

# SHIATSU & BACK PROBLEMS



## What is Back Pain?

**Back pain** is pain felt in the back that usually originates from the muscles, nerves, bones, joints or other structures in the spine. Back pain may have a sudden onset or can be a chronic pain; it can be constant or intermittent, stay in one place or radiate to other areas. It may be a dull ache, or a sharp or piercing or burning sensation. The pain may radiate into the arms and hands as well as the legs or feet, and may include symptoms other than pain. These symptoms may include tingling, weakness or numbness. Back pain is one of humanity's most frequent complaints. In the U.S., acute low back pain (also called lumbago) is the fifth most common reason for physician visits. About nine out of ten adults experience back pain at some point in their life, and five out of ten working adults have back pain every year. The spine is a complex interconnecting network of nerves, joints, muscles, tendons and ligaments, all of which are capable of producing pain. Large nerves that originate in the spine and go to the legs and arms can make pain radiate to the extremities.

Source: Wikipedia, April 2013

## RESEARCH

### **Shiatsu, a pressure technique**

***Vega RH. Physical Therapy. 55(4):381-382, 1975.***

This is an early account of Shiatsu by the Chief Physical Therapist of a medical centre in New Mexico, USA. It includes four very brief vignettes and suggests that Shiatsu may be useful in helping to alleviate a range of symptoms including muscle spasms, headaches, low back pain, painful shoulder and limitation of movement.

***A randomised controlled clinical trial for low back pain treated by acupressure (Shiatsu incorporates acupressure).*** Hseih LL, Kuo CH, Yen MF, Chen TH. Preventative Medicine, July 2004; Vol 39(1): 168-176. Acupressure (Shiatsu incorporates Acupressure) helps 90% of patients with lower back pain.

A study by the Institute of Preventative Medicine at the National Taiwan University and published in the British Medical Journal online has revealed that 90% of patients suffering from back pain found that acupressure treatment reduced their discomfort. Results showed that acupressure was more effective in alleviating low back pain than physical therapy in terms of pain scores, functional status, and disability, say the authors. The effect was not only seen in the short term, but lasted for six months.

The trial, comparing acupressure with mainstream physical therapy in a study of 129 patients, found that the treatment resulted in an 89% reduction in disability. The patients also saw improvements in leg pain and "pain interfering with normal work", with a reduction in time taken off work as a result.

64 patients received six sessions of acupressure over the next month and 65 received conventional physical therapy. The mean disability score after treatment was significantly lower in the acupressure group than in the physical therapy group.

\* Published online first, BMJ Feb 18, 2006.

### **The Effects of Shiatsu on Lower Back Pain.**

**Brady LH, Henry K, Luth JF 2nd, Casper-Bruett KK. Drake University, USA. J Holist Nurs. 2001 Mar;19(1):57-70.**

Shiatsu, a specific type of massage, was used as an intervention in this study of 66 individuals complaining of lower back pain. Each individual was measured on state/trait anxiety and pain level before and after four shiatsu treatments. Each subject was then called 2 days following each treatment and asked to quantify the level of pain. Both pain and anxiety decreased significantly over time. Extraneous variables such as gender, age, gender of therapist, length of history with lower back pain, and medications taken for lower back pain did not alter the significant results. These subjects would recommend shiatsu massage for others suffering from lower back pain and indicated the treatments decreased the major inconveniences they experienced with their lower back pain. PMID: 11847714 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

### **Acupressure eases low back pain.**

Researchers at the National Taiwan University conducted a randomised, controlled trial involving 129 patients with chronic back pain in order to compare treatment by physical therapy and acupressure. As reported in the March 2006 issue of the British Medical Journal, the participants' pain was not caused by systemic or organic disease, cancers or psychiatric diseases. The patients, ranging from 18–81 in age, did not have open wounds or acute, severe conditions requiring immediate treatment or surgery and they were not pregnant. Results were measured by self-administered, standard outcome measures over a six-month period. The results showed an 89% reduction in significant disability compared with physical therapy, and those who received acupressure had fewer days off work and a significant reduction of pain.

## **SHIATSU IN THE NHS**

### **Mike Flanagan, MRSS**

Mike Flanagan, MRSS, is a Leeds-based Shiatsu practitioner. Since September 2000, Mike has been working in conjunction with Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust to provide Shiatsu for NHS staff. Mike holds a clinic once a week at St James University Hospital in Leeds. Treatments are available to all hospital staff at concessionary rates.

In his private practice, Mike has a particular interest in back pain and postural issues as well as neurological disorders (having worked with a number of multiple sclerosis sufferers). He enjoys helping clients identify ways in which they can take an active part in their own healing process.

This 'looking after the carers' approach is also taken in a palliative care project in Guildford. At The Beacon, a day care centre attached to the Royal Surrey County Hospital, Penny Elliott, MRSS, offers Shiatsu to carers of patients.

## **BACK PAIN IN THE WORKPLACE**

*"Back pain in businesses costs employers £600 million per year and over 75% of employees would consider suing their employer over a workplace injury. Shiatsu has been proven to help with back pain. "*

*(Data sourced from The Costs of accidents at work, HS(G)96 2nd edition, HMSO 1997 and www.viewsoniceurope.com).*

## **ARTICLES**

### **Shiatsu: Helping your Energy to Flow more Freely**

**Printed in the New Generalist NHS magazine 2005 by the Shiatsu Society (UK).**

“Whatever my preconceptions and prejudices were, they were certainly challenged when I read about and eventually experienced this massage technique” – Charles Broomhead FRCGP, GP and GP Trainer, Sutton Coldfield

Shiatsu is an ancient Japanese practice that is viewed by its advocates as a complementary (as opposed to an alternative) therapy. It is said to aid healing by encouraging the body’s natural energy rather than being therapeutic in its own right. Those who are familiar with the philosophies on which acupuncture is based will recognise similarities that it shares, embodying as it does the concepts of “Ki” (vital energy), “yin” (the principle of darkness, negativity and femininity), “yang” (the counterpart to yin – light heat and masculinity) and bodily “meridians” (channels in the body through which energy flows).

It would be naïve, indeed impertinent, to claim that I really understand the postulated mechanism of action based on my brief experience. Although shiatsu is an unregulated profession, the Shiatsu Society recommends that a fully trained shiatsu practitioner will have undergone at least three years of instruction to become proficient in its application.

Although I have heard colleagues insist that they would not use a therapy if they didn’t fully understand how it worked, I wonder whether this really matters. History is littered with examples of remedies that achieved acceptance before anything was known about their mode of action. Indeed, in some circumstances the “mystique” that surrounds complementary therapy might be viewed as actually contributing to its efficacy.

The practitioner whom I consulted dealt with me in a highly professional manner. Like many of us, I have for years had mechanical low-back pain that comes and goes depending on the amount of gardening that I have been doing. What, I wondered, could shiatsu do to improve this?

On my first visit to her, after taking a history covering general life and health issues, she sought out any apparent energy imbalances within my body. She did this by gentle palpation of my abdomen and “connecting” with the “hara”.

I can only describe the massage that followed as intensely relaxing, something that sounds like a contradiction in terms. The shiatsu was given while I lay on a futon, a thin mattress, in a warm, simply decorated and intrinsically tranquil room. A blindfold assisted the relaxation process and enhanced the sense of pleasant detachment that I experienced, while my therapist manipulated me and applied pressure to my meridians and “tsubos” (pressure points). Much to my amazement I found myself drifting in and out of sleep during the 90 minutes that the treatment took!

Shiatsu is said to be effective in a wide range of conditions, restoring the equilibrium of energy within the body. It is hypothesised that “dis-ease”, in its widest sense, is related to a loss of normal “homeostasis” and that shiatsu works by correcting this imbalance whatever the origin of the

problem. Effective therapy is based on a course of treatments, becoming more successful as the relationship and synchronicity between therapist and patient develops.

Did the treatment help my back problem? Well it's hard to say. After the first treatment it certainly didn't hurt so much, and I didn't wake up with as much discomfort the next day. Unfortunately the problem recurred a few days later! Subsequent treatment did seem to replicate the improvement and certainly made me feel very well, but perhaps I needed a longer course of therapy to achieve maximum benefit. Of course, a sceptic might suggest that back pain often improves if you lie on a firm surface and that the sort of individualised personal treatment that shiatsu provides is bound to make you feel good. I'm not sure where the truth lies, but this is certainly an intriguing therapy area and one that deserves serious consideration.

'Physically the "hara" is the whole of the abdomen below the ribcage to the pubic bone with its centre just below the navel – the "Dan Tien". However, in Eastern martial art terms it is much more: it is the centre from which all strength and power originate in the body. This strength is physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. To be "in hara" is to be totally centred, detached yet open, aware and receptive, able to sense everything both inside and outside of the body and to respond appropriately, beyond the "ego", the small "self". It is the vital centre of man.

