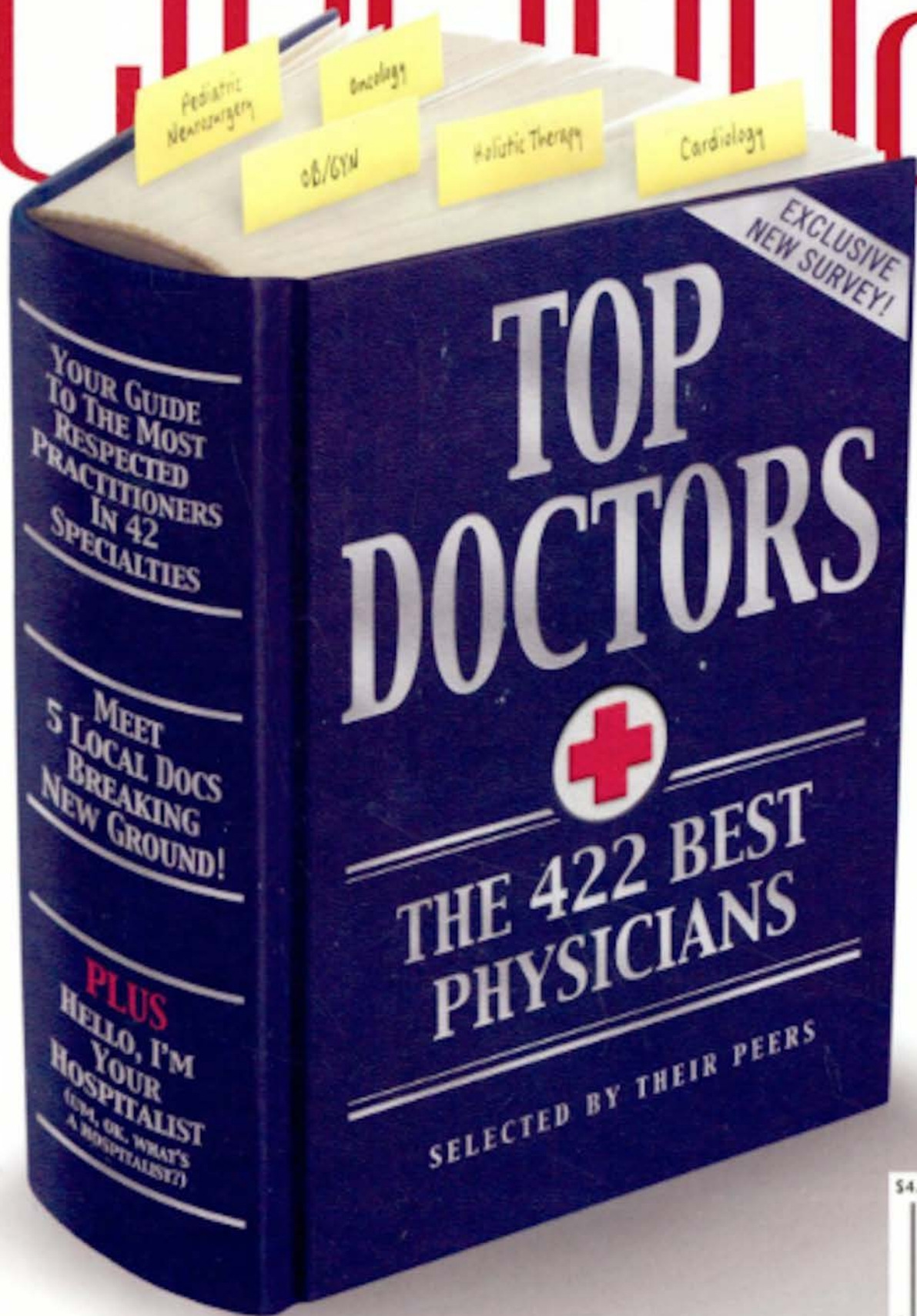


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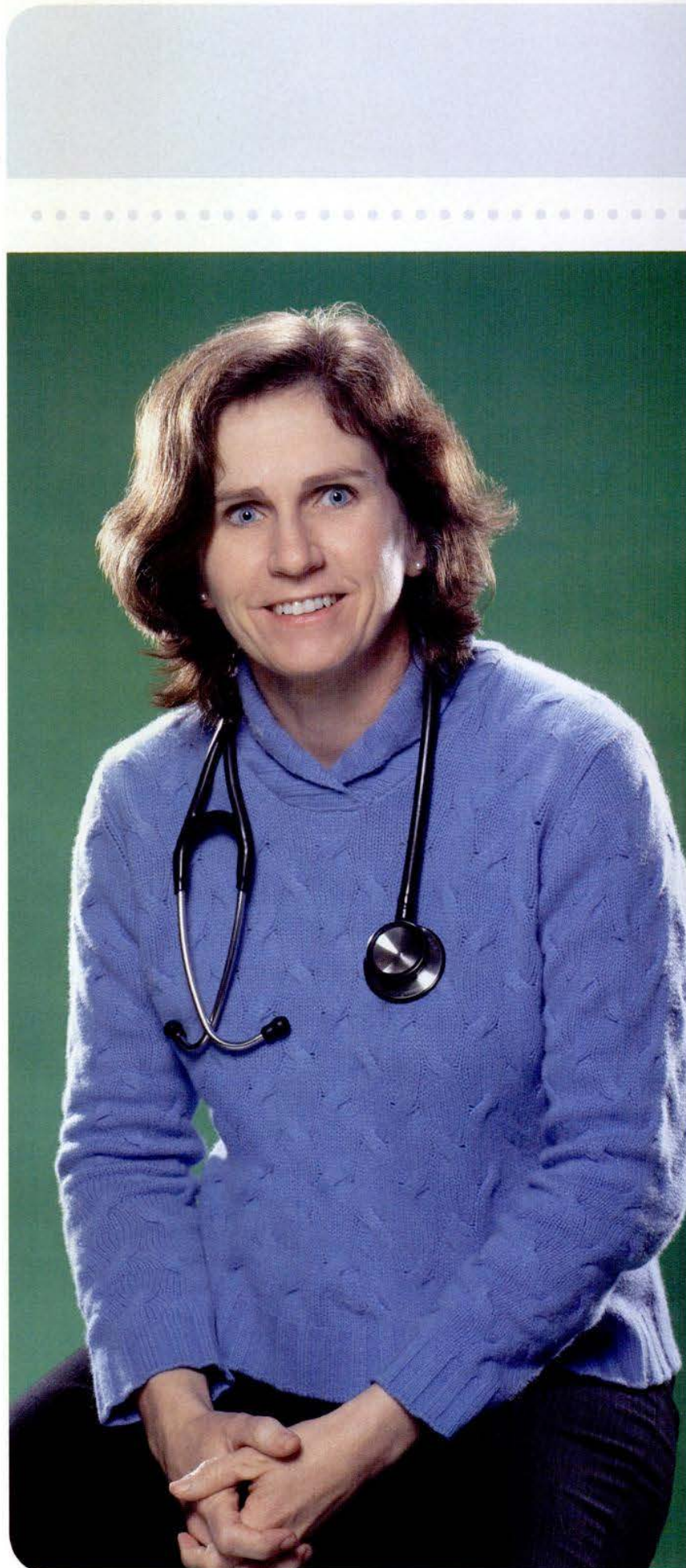
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## Dr. Dotty Shaffer

Expertise: Holistic Therapy

Objective: To give patients the knowledge they need to attain, and maintain, good health.

**"I hate doctors' offices,"** Dr. Dotty Shaffer states emphatically as she conducts a tour of her own. This is why she has gone to great lengths to make her patients feel as if they are walking into a warm and welcoming home when they cross the threshold of her renovated 1914 Tudor Revival manse on the corner of Reading Road and Clinton Springs Avenue in North Avondale. Large windows allow light to flood the waiting room, a cozy space of comfy chairs, area rugs, a fireplace, and large plants. "I wanted to create a calm place," she says. So calm, in fact, that some patients come early just to sit and read a book.

You can learn a lot about Shaffer by studying the contents of an ornate curio cabinet at the end of the waiting room. There's her grandmother's teacup collection, photos of several generations of her family, and the most interesting piece of memorabilia, her great-great-grandfather's Civil War battlefield doctor's bag containing his kit, including a hacksaw-like tool. Not calming, perhaps, but fascinating nonetheless.

It is not surprising that the 41-year-old Shaffer, who trained as an internist at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, has an approach to medicine that is as unique as her taste in office decor. Call it a "Common Sense/Traditional Medicine/Holistic Therapies" brand of health care. Shaffer explains her methodology, a regimen she prescribes for all her patients, regardless of their problems. "First, I get patients walking," she says. "Then my emphasis is on getting them to a normal weight, eating real food, taking fish oil, antioxidants, and minerals." Depending on the ailment, Shaffer is likely to suggest that patients visit the second floor, where several alternative therapists do massage, shiatsu (a stretching and rotation of joints), and a number of other therapies, such as tai chi, yoga, and qi gong (a series of exercises performed in a meditative state). More than likely, she will suggest that they try what she has found to be one of the most effective tools for managing well-being: acupuncture.

