

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.