

## TIBETAN HEALING CENTER

*Hillcrest's distinctive Tibetan Healing Center unites Eastern and Western medicinal practices to facilitate total wellness.*

BY KIRSTEN HUBBARD

**F**luttering in the winter wind, a trail of multicolored flags discloses the location of San Diego's only Tibetan Healing Center, located in an intimate complex in Hillcrest.

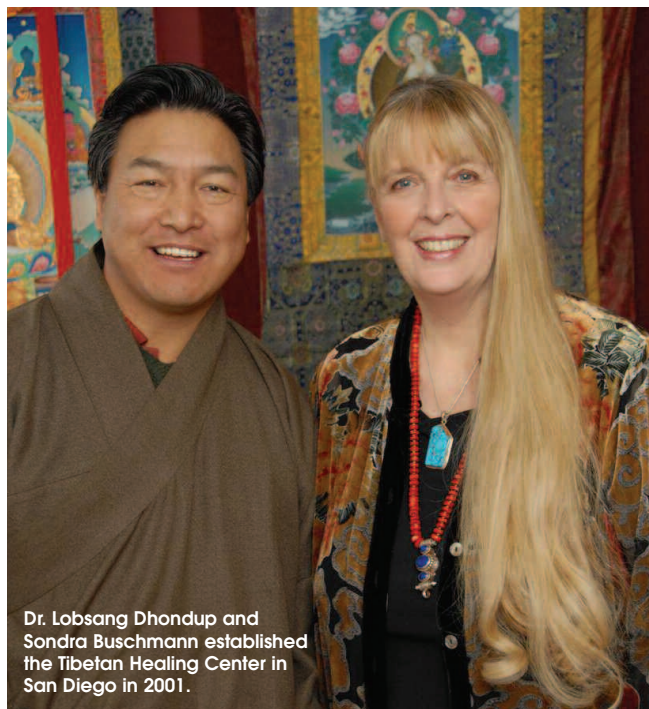
Inside, the small main office swirls with intoxicating scents: incense, oils and the spiced apple cider warming patients upon arrival. People speak in low voices. The atmosphere is appropriately soothing, as the Tibetan Healing Center is a place where patients come to learn, to relax and most of all, to heal.

### TIBETAN MEDICINE

Tibetan medicine embraces a holistic approach to health care, incorporating science, art and philosophy in the treatment of illnesses while employing key Buddhist principles: altruism, karma and ethics. In the field of Tibetan medicine, total healing involves the treatment of emotional and spiritual dysfunctions along with physical maladies.

"Healing has many branches," says Dr. Lobsang Dhondup, the heart of the Tibetan Healing Center. "To be most effective, all must come together."

Dr. Dhondup was a 1988 graduate of the Tibetan Medicine School in Lhasa, Tibet. After working for two years as a doctor of traditional Tibetan medicine in Tibet, he headed to the Men-Tsee-Khang Tibetan Medical Institute in Dharamsala and achieved the American Master's Degree equivalent of Menpa Ka Chupa. His next stop was Mongolia, where he helped reinstate the study and practice of Tibetan medicine



Dr. Lobsang Dhondup and Sondra Buschmann established the Tibetan Healing Center in San Diego in 2001.

at the Menpa Dratsang Institute for Doctors and the Medical University of Mongolia.

Dr. Dhondup arrived in the United States in 1998 to attend the First International Conference of Tibetan Medicine in Washington D.C., and obtained his Master's Degree in Acupuncture in Los Angeles. During a stint as a Research Specialist at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Dr. Dhondup met Dr. Cynthia Husted of University of California, Santa Barbara, with whom he forged a partnership analyzing multiple sclerosis, neurodegenerative and autoimmune disorders from the perspective of Tibetan Medicine.

The Tibetan Healing Center in San Diego was established in 2001, with the help of Sondra M. Buschmann, who serves as the Center's president. Since the Center's inception, Dr. Dhondup has published and spoken on the topic of Tibetan medicine across the United States, from the Second International Conference on Tibetan Medicine in Washington D.C., to the Columbia University Integrated Studies conference in New York.

“CHINA HAS BEEN INTEGRATING EASTERN AND WESTERN MEDICINES IN ITS HOSPITALS FOR DECADES,” SAYS DR. DHONDUP, WHO CONSIDERS HIMSELF A PRODUCT OF BOTH CULTURES. “PATIENTS ARE PRESCRIBED THE BEST POSSIBLE TREATMENT PLAN: EASTERN, WESTERN OR BOTH.”



