

# Our Patient Stories- Soraya Mangondato-Galvan

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## Our Patient Stories- Christy

The first time someone told Christy to try acupuncture she thought, “that’s a load of crap.” A corporate immigration lawyer in San Francisco, Christy was struggling with allergy flare-ups including hive outbreaks, seasonal hay fever, and skin that felt like it was on fire.

“As a partner in a corporate law firm, I am responsible for a lot of people, and always strive to do the best for my clients. Unfortunately, that means I don’t always take the best care of myself,” she reflects. Western doctors were unable to pinpoint the source of Christy’s allergies, and prescribed pharmaceutical medication. While drugs knocked out the hive symptoms, they also brought unwanted side effects. Christy often felt sleepy. She stayed on the medication for a few years, but the outbreaks returned. Allergists did more tests and prescribed more medicine, and that’s when Christy decided to try another approach.

“I wanted to understand what was causing my flare-ups, not just mask the pain with drugs,” says Christy.

After trying a few different acupuncturists, Christy came to East West Health Services at Chinese Hospital in 2014, and began working with Sabine Huey, . Today, she not only has her allergies under control without medication, but she also feels better than ever.

“Sabine and all the providers at East West don’t just do treatments; they help you understand what is happening inside your body, and how to feel your best,” says Christy.

Sabine has helped Christy learn what triggers her allergies and her underlying stress. She now understands the impact that different foods, temperatures, and stressors have on her symptoms. This has given her more control to manage her own health.

“Sabine knows me in a way that I don’t even know myself. There are times when I don’t think I’m stressed, but my body says something else. She asks the right questions to assess what I need. I always trust her to get my body leveled out,” says Christy.

Beyond stress and allergy management—Christy has been hive-free for years—acupuncture has helped this busy lawyer relieve aches and pains, regulate her menstrual cycle off birth control, and prepare her body to start a family.

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## **Our Patient Stories- Leslie**

“It was hard to turn my head left or right, and my upper back felt so stiff,” describes Leslie Quan, a 62-year-old educator who recently retired from an SFUSD elementary school.

A beloved educator and curriculum coordinator, Leslie spent more than 10 years lifting and carrying heavy boxes of materials between classrooms, including cups, trays, and chemicals. While she loved her work, the toll on her body is something she is still reckoning with. As the pain worsened, Leslie tried yoga and physical therapy, but the exercises did little to alleviate her discomfort. A friend suggested

acupuncture, but Leslie considered it a last resort.

“Just the thought of needles in my back made me cringe. I was worried about nerve damage,” she remembers.

But as Leslie’s pain persisted, and she consulted with her doctor, who reinforced that acupuncture was safe, she decided to give it a try. After careful research, Leslie made an appointment with East West’s Licensed Acupuncturist and Herbalist Sabine Huey.

“At the very first appointment, Sabine made me feel so comfortable by explaining the whole process to me as she gently placed the needles in. Having someone you trust makes a huge difference,” Leslie says.

Sabine used acupuncture to treat Leslie’s musculoskeletal pain, breaking up Qi and blood stasis in areas of blockage to alleviate discomfort.

Traditional Chinese Medicine defines Qi as the vital energy flow that regulates a person’s physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual balance and well-being. The body has various channels or “meridians” through which Qi circulates, providing vitality to muscles, organ systems, nerves, and every part of the body. When the free and uninterrupted flow of Qi and blood is somehow obstructed, disrupted, or imbalanced, however, it can lead to symptoms of pain, illness and disease.

Leslie felt a difference after her first treatment. She was amazed that within seconds of the needles going in, the pain began to ease up. By her fourth treatment, she was feeling significantly better. “My pain went from an 8 to a 3!” she says. She continued weekly treatments for approximately six months.

“I was feeling so good that I decided to stop treatment. But after about four months, the pain came back. So I went back to Sabine and she worked her magic again,” remembers Leslie.

Now, Leslie schedules treatments every three weeks for ongoing maintenance. Acupuncture treatments have also helped her alleviate a recent onset of hip and leg pain, which did not respond to physical therapy.

“From time to time we add cupping sessions to facilitate Qi and blood movement, and to relax tight muscles, fascia and tendons on Leslie’s neck, back, scapula, shoulders, hips, thighs and legs,” shares Sabine. Cupping treatment involves placing cups on the skin to create suction that increases blood flow and helps to relieve muscle tension, improve circulation, and reduce inflammation.

With her pain under better control, Leslie is starting to relish her retirement. “I can enjoy taking my 91-year-old mother on outings, and am looking forward to gardening, organizing my home, and most of all, traveling,” she says. “Thanks to Sabine, I was able to hike down to the Kilauea Crater in Hawaii. It was an awesome experience.”

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## **Our Patient Stories- Stella**

Stella Lochman is an active 34-year-old Public Engagement Manager for the SFMOMA. Last summer, she was diagnosed with hypertension. “I had the blood pressure of a 70-year-old obese man,” she describes. Determined to feel better and not be on blood pressure medication for the rest of her life, Stella turned to acupuncture.

