

Our Patient Stories- Laura

An avid spinner, Laura Andersen did not want her lower back pain, which had flared on and off for years, to keep her off the bike. Regular stretching, massage, and over-the-counter medication were only providing limited relief. Now, with regular acupuncture treatments at East West, she is finally free of the constant tightness, soreness, and achiness she had been living with. Laura loves the spa-like atmosphere in the clinic, and looks forward to her weekly treatments as relaxation and healing time.

Our Patient Stories- Karla

"I was not sleeping well, and feeling stressed and run down," describes Karla Zens, entrepreneur and owner of The JellyBus, remembering the first time she walked into an acupuncture treatment at East West Health Services. "When I stepped out into the street immediately afterward, I had a feeling of euphoria." Fast forward four years; today, Karla feels healthier than ever in her body, mind, and spirit thanks to Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM).

At first, Karla looked to acupuncture to address general malaise resulting from poor self-care.

"I was stuck in a routine: sitting in front of a computer, not breathing properly, not sleeping enough, and definitely not practicing work life balance," she recalls.

After her initial appointment, Karla began walking five blocks from her office to the downtown San Francisco clinic regularly to experience the physical benefits of acupuncture, making

space for health and well-being in her busy routine.

“The atmosphere at East West is so welcoming and positive. I spend a lot of my life attending to my work, responsibilities, and to other people. At the clinic, I always feel taken care of.”

Sabine Huey, , looked deeply into Karla’s chronic symptoms of sluggishness, bloat, sugar cravings, and cold hands and feet, in order to address their root cause. She determined that Karla had liver Qi stagnation due to chronic stress.

“Qi is that vital energy that contributes to our state of health. It is everywhere in our body from bone to skin. Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners direct Qi using acupuncture and other modalities in order to treat a wide range of health conditions,” says Sabine.

Sabine utilized weekly acupuncture treatments alongside specific herbal formulas to smooth Karla’s liver Qi and tonify her spleen Qi (the vital energy for digestion).

“We also replaced cold foods with warm soups, teas, and cooked vegetables in order to optimize digestive energy and replenish spleen Qi,” says Sabine.

With Sabine’s guidance, Karla is now cooking regularly with whole, seasonal ingredients. She enjoys creating and choosing warm, nourishing foods over cold smoothies, salads, and other trendy health foods that did not agree with her body.

“I have learned to adapt my diet and eat in a way that is more in harmony with what I need,” Karla reflects.

Beyond nutrition, Karla has incorporated more mindfulness and physical exercise into her life, including breath work, yoga, and qigong. As a result, she feels lighter than ever, more energetic, and happier.

Our Patient Stories- Kevin

Kevin O'Donnell made his first acupuncture appointment to resolve a numbing sensation he was experiencing in his left arm and left leg. He had no intention of transforming his lifestyle. But over the past eight months since he started treatment with Emily Yuen, , he's not only healed the numbness naturally, but also lost more than 15 pounds, adopted a consistent exercise routine, and gained loads of energy and strength.

"I was skeptical at first, but now I am a big believer that Traditional Chinese Medicine equips you with the tools to manage your own health," he says.

An Assistant for Intergovernmental Affairs at the Consulate General of Japan, Kevin works in the San Francisco Financial District office, liaising with local and state governments, and coordinating the itineraries of incoming Japanese delegations. He was sitting at his desk one day in late 2018, when he experienced a dull, numb sensation in his left arm and leg.

"It was strange and frustrating—and unignorable," he reflects. Days went by, and the uncomfortable feeling did not go away.

Kevin tried physical therapy unsuccessfully, followed by a battery of neurological tests including an MRI, electromyography, and musculo-skeletal evaluations to assess his nerve function. Still, there was no diagnosis, and no change.

"Here I was, my central nervous system clearly announcing that something was wrong. But all Western medicine could tell me was that I had mild carpal tunnel and I should de-stress a

little bit.”

In February 2019, Kevin made an appointment with Emily Yuen. “Acupuncture is fully covered in my CCHP health plan, so I figured, why not give it a shot?”

Kevin didn’t know what to expect, but felt comfortable at East West Health Services from his very first visit. “The clinic is very streamlined and modern. The front desk staff is friendly, and the music is relaxing. I enjoy the vibe.”

Emily performed a detailed intake, including a Q&A about diet and lifestyle, and a tongue examination. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, the tongue’s appearance is considered to reflect the health of the body’s Qi (energy) meridians. After making some observations, Emily asked Kevin if he consumed a lot of dairy, sugar, alcohol, and fried foods.

“Yes, those were my four food groups!” he admits.

Emily noted that Kevin’s physical symptoms pointed to a deficiency of Spleen Qi. Spleen Qi refers to a specific meridian’s Qi, which helps to manage the body’s digestive system. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, when Spleen Qi is not flowing properly, the digestive system also functions improperly. Certain foods can make internal systems “damp”. This causes the body to feel phlegmy, sluggish, or swollen. Often these symptoms start in the digestive system, but can accumulate and bring stagnation to the rest of the body, causing many other unwanted symptoms.

To reverse this, Emily suggested a combination of weekly acupuncture treatments plus significant changes in diet. Kevin was nervous about the needles, but Emily explained that a single blood draw needle can hold 30 acupuncture needles inside of it. “That visual was super reassuring, and allowed me to relax into the treatment,” Kevin recalls.

Kevin came back weekly for the acupuncture appointments, but

found the dietary changes very hard to make. Emily encouraged him to start with small changes, and helped him see the positive effects of these adjustments. This inspired him to do even more. After several months, Kevin was able to cut out 90 percent of the sugar, dairy, and alcohol he had been consuming. “That’s when I finally started to feel the numbing sensation lessening,” he remembers. But that wasn’t the only thing that changed.

Kevin felt his digestive system getting stronger; he was feeling lighter and less queasy in the mornings. He had lost 15 pounds, and experienced a boost in his energy. As a result, he joined a soccer league and practiced weekly. That felt really good, so he also joined a volleyball league. Kevin was now playing team sports twice a week, incorporating consistent physical exercise into his healthier lifestyle.

“Traditional Chinese Medicine has been transformational. It has taken a lot of self-discipline, and I wouldn’t have been able to do it without Emily, an experienced acupuncturist who has motivated me along the way.” He encourages people to consider acupuncture for anything from numbness to pain to stress.

Our Patient Stories- Soraya Mangondato-Galvan

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.

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.”

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.

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.