## **Shiatsu for Chronic Pain in the Lower Back** **By Wilfried Rappenecker**

**Published in the Shiatsu Society News 76 Winter 2000**

Back pain is perhaps the commonest presenting problem for Shiatsu practitioners. Wilfried Rappenecker provides a detailed analysis of the histology of back pain from a Shiatsu perspective, with some cautionary words too. Translated from German by Shruti Gordon, MRSS(T).

Back pain manifests itself in various ways. Apart from causes and patterns that are well known, back pain very often originates from psychosomatic and other energetic patterns. It is important to be able to develop receptiveness and openness when interpreting the background of a person's condition, and to look deeply at how such pain manifests physically and energetically.

### Sensations of pain

Very often we can see a life-situation hanging over a client like a cloud as soon as they walk in. Before we even put our hands on the affected part we can tell if he/she is complaining mainly about the actual pain or if it is the general life-situation that is inflicting pain (being interpreted as painful). This encourages us to take a closer look at the phenomenon 'pain', which cannot be proven objectively. One person will experience certain nerve impulses as excruciating pain whereas another may interpret these impulses indifferently or even pleasurably. When someone is in a lot of pain, the emotional aspect is usually very strong, and there is often a great deal of emotional investment in maintaining the condition.

In a certain sense, we produce our pain too; it does not just hit us. In order to access the deeper causes of a person's own generated tensions, put your hand on the affected area and wait for something to surface – an involuntary and subtle expression of their story. The more you stay open, unbiased, and the more you give space to the client, the more you will witness and feel involved in the process.

For instance, it may become clear that a small energetic woman seeking help for chronic pain in her lower back has, since childhood, carried the instilled belief that she had to straighten her back and

legs to be taller, in order to be taken seriously. Only then would she feel accepted. In the case of a man experiencing weakness in the lumbar area, it may become evident that he is carrying the psychological imprint of lack of support all through his life. And again, when touching a person whose back condition has suddenly deteriorated you may find a body signalling barely controlled rage.

I do not usually talk to my client about these impressions, as they influence my diagnosis and contact and add to the treatment plan. The technique of tuning into a client's life-situation is not difficult, but beware of the traps, such as subjective projections of the listener, transference and counter-transference.

### Face life full-on

One of the basic functions of the Lower Burner (including the lumbar and sacral areas) is to give the emotional strength needed to face life "full-on". The underlying pattern in most cases of chronic back pain seems to be not wanting to feel alive in this region of the body, but rather to dampen feelings there or to suppress them completely.

When we suppress this function of the Lower Burner, from fear or patterns of avoidance, other areas have to come in and do its job. So it falls to the Middle Burner (Earth and Wood), and the Upper Burner (Fire and Metal). They are usually held in tight in order to cope and the shoulders, also, sometimes seem to take on the task of all three burners.

This process of stopping aliveness in the lower region starts very often at three to four years of age. It proves how early childhood experiences together with inherited conditionings are at the base of this change: The life energy (ki) gets pushed out of the lower burner up into the substitute areas. There remains a weakened lower back which ideally would need the support of a warm mother-hand, but instead tenses up to maintain a reduced stability.

### Tension is not enough

The aim of a Shiatsu session will be to harmonize and stabilize the area of the lower back so it can let go of tension and the consequent pain. Treatment will revive and revitalize this area working on the reintegration of the weak areas and the flow of the whole back. Revitalization is the main aspect of long-term improvement. It is of great importance that the client works together with the therapist in this process; otherwise the short-term effect of relaxation and freedom of pain may lead to an even greater imbalance or weakness.

A state of energetic emptiness or exhaustion in the lumbar area does not necessarily mean that the Kidney energy is so depleted that it cannot be restored. It is more likely a local problem with more physical indications such as a lack of movement or energetic activity.

### Slipped disc

In my opinion, conventional medicine has only partly understood the causes of lower back pain. Mostly it is interpreted as tension and irritation of muscles and tendons and nerves, especially the ones that support the spinal vertebrae and the pelvis. These problems are said to be caused by bad posture (of which the causes are little thought about), displacement of the intervertebral disc or an anatomical anomaly, such as misshapen, surplus or sliding vertebrae.

The symptoms of shooting pains into the legs, sometimes with sensitive skin or weak leg muscles, are explained by western medicine as irritation of the spinal nerves, which may be trapped in between a protruding or prolapsed disc and the vertebra from which they emerge. Protrusion,

prolapse and trapped nerves can be monitored on computer with a tomogram of the spine. However this model cannot explain the observation that sometimes there is no prolapse even with strong pain, or that sometimes, there is a prolapse and no pain. Also this model does not explain the actual pain at the original site, e.g. the Kidney or Large Intestine area in Shiatsu terms.

Conventional physiotherapy accepts and recognizes the term 'blockage' as does Shiatsu. A 'block' is described as a mutual dysfunction of joints, muscles, tendons, nerves and connective tissue and this explanation comes fairly close to what we understand as an energetic block in Shiatsu.

A prolapsed disc is only rarely the direct cause of lower back pain and shooting pains into the legs. To understand pain as the result of energetic blockage (as we do in Shiatsu and oriental medicine) makes more sense. On the other hand, a prolapsed may well be pointing to a chronic energetic depletion and imbalance, not only in that area, but most likely in the whole person.

Working together with the GP brings clarity to the diagnosis (in the conventional sense) and to the professional and ethical position of a Shiatsu practitioner. It is sometimes better to let conventional expertise and treatment come first. Shiatsu can be successful even in extreme cases, but an individual case may be quite daunting to a new graduate, so – when in doubt – he/she may want to refer to a more experienced practitioner.

### The many faces of the back

With observation, we can find energetic patterns and manifestations of the 'life-situation' reflected in certain parts of the back and observe that these parts have literally disconnected from each other. Each one with their own story and dynamic feels different to the touch. The energy of the Bladder meridian does not flow, but feels lumpy and stagnant.

Reconnect these disconnected areas into a whole will bring life back into the lumbar area, because any blockage above seems to accumulate and the stagnant pattern persists. Very often the affected area can and should not be touched, but it can be improved with specialised treatment of the Bladder meridian on the rest of the body, together with holding / keeping connection to the area of pain. Every part of the back has a special relationship with the depleted/weakened sacral and lumbar area. It is worth looking at each of them checking their condition/energetic level and trying to understand how they influence each other and then treat them effectively.

### Back of the thighs

You could view the back of the thighs as part of a unit with the lower back because they respond to each other presenting the same patterns either very strong muscular tension or the opposite, emptiness with weakened muscles.

If tension is the dominant pattern we may find that this person tries to compensate for his/her weak back by stiffening and tensing other parts of the back of the body and by holding Bladder energy in so as to function without addressing the original imbalance.

A great energetic 'neediness' can be hidden in the hamstrings which when discovered and touched deeply enough will open up, not by forcefully going in, but by carefully working perhaps with the elbow and with great Hara awareness. This is easier than trying to work deeply with the thumbs, but requires appropriate sensitivity to Shiatsu principles.

### Sacrum, Gluteus and Groin

The Bladder energy is most obvious in the sacrum and its flow can be best controlled there. The outward sign is a concentration of Ki (Jitsu condition) in the lower half of the sacrum manifested in a small bump that should normally feel resilient to the touch. With acute back pain this region is taut and at the same time the upper half of the sacrum may feel empty. The treatment requires dispersal / releasing / letting-go in the lower half and contracting / filling / nurturing the depleted area in the upper half.

This kind of tension usually continues over part of the bladder meridian into the glutei muscles down to bladder 36. Then watch for Kidney responses on the lateral edge of the sacrum, deep penetration along the small intestine meridian on the buttocks, Gallbladder 30 and Tenshi (3 cun below the iliac crest, upper lateral quarter of gluteus). They are very useful for localized treatment and connecting with areas further afield.

Yet another region revealing the energetic flow is the groin. Here it is possible to release, e.g. in supine position, with the method of rotation and working simultaneously in the groin, or by steady palming using some body weight to open up. It is important to note that this is not indicated when the client suffers acutely radiating back pain.

### The Knees

The knees (via the legs and feet) play an important part in connecting a person with the earth. Suppression of fear, the emotion of water can bring a person to cut off contact with the earth at this crucial point.

Deep-seated fear in my experience is also a major factor in lower back pain and may well be regarded as one of the prime causes of blockages. It is therefore not surprising to discover a connection between the lumber area and the back of the knees.

So, in the attempt to control the emotions of the water element, the backs of the knees may seem especially tight, or they may feel empty, a sign of resignation or exhaustion. The back of the knees tells the client's story readily where the hands are flat with very little pressure; they tell about the desperation, confusion or the tiredness in the lower back. Working with these issues may bring immediate relief.

### Calves and Ankles

Going further down the legs brings us more and more into the realms of the Water element. Tiredness, weakness, or too much tension in the calves, ankles and feet point toward the general energetic state of this element, which would be more difficult to detect in other body zones.

