

**CANADIAN ACUPRESSURE COLLEGE
CHAIR MASSAGE CASE STUDY
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Client Details

Client is a 47 year old single mom of a teenager. She was injured in a car accident where she sustained injuries to her right shoulder rotator cuff and back. The injury to her back resulted in a herniated disc for which she had surgery which was unsuccessful. The bulging disc was cutting off the sciatic nerve which resulted in her losing the use of her legs and requiring her to use a wheelchair. A second surgery was performed 2 weeks later and was successful. There was sciatic nerve damage which took about 1 year to repair itself and for Client to regain the use of her legs.

Presenting Symptoms

Client has scar tissue build up near the sciatic nerve in her back. This scar tissue is located between L4 and L5 and she suffers chronic pain in this area and the area is sensitive to touch.

A few years ago, she also developed symptoms of arthritis which started in her ankles, elbows and shoulders. She has been diagnosed with Psoriatic and Rheumatoid arthritis with hardening and pain around the tendon sheath. This is predominately in the thumbs, elbows and ankles (on the outer side for the elbows and both outer and inner for the ankles).

She has 100% of feeling back in her legs but her feet have not fully regained their feeling. There is tendonitis in the right shoulder rotator cuff and pain with shoulder movement.

She experiences pain, fatigue and inflammation on a daily basis. Her sleep is often interrupted by pain. Her appetite is normal and her mood varies with stress. Walking is the only exercise she can tolerate and her condition has contributed to weight issues which, in turn, increase her symptoms. Currently, she is prescribed Methotrexate, Effexor, folic acid and Naproxen as needed.

Client is a hard working and independent woman. She has endured a huge set back, physically and financially as a result of this accident. She has worked hard to get her health back to a point where she can continue to support herself and her teenager. She has an indomitable spirit and is open to trying new approaches to better health and wellness. I observe that she is often under a tremendous amount of stress but copes with it well and remains positive.

On the day I first met with her she felt that her shoulder was acting up due to yard work the day before. She was noticeably tired from waking up in the night with the painful shoulder. I also noticed that her feet, ankles and hands were swollen which Z. told me is normal for her. I sensed that she was a little tense and stressed from having to get the house ready, for a houseguest arriving the next day. I can tell, however, that she was looking forward to receiving a chair massage, taking a break, and having someone take care of her.

Treatment Plan

My goals for the treatment sessions with Z. are:

- Enable her to relax and take time for herself.
- Ease the pain and increase mobility in the right shoulder and other joints that cause her pain such as elbows, wrists, hands, knees, ankles and feet.
- Allow her to get a good night's sleep.

Session 1 – July 24th, 2012

I began our session with the standard Relaxfast sequence and used a medium to light pressure. Client requested that I avoid her lumbar area altogether due to the initial injury and chronic pain in that area. I will need to avoid this area for all 6 sessions.

After moving down each arm with the TW points, I supported Client's arm and gave slow, gentle shoulder rotations. I then gave my client a massage around the wrist area and then proceeded with hand massage. I next applied acupoint LI-11 to relieve the arthritic pain in her elbow and shoulder. She felt immediate pain relief with the application of LI-11.

At the end of the session, she reported that she felt more relaxed and the shoulder and elbow pain was lessened. I showed her acupoints LI-4 and LI-11 to try at home between session treatments. She also really appreciated the shoulder rotations. Since I support the weight of her arm, the rotations feel good and are not painful for her.

Session 2 – July 31st

After her first treatment session, Client had a restful night's sleep and noticed that she had more mobility in her wrists and hands. This increase in mobility and the relief of pain in her right shoulder lasted for approximately 3 days. She was semi-consistent with self applying acupoint LI-4 during the week.

I gave the chair massage, still avoiding the lumbar area as requested. I recommended that she try breathing deeply into any specific area that felt tight or painful. The deep breathing would help with relaxation and tension release. I held acupoint LI-4 a little

longer while massaging her hands in order to reduce pain and inflammation in her hands, wrists, elbows and shoulders. At the end of the hand massage, I tried local point LI-11 with distal ST-36 for pain in the right elbow.

At the end of this session, she reported that again she felt less pain in her shoulders, wrists, hands and elbows and also felt more mobility and less muscular tension. I showed her the exercise of page 42 of Michael Gach's book, *Acupressure's Potent Points*. This exercise uses the fists to briskly massage up and down along the outside of the shin bones for one minute. This is a recommended exercise for counteracting pain and fatigue.

Session 3 – August 7th

The day after our second session, Client was working on repairing some dry wall in a ceiling of her bedroom. This aggravated her arthritis and she spent the next day in bed due to pain. By this session, she was experiencing pain in her feet which she described as feeling as though she was walking on broken glass. Her back pain radiated into her feet and her shoulders were tight right up to the neck area.

I proceeded to give the chair massage but informed her that I was going to use a lighter pressure, (tonify), and would be checking in with her regularly. The TW meridian points down her right arm were especially tender so I used a very light pressure. I then gave very slow and gentle shoulder rotations. After massaging her hands and fingers, I asked if she felt it would be alright to try acupoint LI-11. She replied no to that as it was just much too painful. I then held acupoints K-3 and B-60 on both ankles for one minute each side. I tried these acupoints to help relieve pain in her ankles and feet. Before ending the massage, I gave extra kneading to the muscles in her shoulders and neck ensuring that I held acupoint GB-20 a little longer. I also added the application of acupoint LI-14 on her right shoulder to relieve pain and tension in her arm, shoulder and neck. At the end of the session, Client felt much more relaxed and relief of tension in her shoulders.

