

CANADIAN ACUPRESSURE COLLEGE

FIVE ELEMENTS ACUPRESSURE DIPLOMA

CASE STUDY

A Clear Study in Wood

Jon is a 39yr old male whose presence fills the room. His voice is commanding and loud. He has lots of energy, even when he is tired. He describes himself as a surfboard shaper and mechanic and operates his own business. He surfs, stretches, meditates, and practices yoga almost daily and says, “breathing helps.”

Jon’s focus for our acupressure sessions is mainly orthopedic, but he has experienced the effects of acupressure years ago and understands it can have full body effects. He has also seen a chiropractor, acupuncturists, and massage therapists. Previously he has seen an osteopath for injuries. He has also recently started on Sertraline to support his moods as he complains of feeling angry regularly; a feeling he’d like to be more in control over. The Sertraline gives him gas and he is bloated and uncomfortable “constantly” but says he also eats very fast and then feels like the food is caught in his mid chest. He occasionally has diarrhea. He states he used to have asthma as a child and pneumonia but since starting surfing has had no lung issues. Jon experiences headaches at the back of his head and occasionally migraines that he attributes to shoulder, neck, and back injuries. He wakes often during the night at 3-4am “overthinking” and has a difficult time getting back to sleep but stated he thinks the Sertraline may be helping to “let go a bit now”. Jon wonders if he is experiencing andropause as he notices a pattern near the start of every month where he is angry, clumsy, decreased ability to focus and concentrate. And he says the weather affects him unlike the ways it can affect others; high pressure can make him angry and irritable whereas the low pressure and raining helps him to feel more in control and energized.

Jon has had many injuries over the years, mostly sports related, and some of which have not healed in proper alignment. When he was 5yrs old he was kicked in the back by a horse at approximately T7-9 vertebrae which continues to feel slightly out of place. He was hit in the neck with a surfboard years later creating a thoracic outlet syndrome (TOS) down his right arm and hand. He fractured his right 4th metacarpal which healed incorrectly and now catches on his pockets and clothing. Both shoulders have dislocated, and he has learned to self-reduce subluxations he gets in his shoulders and left knee. If he sits cross legged, he feels as though his left fibula is unstable and will sublux. He states that all his joints are loose, he has “tendon and ligament issues” and both feet/ankles are a source of pain for him daily. Jon’s emotion and sound clearly presents as a Wood Element but paying attention further to colour and odour (CSOE) will help identify his Constitutional Factor (CF).

Session 1

July 29 (Fire Season) at 5:30pm (Kidney/Water Time)

Condition

For his first session Jon’s complaints are those mentioned above and cover many systems but ultimately would like to focus on his right shoulder/arm as it is “squawking” the loudest.

Si	GB	BL	Li ↓	ST ↓	TW ↓
H	LV	Ki	Lu	Sp	P

Action

As this was Jon’s first session and his complaints were multi-systems, I felt the LINKING VESSEL was the most appropriate starting point for its effects on digestion, headaches, arm/neck/shoulder pain, muscle pain, and neuralgia (TOS).

Response

During the session Jon fell asleep for a short time. The most noticeable release was in Si-10 while holding Li-11 with some finger twitching and muscle softening. Jon regarded the pattern as “incredible” and had many positive results. First, his pulses all improved. And physically he stated his shoulders were improved (R > L), hips felt looser, overall, less pain, and he felt more “upright”. He stated his sinuses drained while holding ST-16 and hadn’t realized they were plugged. He particularly felt GB-41 was effective for his feet and was able to spread his toes more than previous.

Evaluation

We discussed the importance of drinking lots of water, keeping up his stretching routine, and recommended he be more mindful to his eating habits. I asked him to pay attention to any foods that may aggravate his digestion and made a couple of “summer food” suggestions.

Given that many of his symptoms and suspected CF is wood, further sessions should focus on supporting this element.

Session 2

August 7 (Fire Season) @4pm (Bladder/Water Time)

Condition

Since his last session Jon has noticed an overall ease in his movements and comfort. He stated that he is more motivated and *slightly* less angry. Today’s complaints are:

- Right shoulder
- Left great toe pain (medial)
- Left knee pain
- Insomnia. He is now waking at 2am confused and irritable. He can generally fall asleep ok but not “lately” and usually wakes up thinking about work things.