Pressure on the Achilles tendon reveals similarly to the back of the knee, how well rested a person is or how they distribute their energy.

There may be other meridian qualities coming into play. It is, however, the bladder as the Yang expression of the element Water which usually prevails. Shiatsu on the ankles (don't forget B160 and 3!) and on the sole of the foot and the toes brings back the flow of this element resulting in general revitalization.

Looking at the foot before treatment, ask oneself: what quality of touch could be of help and where is it most needed? This will soon bring into focus the treatment needed, e.g. stimulation of the metatarsals in the arch of the foot by standing on the instep. Finding the answer to the question "How do feet connect this person with the earth" will often give quite precise directions as to how best to support your client.

### The Chest

The middle and the upper back react to blockages in the lower back and they can even be forced to take over certain functions (including Bladder-Kidney issues) if the lower back becomes rigid or lifeless with lack of Ki. Of course they have their own emotionally related energy imbalances, such as the holding on to Ki in between Earth and Wood Yu-points in the middle and in Lung/Heart and Pericardium in the upper back.

Very often we find quite distinct, but isolated Ki “lumps” in the upper body and in the chest. These draw up so much energy that it seems that this pattern can maintain the emptiness in the lower back by itself. Needless to say, such a pattern may also be the cause of pains in the upper back.

### The Lumbar area

I am mentioning the lumbar area last intentionally. Although it is the focal point of our efforts, it is very often indicated not to treat it directly. Applying Shiatsu could even worsen the condition.

By exploring and treating the other parts of the back of the body, the flow of Ki in the Bladder meridian should ideally be balanced. Working on this meridian will facilitate connection and lead to an improvement. Good Shiatsu on the thighs, knees, ankles, shoulder and neck will induce relaxation and healing in the lumbar area.

If the diagnosis indicates exhaustion and emptiness (Kyo), stimulation is indicated. By this I mean a treatment that tonifies, bringing Ki and Blood into this location.

In contradiction to the view that areas of emptiness and depletion should be treated with deeply held pressure, I would like to say that in my experience this can worsen the condition dramatically. A deeply held touch can also have a sedating effect, calming and sending out the message that there is no need to change. The depleted inactive tissue is not stable and could lose its last support with this action. More instability may develop later in the day with renewed rigidity and more pain in other areas. Similarly, strong stretches are not indicated as they bring about a dispersal of Ki instead of a nurturing touch.

In order to stabilize the lumbar region, I frequently ask my client to move the pelvis and lumbar spine by rocking gently to and fro and/or up and down during the treatment (especially on sections of the Bladder meridian). This avoids stagnation.

Treatment of the Kyo of the lower back requires a sound touch and experience in working with energy. Perceiving the need of each individual, whether it means sedating or stimulating certain regions, should be left to the expert. It is therefore recommended to leave this area out during treatment (apart from a very light stimulation) until the practitioner has the experience of knowing precisely how to respond.

### Other connected areas

The treatment of body parts governed by the bladder energy can be combined with treating other meridians, e.g. after a Hara diagnosis. But it can remain the sole treatment as well, during the course of several repeat sessions until the situation has stabilized.

The Lower Burner is energetically one unit with lower back. Its weakness goes hand in hand with weakness and lack of vitality in the Hara and the abdominal muscles too. Effective work on the Hara can greatly influence and liven up the lower back.

The other key area is the shoulder and neck region. Looking at the posture of a skeleton this area is directly vertical to the hip region above the familiar curvature of the spine. Problems in one of these areas will sooner or later be reflected in the other with varying degrees. And so a rebalancing of the neck will have a beneficial effect on the lumbar area. The main focus would be to gently harmonize the energies in the neck and shoulders toward greater flexibility.

Tension in the shoulders also hints at suppression of vital energy in one, two or all three Burners, holding the energy tight in the upper regions. Freeing the Ki in the shoulders will usually encourage it to move to lower areas, e.g. flowing down into body parts that need livening up.

### Risks and cautions

Apart from relieving the pain and strengthening the vitality of the lower back, I work toward the objective that the client's overall back condition does not worsen again. In my experience this is unfortunately not guaranteed. There is the danger of wanting to improve too fast, applying too heavy-handed or too deep work in the affected area as well as trying to release the tensions in the lower back too soon. Here are a few other tips that may have a positive effect on your treatments.

When positioning the client it is advisable to make sure the lumbar area can actually relax. So in supine position, put a cushion or rolled up blanket under the thighs and/or a pillow under the head. In prone, a folded woollen blanket under the tummy and lower chest really helps (even if the client thinks that he/she does not need it). If he/she has a stiff neck the elevation should apply to the upper chest and the shoulders as well in order to relieve the muscles in the neck. A frequent reminder to turn the head from side to side is appropriate. In cases of extreme pain or discomfort due to age it is okay to treat in side position possibly with the legs pulled up.

It happens that sometimes a client will lie down in a crooked position or slightly twisted with bent arms and legs. The position they assume as most comfortable is often very revealing about their physical and energetic state. Interesting as it may be for me as an observer it may also help with the treatment plan.

If pain is intense, and goes together with an emotional appeal (e.g. pain may be an urgent call for help and support), or if an abreaction to the treatment is likely, it may be best for the time being to shorten the sessions and repeat them two to three times per week. This enables the practitioner to go with the changes immediately and to soothe 'healing reaction'. The client will feel safer and the healing effect will be enhanced.

Talking to the client is also important, as it helps to build trust and help them to let go of stress, suffering, fear and rigidity. The practitioner will gain more understanding of the case history and back ground, which is necessary for proper treatment and recommendations.

### Exercises and recommendations

Encouraging the client to work with the therapist is very important so that even with a chronic condition a lasting improvement can be reached. The client needs to become active in his/her healing process.

Accordingly I think it is useful to give some simple exercises to take home. Just as the sessions intended to revitalize stagnant areas, to reintegrate the flow of the painful lower back into the whole back, and to release physical and emotional stress, so these exercises and the recommendations will help to re-programme the body step by step. Simple movements and mobilizing muscles as well as Sotai, meditation and visualizations will help regeneration. Yoga or MakkaHo may not be indicated in such cases without specific guidance.

*Wilfred Rappenecker born in 1950, is a medical doctor predominantly working with Shiatsu. He has been practising Shiatsu since 1981. In 1986, he founded one of the first Shiatsu schools in Europe, Schule Fur Shiatsu Hamburg and in 1992 he co-founded the German Shiatsu Society. He is the author of numerous articles on Shiatsu as well as two books, which have been published in German, French, and Italian: Yu Sen: Shiatsu for Beginners, and Five Elements and Twelve Organs.*

## **CASE STUDIES**

### **Susan Crawshaw, MRSS. 16 March 2006**

In October 2001 I treated Mr H twice for his back problem.

#### Presenting Symptoms

On 25 August Mr H had strained his left lower back and side by throwing a suitcase upstairs. He had been to an osteopath three times and the pain in his side had improved, but he still had pain in his lower back going up the left side of the back. The pain was a constant ache that would spasm into pain on twisting or moving suddenly. He moved quite stiffly to get down onto the floor.

#### Treatments

His back felt very solid and 'locked' to the touch, so I did lots of work to get his energy and circulation moving and relieve the stiffness. I spent a lot of time tonifying the energy of the Small Intestine energy channel which runs up the outside of the back. This channel was very, very responsive and he said it felt really good. I worked the channel along its entire length, not just in the back. When I found 'painful spots' I used distal acupoints to reduce this pain and also local acupoints for back pain.

#### Results

After the treatment Mr H said his back felt great. We booked him in for a follow-up treatment 11 days later, but I had a phone call a couple of days later to say that his back was totally recovered — which amazed me, as I was expecting it would take more than one treatment. He came for the follow-up appointment anyway, but was experiencing no pain or lack of movement. He had started exercising again and it felt a little weak, but he was taking it gently. I consolidated the work of the previous treatment by further tonifying the energy of the back.

I saw Mr H a number of times over the next 18 months, as our paths crossed through other work, and during that time he had no recurrence of the problem, and I never treated him again. I then moved away from the area.

## **CASE STUDY 2**

### **Susan Crawshaw, MRSS. 9 March 2006.**

Between November 1998 and February 1999 I gave Mrs S seven shiatsu treatments whilst I was training to be a practitioner and used her case as one of my final year case histories. I then gave her a further seven treatments up to October 1999. Some of these were very short — 20-30 minutes duration.

#### Presenting Symptoms

Mrs S was a married, 50 year old, Moslem woman. She came to see me primarily for her lower backache and her oedema. The backache presented as a general, frequent, dull ache in her lower back which she had had for several years, and achy stiff shoulders — both of which were worse when she was tired or stressed. Her oedema affected her lower legs and ankles which were extremely swollen, weak and painful when flexed, and which had a lot of small broken veins on the inside surfaces, especially on the right ankle. Her belly was also swollen and felt 'drum-like'. Her energy levels were low and she felt permanently tired.