Session 4 – August 24th

It has been 17 days since our last session. Client had three great nights of sleep after the last session and was able to finish some work around the house. The mobility in her hands has been fairly good but due to a stressful week, she feels pain in her right shoulder, back and elbows. The pain in her feet has lessened. Z. informed me that I could try to apply more pressure during this chair massage session as she doesn't feel as tender as she was during the third session. She also wanted to make a conscious effort not to talk during the chair massage. I reminded her to try taking deep breaths and breathing into areas that I worked on that were painful.

I proceeded with the standard Relaxfast sequence with moderate pressure. I changed the pressure from moderate to light around her elbow area and just below on the forearm due to pain. I gave the slow and supported shoulder rotations. At the hands, I extended the time that I held acupoint LI-4 and also for GB-20 at the neck. I then went to the ankles

and applied acupoints K-3 and B-60. Before ending the chair massage, I rubbed my hands together, generating heat and applied my warm hands to her upper and middle back. I repeated this procedure for her right shoulder and gently on her elbows. She reported that the heat felt good, even on her elbows and she could really feel her shoulder tension melting away.

I showed my client how to massage ST-36 once more. As she feels that her hands are uncomfortable in a fist position, we modified the exercise with using the tips of her fingers instead. I also showed her the shoulder grasp and pull exercises on page 200 of Michael Gach's *Acupressure's Potent Points*. She likes this particular exercise and feels that she will use it often.

Session 5 – August 31st

As a result of last week's session, Client had two consecutive nights of really restful sleep. She also had symptomatic relief of pain in her shoulders, neck and upper back area. She noticed that her thumbs were free of pain and stiffness for the entire week. I noticed a significant change in her energy level and mood this week. Her bubbly personality was coming through and she seemed much more positive.

I began the chair massage with moderate pressure, avoiding the lumbar area and I also repeated the prolonged pressure at acupoints LI-4 at the hands and GB-20 at the neck. The TW meridian points along the arms were noticeably less painful for her this session. I gave the usual gentle and supported shoulder rotations. Before ending the chair massage with raindrops and quacking, I applied acupoints K-3 and B-60 at the ankles. I tried two new sets of local and distal acupoints this session. For her lower body, I applied local point GB-30 with distal point GB-41. For the upper body, I applied local point LI-14 with distal point TW-5.

At the end of the session, she felt a lot of tension relieved from her shoulders and felt more mobility in her neck and ankles. She also felt her fingers had more mobility and her hand grip was stronger.

Session 6- September 7th

Client experienced symptomatic relief of pain for nearly 3 days after the last session. She felt much more relaxed and emotionally more positive. The parts of her body that benefited the most from the chair massage were her shoulders, upper back, neck and hands. She has been using the grasp and pull exercise during the week and has found that it really works well to help relieve muscle tension in her shoulders.

I gave the chair massage and repeated the acupoints I used last week which are as follows:

- LI-4 at the hands
- GB-20 at the neck (held for about 30 seconds)

- Local GB-30 with distal GB-41 for the lower body
- Local LI-14 with distal TW-5 for the upper body

I noticed Client taking deeper breaths throughout the session. She felt very relaxed and much more mobility in her shoulders and upper back. The massage was also beneficial for her hands, wrists and fingers in that it helped improve her joint mobility.

Summary of Acupressure Points Used

1. LI-11: to relieve pain in elbow
2. LI-4: to relieve pain particularly in the shoulders
3. LI-11 (local) with St-36 (distal)
 - LI-11 to relieve pain in the elbow
 - ST-36 to draw pain away from elbow area and to relieve arthritic pain

Summary of Acupressure Points cont.

4. K-3 simultaneously with B-60
 - K-3 to relieve swollen feet and ankle pain
 - B-60 to relieve swollen feet and ankle pain and low back pain
5. LI-14: to relieve pain and tension in the arm, shoulder and neck
6. GB-30 (local) with GB-41 (distal) for the lower body
 - GB-30 to ease pain in sciatica, lower back and also to improve circulation of blood and Qi.
 - GB-41 to relieve arthritic pain throughout and to possibly shift and eliminate pain
7. LI-14 (local) with TW-5 (distal) for the upper body
 - LI-14 to relieve shoulder tension and stiff neck
 - TW-5 to move pain away from shoulder area and to relieve wrist and shoulder pain

General Summary

When starting my case study, it was my hope to at least provide Client with some relaxation time and some temporary symptomatic relief from the aches and pains she feels due to Psoriatic and Rheumatoid arthritis and therefore experience more restful sleep. By the end of my first session with her it was clear to me that indeed, acupressure and chair massage were going to be beneficial to her. It was encouraging to hear her say that she felt immediate pain relief in her elbows and shoulder, particularly the right shoulder.

Throughout the 6 sessions, Client was able to feel more relaxed, stress relief and have improved sleep for 2 to 3 days after a session. With this, she also experienced symptomatic relief from pain and improved mobility in her upper body for the same amount of time. This temporary relief of pain was “like gold” to her. She described to me that every day, she feels like she is lugging around a load of bricks and that after a

chair massage session it felt like someone had come along and taken half the load. Although some ease of mobility and pain relief was experienced in the lower body, Z. reported that it was her upper body that felt the most benefit. She found that she was better able to cope with stress and had more energy during those few days following a chair massage session. In addition, she has a heightened self awareness and is now more attuned to her needs.

Through this process, I have been able to explore and discover how acupressure and chair massage can ease pain and suffering. I have acquired a deeper appreciation for this modality and am eager to learn more. I am looking forward to gaining more experience as I pursue my new career in chair massage and the positive impact it can have on people's health and well-being.