Si	GB	BL	Li	ST	TW ↓
H	LV	Ki	Lu	Sp	P ↓

Action

Given Jon’s likely CF is Wood and relating to some of his symptoms I decide to focus on supporting the wood element starting with the yang, being the attitude towards the emotion, GB PATTERN.

Response and Evaluation

During the session Jon was relaxed and quiet with his fingers interlaced across his chest. He fell asleep for a short time. During the head/neck/shoulder (H/N/S) release I was very aware the left, first rib was elevated. While holding GB-21 it dropped back into place and the entire shoulder dropped. There were lots of twitching muscles throughout the pattern and a big release felt in the form of muscle softening in the SHU point BL-48. When holding GB-14 he stated it was “a different sensation” but could not describe it and said he felt his whole head relax at this time.

Post session Jon was generally more comfortable and said his foot felt much better. His P pulses improved but only minimally in TW. Future session options are plentiful; continue to work in Wood with the LV pattern being next OR depending on his pulses and symptoms TW pattern may be appropriate if digestion, shoulder pain, etc. continues to show pulse deficits.

Session 3

September 11th (Fire Season) @ 4:30pm (Bladder/Water time)

Condition

Today Jon's back is very painful. He had a terrible night trying to find a position of comfort and eventually fell asleep on the living room floor for a few hours. The pain is mid back and feels like it is higher on the left side than the right; the right extends down through the lower back. He is unable to twist from side to side. He does not complain of any sciatic-type pain but says his feet are "clumsy", the left one being worse than the right and he trips over them. This is worse in the mornings. His left great toe continues to be painful.

Generally, however, Jon shows many improvements:

- Right shoulder pain has improved
- Digestion/elimination are improved and regular
- Sleep has improved (except due to pain last night)
- Mood is better; he is far less angry. Jon stated he hardly recognized himself when he didn't get mad at another driver at a stop sign; a situation he normally would have been very angry and yelling.
- No complaints of issues in his knees
- Work stress is very manageable

Si	GB	BL ↓	Li	ST	TW ↓
H ↓	LV	Ki	Lu ↓	Sp ↓	P

Action

The BACK PATTERN was chosen for today due to symptoms. I hope this pattern will balance some of Jon's pulses as there are five master points in it. I also hope that he has a good release through his mid back with the LV SHU (GB-47) which also keeps us working with some Wood points.

Response

During the session some releases were noted in the form of twitching in right BL-53 as well as when TW-15 and TW-5 were held together. Bilateral releases of BL-52 occurred as the points softened more on the right than left. Jon stated his favourite spot so far was Sp-9 and liked the idea that it is helpful for any edema in the body as well as useful for back pain.

Post pattern, Jon was able to sit up without difficulty and twist from side to side. He said his toe had some improvement and generally felt more comfortable. All pulses improved except TW which felt only slightly better.

Evaluation

Jon continues to drink lots of water, stretch, and rest his back. We discussed adding some Qigong and 8 Brocades; specifically Sway the Head & Swing the Hips as well as Bouncing on Toes.

Planning for next session will depend on pulses and symptoms. TW has remained deficit for some time now and may require attention. Continuing in Wood with the LV pattern is also an option.

Session 4

September 19th (Fire transitioning into Earth Season) @ 4:30pm (Bladder/Water Time)

Condition

Jon states that he has noticed some improvements in his back pain since our last session. He continues to do gentle stretching and can twist and raise himself from laying to sitting more comfortably. His discomfort remains mid to low back, greater on the left side. His hips are tight, again, greater on the left. He tried to surf and found there to be a "pulling sensation" across his left upper chest and shoulder. He also noted it was difficult to take a deep breath across

his anterior ribs/diaphragm. New for him this week is constipation, complaining that his abdomen is bloated and painful. He is not experiencing any headaches and stated that his sleep is “sore but pretty good”.

Si	GB	BL ↓ but improved from last week.	Li	ST	TW ↓
H	LV	Ki	Lu ↓	Sp ↓	P

Action

Given Jon’s symptoms and that the treatment plan seems to be helping him I decided to continue with supporting his CF Wood. LV PATTERN was the choice for today’s session. I added GB-29 and GB-41 while holding GB-34 for his hip and foot pain respectively.

