

# 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."