Mrs S looked extremely tired, with a pale/sallow face and very black rings around her eyes. She said her sleep was good, but she arose every morning before 5.00 am for prayer and did not go back to bed. She usually felt cold and suffered from flatulence, especially during the day — but otherwise her digestion was fine. She was menopausal, but her symptoms were mild — occasional hot flushes. She had taken HRT for a while, but had stopped some time prior to my seeing her. Her tongue had a pale body, was slightly swollen and had small central horizontal cracks and a red tip.

Mrs S was very much the 'carer' of the family. She was the only breadwinner, facing a complicated daily commute from Surrey to London where she worked full-time. During early 1999 her job was threatened with redundancy. Her husband was in poor health and on invalidity benefit, and her adult divorced daughter was also struggling with very poor health and lived at the family home with her own small child. Mrs S spent a lot of time caring for them all, and also worrying about and taking her turn in caring for her ageing parents who lived in north London ... another difficult journey. Her real love and talent was massage and alternative health, and she had taken many evening class courses in these subjects and wanted to practice professionally, but couldn't afford to give up her full-time job. She therefore treated a few clients in the evenings or at weekends.

### Diagnosis

In Traditional Chinese Medical Terms, Mrs S had chronic Kidney Qi (mainly Yang) and Spleen Qi Deficiency. There were also some Heat signs in the Heart and Stomach areas of her tongue.

Mrs S was the archetypal "Earth Mother" type. She was overdoing it, over giving — both worry and the menopause were depleting her Kidney, and thus her Spleen energy. Oedema in her lower body was caused by the impairment of Kidney Yang's function of catalysing the body's Water metabolism and Spleen's function of transforming/transporting fluids. Yang energy's warming, transporting, activating, upward flowing principles were primarily affected, but also Yin energy was depleted by lack of relaxation and the menopause.

### Aims

As she was menopausal, Kidney energy was naturally declining. The focus was therefore mainly on strengthening the depleted Spleen energy, but also supporting the Kidney energy (Yin & Yang). I also aimed to give her very supportive shiatsu to relax her, and to encourage her to give herself time.

### Treatments

During the treatments I used acupoints specifically to disperse fluids in the lower body and strengthen the Spleen, to help back pain and support Kidney energy, and I spent a long time warming her Kidneys which really relaxed her back. During the initial treatments acupoints in the ankles were very difficult to locate due to swelling. I also prescribed her acupoints to work herself, which she did assiduously. We discussed her diet and she reduced her intake of dairy/cold/raw foods; and increased root vegetables and cooked foods to help Spleen. During the period covered

by the 3rd-5th treatments she was fasting for Ramadan and feeling quite weak, headachy and also constipated. At the 4th treatment she also had a heavy cold.

## Results

She generally noticed much better energy levels in the days after having had shiatsu. At the 4th treatment she was feeling less bloated and her ankles were feeling stronger, at the fifth treatment her legs and ankles were markedly less swollen, and by the 6th treatment I could actually feel her ankle bones. Her backache gradually decreased in frequency and severity. By the end of my initial 'case history' series of 7 treatments, there was definite improvement in all her symptoms. She really enjoyed the shiatsu and found it deeply relaxing, she was looking less exhausted and much more 'alive'. Over the following months I gave her 7 more treatments and her oedema in particular greatly improved. Her belly was hugely less bloated and her ankles had almost no swelling at all in them and the broken veins had virtually disappeared. Whilst her backache did improve markedly, it was still noticeable when she was very tired and stressed. Her flatulence was also no longer a problem.

Mrs S found Shiatsu very beneficial and supportive, and she needed to have given herself something to look forward to which was 'just for her' and to support her through the stresses of her life. As long as she continued to 'give' of herself to everyone else and to have such a hectic life, her body's energies would always struggle to be balanced, but shiatsu definitely helped her maintain a reasonable equilibrium.

## **CASE STUDY 3**

### **Cliff Andrews, MRSS(T)**

E.A. is a woman of 66 years of age. Her predominant symptoms were extreme vice like pain in the mid-back around the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> thoracic vertebrae. This was accompanied with pain in the left shoulder.

She had a complex medical history including emotional and physical problems. The pain was such that movement and flexibility of the spine was severely limited, and was clearly causing a great deal of distress.

Taking into account her medical history, and by taking a meridian reading from her abdominal area, an imbalance manifesting in the Heart meridian was diagnosed. The Heart in Oriental medicine is related not only to the circulatory system as in western thought, but also encompasses the mind and is particularly related to emotional stress.

I proceeded to give E.A. a series of Shiatsu treatments over 6 weeks. The mid-back area was severely constricted, with a lump which was clearly raised from the rest of the muscles of the back. I used a combination of local work and distant points based on the acupuncture meridians involved to release the back.

E.A. experienced a marked reduction of pain after the first treatment. Progress was steady with mobility increasing and a significant reduction of pain after each treatment. After the first series of 6 treatments they were extended to fortnightly and monthly visits. After 4 months the back pain was no longer a predominant symptom, the raised area of the back was no longer evident on palpation. E.A. also reported a noticeable positive effect of the treatments on her moods and emotional state. She continues to visit less regularly for maintenance sessions.

## **CASE STUDY 4**

### **Cliff Andrews, MRSS(T)**

P.L. is a 40 year old woman who was complaining of dull aching pain in the lower back. Accompanying symptoms included headaches and fatigue, and urinary problems. At the time of her first visit she was just about to undergo investigative procedures at the local hospital.

Taking into account the pattern of symptoms, and by taking a meridian assessment of the abdominal area I deduced that there was a deficiency in the Bladder meridian. In Chinese medicine the Bladder meridian is associated with the lower back, fatigue and some types of headaches, as well as the usual urinary functions.

P.L. came for a series of 6 treatments, initially weekly but quickly spread out to fortnightly and then monthly, which consisted of a full Shiatsu session with particular attention paid to tonifying the Bladder meridian. I also gave some dietary advice which principally involved the reduction of caffeine drinks, which have an effect of the Bladder meridian, and which P.L. was drinking to excess.

Very soon after the first treatment P.L. found that the back pain had improved. She also had less urinary problems, headaches and fatigue. Her symptoms continued to improve and she is now free from symptoms. She has observed that if she does increase her caffeine intake then the symptoms tend to reappear. P.L. visits the clinic very occasionally for maintenance. As a result of the progress with the Shiatsu treatments P.L. did not need to proceed with any further medical investigation.

## **CASE STUDY 5**

### **Ray Ridolfi, MRSS**

Ms N. had come to Shiatsu after a variety of therapies. She had been a Nurse and injured her Lumbar-Sacral joint whilst lifting a patient seven years before. At the time she had received traction, epidurals, cortisone therapy, worn a medical corset and osteopathic treatments with little apparent improvement. Two years later she was struck on the neck and arm by some hospital equipment and had continued neck pain ever since. Her Sciatic nerve was inflamed and created great discomfort. I began seeing Ms. N. after she had promoted physiotherapy treatments, once again with little effect. She was taking prescribed painkillers daily to control the pain and frequent headaches.

My initial assessment revealed general congestion around the pelvic girdles and a deficiency of energy in this area. Her neck was in a constant state of tension with multiple minor misalignments. She had a general lethargy and lacked confidence in herself. She had recently given birth to a son and the pregnancy understandably aggravated her back and neck. Her neck was partially relieved after the first session. After three further sessions her sciatic pain had subsided and the neck was no longer an issue for her. She felt great relief and very positive about herself and her future. The symptoms had subsided substantially but were not cured. Continued treatments maintained her more stabilised condition which was occasionally aggravated by strains of motherhood such as lifting an increasingly heavy child, tripping over toys, and some general mother exhaustion. She no longer relies on painkillers and exercises designed to strengthen her spinal column and musculature have helped greatly.

## **CASE STUDY 6**

### **Nigel Dawes, 2001.**

## INITIAL PRESENTATION

GL is a clergyman in his early 50's who was referred to me through the clinic having telephoned for a massage or "anything that would get rid of his back pain"!! He had never received Shiatsu before but was happy to give it a go as he was familiar with western massage and wanted something similar. He described his back pain as "stress-related".

## MEDICAL HISTORY

Revealed no significant details about himself though he described his body as always having been stiff and inflexible. He added that he rarely exercises and leads quite a sedentary lifestyle. Otherwise healthy. Doesn't drink or smoke. History of cancer in the family – his father died of bone cancer in '86 and his mother of bladder cancer in '80.

## PERSONALITY

He is a quiet, retiring person – a bit of a loner (his own words). His life as an unmarried clergyman is disciplined, active and varied though rather sheltered he admits, something which apparently suits him. He dislikes crowds and socialising though this is a part of his work. He sees his job as a necessary part of "bringing him out himself". He is shy and uncommunicative and finds it difficult to talk about himself. His religion seems to have reinforced this self-effacing attitude.

