

Paul is a 61-year-old male who works for a large transportation company. He has been a skilled intermediate level worker for 19 years, but for the past 2 years, has been working as a project manager. This new position has required him to do a longer commute to work and as a result, he is away from home for 11 to 12 hours a day. Although this is tiring, he enjoys his job, and finds his new duties more stimulating than his previous position. He lives with his wife and strong-willed teenage daughter.

Paul has had physiotherapy in the past, but no other bodywork. In 2000, he injured his neck while painting a ceiling, compressing the disc between C-6 and C-7, and impinging on a nerve with pain radiating down his right arm to his wrist. Three years later he re-injured it, though less severely, this time with pain radiating down the left arm. He sometimes has pain in the neck area, but exercises and stretches keep it under control. He has a history of recurring right hip pain and, more recently, joint pain in his fingers. He assumes the finger joint pain is arthritis. Other than that, he has enjoyed good health.

There is a family history of colon and liver cancer, and heart disease. On his doctor's recommendation, Paul takes one low-dose aspirin a day.

Paul came to me looking for relief from belching and what he called an acidic stomach. He also mentioned that his neck and fingers were a bit sore. Six weeks before his first appointment with me, Paul's much beloved sister had died of cancer. Paul presumed his digestive issues were related to his grief. He also mentioned that he has "a temper", and sometimes has angry outbursts, but he feels they are within reason.

Paul has a deep, strong voice that has a definite authoritative quality. This in addition to the hip pain and his self-admitted angry temperament caused me to consider Wood as the CF immediately. He was approaching his health with a "take charge" attitude, which I admired. His attitude, and his job change from worker to manager displayed motivation, another Wood trait. But the colouring around the eyes seemed reddish, yellow, or white. Paul has reddish blonde hair and fair skin, and perhaps the hair reflected red onto his face. I also noticed that he had a ready laugh, even when talking about his ailments, so it was also possible he was a Fire CF.

Session #1 May 7 1:45pm *Small Intestine Time*

Paul told me he wanted to focus on the belching which he found very physically irritating and slightly embarrassing. As it was his first session, and he had not had energy work or bodywork before, I decided to begin with an Extraordinary Vessel. I chose the Great Regulator Release as it would address his digestive and neck problems and also included GB 29 on the hip.

This was the first full session I had ever done with a client. I was very inexperienced and consequently, I forgot to take the pulses.

I heard loud stomach gurgling immediately on pressing Sp 4. On GB 41, Paul felt warmth in his neck, and he could feel Sp 13 on the opposite side of his body. There was distinct softening of GB 41 and TW 15. Paul's breathing became deep and he made vocal sighs of pleasure. He had his eyes closed but, at one point, he was smiling and it was obvious he was enjoying the sensations of energy moving. He said he could feel his stomach and intestines moving during the session. Afterwards he was very relaxed and serene, and he reported that his neck and shoulders felt much less tense.

I taught him the Pal Dan Gum exercise "Raising the Hands Separately", and recommended he do it three times in the morning, and three times at the end of his work day if possible. I told him this exercise would help with his digestive problems.

Session #2 May 21 1:00pm Heart/Small Intestine Time

I suggested 1:00pm for this appointment as I thought it might be effective to work with Paul during the low time of the Gall Bladder/Liver. I still suspected that he was a Wood CF. Working at the GB/Lv high time (11pm to 3am) would simply not be practical. As coincidence would have it, Paul was complaining of abdominal distension, a Small Intestine issue, and we were at the high time for that meridian. He reported happily that he had hardly been belching at all since the last session, and that his indigestion, which had been a problem for several weeks, was now gone.

To deal with the abdominal distension, I chose to do a segmental release of the pelvis using St 30 as a local point, with K 6, Sp 4, St 36, St 13, St 16, and BL 48 (GB Shu).

Pulses Before:

SI - H \emptyset to + GB \emptyset Lv - B \emptyset K + LI - Lu - St \emptyset Sp \emptyset TW \emptyset P +

Pulses After:

SI \emptyset H \emptyset GB \emptyset Lv \emptyset B \emptyset K \emptyset LI - Lu - St \emptyset Sp \emptyset TW \emptyset P \emptyset

I felt pulsing in St 30 with Sp 4, which was also pulsing. There were good releases of St 16 and BL 48. Paul was breathing deeply for most of the session without any coaching from me. His pulses were more balanced after the treatment, and he felt good, relaxed, and happy. It occurred to me that he might have become unfamiliar with these good feelings since his sister had died; he was experiencing a lot of grief even though he was not expressing the grief in the sessions.