Response

Jon was quiet and relaxed quickly into the pattern and fell asleep. On the right side, his foot was twitching while holding LV-3 with LV-13. BL-47 was once again tender bilaterally, left more than the right. During the H/N/S release Jon’s stomach started growling. He was more comfortable getting up from lying position than previous and stated he could feel the tension remaining in his mid back “but not as bad”.

Evaluation

Depending on the pulses next session I am considering sedating GB/LV. I wonder if Jon’s Wood is in excess causing some of his symptoms and imbalances. His mid back pain appears to be at the SHU points; and, where he was kicked in the back by a horse as a young child.

Session 5

September 25 (Earth transitioning into Metal Season) at 3:30p (Bladder/Water Time)

Condition

Jon is feeling much better than when we first started working together. He has less anger and when he feels it, he can recognize it and control it. When it starts, he feels it high in his stomach/diaphragm region. If a circle is drawn around his body this sensation brings us across his back issues where he was kicked by the horse. (It makes me wonder if his CF was different prior to his injury.) Although his back pain has improved, he still feels it mid back “like a band. The feeling he describes is “stiffness”. He can bodysurf but unable to lay on a surfboard, arching his back to paddle yet. He is taking things “slow and easy”. His sleep is better as is his digestion and elimination. He is less stiff and sore in the mornings and his left knee feels much more stable now. Left pulses were stronger than the right.

Si	GB	BL	Li	ST	TW ↓
H	LV	Ki	Lu	Sp ↓	P

Action

GB/LV Sedation (to Fire) with an extended H/N/S release.

Response

Jon had no tenderness on either MU point but stated the SHU points were the remaining sore points in his back; the left being more tender than the right. While holding the MU points he stated it helped the back tension release. He fell asleep 20 minutes into the session. Post transfer all the pulses improved and seemed to even out. Jon was able to sit up easily and comfortably and twist further from side to side. He said he was more comfortable.

Evaluation

There are a few options for future sessions. If earth (SP) pulses are deficit a control may be appropriate. If TW remains deficit a tonification would be considered. If a pattern of anger, concentration issues etc. continues the male revitalization pattern could be used. If Jon wants to talk about deeper issues with his stepdad or his relationship with his girlfriend he may be ready for a window of the sky potent point (related to wood).

Session 6

October 5th (Earth transitioning into Metal) at 5p (Kidney/Water Time)

Condition

Jon states his back has been feeling good for the last couple of days. Today's complaints are some constipation ("like rabbit pellets"), stiffness and pain across the left side of his chest and shoulder, up and over to his upper back, as well as some pain in his right shoulder. He has noticed his left foot has been clumsy in the mornings, "especially if it's cold" and some pain again on his left great toe.

Si	GB	BL slightly ↓	Li	ST	TW ↓
H ↓	LV	Ki	Lu	Sp ↓	P

Action

Pulses were stronger on the left than right. It was noticed that LU pulses were at least equal to LV, so an entry/exit pattern is not considered. I also tested both SHU and MU points of Li to determine the cause of the shoulder pain/constipation, but these points were not tender. After some consideration I decided to perform a CONTROL of Sp from LV (working in Earth) making sure to include the lo to balance energy from its partner ST. After this transfer I did hold Li-4 and Li-10 for Jon's constipation and as part of the H/N/S release I added Li-15 bilaterally to help with shoulder pain.

Response

Jon was awake and eyes open for the session up until the H/N/S release when he fell asleep for a few minutes. The Sp SHU (BL-20) was tender on both sides. Both were felt to release. Sp-1 was not tender until held with Sp-3. And in general, the SP points were not as tender as in past sessions. All pulses improved.

Jon told me that night he had a hard time going to sleep and a hard time staying asleep. He felt his left leg had "restless limb". He stated, "overall my body is feeling better". And he was not constipated the following day which gave him some relief. The 2nd night after our session he said he slept well and was told that he was talking in his sleep.

Evaluation

Since TW continues to be deficit time and again it may be appropriate to tonify on our next visit. Now that his symptoms are subsiding, he may be ready for occasional visits and seasonal tune-ups.

