

## Sweet remedies

Dr Ludmila is the first doctor in Dubai licensed by the Ministry of Health to practise homeopathy. She shares a clinic with her husband Dr Sergei Vassiliev, a surgical oncologist. Her interest in homeopathy goes back decades.

*Sonali Raha meets the first doctor in Dubai licensed by the Ministry of Health to practise homeopathy*



"You have a sore throat and what does the allopathic doctor give you? An antibiotic. What is an antibiotic?" asks Dr Ludmila Vassilieva, MBBS, MD, Ph.D. She answers herself: "It means anti life. So you're having a medicine that is actually against life. That is why myself, my family, my friends, my animals, even my flowers, follow homeopathy."

"I have been a medical doctor for 27 years," she continues, settling into a deep swivel chair in her spacious chamber in Dr Sergei Clinic, Al Maktoum Tower, Deira, Dubai.

"I qualified in general medicine from Ukraine Medical University. I was a general practitioner when I started doing scientific research in cardiology (particularly in microcirculation) for my Ph.D. I started to check the whites of the eyes because that is the only place in the body where you can study the blood vessels without cutting up anything."

Through this, she became interested in iridology — the study of the iris to diagnose disease — which she still uses to complement homeopathy.

"Then, over the years, I discovered that persons who use conventional medicines for a long time become more and more dependent on them. This leads to more side effects. The body gets more and more toxic and the condition becomes chronic.

"So I packed a suitcase and went off to study acupuncture, a (medical) line that has no side effects and does not intoxicate the system."

Dr Ludmila went to Kiev and studied acupuncture, a system of complementary medicine where fine needles are inserted in the skin at specific points along supposed lines of energy. She practised for some years and then felt the need for something more.

"In acupuncture, you balance the energy of the body. But when the body has low levels of energy, what do you balance? You need to restore the energy first. So, I thought of homeopathy," she says.

"Homeopathy has old roots in Ukraine and Russia. The private doctor of (one) Czar was a friend of Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy," she adds.

Dr Ludmila studied homeopathy from 1986-89 and subsequently opened the first homeopathic centre in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Chernobyl happened.

On April 26, 1986, near Chernobyl, Ukraine, reactor #4 exploded and burned, releasing a host of radioactive chemicals into the environment. This resulted in history's worst nuclear plant disaster, killing 31 people instantly.

Another 237 were treated for acute radiation syndrome.

Dr Ludmila became part of the team treating the Chernobyl children. "I supervised the homeopathic treatment of 250 children," she remembers.

"Homeopathy helped me treat a range of radiation illnesses, from tonsillitis and asthma to hepatitis."

Fuelled by the success of her treatment, she set up the Homeopathic Centre in Kiev. Committed to studying, bettering and promoting the medical system, the centre has five departments — research, pharmaceutical, consultancy, publishing and teaching.

In 1992, Dr Ludmila organised the first homeopathic congress in Ukraine. "We had a huge response and 400 specialists came for the congress from all over the world. I presented a report on the Chernobyl children and on how homeopathy can help boost the defence system," she details.

In 1994, she came to Dubai on vacation, taking a break for the first time in five years. "I tried to find out about homeopathic practices here. No one could answer me. I decided this would be a good place to open my own clinic," she laughs.

She moved to Dubai and seven years and three examinations later, she got her licence from the Ministry of Health on May 28, 2002.

In Dubai, Dr Ludmila has already built up a loyal base of patients.

"I take my two-year-old son to Dr Ludmila," says one woman. "My son was born with a condition that needs surgery and medical back-up. He is very susceptible to coughs and colds.

"I didn't want to get into a situation where every time he starts a cold, he is given an antibiotic. Dr Ludmila maintains his health at a good level. If he shows any symptoms of a cold or cough, we take him immediately to her. The remedy she gives helps him greatly. She has also helped us plan a special diet for him."

Another grateful patient says her slipped disc condition has improved greatly, thanks to Dr Ludmila. "I was suggested surgery, but I wanted to avoid it. I had pain in my back all the time, and sometimes the pain would travel to my legs. I couldn't sit for more than five minutes at a time," she recalls.

Dr Ludmila's remedies made her feel better from the next day, she says. Months later, she has recovered 90 per cent normal movement in the lower part of her body.

Dr Ludmila is not surprised. Homeopathy is very effective, she points out, listing Mahatma Gandhi, the Queen Mother, Prince Charles and Paloma Picasso among its many followers.

"Homeopathy is pro life, that is why there are no side effects, only good comes out of the treatment," she concludes, sitting back and looking up at the portrait of Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, hanging on the wall behind her.