

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- 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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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.