

# Can ancient medicine help cure chronic fatigue?

Researcher looks to Chinese traditions for help

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IT has been labelled a modern medical enigma, and caused a stir in the media, but Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is nothing to yawn at. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome first surfaced in the public eye during the 1980s and it was debated as to whether it was an illness at all. Labelled the 'yuppie sickness', it was thought only wealthy, white women would present with symptoms — it is now known that it can affect anyone, regardless of race or socio-economic status. Since then, more has been discovered about the disease, and many sufferers have taken research into their own hands. Samantha Keen is a researcher who recently visited Byron Bay to give a seminar on her recovery. She was a journalist who recovered from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome after five years of coping with the illness. Usually accustomed to the high pressure of a national news room, Samantha's life changed dramatically in 1997 when she contracted a nasty flu that didn't leave her until 2002. "I had a hectic work life as well as a full social life and I got this killer flu and couldn't get out of bed," she said. "After that, things changed and I couldn't digest food properly or sleep. "I was irritable and foggy and couldn't recall simple things I could before."

Samantha experienced first-hand the lack of knowledge in the medical profession about CFS and went through several doctors, with several misdiagnoses. One even told her it was irritable bowel syndrome, handed her a brochure and told her to simply 'learn how to manage it'. "I refused to accept it and decided to do my own research," she said. Since then, Samantha has compiled 30 case studies and interviewed a number of specialists in the area. One of the main issues surrounding CFS is that there is no known cause and no accepted cure. However, Samantha believes many recover from the illness, despite the fact doctors know little about it. She has done several trials in an attempt to work with the illness using energetic techniques involving the Chinese principles of qi (life energy). "I really believe Western science is missing something because they're great at curing the physical body, but don't look at the role of the energetic body. "We now work faster and think faster and there are a whole group of CFS sufferers who are naturally very intense people. "What happens then is a sort of collapse in the energetic body." Samantha believes people are able to work directly on the body by utilising various techniques from the Clairvision School of Meditation (which helped her) Qi Gong, or the Alexander Technique.



**CLEAR THE MIND:** Meditation, like that practised by Richard Gere, and other Eastern traditions were found to be helpful in combatting chronic fatigue syndrome, according to researcher Samantha Keen.

Picture: AAP

## What is Chronic Fatigue Syndrome?

- CFS is diagnosed when people suffer six months or more of disabling fatigue not caused by other medical or psychiatric illness
- Research suggests about 100,000 Australians suffer from CFS
- It is most common in people between 15 and 20 years old, and between 33 and 45 years old, but it can happen at any age
- About 70 per cent of sufferers are women
- The causes of CFS have not been worked out yet, although it is possible that a viral infection could trigger it
- Symptoms include difficulty concentrating, poor memory, sore throat, tender lymph nodes, muscle and joint tenderness and pain, headaches, not feeling refreshed by sleep and feeling unwell



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