Stella is passionate about her work placing artists’ projects in the community, and bringing community artists into the SFMOMA for residencies. “It’s really fun. And it’s also really stressful,” she says. She was regularly logging 65-hour weeks, but wasn’t taking any time for herself. “I was kind of a mess.

My body was done with me,” she remembers.

At the advice of her primary care physician, Stella quit smoking. She also went off of birth control medication. Despite these big changes, her blood pressure didn’t budge. This contributed even more to her stress and anxiety. Stella started going to the gym five days a week, doing 45 minutes of cardio. She was prescribed two different types of blood pressure medication, but didn’t like the way these drugs made her feel—tired all of the time. After a few months of struggling with these changes, she decided to try acupuncture.

Sabine Huey, , made Stella feel comfortable and confident from her first visit to East West Health Services. “She was sweet and professional, and I could feel her enthusiasm for her practice,” Stella remembers. After the first session, Stella’s blood pressure had dropped 20 points. She came back weekly, and noticed that the positive BP change lasted longer and longer after each time. “Sabine explained to me that with each session, I was building up my own army in my body.”

The East West Clinic is conveniently located just steps from Stella’s office, at the intersection of Chinatown and FiDi. “It’s right by my work, so I can just walk there on my lunch break. I have yummy Chinese food for lunch,” she says.

After three months of weekly sessions, Stella’s blood pressure stabilized. Now, she is able to maintain her healthy BP with once-a-month treatments.

In addition to seeing her numbers go down, Stella has experienced other benefits from acupuncture. “It’s a whole person treatment. On top of helping me feel better physically, Sabine is a life coach. When I came in with anxiety, she would tell me: ‘We’re going to work on making you feel more brave.’ She really helped to build me up mentally and emotionally.”

Sabine also helped Stella make the connections between different symptoms in her body. She showed her how her

headaches and back aches were related to her stress and high blood pressure. “She’s able to see the whole picture in a way that my Western doctors, as much as I love and respect them, can’t always do.” Thanks to acupuncture, Stella has been able to come to her primary care doctors more informed about her body and her needs. She feels like those visits are more productive now, too.

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## Traditional Chinese Medicine for Liver Health

Spring is the ideal time to balance the flow of qi (energy). Many people know that qi stagnation can cause pain and illness, but they may not know that it can create negative impacts on our emotional well-being. For example, liver qi stagnation causes people to become more irritable, unable to relax or let things go. Similarly, unhealthy emotions will cause qi stagnation, especially qi in the liver. These two factors will hence create a vicious cycle.

### **Liver 3 (Tai Chong/Great Surge)**

This acupuncture point can help liver qi flow smoothly, and it is in the depression distal to the junction of the first and second toes. You can lightly massage this point with your fingers for 5 seconds or until slightly tender.

This information is provided by Emily Yuen, ., our licensed acupuncturist.

*\*This article is a general guideline. To find a treatment plan tailored to you, please talk to us or a licensed acupuncturist.*

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# Traditional Chinese Medicine for Cold and Flu Prevention

Everyone has had the experience of catching a cold or flu.

Our immune system can be weakened by seasonal changes, frequent travels, and/or stress. When our immune system is suppressed, it could lower our body's defense against colds and the flu.

There is an acupressure point to help relieve symptoms of a cold or flu. If we use it early enough, it may help reduce the risk of getting a cold or flu.

## **Gb20 (Feng Chi / Wind Pool)**

This acupressure point is recommended for headache, low energy, and cold or flu symptoms.

You can find it by placing your hands on the back of your head. Use your thumbs to find two depressions on the edge of your neck muscles. Use deep and firm pressure towards the skull and massage for 3-4 seconds

This information is provided by Joyce He, ., our licensed acupuncturist.

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# Feeling Stressed? Try These Calming Herbs.

You're not alone if you're feeling stressed during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this uncertain time, it's natural to feel anxiety but being consumed by stress isn't good for your health. From a Traditional Chinese Medicine perspective, stress will knot your "Qi" and make its flow stagnate, most commonly in the shoulders, chest, and abdomen. Your neck and chest may be tight, you may need to clear your throat more often or have digestive issues.

If you are experiencing these symptoms, you can adopt stress reducing techniques such as meditation, Tai Chi, and yoga. These can get your Qi flowing more smoothly.

Chinese herbs made into simple teas are also a useful treatment to reduce these sorts of symptoms.

**Aged Tangerine Peel (Chen Pi)** – Tangerine peel tea is known to stimulate the appetite, reduce phlegm, and stop coughing. It also helps to balance and move Qi in the body.

**Chrysanthemum (Ju Hua)** is a common ingredient in Chinese herbal medicine. It is often used to treat stress, headaches, allergies, and eye strain (especially with prolonged mobile usage). Please be aware that it can cause low blood pressure with overuse.

**Dried longan fruit (Long Yan Rou)** helps to treat insomnia, improve the quality of sleep, reduce stress and calm the mind.

