

The New York Times EDITED BY DENISE GRADY

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Guide to
Alternative
Health

A CONSUMER REFERENCE

YOUR OBJECTIVE SOURCE FOR THE
LATEST INFORMATION ON

- Scientifically proven therapies
- Herbal medicine and prescription drug interactions
- Unregulated supplements
- The most promising remedies
- Dangerous frauds and scams

JANE E. BRODY, DENISE GRADY AND
REPORTERS OF *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

The Integrative Health Center at the Rockefeller Pavilion is similarly airy, offering acupuncture and massage as well as chemotherapy in a room painted with blue skies and scudding clouds. Other clinics have an earthier feel. Natural materials like slate and silvered wood cover almost every surface at the SoHo Integrative Health Center on Crosby Street in Manhattan, which opened this month. Run by Dr. Laurie Polis, a dermatologist, the center is filled with the reassuring sights, sounds and scents of nature.

"I wanted to dispel anxieties that rise from memories of walking down a sterile hallway, a nurse in white shoes coming at you with a syringe," Dr. Polis said.

Determined to create an anticlinical environment, she commissioned Clodagh, an architectural designer known for her woodsy spa interiors and stores, to create a setting that evokes a Zen garden and a rain forest. Its focal point is a twenty-seven-foot wall of water that plunges from the upper floors to the lobby.

Patients awaiting the removal of skin lesions or a consultation with the house internist or ophthalmologist can steady their nerves with a facial, a seaweed wrap or a visit to Steven Dillon, the center's own hair guru. Cocooned in sand-color terry-lined robes, the patients, who are called "clients," sit in the waiting area sipping iced green tea and inhaling the house fragrance, a blend of ginger and passion flowers.

A similar hush pervades the Continuum Center for Health and Healing, an outpatient clinic of the Beth Israel Medical Center in New York. Opened in June 2000 at Fifth Avenue and Twenty-eighth Street, the center offers traditional Western medical treatments alongside Eastern therapies in an environment that looks like a Hong Kong hotel.

Tibetan carpets, rough-hewn wooden benches and a weeping fig tree, among other features, were installed at the suggestion of Alex Stark, a New York feng shui specialist. Chinese cabinets, fountains and a limestone corridor make the reception area feel like a sanctuary, compelling visitors to lower their voices.