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The Rotan Manau Herbal Tungku Massage employs rattan poles for deep tissue treatment.

**M**ORE than five years ago when I was diagnosed with a prolapsed disc that numbed my right leg, an orthopaedic surgeon whom I once interviewed suggested that I stop running for three months, have a series of massages and enrol in yoga classes. I did all that, and within seven weeks, I knew I could run again once the time was up.

I found my masseuse in a public housing area in Ampang who helped me with my condition. After three sessions, the numbness subsided. My prolapsed disc may or may not have improved, but the symptoms were not there to bother me anymore.

I am not advocating anything your doctors don't prescribe, but that healing power of massage is real. Done correctly, a massage can help a host of bodily aches, especially in this sedentary age of computers and handheld gadgets.

At the spa at the new Four Seasons Hotel Kuala Lumpur, massage is also taken seriously. Beyond the feel-good factor of an upscale spa, the 60-minute massage is physically therapeutic.

My masseuse tells me she had just moved from Kota Kinabalu to the capital to join the new spa. Her hands have a varying degree of pressure that I could instantly sense, like a massage remote control.

And even with hard pressure, her massage is firm and reassuring without being the slightest painful.

#### LOCAL ELEMENTS

What I like about the protocol is the infusion of local elements. The Rotan Manau Herbal Tungku Massage is inspired by the region. Combining the healing powers of human touch with locally-sourced rattan wood poles, the result is deep tissue treatment to help with blood circulation.

While I cannot vouch for the deep tissue effect, the treatment certainly has a very



The spa lounge helps you relax before your treatment.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS HOTEL

# Homegrown healing

The spa at the Four Seasons Hotel Kuala Lumpur promises physical rejuvenation through its treatments, focusing on local protocol and ingredients, writes Syida Lizta Amirul Ihsan

traditional feel to it. The massage oil has a touch of lemon and the poles, rolled firmly on my legs (especially hamstrings), do a good job in loosening stiff muscles caused by running and overall lack of stretching.

As someone who enjoys running, a massage is second best after active stretching, because, let's face it, it's very relaxing to have someone help you stretch stiff muscles for a change.

I underwent C-section in January, so my stomach is only given a light massage but my legs and hands are properly attended to.

#### TUNGKU TREATMENT

Part of my postnatal protocol is the tungku, which is essentially a smooth stone heated over fire then wrapped in cloth before being placed on the body. But there's no stone used in this massage. Instead, what's

#### TRY THIS

Those who play sports should also try the 60-minute Sports and Remedial Massage, performed by a skilled sports therapist. This medium to firm massage eases chronic muscle tension for the entire body. Using a combination of traditional sports stretches, compressions and deep-tissue work, this massage restores flexibility, mobility and vitality and focuses on the body's soft tissues, muscles, tendons, and fascia. For optimal results, do it regularly.

heated is a pouch of herbs and leaves, and it is placed on the body at certain intervals.

I prefer the stone tungku because of the heat and weight. This one has no weight but a good smell that helps you relax. The combination of tungku treatment and skillful massage makes the treatment physically rejuvenating.

#### TASTE OF HOME

Instead of sourcing spa products from out of the country, the Four Seasons has proudly used local products, developed with a team of biotechnology specialists from the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia.

Kuem Royal Heritage is a local brand known for its healing properties. Founded by Tengku Nurimazon Tengku Ab Wahab, fondly known as Kuem, the range is made from the purest form of exotic herbs found throughout Asia, alongside a customised essential oil and herbal blend to offer a result-oriented deep tissue massage that aids blood circulation, awakens the meridian and firms the appearance of skin.

With offices in Kuala Lumpur and London, the brand, founded in 2011, specialises in traditional Malay postnatal care products and postnatal confinement treatments utilising Malay natural herbs and spices.

The oil I chose has a blend of lemon which I find relaxing and invigorating at the same time. While some customers prefer the oil residue wiped after massage, I find it better to leave it on, so my body is well-moisturised.

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FROM LEFT: Tea is served after the treatment, a calming punctuation after the massage; Kuem Royal heritage products are used in the massage protocol.