Session 7

October 20th (Metal Season) @ 5p (Kidney/Water Time)

Condition

Jon has noticed that only the mid back injury when he was kicked by the horse remains. (GV-8/BL-18/BL-19) He said he has experienced some sensations that he has not felt or thought of since he was young. We discussed the Law of Cure. Knees, digestion, sleep, foot issues and shoulder have all improved. He feels much less anger and states that even though he has lots on the go and normally would feel very stressed about it, he believes he is experiencing an "appropriate amount". He does feel a sense of urgency as moving day is rapidly approaching. He is not experiencing any seasonal issues (skin, allergies, sinuses). Left pulses were stronger than the right.

Si	GB	BL	Li ↓	ST	TW ↓
H	LV	Ki	Lu	Sp	P

Action

TONIFY FIRE FROM WOOD with the assumption that Wood remains in excess or in the least, has a stronger pulse. Yang (TW) done first and then Yin (P). Added the P lo to balance the meridian partners in Fire. Then I did a quick first aid mid back pattern using BL-47 as the local point.

Response

I was curious as to how Jon was encouraged or discouraged to talk about the horse event when he was 5yrs old but Jon fell asleep and so I let him rest. After the transfer the pulses improved slightly. I wondered if I felt a deficit in the LU pulse and will monitor for next session. I will also monitor TW pulses. At the end of the session Jon was able to sit up easily and stated he felt more comfortable. He was able to fully twist his upper back and was very pleased by this.

Evaluation

Options for next session will be based on pulses, perhaps a control of LU from P, or a seasonal tune-up. It might be helpful to explore deeper Jon's memories of how his family dealt with injuries, perhaps while using a pattern that focusses on GB SHU. Another option still available for Jon is the male revitalization pattern which has some great LV and GB points and would continue to support Jon's Wood element.

Session 8

October 28 (Metal Season) at 5p (Kidney/Water Time)

Condition

Today Jon is feeling the stress of moving. He also has been having some difficulty doing some mechanic work due to a lack of concentration and focus but instead of getting frustrated, he took a walk to regroup. When he returned, he easily solved the problem. He had a restless sleep last night in thinking about everything that still needs to be done to move so decided to close the shop for a couple of days while he figured it out. He has been working in his steel toed boots recently so also complains that his feet are sore. Left pulses were stronger than the right.

Si	GB	BL	Li ↓	ST	TW ↓
H	LV	Ki	Lu	Sp	P

Action

I decided to use the MALE REVITALIZATION PATTERN this session as it contains great points for back pain, stress, and foot pain.

Response

Jon was quite relaxed and fell asleep a couple of times during the session. He would wake himself snoring and fall asleep again. Post session he said he felt "great" and that his feet no longer hurt. I did not detect any changes in the pulses.

Evaluation

Jon seems to be much more balanced and experiencing less symptoms from when we met and first began working together. Future session patterns will depend on symptoms, seasons, and pulses. I believe he would benefit from seasonal tune-ups.

Discussion and Conclusion

When I first heard the number of physical complaints Jon experienced, and complex issues such as TOS, I wondered if this case would be complicated. However, I was very interested and excited to see how easily and clearly Jon's element and patterns chosen became apparent and helpful. I believe this case was excellent for my learning as it went according to text and was great to see how following the sequence of patterns chosen for each session affected Jon, improved his symptoms, and helped on a deeper level with his anger. We accomplished all his initial goals! It also showed me that Wei Wu Wei, and choosing the right points are key. I need to trust the process after paying close attention to my client and then watch them benefit from carefully thought-out patterns/points. I would have liked to explore further the emotional pieces with Jon on a deeper level to create lasting and perhaps permanent changes for him. I believe that in the future, since he falls asleep so often, I should do this gracefully closer to the beginning of the session and not wait until I am holding specific points. I believe my time with Jon will continue and expect we will get there organically. I was grateful for this opportunity and to be part of his healing journey.

POST NOTE:

Recently, I was able to ask the question of the family reaction to Jon's injury from the horse kick. He says he distinctly remembers it even though he was only 5yrs old at the time. He went to his mother about it as he knew he could not go to his dad. She told him something along the lines as "well that's what you get when you play with that horse. You should know better than to play with horses you are unfamiliar." Jon learned to push down his pain and understood he could not communicate it or seek support from those closest to him. He had to "suck it up". We were able to acknowledge and appreciate the link between his symptoms and that point in his childhood.

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