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Welcome Spring With a Detoxifying Massage

NORWALK (March 17, 2008)—Spring is the time when most of us get the urge to clean out our closets, but in the old days it was also a time when people underwent certain regimens to detoxify their bodies, according to Licensed Massage Therapist Lorraine Gengo, who has a therapeutic massage therapy practice in Norwalk that specializes in Ayurvedic massage, employing techniques and treatments developed in ancient India.

“Most holistic practitioners will tell you that, traditionally, you are supposed to detox in the spring and fall—you’re never supposed to detox under extreme conditions, such as during the heat of the summer or the cold of winter,” says Gengo, a 2004 graduate of the Connecticut Center for Massage Therapy. Gengo was the first massage therapist to become certified in Ayurvedic massage at the University of Pune, India, through CCMT’s Continuing Education program. Gengo’s clinical experience included working at a charity hospital in Pune where many patients were being treated for severe arthritic conditions.

Therapeutic massage is an integral part of any detoxification program because of its unique ability to loosen toxins that are trapped in the body’s tissues, Gengo explains. Once mobilized, the toxins can be expelled through the gastrointestinal tract, the skin and the breath. Massage is therefore an excellent complementary therapy, which can be used before, during or after any detoxification protocol, Gengo adds.

Ayurveda, a Sanskrit word meaning “Science of Life,” is a 5,000-year-old treasure trove of knowledge, techniques and treatment options for people with the most obstinate chronic diseases. For historical reasons, namely the proliferation of Western medicine, it fell out of use, but is now experiencing a resurgence, both in India and the United States.

Dr. Amala Guha’s mission is to bring the authentic teachings of Ayurveda to the United States by training western medical professionals and massage therapists through programs that are dually accredited by prestigious medical facilities here and in India. According to Guha, the Ayurvedic Massage program, certified by CCMT and Complementary Alternative Supportive Care (CASC) Program, an Ayurveda based program at the University of CT Health Center, in collaboration with The International Society for Ayurveda and Health, is the only program in the country to hold this credential. Dr. Guha received her doctoral degree in immunology from the University of

Allahabad, India, in collaboration with the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. She now teaches immunology, hematology and an elective course in Ayurvedic medicine at UConn's medical school.

According to Dr. Guha, massage therapy plays an important role in Ayurvedic medicine, particularly when it comes to the five-step detox protocol known as *panchakarma*. The aim of this form of therapy is to cleanse the body of accumulated impurities and then to nourish the tissues. In India, the preparatory procedure performed on *panchakarma* patients is oil massage, given under the direction of an Ayurvedic physician, Guha says. The purpose of this oil massage is assist expulsion of the *ama*, or toxins, buried deep in the tissues, so that subsequently they can be expelled.

While such procedures are not within the scope of practice of massage therapists in this country, Gengo says that many of the special treatments she learned in India are not invasive, yet are very useful in helping her clients feel rejuvenated.

“An increasing number of my clients are using some form of detox protocol—whether it’s a week-long juice fast or a prolonged treatment of supplements administered by a health practitioner—and they’re finding that massage is helping them feel better faster,” Gengo says.

Ayurvedic massage employs different strokes than Western massage, and begins either at the head or abdomen, which are considered key areas of assessment. The oils are tailored to the individual’s mind-body constitution, and are often suffused with various herbs. One determines what specific oils and herbal infusions to use after a thorough assessment of the client, Gengo says. “It’s the furthest thing from a one-size-fits-all approach,” she adds.

Gengo says that for some of her clients, oil massage is not what’s indicated as the best treatment. For clients who are overweight or who suffer from certain skin problems, she performs *udvartana*, an herbal paste massage that is said to benefit the lymphatic system and exfoliate the skin, making it healthier. She also employs sweat therapy techniques, called *swedhana*, which she learned while working in India.

Gengo says she has noticed increasing interest in Ayurvedic massage since she began her practice. She attributes her clients’ interest—90 percent of whom come to her for Ayurvedic treatments as opposed to Swedish massage—to the overwhelming popularity of yoga, the sister science of Ayurveda.

“Ayurveda is where yoga was maybe 20 years ago in terms of people’s awareness,” Gengo says. “Now that yoga, the science of self-realization, has achieved critical mass in this country, Ayurveda’s time has come.”

For more information on the Ayurvedic Massage program certified by CCMT and University of Connecticut, contact or Dr. Amala Guha at guha@worldnet.att.net or Linda Derick at linda@ccmt.edu. For more information on the benefits of massage

therapy visit the American Massage Therapy Association's web site at www.amtamassage.org. If you are interested in learning more about CCMT's massage therapy programs, consider attending a Discovery Workshop. To register for an upcoming workshop, visit www.ccmt.edu or call: Newington main campus, 75 Kitts Lane, Newington, (877) 282-2268; Groton branch, 1154 Poquonnock Rd., Groton, (877) 295-2268; or the Westport branch, 25 Sylvan Rd., Westport, (877) 292-2268.