Shaffer earned her acupuncture certification from the Helms Medical Institute's Medical Acupuncture for Physicians program at University of California at Los Angeles and administers the treatment herself. She's seen some dramatic results. "It's especially helpful in treating addictions," she says, citing one patient who had smoked one to two packs of cigarettes a day for 40 years. "His family dragged him here, and he absolutely didn't believe it would work." All doubts disappeared the morning after his first acupuncture session, when he got a whiff of a friend's cigarette and vomited. Then there was the patient who came in 10 days after a stroke that had left one arm useless. "I put the needles in her scalp, stimulating the motor cortex of the brain, and by the end of a 20-minute treatment she was able to flex her elbow," she says. "And that progress was permanent."

Shaffer admits acupuncture isn't effective for every illness and that it isn't always helpful for patients with long-standing problems. She also acknowledges that some of her patients want no part of it. "For those people I'm just a straight internist," she says, adding that "it's difficult in our culture to talk about how acupuncture works." Indeed, in Eastern medicine, acupuncture is a respected, centuries-old method for managing a range of maladies, from pain to anxiety disorders. But in the West, the premise that the human body contains "meridians" along which energy flows, and that the insertion of needles at points on those meridians can stimulate and restore an energy flow that has gotten off track, is still hard for most practitioners—and patients—to fathom. "A lot of docs in town think I'm flaky," Shaffer admits, "but it's all very logical." ©

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