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**Local News**



**Hands That Heal Can Be Your Own**

*By Josh Cohen News Staff Writer*

If a reporter's greatest tool is his skepticism, then pencil me in for a Pulitzer. I'm thinking this as I step into the Malaga Cove office of Anthony Guidera, a Rolling Hills resident and certified pranic healing instructor.

Office really isn't the right word. Healing center is probably the preferred term, and the smell of lavender, sounds of chanting and lack of footwear tell me I've entered a place that only my job would lead me. As the son of a physician, I've always looked upon alternative medicines with humorous disdain. After all, I think, if alternative techniques really work, why isn't my doctor prescribing a dose of mystic medicine?

But joining Guidera and myself is Dr. Eric Robins, a Rancho Palos Verdes urologist and author of "Your Hands Can Heal You," which he co-wrote with Master Stephen Co, one of today's masters of pranic instruction.

How did a practitioner of modern medicine get involved with what some might consider quackery?

"Urology probably has the highest rate of patient satisfaction in [the field of medicine,] but I see a fair number of patients with chronic, functional problems that weren't getting better with any of the standard medications or surgery," says Robins. "I was frustrated just giving medications that treat their symptoms but not addressing the underlying cause.

"So I began to look at how the body really heals itself," he continues. "The body has natural healing energy that flows through it. Unfortunately, that energy gets blocked, and we find that the largest factor for causing this blockage is emotional."

Robins' book portrays a number of cases in which patients whom modern medicine had given up on make remarkable recoveries after pranic healing techniques are employed. Robins uses pranic healing on his patients in conjunction with today's medicine, from numbing a man's private parts during a painful procedure to, as the book relates, curing a dying man's symptoms of nausea and fever, which eventually helped lead to the patient's full recovery.

Every living thing has prana, or life force, explains Guidera. Even questioning reporters. And the prana creates in everyone an energetic anatomy consisting of chakras, the body's power centers, meridians, the body's energy channels, and inner and outer auras. The function of the energetic anatomy is to absorb and distribute prana throughout the physical body and protect against energy contamination, the root cause of the chronic "functional disorders" of which Robins spoke.

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"If you can understand that there is bacteria that you can't see that can harm you, and bacteria that can help you, it's the same principle with energy," says Guidera.

As Robins explains, our unconscious mind and the suppression of negative emotions play an enormous role in our physical health.

"Many of us learn at a young age that it's not OK to exhibit particular emotions, particularly anger and anxiety. You may not consciously remember that, but it becomes an automatic process," Robins says. "As we get older and things happen ... those emotions come up from the body, but the brain tells the body to clamp down on those emotions and keep them from coming into conscious awareness. We hold those tensions in the smooth and skeletal muscles, among other places, and we see a number of disorders (irritable bowel syndrome, backaches) that are caused by these [repressed emotions]."

My Own Prana

To prove that even the spiritually inept can feel their prana, Guidera leads me through an exercise to sensitize my hands to my pranic energy.

Sure, I think, pretty soon multi-colored lights will shoot from my hands like a character in "Lord of the Rings."

But I had read Robins' book and knew the expectations weren't that high. I was to feel, after a short series of hand and breathing exercises, a small pressure between the gap in my outstretched palms.

"Visualize a beam of light coming out of your left hand. Do you feel anything? A light tingling?" Guidera asks in his low, deliberate voice. The book notes that it takes weeks, even months of practice before some people can feel their energy, particularly if you don't have a positive attitude during the exercises. I try my best to think happy thoughts.

So imagine my surprise when I do feel what seems like a slight resistance when I try to close the gap, as well as a tingling along my fingers.

Pranic practitioners say that what I feel is my own energetic aura from the chakras located in the center of my palms.

The book describes in simple terms many exercises one can practice at home, from breathing techniques to "sweeping," which cleans out dirty energy like a five-fingered vacuum cleaner.

"It was our goal that whether the reader was a garbage collector or astrophysicist, they would be able to read it and understand it," says Robins. "Part of our teacher's genius is the ability to take really complex, esoteric subjects and simplify them. It's certainly something you could do at home."

Working with an instructor can speed up the process.

"Pranic healing classes lay everything out you're going to encounter," says Guidera. "In class, after two days, [students] are comfortable, in a practical and applicatory sense, how to utilize this energy."

The tools of the pranic trade aren't nearly as frightening or cold as those Robins uses in his practice: A finger-sized crystal to expedite the elimination of negative energy; a spray bottle filled with alcohol mixed with lavender, the latter of which uses purple prana that relates to the crown chakra at the top of our heads; and saltwater, which has green cleansing prana. Robins and Guidera say salt baths are key to removing negative energy and should be taken every day.

Even News photographer Tom Underhill gets a taste of pranic healing. Before he leaves Guidera's center for another shoot, the instructor offers a free pranic energy boost.

Tom holds out his arms, a camera dangling in the right, takes a deep breath and stands motionless as Guidera sprays him with the bottle. Guidera then scans Tom's aura, commenting that he can feel the amount of stress a Peninsula News staff member endures. This guy's right on, I think. Can he get the message through to my boss?

The instructor moves in front of Tom and makes a few, quick downward thrusts with his hand, like a karate chop. He then circles behind our intrepid photographer and repeats the action.

"How do you feel?" Guidera asks as Tom puts his shoes back on.

"Good," Tom replies, "I feel good."

Those who can channel and manipulate prana can use it to heal others, performing everything from a small pep buzz to, Guidera reveals later, a pranic face-lift that doesn't involve injecting any bacteria in the proximity of your brain.

And while the power of pranic healing and many other energy medicines, such as reiki, acupuncture and chi kung, is potentially unlimited, Robins doesn't suggest doing away with standard medicine.

"There's nothing we would tell somebody not to go to their doctor for," he says. "Pranic healing is not exclusive of standard medicine. People should go to their physicians and make sure everything is OK.

"But if the person is given standard treatment and these chronic problems aren't healing, they should consider pranic healing to complement what standard medicine is doing," he continues. "I think pranic healing really helps people empower themselves."

Those interested in learning more about pranic healing can call Anthony Guidera at 699-2729, or visit his office at 2572 Malaga Lane in Palos Verdes Estates. "Your Hands Can Heal You" is published by Free Press, and is available at major bookstores throughout the South Bay.

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