THE POWER of TOUCH

PRACTITIONER BRINGS JIN SHIN JYUTSU TO UK MARKEY CANCER CENTER

BY JULIE WILSON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALAN RIDEOUT
"I used to call myself 'The House of Last Resort,'" said Jennifer Bradley, laughing at the notion. "We don't want to know what to do so let's go see Jennifer." This incites an implied palm-to-the-forehead moment for Bradley. "Why didn't they come to see me sooner?" she asks herself.

For two years now Bradley has been working with UK's Markey Cancer Center as their Jin Shin Jyutsu (pronounced "jeet-yoo") Integrative Medicine Practitioner. The tongue-twister of a name could be an obstacle, but for the most part, Bradley feels it's a simple lack of awareness. "It's not a word that people recognize as much as, like reiki," she explains. "The explanation I give is it's similar to acupuncture. It's energy moving in specific pathways."

Jin Shin Jyutsu is a balancing act of sorts, a re-routing of energy is like a flowing stream, which can get dammed by the intrusion of pebbles along the path. Remove the pebbles, and the stream is back on its way.

Bradley explains the technique with a rippling brook analogy, as much as, like reiki," she explains. "The explanation I give is it's similar to acupuncture. It's energy moving in specific pathways."

Jin Shin Jyutsu practitioners focus on – 26 on the right, 26 on the left – and these points along the body that Jin Shin Jyutsu practitioners work on – 26 on the right, 26 on the left – and these are found from head to toe: the spine, some fingers, some toes. Getting these two sides to reside in harmony is the goal.

"I can't imagine being able to treat the body as a whole without Jin Shin Jyutsu," said Bradley. "There are 52 points along the body that Jin Shin Jyutsu practitioners focus on – 26 on the right, 26 on the left – and these are found from head to toe: the spine, some fingers, some toes. Getting these two sides to reside in harmony is the goal."

Now, before your mind starts wandering toward thoughts of hokey new-age rituals, let's think about this for a minute: why do people call your back the seat of your soul? Why do we keep our hands behind our head when we're thinking? Bradley gives another example: "Football players put their hands like this," she said, "crouching at the waist with her hands on her thighs. "We all do it for a reason, to harmonize energy."

And because most of the patients are referred from doctors at the center, Bradley has the patient history to help guide the treatment. But then it all comes down to the pulse. "The energetic pulse tells us what's happening to the body today," she said, acknowledging that patient history is helpful, "but what I really go to is what the body tells me what it wants in the pulses."

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Still not buying it? OK, let's try this analogy – you're having one of those days, the ones where your reality and the outside world are just not in alignment. It's maddening. Does Jin Shin Jyutsu have a trick for this? Bradley explains her tactic: "Cross your arms, hands in armpits and thumbs rest at your chest. If you are feeling insanely crazy, you'll notice your shoulders start to drop. And it's no trick. Think of it this way – a straight-jacket has the exact same effect … for a reason."

Although she has been using this form of collaborative (NOT alternative, "I hate that word," said Bradley) therapy for years now, she makes no qualms about it not being right for everyone. "Look, try it one time," she said. "I really believe that people know on a very deep level if this is something that's going to help them."

It worked for Cauldill. She's a volunteer now, but her first foray into Jin Shin Jyutsu was as a patient. "It's as if [your body] is being told that it can relax," she explained, "and I don't know how to term that any differently."

Although many variables are at play here – chemotherapy, radiation – Jin Shin Jyutsu brings a sense of peace to patients who add it to their overall therapy; their doctors see the change as patients are more present, able to make decisions about their care with a centered mind.

Yet humbly, Bradley explains that she is not a "healer." She is a catalyst of care. "If you hooked your jumper cables up to your car battery and flipped the switch on the other car – that spark is what puts the two of them together," she explained. "I am like the spark."