



SCOTT MULLIN PHOTO

Zohar is a teacher and practitioner of exotic Arabian dances which, she says, can empower, energize and connect one with nature, the elements and the temples of the soul. She runs workshops from her Katonah studio.

Need healing? There are plenty of alternatives

By FELIX CARROLL

From the sublime to the fantastic. From acupuncture and vegetarianism, to angel reading and zero balancing. From people with names like Alice or Andrew to those named Zohar.

Healing and health. Medicine, therapy and religion. They have become increasingly intertwined these days. Just look at the list of alternatives stretching down the yellow pages, notices and advertisements plugged onto corkboards in local book stores and coffee shops, and the "new age" and "holistic" health offices stretching down the length and breadth of such streets as Katonah Avenue.

Hypnosis?... aromatherapy?... reflexology? Reiki and channeled readings?

They may all sound like parlor games for the bored and wealthy,

but such activities have become increasingly popular alternatives for what some believe to be an expensive and out-of-touch health care system — a system whose limitations are clear to a growing number of consumers, many of whom regard health not as a cold, calculated science, but as an interrelationship between the mind, the body and the spirit.

"This is the next frontier," said Helen Escoffier, a holistic healer from Chappaqua. "I think a lot of people are opening up to alternative methods partly because the conventional routes just aren't working for them."

Granted, the terms "alternative" or "new age" health care may for some draw connotations of the quacks and cultists in some 19th century medicine show, professing the healing powers of magnets and moon rocks. But even the National

Institutes of Health has recently established an office for alternative medicine.

So what gives?

Is it because the doctor doesn't make house calls anymore with his worn-out old black leather bag, and stethoscope drooping?

Rising from the cusp of the industrial revolution as small pharmaceutical workshops in Vienna, the western medical model became an institute in Paris (Pasteur Institute), and finally an industry in the United States.

But in its quest for truth and in an empirical rendering of reality, has western medicine become too faceless — a closed acropolis, a different denomination, with an aim toward some vague immutable star shining somewhere above Johns Hopkins? In other words, has it lost touch?

continued on page 14

New age medicine and holistic healing opportunities flourish

continued from page 1

Many believe so.

"I think people are looking in general more at alternatives," said Deborah Marston, owner of Katonah Scentral, a shop which offers medical and sports massage therapy and aromatherapy, using various oils that are said to soothe, excite, inspire or heal. "I think people are questioning western medicine. Not that one negates the other. It's complementary."

"Right now," said Lawrence Edwards, who practices transpersonal psychology from his office on The Parkway in Katonah, "alternatives are shining in comparison because the light of hope is shining rather than the light of reason."

"I think it's blossoming all over the country," said Zohar, of Katonah, who holds workshops on the sacred art of belly dance, based on an ancient Goddess religion, and who has performed recently for the likes of the rock group Metallica and for senior citizens at local nursing homes. "People around here, especially, I think are like-minded and attracted to beauty. I think having Caramoor and the (Katonah) Museum, and the galleries and health food stores establishes the arts here and (the opportunity for) the holistic."

And while a national debate continues regarding whether these new therapies work, consumers are casting their votes with their wallets.

The Wall Street Journal has reported that one-third of Americans are switching to alternative forms of medical treatment. A similar study in 1994 in the "New England Journal of Medicine" reported that one-third of all Americans are "disillusioned" with modern medicine.

CNN reported recently that Americans spend \$15-billion a year on alternative medicine. With that kind of testimonial, alternative medicine is getting harder to ignore. And institutions of traditional medicine have begun experimenting with alternative forms of healing.

In the area, centers and offices of holistic health care have been popping up consistently in recent years. Awakenings, located on Katonah Avenue, draws large attendance to its showcases and seminars hosted by area healers and psychics. Furthermore, several area publications such as the Holistic Resource Directory, and Light Voices, have begun the daunting task of linking into a network of area health care therapists and counselors who

advocate an alternative, holistic approach to health and healing.

These practitioners come in various forms — as chiropractors, masseuses, dietitians, homeopathic practitioners, acupuncturists, card readers and hypnotists. They treat everything from behavior modification (stress, weight, phobias, smoking) to success motivation, physical and emotional healing, fears, past life regressions and even pain control.

Some practitioners have a wide range of tools at their disposal.

Mr. Edwards, for one, is a self-described specialist in Jungian dreamwork, hands-on-healing, psycho-spiritual counseling, soul counseling and channeling. He employs these methods under the umbrella of transpersonal psychology, which he describes as "looking beyond pathology."

"Very often people have a spiritual and mystical component... a higher self," he said. "This offers a way of looking at that and bringing it into the clinical experience, seeing it as a major dimension of what it is to be healthy."

Mr. Edwards charges \$100 per session, which usually lasts an hour.

He, like other holistic healers interviewed, divided his local clients into two groups: those who are simply curious .