

MONROE: Cranbury inspires doctor for joint healing practice

By David Kilby, Managing Editor

Posted: Thursday, August 4, 2011 8:37 PM EDT

MONROE — A Cranbury doctor has received inspiration from the serene landscape of her hometown, and that inspiration was part of her reason for opening a new rheumatology office in Monroe that offers unique integrative medicines for joint healing.

Aly Cohen, M.D., a fellow in the American College of Rheumatology, has a new office, called Integrative Rheumatology Associates, located in the Medical Arts Building on Applegarth Road by the Dunkin Donuts.

Dr. Cohen opened her office in Monroe June 1, after practicing rheumatology for almost eight years in Freehold.

She said she opened her office with the vision to make rheumatology more comfortable, while creating more options for patients, and offering a “more Eastern perspective”.

“It (the Eastern approach to rheumatology, which uses mostly herbs and acupuncture) is becoming more popular because people are getting sick from pills and surgeries that aren’t always appropriate,” she said, adding that a patient should know everything he or she can before making decisions regarding joint surgery.

“It’s not that I don’t do traditional medicine but I think you need to be open-minded,” she said.

She said she was in a practice for almost eight years that was too fast-paced for her, and she believed the patients weren’t treated with enough individual care.

“Medicine is changing so fast,” she said, adding that she focuses on avoiding the “conveyer belt, cookie-cutter” approach that many medical offices have fallen into.

“I just have a strong belief in integrative medicine and other ways to help that don’t involve a pill,” she said. “I want to be able to talk to people about other options that they have.”

At her office patients can receive professional advice on stress management, diet, sleep, hygiene and healthy living habits.

“Pain isn’t always just pain. It often has to do with stress,” she said.

In the high-paced, stressful lifestyle people live nowadays, emotional ailment can be a big factor in many joint problems, she explained.

She hopes that her business shows people how they have many options and usually don’t have to resort to pills or surgery to solve their joint problems.

She said many doctors don’t mention, for instance, that carpal tunnel can be easily healed by a brace or something simple.

“There’s a lot of money involved in (carpal tunnel) surgeries,” she said. “Traditional medical people don’t talk about (integrative medicine),” she said, adding that, for example, one of the most effective ways to help someone stop smoking is to talk to them about it.

Having conversations with patients is partially what she means by integrative medicine. More generally, integrative medicine integrates all aspects of a person’s health when searching for a remedy. This holistic approach may lead someone to discover at least a partial remedy through changing the way he or she sleeps, eats, drives or walks.

Dr. Cohen also takes care of all the traditional joint ailments, such as rheumatoid arthritis, osteoporosis, lupus, carpal tunnel, Lyme disease, psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis, Raynaud’s phenomenon, polymyalgia rheumatic, scleroderma, gout, bursitis, tendinitis, other soft tissue syndromes, polyarteritis nodosa, and Wegener’s granulomatosis.

But if a person comes in saying that they have knee pain she may talk about stress to find out if that is a factor contributing to the pain.

“But if that’s not their bag of wax I won’t go there,” she added. “Medicine has become so stressful. When people are in pain they’re upset.

“Nine out of ten times it’s behavior. What happens to our body is what we’ve done to it. Listen to your body. If you’re hurting

something isn't right."

She said stress isn't the main cause of joint problems, but it often makes existing problems worse.

"We're all just trying to survive. Our environment is so full of toxicity that we have to battle our way through to keep our bodies healthy. There's a whole world of chemicals that we're involved with without enough information. I'm trying to be a resource for that."

She also offers acupuncture referrals, biofeedback referrals and many other referrals through her many connections as a Fellow in the American College of



Dr. Aly Cohen sits in one of the many fields by her house in Cranbury, a town she says complements her holistic approach to joint healing.

Rheumatology.

Dr. Cohen moved to Cranbury with her husband because it offered the same kind of serenity that she believes is so important to one's joint health and health in general.

"We love the quiet peacefulness (of Cranbury). It's as picturesque as you can get." She said a handful of Cranbury businesses

such as Cranbury Pizza, Teddy's Restaurant and The Blue Rooster, supported her cause when she ran in the New York City Marathon in 2009 for the Lupus Foundation.

She has scheduled a lecture at the Cranbury Library tentatively for Oct. 20, where she will talk about joint health for children playing sports.

Dr. Cohen studied acupuncture at UCLA's Helms School of Acupuncture. She also spent some time in the television business, working as a medical consultant with "Keeping Kids Healthy" on PBS from 2003 to 2006.

She has lived in Cranbury for seven years, and currently lives in a renovated barn overlooking cornfields with her husband and two children. "Cranbury was sort of the hidden jewel I didn't know about, despite going to school 20 minutes away," said Dr. Cohen, who went to Princeton Day School.

She came to Cranbury with her husband after working at Albert Einstein University Hospital and Beth Israel Hospital in New York City, and said she appreciates the fight Cranbury puts up to keep itself pristine.

"No one wants to live in a New Jersey strip mall," she said, adding that she supports the local farms and goes to farmer's markets on Saturdays.

"We try to teach our kids wholesome living and Cranbury supports that."

For information about Integrative Rheumatology Associates, visit www.irahealth.com or call 609-662-5212.

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