



## THE TRIPLE WINNING FORMULA

by K Gurunathan

**T**he first acupuncture clinic of its type in New Zealand is more than a win-win project. The Hutt Valley Hospital's out-patient acupuncture clinic for pregnant women has a triple win-win-win track record. The clinic, set up in 2008 by the NZ School of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine, benefits the community, students of the School and the hospital.

Whether it is morning sickness, various pregnancy-related pain conditions, or help in preparing the body for birth, the clinic has been effective. What started as a tentative step, into the corridors of mainstream health service providers in 2008 has seen more than 400 women treated over the last four years. And the treatment is free.

Professional midwife and acupuncturist, Gill Burdett, is more than pleased with the clinic she helped start with acupuncture specialist, Debra Betts. "One advantage of a free service is that it provides a good opportunity for those who would not have tried acupuncture before. The School funds me to supervise the students from the School. Third-year students get to observe while fourth-year students get to deliver the treatment," she said.

Jane Anderson is one of four graduates of the School helping out at the clinic. She already has her own clinic, but volunteered to help at the hospital clinic which is held twice a week. She has been volunteering for two years. "At my clinic, I was at first, only able to attract a few patients a day. Working at the hospital clinic gave me four or five patients every afternoon. It has boosted my skills and confidence," said Jane. She said she used to be afraid to work with pregnant women but, after seeing the success of the treatments, she is now confident in this area.

"The clinic is fully booked, with many on standby hoping for cancellations. The feedback from patients is very positive. Some have tried everything and turned to acupuncture as a last resort. This is especially so in pregnancy where there are few choices. The treatment here is so useful and well regarded that I've found there's a constant stream of patients referred to us by midwives," she added.

Sharon Conroy, a recent graduate, was thrilled with the opportunity to volunteer at the clinic. "The School offers a



*Debra Betts treating a patient.*

firm theoretical grounding so it's valuable to observe Gill who is a qualified acupuncturist and experienced midwife. I was able to gain knowledge in obstetrics by listening to Gill and following that through by observing her treatments," said Sharon, adding that the clinic had given her greater confidence.

Gill has observed this confidence booster at work in the third and fourth year students. "Pregnancy is perceived as a sensitive area of medicine. There's nothing like seeing the actual results from the treatment to increase your confidence level. For the students, the experience of being in a mainstream hospital, working on people, and seeing them improve is a priceless learning experience," she said, adding that the School had taken a pioneering step in embedding the clinic within a mainstream health provider.

Gill said Hutt Valley Hospital staff were supportive. "It helps that I am a fully qualified midwife with 30 years' experience. Those unfamiliar with acupuncture are more relaxed to know that," said Gill who was first introduced to the discipline through a course run by Debra. Midwives, who have done Debra's courses, have been very influential in introducing acupuncture to the general New Zealand community.

"Because midwives are able to practise independently within the health system, they have been able to use alternative treatments like acupuncture as part of their scope of practice. A specific course for midwives was offered through the School in 1997. Courses are run in several New Zealand cities with education points awarded by the Midwifery Council," said Debra.

She has seen a two-fold increase. "This has resulted in a demand for acupuncture treatment for women who are receiving maternity care, and a growing acceptance within the hospital system that acupuncture may be useful in certain circumstances," Debra added. ■



Gill Burdett

## ACHIEVERS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

by K Gurunathan

If one of the notable things about New Zealand School of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine is its global links and international flavour, then Sharon Conroy could easily qualify to be the School's ambassador.

Sharon, who was awarded the Pacifico Award for academic excellence at this year's graduation in Wellington, was born in England and had applied to enrol at the School from the West Indian island of Bermuda. "I was in Bermuda with my Canadian husband who was working there. I received my first acupuncture treatment in Bermuda for a knee injury. I was so impressed I wanted to learn more about it," she said.

She searched the global internet for a suitable educational institute. "I had a criterion. I did not want a large university and the language of instruction had to be English. I found the School and was impressed with what they offered. When I rang them, they were good to talk to so I made my decision," she added.

"When I arrived in New Zealand, I knew no one. The staff took me under their wing and the teachers were excellent. It's a tough course, and so it should, to create the best professionals. I am glad of all the educational institutes, I had chosen this school," Sharon said.

She was also one of the senior students doing work at the pre-natal acupuncture clinic set up at Hutt Hospital by the School.



Sharon Conroy





*Auckland graduates 2012*

"That was an awesome, practical introduction. It was wonderful to see the treatment working on women who had little or no other options," she added.

Sharon and her husband planned to travel to China for a three-week tour, including two weeks at Wuhan's Hubei University of Chinese Medicine, before heading back to Canada. "I will set up a clinic in Halifax in the state of Nova Scotia. Acupuncture is not that well known on the East Coast of Canada. The West Coast is more open because of the Asian influence. But I hope to change that," said Sharon who leaves New Zealand with very fond memories, and skills in the healing science of acupuncture.

This year's graduation ceremony, for the School's Auckland campus, saw Kirsty Smith's graduation experience topped with a dash of cream. The surprised, but very pleased, student received the Pacifico Award for academic excellence.

Kirsty, who worked at a law firm while undertaking her study, was described by her teachers as a clear thinker with a logical mind. Known to be hard working and very passionate about traditional Chinese medicine, Kirsty left for the Philippines for her five-week stay which will include a stint with doctor/acupuncturists by visiting three clinics and possibly the acupuncture clinic at the Philippine General Hospital. ■



*Wellington graduates 2012*

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