

The Herald

# ... and the Scots smokers who have seen the light

THE latest way to help smokers in their quest for a healthier lifestyle is laser therapy. Used successfully in Canada and the United States for several years now, the treatment has only now become available in Scotland.

The first centre opened in Glasgow three weeks ago, with plans for further facilities around the country already in hand. It is run by Anne Penman from Northern Ireland and her Scots husband Ron, both former smokers.

Already they have helped 25 people give up smoking, with only two failures so far.

As someone who daily puffed her way through 40 cigarettes, Anne easily sympathises with

**Bill Caven** examines claims that the laser can help smokers painlessly to kick the habit

anyone who walks through her door. "It is the hardest thing in the world to give up smoking — I know only too well," she admitted.

"Smokers who say that they can give up whenever they want are simply kidding themselves. It takes a lot of courage, determination and good friends on hand to give you support."

Anne eventually succeeded in her battle, having failed on more occasions than she cares to remember, thanks to laser therapy. "You have got to have the motiva-

tion in the first place," stressed Anne.

Laser therapy claims to provide an effective way to stop smoking without experiencing the unpleasant withdrawal effects and physical cravings that often follow.

The treatment has three components: the stimulation of acupuncture points with a soft cold laser to remove the craving for tobacco, ways in which to convince yourself that you have successfully won the fight, and guidance on how to make positive choices for a healthier lifestyle.

Normally only three sessions, lasting 30 minutes each, are required to free a smoker from his tobacco addiction. This is achieved through the laser beam hitting precise points to balance endorphin levels in the body's central nervous system.

Based on the results already achieved, Anne believes her laser treatment will have an 85% success rate. "From the outset I have to be convinced that the person has the determination to quit," she explained.

"It is no use trying anything un-

less you have a genuine desire to give up smoking. Where we also succeed is the fact that our programme involves on-going support, which gives people reassurance and encouragement."

Costing around £60, the treatment is not cheap, though this figure will be quickly recouped from savings made in not buying cigarettes. Anne also maintains that the cost should also be borne against the person enjoying a far healthier lifestyle, something that cannot be quantified.

A spokesperson for Glasgow 2000, the anti-smoking campaign, says: "I have never heard of this treatment. I would like to know what studies have been done to show it works. I am suspicious of instant overnight cures for smoking. Anybody can stop smoking for a fortnight. It's the long-term rates that are significant. On the other hand I am always open to new services which may help people to stop smoking and I am interested in finding out more about this new one."

□ Further information is available from Anne Penman at the Stop Smoking Centre, 158 Queens Drive, Glasgow (Tel. 041 423 9375).