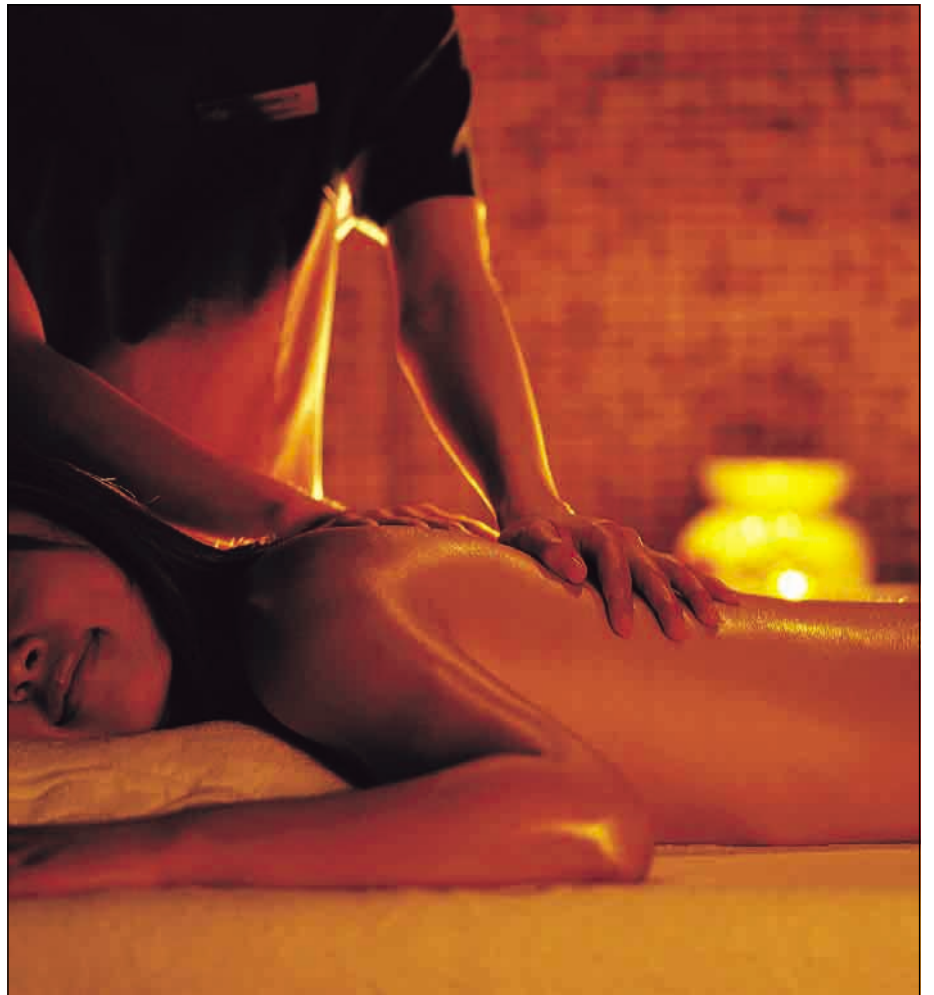
"If the world is becoming increasingly out of balance, then TCM treatments are a very natural way to bring people back into balance," Rosen said. "The aim of good TCM treatment is to 'return people to themselves.'"

Rosen is a licensed acupuncturist and board certified herbologist. He moved to Thailand in 2006 to be a resident therapist at Chiva-Som International Health Resort.

According to him, the five branches of TCM offer a framework to help empower spa guests with advice about exercise, nutrition, treatments and supplements/herbs to help them reach a more whole sense of self.

At Chiva-Som, his consultation session begins with a diagnosis along TCM methods and then devises a treatment plan and prescribes advice accordingly.

The future trend of TCM in a modern spa, according to him, is to use the solid framework to help people



The best cures for stress are not found on the shelves of a pharmacy.

get the most out of their spa stay, which means treatments can be better prescribed for people according to their diagnosis.

"I also see a huge trend in constitutional acupuncture and ear acupuncture being used in the spa environment. Likewise, acupuncture for weight loss and stopping smoking," he added.

However, the trend in most day spas and resort

spas, according to Thienarrom, is to implement TCM philosophy in order to offer the guest a deeper experience rather than a healing treatment. "They don't really bring herbs into the spas but essential oils instead."

For example, at CHI, The Spa, guests will be asked to complete a short questionnaire before a treatment. It is designed to determine the personal element sign and


ensure the correct customized blend of oils best suited to their needs.

TCM has the unique ability to harmonize the body and soul, and enrich the capacity for personal happiness and fulfillment, especially used in a spa retreat. Chinese preventative practices are meeting luxurious Western spa treatments, and the resultant fusion may just turn out to be deeper and greater.



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