He was initially uncomfortable and embarrassed about asking for treatment and seemed cautious about being touched. There was a certain ambiguity here as he evidently enjoyed the Shiatsu immensely and followed the series of treatments religiously.

## SYMPTOMS

Pain in the low back which comes and goes sporadically and with no apparent pattern eg: may be brought on by rest or movement: any time of the day/night. Heat doesn't seem to alleviate it while it is no worse for the cold. The only obvious trend is that the pain is worse at times of stress.

He describes the pain as a deep ache which can radiate from the sacral area over the left buttock and down the back of the left thigh almost to the knee.

The onset was gradual and began 18 months ago, intermittent at first but now almost constant.

Other symptoms include insomnia (often wakes 2-3 times/night), tightness of the chest and shortness of breath (especially when stressed), occasional palpitations and muscle cramps. He sweats easily and tends to feel hot easily.

## DIAGNOSIS

The location and nature of the back pain coupled with its gradual onset and progression suggested to me the involvement of KIDNEY. Since the pain neither responded to warmth nor was aggravated by the cold I assumed the Yang function of the Kidney was normal. The sweats and feelings of hotness along with the insomnia I took to be quite Yang in nature but since he was basically rather weak I put them down to deficiency of Yin rather than actual hyperactivity of Yang. The back pain itself and other symptoms like shortness of breath and palpitations indicated basic "Ki" imbalance. Probably deficient Kidney "Ki" perhaps affecting the Heart "Ki" ie: an imbalance of the FIRE/WATER relationship.

A lot of his personal characteristics suggested a METAL imbalance with difficulty in communication a key issue and, I expected to find some Lung/Large Intestine things showing up in the diagnosis. Apart from the breathing problems, it did emerge later that he suffered from constipation and occasional haemorrhoids.

Physically, he looked and felt very stiff and inflexible and initially, I found some Liver/Gall Bladder jitsu in the abdominal diagnosis. Once this was a little more balanced however, it was Heart and Kidney patterns that consistently showed up in the touching diagnosis – mostly Heart KYO and Kidney JITSU.

#### SESSIONS

4/12/90 Liv.Jitsu/Heart Kyo

11/12/90 G.B.Jitsu/S.I. Kyo

18/12/90 Ki. Jitsu/Ht. Kyo

8/1/91 U.B. Jitsu/Ht Kyo

15/1/91 Ki. Jitsu/Ht. Kyo

22/1/91 Ki. Jitsu/Lu. Kyo

#### GENERAL APPROACH

GL was usually slow to relax during the treatment and although this improved with time, he still remained nervous and highly sensitive. I put this down to his nervous system being hyper active (reflected in the Ki./U.B. Jitsu) and his Heart function being impaired, if not organically then on the level of “Ki” giving rise to anxiety and mental instability. Although my initial treatment was fairly firm aimed at dispersing the Liver “Ki” stagnation and loosening up his whole body, I tended to give quite light, gentle pressure aimed at calming and soothing. I had to be especially gentle with stretch work as many parts of his body were stiff and sore. So, most of my treatments concentrated on working on the Heart and Small Intestine meridians and focusing a lot on the upper back and chest areas. However, I usually included work down the Bladder channel for the nervous system.

Because of his lifestyle, I gradually introduced some simple exercises designed to stretch and open the body and get the “Ki” moving generally. He said he practised them most days and felt that they helped relax and revitalise him.

#### PROGRESS

GL completed a series of 6 sessions during which he made considerable progress. The first signs of improvement were general in that he reported feeling calmer and more relaxed and was able to sleep better. Gradually his body seemed to relax and begin “opening up” and he said his breathing was easier by the third session. At the same time, his backache had improved in that it was no longer continuous but seemed only to bother him towards the end of the day. By the last treatment the pain had almost gone though it was worsened by a period of intense stress at that time. It seems he finds aspects of his job very stressful such as preaching visiting parishioners. From his description of the symptoms that persist it almost sounds like a kind of panic attack. He stopped treatment very pleased with the results though the sweats, palpitations and occasional back-ache were still present. I recommended that he continue with his exercise routine for a month and that

he return after that to consider further treatment if things had not improved. I haven't seen him again.

## ASSESSMENT

I'm sure the Shiatsu helped restore a measure of balance to his overall body systems, especially the Kidney function and the levels of "Ki" throughout the body. His physical body benefited from the opening and stretching (helped by the exercises) and his mental state was considerably calmed by the soothing effect of the touch. At a very basic level, I think the Shiatsu put him back in touch with himself, something I feel he is usually uncomfortable with. However, I did feel by the end that he needs some more substantial internal work, possibly with herbs, and had hoped he would come back so that I could pursue that angle further. Perhaps the Kidneys needed some substantial nourishment (their "essence") bearing in mind his age and sedentary (and asexual) lifestyles. It had struck me that he was completely bald and his behaviour very timid. It must be difficult being a priest.

## CASE STUDY 7

1. Male 32 Exercise Instructor.

01/02/91

Main Complaint: Tiredness/poor energy levels

Accompanying symptoms:

Lower back pain – dull / ache. Worse for stress, fatigue, cold.

Intermittent headaches around temples – dull / tight.

Occasional muscle spasms over whole body.

### History

Digestive problems

Knee problems / traumas

Exercises regularly (with work) but irreg. eating habits.

### Abdomen

Empty, flaccid wall. Cold. Strong pulse at navel. Slight resistance under ribs – no pressure pain.

Spleen KYO: Liv. /GB JITSU (also Ki./TH)

### Pulse

Wiry, full at upper levels, empty at depths.

### Tongue

Pale, flabby. Thin white coat

Worked mainly on the Spleen and Stomach meridians to tonify the centre. Felt he was nutritionally lacking (mainly because of irreg. eating habits rather than diet).

Prescribed Minor Cinnamon and Peony Combination (granulated herbs) for 1 week to build the middle (heater).

08/02/91

Felt very relaxed after Treatment. Muscle spasms relieved. Dull headaches much improved. Backache/tiredness persist.

*Pulse/Tongue* unchanged (pulse slightly stronger)

*Abdomen* firmer

Acupuncture treatment plus Shiatsu to tonify St. / Sp.

15/02/91

*Tongue* less flabby, thin yellow coat

*Pulse* slower, full at all levels

*Abdomen* seems more firm. Sp.KYO; Lo. JITSU

Supine and prone position concentrating on Sp. /Ki. /UB.

Repeat prescription of herbs.

22/02/91

Feels generally much better. Backache persists also knee pain.

*Pulse, Abdomen and Tongue* Basically unchanged.

Prone position plus acupuncture (Stomach points)

01/03/91

Feels tired. Dull headache returned slightly. Fuzzy feeling in head and blurred vision. Low back ache.

*Pulse* No strength at depths, otherwise full/rolling

*Tongue* Pale/flabby. Thin white coat

*Abdomen* GB JITSU; Ki.KYO. Tight under ribs. Pressure pain near umbilicus either side

Digestive things seem improved. Now concentrate treatment on Kidney tonifying (possible cause of back/knee pain, tiredness). Prone position.

Prescribe Kidney tonic: Gecko A (7forests) 7days.

## **CASE STUDY 8**

### **'Lumbago'**

**Professor Gao Li Shan, Guan an Men's Hospital, P.R.O.C.**

3. Basic Types:

1. DUE TO PATHOGENIC INFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL FACTORS SUCH AS ; WIND, COLD AND DAMP.
  - treated by Shiatsu/acupuncture/moxibustion and herbs
  - Shiatsu treatment often involving G.B. channel (especially when wind is the cause).
  - a) Attack by pathogenic wind involves pain which migrates all around the lumbar area and can refer elsewhere also. It often comes and goes and is alternately severe and light. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact location of the pain.
  - b) Attack by pathogenic cold involves pain which is fixed and extreme in nature. It feels as if the muscles are contracting and the whole area feels tight and cold. Often the pain is relieved by warmth.
  - c) Attack by pathogenic damp involves pain which feels heavy and aches. It usually affects the lower limbs also.
2. DUE TO TRAUMATIC INJURY
  - treated by acupuncture/moxibustion/cupping.
  - This pain can be sharp and/or dull and is usually fixed. It often feels worse at night or when the person makes a particular movement. Not relieved by pressure. The whole area feels rigid.
3. DUE TO DEFICIENCY OF KIDNEY "KIDNEY"
  - treated by Shiatsu/acupuncture/moxibustion/herbs
  - Shiatsu treatment of Ki./U.B. channels mainly

This type of pain has a gradual onset. It is usually worse upon exertion or under strain and stress and in the early morning though is better for rest. It is rarely very sharp and is often accompanied by feelings of weakness in the back and knees.