### EASTERN VS. WESTERN MEDICINE

Though Dr. Dhondup’s esteem in the field is inarguable, many Americans are skeptical when it comes to Eastern medicine, and all other medical practices lacking a foundation in Western science. However, Dr. Dhondup maintains that it isn’t necessary to choose one or the other. Instead, the optimal treatment plan for many illnesses and conditions includes collaboration between Eastern and Western medicines – taking helpful herbs along with prescription medications, for example, as long as the two don’t interfere, or merging Reiki hands-on therapy with physical therapy.

“China has been integrating Eastern and Western medicines in its hospitals for decades,” says Dr. Dhondup, who considers himself a product of both cultures. “Patients are prescribed the best possible treatment plan: Eastern, Western or both.”

While Americans first took interest in Eastern medicine in the 1970s, says Dr. Dhondup, Americans have grown more accepting in recent years. With the abundance of topical information on the internet, encompassing the research of many generations, Americans have endless resources for exploring Eastern medicine in general and Tibetan medicine in particular.

### A UNIQUE APPROACH

But when it comes to actual practitioners of Tibetan medicine, there are as few as 20 or 30 in the United States. Dr. Dhondup is the only one in Southern California.

Recognizing the Tibetan Healing Center’s rarity and value, patients make the pilgrimage to the Center from various corners of the state. It also attracts a substantial Eastern European and Mexican clientele. According to Dr. Dhondup, this is unsurprising as both cultures have a history of utilizing homeopathic remedies in the treatment of illnesses.

Fundamentally, Tibetan medicine requires consideration of

### Tibetan Healing Center Treatments

To the average San Diegan, treatments offered at the Tibetan Healing Center range from the familiar (massage therapy, acupuncture) to the exotic (Reiki, Qigong). However, most have been practiced for thousands of years in the field of traditional Tibetan medicine.

#### ACUPUNCTURE

An acupuncturist manipulates specific points in the body with fine needles, minute electrical currents, heat, cold or pressure to regulate the flow of vital energy, called *chi*. Tibetan Healing Center acupuncturist Geoff Thomas interned with Dr. Dhondup for five years before launching his onsite practice.

#### KUNDALINI YOGA

Kundalini Yoga is a comprehensive form of yoga that unites postures, movements, meditation, and breathing techniques to hone awareness and achieve overall well-being.

#### QIGONG

The most-prescribed self-healing therapy, the ancient practice of Qigong includes streamlining postures, non-impact exercise, and breathing to correct physical and spiritual imbalances.

#### MASSAGE THERAPY

The benefits of Tibetan massage therapy are endless, from improving internal organ function to enhancing thinking and creativity.

#### REIKI

Reiki is an ancient form of hands-on healing, in which a Reiki practitioner uses hand placement to redistribute healing energy throughout the body. Tibetan Healing Center co-founder Sondra M. Buschmann has been practicing Reiki for 11 years throughout California.

both the short term and the long term in the treatment of any illness. In this, Western medicine is lacking.

“Diet, microbes, and other environmental factors can cause illness in the short term,” says Dr. Dhondup. “But even if those are successfully treated, the patient will not be entirely healed until long-term conditions are treated as well.”

Take migraine, for example. While there are many prescription drugs available to treat the excruciating ailment, its origins are not fully identified by Western doctors, and no effective cure has been found. But according to practitioners of Tibetan medicine, migraines are a symptom of a general condition or imbalance. Says Dr. Dhondup, common migraine medications treat the symptom, not the underlying condition, which could be anything from hypertension to a deficiency in the blood.

Finding the underlying imbalance condition is crucial, he underscores, in allaying the surface symptoms, and eventually curing them altogether.

### IGNORANCE, ATTACHMENT & ANGER

“In traditional Tibetan medicine, there are three major ‘poisons’ that cause illness in the long-term,” he says,

**“IN TRADITIONAL TIBETAN MEDICINE, THERE ARE THREE MAJOR ‘POISONS’ THAT CAUSE ILLNESS IN THE LONG-TERM,” HE SAYS, “IGNORANCE, ATTACHMENT AND ANGER.”**

“ignorance, attachment and anger.”

These factors negatively affect one’s wellbeing just as much as poor diet, destructive environments, and other more obvious factors, and must be addressed for a person to fully heal. Dr. Dhondup references hypertension as a widespread example. While hypertension medicines might successfully bring

down one’s blood pressure, if the causal stresses and other issues are not eliminated, the condition will likely come back.

“One must alter his or her way of living and thinking to heal completely,” he says.

The Tibetan Healing Center also offers numerous classes for students and aspiring instructors through its Tibetan Healing Academy, including Dharma teachings, Reiki, yoga, Tibetan medicine and Qigong. **B**

*The Tibetan Healing Center is located at 4115 Third Avenue, San Diego, California. Visit [www.tibetanacademy.org](http://www.tibetanacademy.org) or call (619) 325-0992 for more information.*

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