Paul had eaten a big meal about an hour before the session, so he was amazed that he did not have a bloated feeling anymore after the treatment. He said his whole body was relaxed, and his jaw and shoulders were less tense.

Session #3 July 2 12:30pm Heart Time

Paul is experiencing some symptoms of andropause. Just after they began, his sister was diagnosed terminal cancer. I noted the similarities in timing. He had a blood test a few months ago to check hormone levels and was told that they are normal. However, he knows that his libido has decreased. I encouraged him to be more assertive with his doctor and ask for help, regardless of the “normal” test results. *(Paul later had a full physical examination including another blood test, which showed his testosterone as low. The doctor also reviewed the previous blood test and found that, although technically Paul’s hormones were considered to be “normal”, they were at the lowest end of the normal range.)

I decided to do the Potency Release. It was the obvious choice for the andropause, and it also included points with other important effects: Lu 1 for grief release, Lv 14 and Lv 3 for anger and frustration, and Sp 13 for the groin area. Furthermore, it is good for a man’s general health, perhaps especially one of Paul’s age. Realization of one’s aging, an uncomfortable awareness of body changes, and feelings of being “less of a man” are all emotionally difficult and painful. Many men have no way of expressing these feelings, if indeed they are aware of them. This can lead to irritability, anger, frustration, and depression.

Pulses Before:

SI+ H- GB ∅ Lv ∅ B- K- LI- Lu ∅ St+ Sp ∅ TW- P ∅

Pulses After:

SI+ H ∅ GB ∅ Lv ∅ B ∅ K ∅ LI- Lu- St+ Sp ∅ TW ∅ P ∅

Once again, Paul breathed deeply into his hara throughout most of the session without any cueing from me. I heard his stomach gurgling on P6. I felt a good release of GB 21 at the end of the session but, other than that, I did not feel many points release. I felt as though I was working hard physically, that my fingers lacked the required strength and they became shaky. Later I realized I had not eaten for four hours before the session, so I was actually a little depleted and weak. It was a good lesson for me. Now, I always make sure I’m neither hungry nor thirsty before a session.

Paul reported that he had not had any indigestion or acidic feeling in his stomach since the last session. He said that during the session he could actually feel his muscles relaxing and the tension leaving his body.

Session #4 September 10 3:30pm Bladder Time

Paul is suffering with plantar fasciitis in his left heel. This is a common problem for transport workers who are subjected to years of vibration from the vehicles’ steel floors. At home, he has had several outbursts of anger this week, and he says he is “restless”. He also complains of a sensitivity to alcohol that began at least a year ago. He finds that even in small quantities, alcohol gives him headaches and makes him feel unwell in general.

I asked his permission to smell his upper back. I explained to him that it would help me to determine his CF, and therefore, his needs. I told him that I suspected he was a Wood CF, and explained to him what that meant. He found it all intriguing and was quite agreeable to the test. At first I was unable to discern exactly what his odour was. I ran through the Five Element odour designations in my mind and found I was able to definitely eliminate all except "rancid".

I felt that a sedation of Wood could help him today, but his Fire and Wood pulses were too close to equivalent. Instead, I did a Liver release, adding Lu 1 with Lv 14 to encourage grief release. At the end of the session, I did a longer, gentler foot massage to aid circulation in the plantar region.

Pulses Before:

SI +1 H +1 GB +1 Lv +1 B ∅ K ∅ LI -3 Lu -3 St +1 Sp +1 TW ∅ or +1 P ∅ or +1

Pulses After:

SI ∅ H ∅ GB ∅ Lv ∅ B ∅ K ∅ LI -1 Lu -1 St +1 Sp +1 TW ∅ P ∅

Paul drifted off into a semi-sleep, very relaxed. His Lv 14 was tender. After the session, while still lying on the table, he said his toes were "reacting to the treatment". His right second toe was hyper-extended, and he could not flex it although it did not hurt at all. I massaged his toes gently until it was flexible. It is interesting that the second toe was reacting in this way since the Liver meridian runs between the first and second metatarsals. Since this meridian also rules the tendons and ligaments, it is associated with their spasms.

I spoke to Paul about his pulse readings and the Liver's function emotionally. I explained to him that angry outbursts and frustration can be symptoms of an excessive Liver chi, which is in fact what I read in his pulses. I also explained that the Liver meridian is connected to sexual dysfunctions. And as he already knew, the liver is responsible for detoxifying the blood and alcohol is a toxin. I told Paul that I was fairly certain he is a Wood CF and, as such, his Liver and Gall Bladder are his most vulnerable areas.

