

# 10 minutes with...

Anna Vakil,  
owner of Yuma Homeopathy



*Dr. Anna Vakil, owner of Yuma Homeopathy, a health and wellness practice, talks about her experiences.*

By John Vaughn

Photos by Randy Hoeft

**S**uffice it to say Anna Vakil has led an interesting life.

She's lived in six different countries besides the United States. She trained as a classical pianist, worked as an urban planner and taught school in Honduras, just to name a few of her life experiences.

But it is in current career as owner of Yuma Homeopathy and as a homeopathic health practitioner that Health Connections is profiling her in this edition of 10 Minutes With.

## **How long have you been practicing health care in Yuma, and did you practice anywhere before Yuma?**

I have been seeing clients in my homeopathic health care practice since November of 2013. I am the first homeopath in Yuma and this is the first locality where I have established a practice. The vast majority of my clients are local, however, I am also able to provide "tele-health", or see clients remotely via audio-video conferencing such as Skype or Google Hangouts. This is helpful even for some local clients who do not have a car or have difficulty getting out. Being the first homeopath, I am very dedicated to educating the local community about homeopathy and give frequent talks and public lectures on a variety of different topics.

My homeopathic education was from the American Medical College of Homeopathy, which is located up the road in Phoenix. It's very exciting for me to be able to join with acupuncturists, massage therapists, chiropractors, doulas, holistic nutritionists and others who are part of the growing community of practitioners of complementary health care (or "integrative health" as it's now called). The expanding integrative health care sector here in Yuma not only helps to meet the increasing demand for

these services on the part of long-time residents, it also makes Yuma much more attractive for those who might be considering relocating here.

## **What is something that everyone can do on their own to improve or ensure their health?**

There are no guarantees for ensuring good health, but there are definitely a few things that everyone can do to reduce the possibility of disease. First, move. It turns out that sitting is bad for our health. Even athletes who work out regularly often need to move more during the times they aren't working out. So get out for a walk at least once every day, even if it's only brief. And try to move as much as possible the rest of the time as well. (Of course, these days that walk outside should probably be early in the morning before the sun gets high).

Second, as Michael Pollan, the well-known food author and journalist, famously said, "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants." This is simple but profound advice. "Eat food" means that we should eat what our great-grandmother would recognize as food. This does not include things that were made in a factory or come in a box or have ingredients that cannot be pronounced. "Not too much" means the obvious: smaller meals and for many people it also means eating less frequently. "Mostly plants" does not have to mean eating vegan or vegetarian. It means that most of what we eat should have been in the ground fairly recently, ideally organic and grown locally.

Finally, take a few minutes every day to breathe deeply. We don't think much about breathing, but it turns out a regular deep breathing routine can have a positive effect on a lot of other things we don't think about like blood pressure and digestion. At the end of their first

homeopathic consultation, all of my clients leave with a handout that provides simple instructions for a 5-minute deep breathing routine.

### What is your favorite place to be?

I am very fortunate to have a view from my living room window of the farmers' fields of the Gila Valley, with the Gila Mountains and Castle Dome in the distance in one direction and Telegraph Pass in another. The colors of this landscape are different every season and even every day, and from the safety of my living room I can watch storms as they approach, which can be quite a spectacle.

*These are some of the medications used by Dr. Anna Vakil, owner of Yuma Homeopathy, a health and wellness practice.*



produce. Last year, I worked with colleagues at the Yuma County Health Services District on a fascinating

### Tell readers something about yourself no one would have guessed.

I have lived in six countries outside of the United States: I was born in England and raised in Canada, so that counts as two. (I also spent two years in Quebec, which some might consider a separate country!). I lived for three years in Belize, Central America, where I worked as an urban planner for the government of Belize and as a consultant. I also worked one year as a fifth-grade teacher in Honduras and spent the better part of a year doing PhD dissertation research in Zimbabwe, in southern Africa. (I have an interdisciplinary PhD in planning and public policy from the University of Michigan). Finally, I lived for several months on an Israeli kibbutz. During these various sojourns, I had the opportunity to learn French and Spanish and even studied Shona for six months – Shona is one of the main African languages spoken in Zimbabwe.

### What is your passion or are your passions?

I am passionate about improving the health of my homeopathy clients, but also the health of the local community. Even though I am an integrative health care provider, I am well aware that medical services are only one of the factors that influence community health. It turns out that genes (what you're born with), health behaviors (the lifestyle choices you make) and medical care together account for only about 50 percent of population health. The other 50 percent is determined by social and environmental factors like income and where a person lives. Especially important for a person's health is having access to fresh

project that investigated the impact of community gardens on population health. Not surprisingly, those who participate in a community garden see improvements in several health indicators, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity and stress levels. They also save money on food costs. When I am not seeing homeopathy clients, I try to raise awareness in the local community of some of these important issues. This is how I continue to draw on what I learned during my years working, researching and teaching urban policy and planning.

Another passion of mine is working with youth, who have far greater capacity than they are given credit for. For the last few years, I have teamed up with others in my faith community (the Bahá'í faith) to establish a junior youth empowerment program in Yuma. This is a neighborhood-based program open to all 12- to 14-year-olds that assists them to develop moral and intellectual capacities, become champions of justice and builders of unity, develop the power of expression, learn to reflect and analyze, and ultimately become agents of change.

### What are your hobbies?

These days, I have little time to indulge in hobbies, but if the time became available, I would resume practicing the piano. I trained as a classical pianist for 10 years and at one time was very close to pursuing that professionally. Since I have also had voice training and play the guitar, I have for some time wanted to build up a repertoire of songs I can play or even join a band. (Haven't we all wanted to be a rock star?) Another important goal is to plant a vegetable and herb garden. This is actually the best way to eat "mostly plants", as Michael Pollan suggests.

### What are your favorite foods?

I love lemons and dates, so apparently I am living in the right place! ♥