## **CASE STUDY 9**

**Heidi Armstrong, MRSS(T)**

B is 47, she has three children, twins aged 13 and a 7 year old. Her husband works away a lot. She is thin, with a muscular build and has a contained quality. She finds it hard to cry, but has a weepy quality to her voice.

She has come for Shiatsu to relieve stress and pain around her back and shoulders, she is finding it hard to relax and switch off, and acknowledges she finds it hard to slow down, feels a lack of physical and emotional support.

They moved to England from Switzerland 5 years ago and a year ago bought a house. At around the same time her mother died. Her father is suffering from Alzheimers, he lives quite close by so she looks after him. His behaviour can be difficult, angry and hostile.

She has a good diet but has found herself drinking a lot of coffee and more alcohol in the past year. B has been feeling anti-social and cutting herself off from friends and neighbours. She is a movement work teacher but has found it impossible to focus on setting up classes and is having a break and not doing much physical activity.

### MEDICAL HISTORY

B had a caesarean with her twins 13 years ago and has suffered on and off with lower back problems. She has been to an osteopath with no lasting effects. She recently discovered that her uterus is retrograde. Her upper back and shoulders have been painful for 18 months.

She has suffered from digestive problems over the last couple of years, and has a history of PMS starting about 5 days before her period, feeling irritable and impatient. Her periods are getting close together.

### PRESENTING SYMPTOMS

She has been uncomfortable with tightness and pain around her neck and shoulders, upper and middle back with limited movement toward the left. She has been feeling very stressed and finding it hard to relax.

Her sleep has been unsettled, waking several times a night worrying and mentally over active.

Emotionally she has been feeling up and down suffering from irritation, tiredness and depression sometimes feeling that she cannot cope.

Her digestion has been unsettled, suffering from bouts of nausea, abdominal pain, bloating and constipation, which goes in a cycle of 4 to 6 weeks, lasting for several days. She has blocked sinuses and her breathing is quite shallow.

### ZEN DIAGNOSIS

B'S Kyo lung meridian was associated with difficulties communicating and expressing her grief. Her shallow held breath, sinus problems, and isolating herself from friends and neighbours, limiting her exchanges between herself and the outside world, led to feelings of depression and a lack of vitality.

Symptoms of her Kyo spleen meridian relates to feelings of not being supported, excessive nurture of others at the expense of herself, disturbed sleep, PMS, digestive problems and a lack of exercise.

Small intestine kyo relating to shock after her mother's death, and difficulty in assimilating events have left her lacking the ability to acknowledge these difficult emotions. Lack of patience and nervousness can be linked in Zen Shiatsu to the S1 providing a source of Ki in the Hara through nutrients thus bringing the presence of the heart down to the Hara. Because of its link with the ovaries and menstrual disorders it is often diagnosed after a difficult birth, it could relate to shock and uterus problems after her caesarean, and links with lower back problems held since then.

Bladder jitso came up in the first three treatments, relating to tension pain along the meridian pathway, nervous tension, lack of impetus with her work, but overloading herself with family issues, bladder can also relate to the uterus in Zen and an inability to relax.

Liver and GB came up in back visual diagnosis, held around the side of the body, this relates to uneven flow of Ki, inconsistent emotions, irritability, anger and to a physical lack of flow resulting in stiff painful shoulders, neck and back. This stagnation of energies causing the abdominal distension pain, nausea and constipation. This also reflects with livers poor distribution causing problems with her menstrual cycle, frustration and feelings of being at wits end and difficulty expressing creativity in her work.

### FIVE ELEMENTS DIAGNOSIS

B's water element is full but not flowing resulting in an inability to relax, tension in her back some insomnia and a lack of motivation. Water not feeding well into wood which is un-rooted and stagnant, its rising energy getting stuck and causing areas of pain and stiffness in the neck, shoulders and joints. Headaches, digestive problems, nausea, swollen painful abdomen, constipation and PMS are also linking to blocked wood energy. Not aided by daily consumption of coffee and alcohol.. A lack of emotional harmony, feelings of irritability and impatience causing problems in areas of creative expression and organisation. Her lean muscular frame has a wood presence. Stuck wood energy not fuelling fire which is being put out by water causing a lack of joy and emotional expression.

Low fire energy giving a lack of substance for earth which is also being invaded by wood is symptomatic of her care and nurture of her family to the deprivation of herself and feeling unsupported by her partner. Retreating into her head and over worrying, her digestive and PMS problems, the death of her mother, moving country and house all un-grounding the earth energy which is not controlling and channelling her water energy and lacks the nourishing composites for feeding her metal element.

Her weepy choked voice relates to metal imbalance. Overwhelmed with grief, difficulties with crying and expressing emotions and letting go (constipation) lowering her vitality and causing her to withdraw into herself. Problems with her father relating to her metal element, lack of exercise compounding depletion and its inability to control and cut wood.

### TREATMENTS

1 & 2. 20/04/04, 04,05/04

Front and lower legs Kyo, back Jitso

1<sup>st</sup> treatment: Hara Diagnosis S1 kyo BL Jitso started with sotia stretches to release neck. Dispersed BL in sitting and prone using stretches, rocking. Worked BL28 to effect Uterus, BL27 for small intestine and tonified meridian. S1 3, S1 11 for back shoulders tension. S1 felt Kyo used compassionate touch.

Worked hara. heart Uterus which felt disconnected lower hara. Tonified spleen using a supportive touch and spleen 6 to benefit uterus calm mind, relieve frustration.

Recommended holding S1 3, breathing into lower hara.

Next two treatments: 18/05/04, 08/06/04.

Liver GB Jits, spleen Kyo. Back diagnosis, visually energy held in sides, shoulders. My emphasis in treatment was in releasing stagnation, working in side to open liver GB.

The meridians felt Jitso responded to movement and points used.

GB 34 descends rebellious Ki, relaxes tendons, muscles.

GB 21 Move Ki down, ease neck shoulders, Tension. Liver 13 Harmonise Liver and spleen.

Liver 3 smooth flow of Ki, release anger, PMT.

Hara work releases tension ST25, tonified spleen which felt Kyo using SP 6/3.

Recommended hara massage ST 25 for bloating and constipation. Talked about finding more time for herself exercise to shift stuck wood energy.

Last 3 treatments: 22/06/04, 13/07/04, 05/08/04.

Back diagnosis. Liver GB Jitsu. Lung spleen Kyo.

Energy less contracted more continuity. Still working with stretches to release wood energy also focusing on nurturing earth energy, tonifying lung using deep present connection and breath to connect with feeling of grief.

Using lung 9 tonify lung Ki deepen breath. Lung 7 sinuses. Lung 1 help descending Lung Ki release stuck emotions.

### TREATMENT RESULTS

During treatments B had the following results and improvements. Her neck mobility improved. By treatment 3 her lower back pain was nearly gone and she was finding it easier to relax.

As her liver, GB Qi released so did her shoulder and upper back pain. With an improvement in PMS, abdominal bloating and nausea. By treatment 5 she was doing more exercise had taken up riding and teaching again, and she was feeling less irritable and able to cope.

As B's metal energy strengthened she was able to express herself better to her husband and felt less inclined to isolate herself. With firmer boundaries found that she was able to deal with her father's emotions better and with more clarity. She looked more relaxed, her voice was clearer and her breath deepened.

### CONCLUSIONS

B, has been able to get in touch and express her grief more. Through meeting some of her own needs exercising her friends horse, giving her a sense of freedom and joy in life again. Using her strength to bond and communicate with her father, who she has moved into a home, where he is happier. Through releasing tension is able to be more relaxed and comfortable. Seeing more of her friends neighbours has some support outside of the family.

## **CASE STUDY 10**

**Jacqui McCoan, MRSS**

W, who is 50, has recently completed a course in Psychology and continued to study for MSc in Psychotherapy. She herself has been in Psychotherapy for 10 years, since problems in her marriage, which ended 4 years ago. She is involved in acrimonious negotiations with her ex-husband and is coping also with the sudden death of her 18 year old daughter's boyfriend, grieving herself, and supporting her daughter in her grief. She is single minded and organised, rather driven, oversensitive in close relationships, caring and sensitive to others.

At 15, had a riding accident, which caused severe back trouble and sciatica. At 26, she had a laminectomy involving L5 and S1. She had several miscarriages, a gynaecological operation at 32 to remove adhesions to her colon and a cyst on her bladder and was later involved in a whiplash accident. She has had periods of emotional trauma. She is lean, her face almost gaunt-looking with a greenish tinge to her dull complexion, deeply sunken eyes with pronounced dark shadows round them. The eyes themselves are lively, her voice has a laughing quality. She is agitated and tense and gives the impression of deficiency being overridden. Her energy is predominantly in the upper body, a little stuck around the lower Hara, and lacking in the legs.

W complained of constant chronic pain in the lower neck area (along the S.1. channel) which had become acute – exacerbated by the extreme mental and emotional pressure she was under – and was so tender she could not even bear the pressure of clothing on it. It had all become overwhelming, leaving her feeling exhausted and depressed.