This information is provided by Emily Yuen, ., our licensed



acupuncturist.

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## Spring Tips for Health Maintenance

In Chinese culture, Spring is known as the season of the wood element – liver. Tips for renewed health in the Spring include going to bed by 11 PM for deep sleep, as this is beneficial to the liver in aiding detoxification. You may experience dry mouth with light headache, dizziness, or dry eyes, if sleep is impeded. Young adults need 8 hours of sleep; people who are over 60 years old need 7 hours; people who are over 80 need 8-9 hours; for those who have chronic conditions and weak constitution, it is recommended to go to bed by 9 PM. Having a set time for bed in Spring is also good for the liver.

As Spring becomes warmer, enjoying outdoor activities such as hiking, walking in parks, and practicing Tai Chi are all beneficial in smoothing the liver's energy movement.

Additionally, Spring diets may be improved with lower acidity. Consuming more acidity, such as from citrus fruits, will add energy to the liver and cause the liver's energy to rise, which in turn, could lead to irritability and possibly hypertension. Taking in moderate amount of fresh sweet fruits, vegetables and food are recommended. Avoid spicy, fried, BBQ, cold, hard, difficult to digest types of food.

This information is provided by y Esther J. Chen, ., our licensed acupuncturist.

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## **Reviews from our wonderful patients**

### **Relief from osteoarthritis – D.H.**

Cecilia has been terrific in helping me understand how to use Chinese medicine treatments to deal with my osteoarthritis flare ups, insomnia and blood sugar management. Not only did she successfully treat me for my hip and back pain with acupuncture, she also explained what foods to eat more of and what to avoid to keep me in the best wellness condition for my age. I have gone for multiple treatments for over 2 months now and can attest to the efficacy of the treatments for my symptoms. But, very importantly I have derived some long term benefits in educating me on a preventive basis. I like the CHEWS approach to act on warning signals and do more through natural methods to prevent the trigger from happening or at least delaying for as long as possible. Aging is inevitable but one can manage it nicely or just let it overwhelm you. I think CHEWS helps to keep you in control of it! All of the staff are wonderful, starting from Stefanie at the front desk to all of the practitioners. I have been treated by Portia and Cecilia and can attest you will be in good hands!

### **Freedom from debilitating fatigue – K.R.**

Their office is immaculate, brand new, and quiet. Their staff is very professional. It's a first-class operation. I saw Merissa, and after a long and thorough interview she determined I had "almost a textbook case of deficient spleen qi". Being a European, I had no idea what this was, but I was eager to try working on it to see what'd happen. What happened was a night and day change. My energy level went up dramatically, almost to where it was when I was younger. Within only a few treatments and herbs, the dull pain in my liver subsided, my appetite improved, I started having enough energy to exercise, I've been able to think more clearly, got a lot more work done than I have in a long time, and have generally felt worlds better. I'm very thankful for this resource, and for it being covered under insurance. I've continued to feel better, and we've started working on other things that people tend to go to acupuncture for, like muscle tension. I can say, if you haven't tried acupuncture, go for it, and don't be afraid of the needles. This is a top of the line clinic and their staff is talented and fantastic.

### **Healing chronic throat pain – E.L.**

From start to finish, a quality clinic! Everyone there is warm, personable and pleasant, striving to provide a positive experience from the moment you first schedule an appointment, to coming in and consulting with the individual who will be working with you on your treatments. My acupuncturist spent a long period of time with me in discussing my general health and particular reason for coming in for treatment, and took my health concerns very seriously. She was highly professional, yet compassionate and caring in discussing my upcoming course of treatment; she answered all questions in a patient manner, and described what she was doing when I went through my first acupuncture session. All flowed smoothly and painlessly, and I walked out of the clinic buoyed for the first time with a feeling of hope and optimism.

Six sessions later I still walk out of the clinic happy,

knowing that the aching and discomfort in my throat have subsided a good 65% and no longer remains the negative focal point of my life. Now I no longer make my throat pain the focus of my life and am able to see friends and talk for short periods without that severity of stabbing pain in my throat after. I have every confidence my condition will continue to improve, and my general overall health has improved, as well, plus I'm sleeping more deeply. Having the acupuncture treatments has opened a window of hope for me.

### **No more lower back pain – H.C.**

I have been healthy, but as age advances, little aches and pains occur for seemingly no reason. Portia took my pulse on both wrists, and asked, "Are you having pain on the right side of your lower back?" Oh my gosh, was she ever correct! It was something that I had been experiencing, but it wasn't bad enough to tell her about before she took my pulse. Anyway, after the relaxing acupuncture session, complete with warming lamps all over, I went home, feeling calm and of course, the lower back pain was gone.

### **Improved physical and emotional well-being – S.B.**

I have been receiving weekly treatments from Portia for nearly three months and have experienced a remarkable improvement in both my physical and emotional well-being. She is attentive to detail, very caring, and I have complete confidence in her ability to heal. The clinic is very comfortable and serene, which provides the perfect setting for Portia's magic.