UBC to teach alternative therapies to med students

BY JAMIE WOODS

VANCOUVER (CUP) -Medical students at the University of British Columbia will soon learn how to treat patients with acupuncture as well as Tylenol.

Beginning in January, the university will become the first in Canada to offer its medical school students a course in alternative therapies. The fourth-year class will introduce students to techniques such as acupuncture, ayurveda, homeopathy, orthomolecular medicine, shen therapy, Native American spiritual healing and therapeutic touch.

Students who elect to take the class will also spend a month studying one

or more of those fields with a certified practitioner.

The course, which will operate on a trial basis from January to May, will go one step further than an existing class that outlines the concepts of alternative, or complementary, medicine.

Dr. Nazmudein Merali, a general practitioner who proposed the course to the faculty, says UBC needs to integrate alternative

therapies into its teaching if it wants to keep up with the times.

October 1, 1998

"People are asking questions about complementary medicine and if we turn around and say, 'look this doesn't exist,' then we are only fooling ourselves," she said.

An Angus Reid poll conducted in October 1997 revealed 7 in 10 Canadians think provincial health care plans should cover alternative medicine costs, and 56 per cent of British Columbians now use alternative

The widespread use of alternative therapies is the reason UBC's faculty of medicine is introducing the course, says Andrew Chalmers, associate dean of the faculty's undergraduate

"Students need to understand what people are doing, they need to understand what kinds of potential problems there are, as some complementary medicines react very nastily with some of our traditional therapies," he said. "They also need to understand that complementary therapies have a therapeutic effect."

But Dr. Jim Lane, president of the British Columbia Medical Association, says while it's OK to make students aware of complementary medicine, he's sceptical about the scientific basis of alternative therapies.

"I'm a little surprised that [UBC is] putting the course on," he said. "I think that our major concern would be that we would always emphasize that medicine should be evidence-based, and some alternative therapies are less than adequate in a scientific evidence

Chris Lam, a doctor and acupuncturist who proposed the course along with Merali, says there are weaknesses in every medical tradition that an integrative approach could help offset.

"The weakness in traditional Chinese medicine is in the aggressive surgical areas, acute medical conditions like trauma," said Lam.

"Conversely, the shortcomings of western medicine,

such as mind-body conditions, chronic conditions, can be dealt with much better by traditional Chinese medicine."

Megan Corcoran, a first-year medical student, says she'll consider taking the course.

"I'm not a strong believer in that stuff, but I'd take the course to be aware of it so I know what's out there and what it's all about," she

NDP to tackle bankruptcy legislation

BY TARA ATLURI

OTTAWA (CUP) Debt-ridden students who need to declare bankruptcy but can't under changes to student bankruptcy laws may soon be presented with a ray

Libby Davies, education critic with the New Democratic Party, is expected to introduce a private members' bill as early as next week that would amend six-month-old changes to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act.

Davies wants to undo section

178 of the act, which was first passed last spring. The new section extends the waiting period for students who need to declare bankruptcy from two to ten years for graduates enrolled in full or part-time studies at Canadian post-secondary institutions.

"This is scandalous," Davies said of the change. "On the one hand, the Liberals are crowing about all the wonderful things they

are doing for students. And with the other, they are pushing through this section.'

"Student debt is so high it has become an oppressive part of students' lives," Davies said.

She argues the new section disproportionately targets student debtors, and will force students who have exhausted all other options to

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Labour dispute

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of strike or lockout. After a successful strike vote the union may go on strike at any point with a minimum 48 hours notice within the next six months.

Robert Durdan is one of four full-time conciliators on staff at the Dept. of Labour. He joined the department in Feb. 1996 with extensive background in labour relations.

Durdan was also the conciliator during last spring's faculty and university negotiations.

Brenda Crozsman says "the ball's in the university's court.'

"We don't want to do that to the students," she adds. "And even if [we went on strike for] a week, it's a big impact on our salaries."

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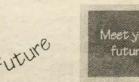
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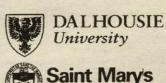








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