Questioning revealed that she suffers from headaches in the occipital area and more migraine-like headaches over one eye. She falls asleep easily, but her sleep is disturbed and she wakes frequently. Her digestion is good, though she tends towards constipation. She is a thirsty person, liking warm drinks, especially in the evening. She feels the cold, poor circulation to hands and feet causing chilblains. She suffers from low back pain (both sides) and occasional sciatica. She has very heavy painful periods with dark clotted blood. Her energy levels dip in the afternoon and she pressures herself to exhaustion point. She can be irritable under pressure and has a tendency to depression. Her tongue is pale with a mauve tinge, a little swollen, with teeth marks round the edge. There is a crack along the midline where it is redder with a yellow coating.

There is stagnation of Chi due to trauma along the S.I. channel in the neck and shoulder, resulting from the shock of the accidents and the operation involving the S.I. Yu point area. This is exacerbated by stagnation of Liver Chi (Wood not nourishing Fire) which is also interfering with the transporting/transforming function of the S.I. and generally blocking the Lower Burner. St/Spl energy (Earth) are also affected and have become deficient. The Chi stagnation has led to some Blood stagnation. There is underlying deficiency of Kidney Chi, especially Yin. Water has failed to nourish Wood (Liver Chi stagnation) or connect with Fire (the Heart) to house the Shen (Liver is also involved here too – not storing the Blood satisfactorily during rest). Though her age is relevant, the Kidney Chi has been drained by the shock of the accidents and the operations involving the lumbar area and the lower Burner, and is still having strong demands made on it by the mental and emotional stress that has become longstanding. There are signs that the Heart Protector is also deficient.

## TREATMENT

W was very agitated and her whole body very sensitised. Her Yu points and the painful area around her neck and shoulders were too tender to touch. I needed to tonify Kid, Bl and her Hara, to draw the energy down, unblock it in the lower Burner, and move it along the S.I. channel. Above all I needed to help her relax by being supportive and calming. As she found work on the occiput and head very releasing I spent time on this, also hands and feet in each treatment.

18.11.05 S.I. jitsu Kid kyo

Side lying was her one comfortable position. I concentrated on holding the Kid/S.I. area on her back, tonifying Kid on the sacrum – which gave her a sensation on her upper thigh – and in the legs. I worked S.I. in the arm, especially around her wrist and hands (S.I.3). Sighed into pressure on her head and felt things begin to move.

30.11.05 Liv jitsu S.I. kyo

This movement continued. I worked with ampucu to her Hara. Though it was rather tender in the lower abdomen, she felt this 'hard lump' melting away in the S.I. diagnostic area as I dispersed Liv in the legs. This produced much borborygmi. S.I. in her legs was very tender, but as I worked it she felt much 'emotional baggage' that had been upsetting her gut had moved.

9.12.05 St jitsu Bl kyo

I worked again on her Hara, rebalanced Kid Chi (Ren 4, Ren 17) and she felt it in her abdomen as I worked Kid along her sternum. I dispersed St jitsu in her legs. I could now tonify Yu points (St, Spl, S.I. and H were reactive) and work on S.I. and St in the shoulder area. She responded very well to this treatment.

6.1.06 Liv kyo Gb jitsu

After the Christmas break the tenderness had moved closer to the top thoracic vertebrae, (Lu, Hp, and H Yu points) between the scapulae. Gentle mobilisation of head, neck and shoulders was now possible, the movement and friction of working Gb round the scapulae now welcome. Gb was tender in the upper leg as I dispersed it, and she felt sensation between her scapulae as I worked S.I. on her back.

14.01.06

Dispersal of Liv jitsu in the legs has a strong dispersing effect around the hypochondrium. Liv is also very jitsu in her upper arms. B1 in the low back welcomes much tonification.

20.01.06 S.I. jitsu Hp kyo

She came feeling much better in herself. I could work more strongly into S.I. on the shoulder area, legs and arms. Working Hp in the chest together with Hp Yu point was very releasing. Hp in the upper arm was very tender. Her scapulae were considerably looser.

The most significant changes happened in the second and third sessions. Emotional blockages cleared and consequently W began to feel better in herself, the acute pain of the shoulder area gradually easing. The latter treatments sustained the change and strengthened her. It would not clear entirely until pressure on her eased. She needed further support, regular rest and time to resume yoga, thus centring herself, and to take more exercise. She was already careful about what she ate. Treatments stopped for her to go on a two week holiday.

## **CASE STUDY 11**

**Jacqui McCoan, MRSS**

A, 29, has worked in a London Art Gallery for 4 years, in an educational role. She has been with partner for 6 years and has just had her first baby, who has a hole in the heart and is about to have major surgery. She is active, in good health, conscientious with a positive outlook on life, possibly a little too much 'in the head'. She is a fairly taut person who easily becomes stressed out.

A had tonsils and appendix out in childhood. At 10 she fell and cracked her elbow, suffering severely from shock. She had glandular fever at 21. She is allergic to penicillin. She is tall, slim looking, with fair hair, lively eyes and mind, and a sallow complexion with a yellow/green tinge. Her voice is clipped. Energy tends to be up in her head, neck and shoulders, there is some stiffness down her spine and a certain rigidity down the sides of her body. The Kid and S.I. diagnostic areas on her arms and legs don't seem very connected.

A came because she was feeling tired and lacking in energy after her son's birth, tense and anxious in face of his impending surgery. She was also a little stiff around the shoulders (S.I. channel)

A smoked until her pregnancy, and was anaemic during it. She regularly has colds with nasal congestion. Her eyes easily become sore and bloodshot, and she suffers from Migraines across her forehead, starting with blurred vision and often connected to her periods. These were irregular before childbirth (sometimes 6 months apart, heavy, clotted and painful). Now they are more regular, though she feels bloated before them. She tends also to feel bloated after eating, her stools tend to be loose-ish, and she urinates frequently. She dislikes cold, which makes her feel sluggish and has bad circulation in hands and feet. Her skin is dry and sensitive, she suffers from dizziness on getting up quickly and has some trouble with her memory. She sleeps well and needs lots of sleep. She has problems with her hearing amongst other loud sounds. Her tongue is short, a little wet and swollen, with a dirty yellow coating in the mid/back, becoming whiter towards the front. There is a large open crack down the middle. The body is reddish at the edges and tip, paler with a purplish tinge more centrally.

The Water Element is very low, (drained by the birth and anxieties), and there are clear signs of Yang deficiency and perhaps some slight Yin deficiency also. Water is not nourishing Wood, where there is stagnation of Liver Chi interfering in the functions of both the middle and lower Burner: Stomach and Spleen in the middle Burner where there are signs of Damp and Yang deficiency (cold) also; S.I. and L.I. in the lower Burner. Wood is invading Earth, which in turn has left Metal needy, the Wei Chi weakened. There are also signs that Liver Chi stagnation has combined with slight Blood deficiency to produce some stagnation of Blood.

A seemed in good health and was cheerful, though this covered considerable anxiety. She needed lots of warming and tonification of Water and the S.I. especially, also the middle Burner. Energy needed to be brought down from head and shoulders, strengthened her Hara, freed up along her flanks, and encouraged to circulate more freely in arms and legs. Work on her extremities – wrists, hands, ankles and feet was particularly releasing for her and formed part of every treatment.

## TREATMENT

08.09.06 S.I. kyo Gb jitsu

Kid and Spl Yu points are very kyo. Sacral rub felt very good to her and much tonifying of the low back and sacral area. Kid in her legs also drank up tonification. S.I. in her shoulders is tight but responsive, and kyo in her arms, but responds well here too. Gb is jitsu along her shoulders, scapula and occiput, and I freed it also along her rib cage and hypochondrium. There was great release as I worked the side of her head and occiput.

22.09.05 B1 kyo T.H. jitsu

A is lacking in energy and very fearful about the impending surgery. I tonify inner and outer B1 channels. The outer is particularly responsive. I do lots of staying there, especially around the low back and sacrum. I loosen between the ribs, and the side of the torso along the T.H. channel. H in her arm is responsive and she enjoys head and face shiatsu, calming the Shen, and especially work on T.H. around her ears. She becomes much calmer.

13.10.05 B1 kyo Gb jitsu

A is tired through lack of sleep, caring for a wakeful child after his surgery. Her Yu points generally are kyo except Liv and Gb. B1 is jitsu in her legs, and welcomes stretches and movement. She responds to dispersal of Gb under her scapulae, in the rib cage and deep into the torso. I tonify Kid around the sacrum and in the legs. Kid 1. Is very needy and she enjoys pressure here. She feels good after the treatment.

