

AIBA Member: **Dr. Christopher Caragan**

It has long been discussed in this country that Western medicine is not comprehensive enough. Because it is wholly based on the premise that the human body is a “machine” and understanding the inner and outer workings of that machine can provide all the answers to medical questions, it often neglects other factors in finding a solution to a problem.



Dr. Christopher Caragan, a physician Board Certified in Family Medicine, believes in a holistic approach. “Human beings are a complex species. In treating pain and stress, the Eastern philosophy considers all things about the patient. Even such questions as ‘what is your favorite color’ and ‘what foods do you crave most’ are crucial in diagnosing and treating a patient,” he says.

Caragan, a doctor of osteopathic medicine, treats his patients by blending what he has learned in both Western and Eastern medical philosophies, which includes using acupuncture when appropriate.

“Like most people, I was skeptical when I initially started learning about acupuncture,” says Caragan, who moved to Austin from Ramstein, Germany only a year ago. “But I began witnessing things while working in clinic that seemed almost miraculous to me, and eventually I came to realize that blending both approaches was crucial in treating pain and stress,” which is what Caragan specializes in at his Central Austin private practice.

“I originally worked in Germany as an Air Force physician, and saw a lot of young soldiers dealing with extraordinary stress and pain issues. Usually, physicians treat those things with pain medications, but when in combat-related environments, pain

meds can obviously compromise a soldier’s ability to make the best judgments. Finding an alternative way of treating those young men and women was not only prudent, it was a matter of safety.”

Caragan learned then about a fascinating form of acupuncture (acupuncture is a varied field, practiced in different ways according to the technique used and the country in which it was developed) known as “battlefield acupuncture” conceived by Dr. Richard C. Niemtzow. “The results from this method, which uses gold-plated studs in various places in the ear, is nothing short of miraculous,” Caragan says. Young soldiers are often so responsive to the treatment, the use of drugs becomes eventually unnecessary; a perfect case of necessity being the mother of invention. “When I was in the Air Force working as a physician, I saw so many soldiers treated by this method who became fully functioning without the use of performance-altering prescription pain medications.”

He recalls fondly a story of success at an Air Force clinic in Sembach, Germany while stationed overseas. “I had an older couple come in, both with various forms of quality of life-altering pain. The husband was particularly grouchy, undoubtedly because of his chronic pain issues. I began using this technique on him, and saw him turn into an entirely different person over the several weeks he came to me.”

Caragan’s wife, Rachel, who runs the administrative part of his practice, attests to the transformation. “It was amazing,” she says with a big smile.

When Caragan takes on a new patient, he spends an hour to an hour and a half consulting with the person. “I believe one of the best things about my practice is the personal, unhurried care I give my patients. In this country we have gotten so used to rushing our patients in and out, for a variety of reasons. I don’t do that here. I want to get to know my patients thoroughly.” He also has them fill out comprehensive questionnaires that ask intimate questions about style and quality of life.

“I view medicine as one part science, the other part art,” says Caragan. “The body has an inherent capacity to defend and repair itself.”

Caragan’s broad training as osteopathic physician and acupuncturist allows him a more comprehensive, personal look at each patient as a unique individual. “I want my patients to have the best quality of life possible,” he says, “and that means not being impaired by the effects of narcotics and pain medicines on their lives and their bodies.”

Visit www.drchriscaragan.com to make an appointment for an initial personalized consultation with Dr. Caragan.

—Story and photo by Christine Cox