

The Scotsman

Smokers take hi-tech approach to quitting

ED JOHNSON

A WOMAN has adopted laser technology to tackle smoking after her husband suffered two heart attacks and almost died because of the habit.

Anne Penman, 44, has helped more than 1,000 people to quit the habit since her husband Ron's brush with death.

Now for the first time her treatment, which combines the ancient acupuncture skills of the Chinese and the latest in laser technology, is being made

available free on the NHS. Mrs Penman explained yesterday that she introduced laser therapy to Scotland after kicking her own 60-cigarettes-a-day habit six years ago.

She said: "Ron was in hospital for 12 weeks after having a massive coronary in 1991.

"I was asked by his surgeon to consider quitting to help him. I tried various things and then went to a Canadian girl in Belfast who was practising laser therapy. After two sessions, I managed to stop."

She became fascinated with the treatment and after training set up a centre in Queen's Drive, Crosshill, Glasgow. The treatment is similar to acupuncture, but uses a pain-free laser costing £5,000 instead of a needle.

She said: "A cold, soft laser beam is applied to energy points on the hands, ears, nose and wrists similar to acupuncture. This promotes the release of endorphin into the system, having a natural, calming effect on the body.

"The client experiences a

feeling of euphoria and well-being, which helps to dramatically reduce the withdrawal system's irritability and cravings that come with giving up smoking."

After five years devising a treatment programme involving the laser, counselling and a back-up phone helpline; she has achieved such high success rates that Monklands Hospital in Airdrie has given her a six months' trial on NHS patients.

With almost half of her patients staying smoke-free a year

after treatment, she has trained several staff who have set up therapy centres in Dumfries, Cowdenbeath, Kirkintilloch.

Mrs Penman said it was vital to have the support of the NHS, as not everybody could afford the £80 programme of therapy and support.

"We did not feel we could get to the poorer people and areas where the smoking is the heaviest. It is the only way some of these folk are going to get any help at all. Much more has to be offered to people."