Paul asked me if eye strain from computer work affects the liver. I told him that, according to Five Element theory, the Liver and Gall Bladder meridians are indeed related to the eyes. He wondered aloud if the floaters in his eyes were connected to his liver issues, and I told him that there are acu-points I could use to eliminate floaters in a future session.

Session #5 November 4 2:30pm Small Intestine Time

Paul felt groggy and generally ill. He drinks alcohol only rarely due to his sensitivity, and had only two glasses of wine the previous night. In spite of his caution, he said his head felt "muzzy", meaning he was unable to think clearly. He felt irritable and tired, and he had a slight headache. He thought he should take an ibuprofen, but I recommended he wait until after the acupressure session.

I chose to do the Simple Great Central Vessel Release for its calming effect.

Pulses Before:

SI -1 H -1 GB +2 Lv +2 B +1 K +1 LI -1 Lu -1 St +1 Sp +1 TW -1 P -1

Pulses After:

SI ∅ H ∅ GB +1 Lv +1 B -1 K -1 LI -2 Lu -2 St ∅ Sp ∅ TW ∅ P ∅

It was challenging to locate the coccyx through the thick sweat pants that Paul was wearing. There were good releases and pulsing of most of the points. As was now normal for him, Paul breathed deeply without being directed or reminded. I did not know what to expect from this release pattern as I'd not done it before, and it seemed almost too simple to have much of an effect.

The session seemed to be very relaxing for him. His head felt better afterwards, so much so that he no longer felt the need for ibuprofen. This surprised me. I had obviously underestimated the treatment. He said that the tension behind his eyes was now greatly reduced and that he felt relaxed all over his body. He commented that the sessions are continuing to help his digestion, his stress reduction, and overall relaxation.

Session #6 November 12 4:30pm Bladder Time

Paul was very frustrated with his teenaged daughter. Her obnoxiousness and rudeness make him very angry. He is further aggravated by all the tasks he feels he is not accomplishing at home and at his job. The muscles in his right leg are very tight.

The anger Paul is feeling is surely his dominant emotion. Over the last three sessions, his GB/Lv pulses have been excessive and his anger (at the beginning of the session) has been consistent. I feel this is the cause of many problems for him and I have been working to release his anger and restore balance of his elements. I admit I was feeling somewhat defeated in my attempt. I noted at the last session that there may be a block between elements, so I decided to do an Entry/Exit technique with the Liver and Lung meridians.

Pulses Before:

SI -2 H -1 GB +2 Lv +2 B +1 K +1 LI +1 Lu +2 St +2 Sp +2 TW +1 P +1

Pulses After:

SI -1 H ∅ GB +1 Lv +1 B +1 K +1 LI ∅ Lu ∅ St +2 Sp +2 TW ∅ P ∅

I used stronger finger pressure during this session because I was not feeling many releases of the points. After the session, I realized I had confused the location of Lv 3 with St 42. The pulse readings afterwards showed the Lung now balanced, but the Liver was still excessive. I speculated that using the wrong location for Lv 3 had reduced the efficacy of the treatment and I was annoyed with myself for making the mistake.

However, Paul did lots of deep breathing from the diaphragm, and I noticed his lower belly rising more dramatically than I had ever seen before. He dozed off and was obviously relaxed. He said that his focus and concentration had improved since the last session, and he felt that he'd been more even-tempered. Contrary to my

worries regarding the points not releasing, Paul commented specifically that he'd found my finger pressure very calming and relaxing. Thus I learned that the client still benefits from the session even when the acu-points are not palpably softening. As for my mistake with the location of Lv 3, it certainly didn't seem to have a negative impact on Paul's experience of the session. And St 42 is very close to Lv 3, so it was not a crucial or disruptive error.

Summary

I continue to work with Paul, and am confident that my original impression of him as a Wood CF is correct. Looking back on our course of acupressure sessions, I realize now that I was expecting results that were more dramatic than is perhaps realistic. I was frustrated by what I saw as too little improvement, taking too long. Paul was returning to each appointment with what I viewed as "the same" anger. But I had failed to credit the importance of the progress that had been made. After only one session, the belching Paul had initially complained of had reduced significantly, and the indigestion had disappeared. He was feeling more relaxed. He even described himself as more even-tempered. This was a significant personal success for him. A success in which he could take pride. He finds the acupressure profoundly pleasurable and feels lighter and happier after a session. Through my work with Paul, I learned that it is imperative to notice *any* improvement in the client's condition and to consider those improvements to be a success, a further step towards the client's balanced health. In other words, we need to look at how far we have come as opposed to how far we have yet to go. This is vital also in terms of the client's perspective on their own progress, so we need to draw their attention to it.