Alternative allergy treatment: cure or quackery?

9 September 2003
Reporter: David Margan

Australians suffer from more allergies than just about any other nation on earth. It's estimated around 40 percent of Australians have been afflicted, and it's getting worse. Now, an American-trained therapist who is based in Australia claims she can cure 87 percent of all allergies. But, as ACA reports, many doctors remain unconvinced.

Statistics indicate that allergies in Australia have doubled in the last 25 years with pollens, dust, milk and wheat among the most common. According to Dawn Nowlin, a doctor of acupuncture and oriental medicine, who developed what's known as Advanced Allergy Elimination, this technology successfully treats the problem at its source.

"We can eliminate most forms of allergy and, after the immune system takes the treatment, it's usually permanent," she says.

The technology merges western science with 3000-year-old Chinese acupuncture to create a non-invasive and drug-free treatment. The way it works, says Dawn, is the application of pressure on acupuncture points stimulate nerve bundles along the spine — reconditioning the body not to have a negative reaction to whatever you're allergic to.

"Now, we do have cases where people have to have more than one treatment, but that's not the majority of the time," Dawn explains. "It's usually one treatment per allergy family; we eliminate it and that's usually it."

But according to Brisbane-based immunologist Dr Graham Solley, the treatment just doesn't make any sense and simplifies in the face of scientific medicine.

"I wish I could say that I can cure 87 percent of people who come to me in one treatment but I know that that is unrealistic about these particular conditions," he says.

So, in an effort to find proof the Advanced Allergy Elimination really works, ACA spoke to five of Dawn Nowlin's patients. First, there's Melissa, who is allergic to red wine. Drinking red wine is a pleasure her doctors told her to avoid because she becomes so congested that she can hardly breathe.

Dawn, however, reckons just two treatments will do the trick. And, it did.

For Justin, nothing offered by conventional medicine gave him relief from the chronic hayfever he's suffered since he was a child.

"It was really quite severe, I got to the point where I was trying every medication under the sun," he says. "There were days I couldn't even get out of bed."
The condition got so bad that Justin felt it was really beginning to destroy his life and even resorted to having injections. But when they made little difference Justin decided to see Dawn Nowlin.

"I went in there as a bit of a sceptic to be totally honest," he says. "I really didn't hold out much hope for it and I can only say I am amazed at the results."

Now, Justin's hayfever has gone and he's got his life back.

Then there's Maree Hume, who's trained in medical science. She says she would break out in an itchy mess of rash and hives if she even looked at any form of stone fruit. But after just one treatment, Maree cooked up a big dessert of cherries and apricots and ate it that night, and she didn't suffer any reaction.

Fellow allergy sufferer, architect Will Markus, would get a migraine after drinking so much as a sip of coffee. He's been unable to drink a drop for seven years — a tragedy for the modern man! But, following two of Dawn's treatments, Will is able to down a cappuccino with confidence.

And for Max Hardy, putting his arms in the sun for five minutes was enough to make his skin so red it would look like he'd been outside for hours. He suffered for 17 years before hearing about Dawn Nowlin's treatment and admits he thought it would be a waste of time. Four treatments later and Max can now be out in the sun for five hours playing golf without a problem.

Still, the world of orthodox immunology is not swayed.

"I think for a lot of those patients, it's purely a placebo, that no matter how many people go to a doctor, some of the will get better no matter what treatment they receive," says Dr Solley. "So there is always success that can't be explained."

But Melissa, Justin, Maree, Will and Max beg to differ; they believe the treatment has given them the opportunity to finally get rid of their miserable allergies.