29.10.05 Kid kyo L.1. jitsu

A is less anxious, but her ears are blocked. Kid on the back and buttocks is kyo. I tonify this and disperse B1 jitsu in her legs – B1 60 is very kyo. Disperse L.1. jitsu on legs, also L.1. in the whole arm and neck is very reactive and there is a reaction down into the rib cage. I disperse into the front of the shoulder. She finds B1 work on the head very refreshing. Her ears have released by the end of the treatment.

14.11.05 Liv jitsu Spl kyo

I disperse Liv jitsu, especially in the lower leg. Liv 8 and Liv 3 are responsive and they feel strong to her. Spl in her legs is kyo. It is also very needy in her upper torso (Spl 21) and Hara where I do deep ampucu work. Work on Liv in her arm and torso feels very strong for her. Disperse around the scapulae.

02.12.05 S.1. kyo Gb jitsu

Points around the top of the scapulae are responsive, and feel good. S.1. on the cheek is very strong and S.1. tight in the neck and kyo in the upper arm. I tonify S.1. in the low back and the pressure is very welcome. She also enjoys dispersal of Gb jitsu in the head, neck and shoulders, and things move as I work Gb along her side, between her ribs and into the lower abdomen and the front of her pelvis. Gb is responsive also around her ankles and feet.

A responded well to treatments, seeming to increase in energy and resilience and to 'loosen up' a little, coping well with her son's difficulties. She intended to resume yoga and other forms of exercise, perhaps taking up Qigong, and was conscious of the need to maintain a good diet. She found the Makkaho Meridian stretches, which I taught her alongside the treatments, very beneficial.

## **CASE STUDY 12**

### **Helen Fung, MRSS**

#### Personal History

A is 53. He works as a local government officer with responsibility for co-ordinating international projects, involving chairing large meetings, leading and receiving delegations and much computer work. He lives with his wife and 21 year old daughter.

He describes himself as an 'old hippy' and likes to stay up late and sleep in. He prefers to socialize with family and appears confident and easy going, while professing to be shy. He has says he, had to develop skills to deal with socializing, speaking and chairing large and sometimes disparate groups.

He doesn't readily express his feelings and admits to some rigidity. He is hungry for information and finds it hard to 'switch off' naturally, preferring to 'engage and think'. He has a passion for playing and designing computer games, which perhaps provides an escape from relating to people which is a large part of his work, but few other outside interests.

He initially came for treatments to ease the presenting symptoms (see below) and for ongoing maintenance of his health.

### Medical History

A had acute appendicitis when he was 11, which he remembers as a traumatic experience. He had a vasectomy 10 years ago and about 6 years ago a helicobacter pylori infection was cure with antibiotics.

He used to be a keen runner and stills cycles and walks a lot and has suffered various ankle and leg injuries, especially on the right. His knee tendons used to be very tight. This was alleviated by acupuncture some years ago, although some stiffness remains. He developed a frozen right shoulder about 2 years ago, for which he initially saw an osteopath but now has weekly Feldenkrais sessions.

He gave up smoking 5 years ago with an attendant weight gain, which is not apparent as he was previously underweight. He has a 30 year old dope habit and drinks about 14 units of alcohol a week. There is a family history of quite serious heart problems.

### Presenting symptoms

A presented with ongoing tension in his neck shoulders and upper back, extending into his right forearm with excess typing, and stiffness and tenderness in his knees, ankles and Achilles tendons.

He is prone to acid indigestion and generally feels hot and sweats easily and copiously, especially in stressful situations. He most dislikes a humid hot climate.

Although his diet is healthy, large business lunches are the norm with no breakfast and little in the evening. He has a chocolate habit and a preference for sour flavours. He urinates frequently, particularly if cold or tense and at night.

Any emotional problems were expressed solely as difficulties at work – long, confrontational meetings, overload, over thinking – which affected his sleep and exacerbated his physical tension. He rarely mentioned his family or personal relationships.

### Presenting signs

A appears 'full' in the head, diaphragm and belly and 'deficient' in the limbs – he has particularly long arms – and chest. His neck and mid to upper back tends to jitsu, while his lower burner and the sides of his torso tend to kyo. His shoulders hips and knees are fairly tight and there is a right-left imbalance – his right hip is looser and in prone he prefers to have his right arm down and his left arm up.

His complexion appears doughy with a greeny-yellow hue, especially around the mouth. He is often dark under the eyes, with a pronounced frown. He likes to wear green clothes.

### Aims of Treatment

To tonify the most kyo and sedate the most jitsu meridians and areas diagnosed from the hara, touch and appearance and use Five Elements and TCM theory to supplement diagnosis and treatment.

In Five Elements theory, Wood appeared to be in excess from the joint and tendon problems, green facial hue, frown, preference for green and sour things and staying up late (2am), physical rigidity, left-right imbalance, liking for organizational and computer work and addictive tendencies. In TCM, lack of suppleness and emotional repression is associated with liver imbalance and Tony's job and hobby are demanding on gall bladder energy. The consistently jitsu hara diagnosis supported this.

Consequently, Wood is draining its mother, Water, which was consistently deficient from the hara diagnosis. This is supported by the darkness under the eyes, lower backache, inability to relax and frequent urination, which is a sign of K deficiency in TCM, as is a lack of tongue coating.

Wood is also invading Earth which is showing signs of imbalance in his chocolate habit, analytical mind and slowness in getting up. In TCM also, constrained LV energy upsets digestion, which can be a problem for Tony and his dislike of humidity and scalloped tongue indicate a damp condition.

Additionally, in TCM terms there are signs of Interior Heat – dislike of heat, long red tongue, copious sweating and feelings of anxiety, lack of emotional expression, exacerbated by dope and alcohol. The family history of heart problems would also support this.

In addition to treatment based on the Zen shiatsu diagnosis, Metal, as the controller of Wood in the Ko cycle, was tonified through treatment of the LU and L1 meridian or appropriate points on either. Additionally, points for Heat, were included (L14, L111, GV14, HP6) as well as points for musculoskeletal problems (GB34, LV3) to address the excess Wood energy.

### Treatments

The pattern of hara diagnosis was:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Kyo</b>	<b>Jitsu</b>
08.7.04	K/BL	GB
22.7.04	K/BL	GB
30.7.04	TH	GB
06.8.04	Unsure LU/TH/BL/	Generally
13.8.04	TH	GB
20.8.04	BL	GB
25.9.04	BL	GB
2.10.04	BL	GB
23.10.04	K	GB

It was suggested that decreasing the consumption of dope and alcohol and meat might ease symptoms of Heat and trying to find ways to get good quality rest and relaxation and creative expression apart from the computer games would increase energy and decrease anxiety and stiffness.

## Results and conclusion

The treatments complimented A's ongoing Feldenkrais sessions and awareness of postural and physical problems. He regarded them as part of the same process of re-educating his body to achieve better mental and physical health, but did not seem interested in any other aspect. He did not attempt any behavioural changes or take any steps to take more responsibility for his own health and decrease his reliance on practitioners. He embraced the Feldenkrais philosophy without showing any intention to end the sessions or do any regular exercise to address his particular problems or explore his mental or emotional patterns.

He felt that shiatsu made him generally more relaxed, with slightly improved digestion. He seemed to enjoy the treatments although gave little feedback during or after.

His energetic pattern remained unchanged, perhaps reflecting the chronic Wood and Water imbalance – rigidity in his psycho-emotional make-up and fear of upsetting the status quo.

## **CASE STUDY 13**

### **Dee Cameron, MRSS**

Lower Back Pain (14 year old)

#### Introduction

Anna (pseudonym) is a 14 year old girl, who was keen to try Shiatsu and happy to partake in the study. Since she was under 16 years of age written consent was obtained from her mother prior to commencing treatments. In addition, Anna's mother brought and collected Anna from treatments as recommended by Balens Insurance. Information was obtained from both Anna and her mother.

#### Personal History

Anna is a fairly quiet girl who enjoys good books and her own company. She has a twelve-year old brother that she gets on well with although he can be 'annoying at times'. Both parents are down to earth and supportive. Anna is happy at school, organised and diligent with all aspects of schoolwork, gaining good grades in her chosen subjects. She is very athletic, taking part in various sporting activities in and after school, and a member of the Perth and Kinross under 15 yrs-netball team, which recently won the Scottish Cup. Although she has always been competitive in nature, Anna has become more settled in her sporting capabilities and now admits to being happy doing her best rather than having to win at everything! Anna is also very creative and enjoys artwork' she likes to find a quiet spot in the garden to draw.

She is tall for her age at 5ft 10", with very long legs and has a solid but slim build. Anna has a tendency to 'slouch' at times, possibly due to the fact that she is a good head and shoulders taller than her classmates. She is often gently reminded by her parents to 'walk tall' and 'be proud of her height'. Anna enjoys a healthy diet, drinks mainly water disliking hot drinks, and has a tendency to eat refined sugars when hungry – often 'starving' on return from school dives into the biscuit tin!

Anna is a contented girl who enjoys time relaxing at home' caring for young children and shopping trips with mum. She has an even temperament and an easy-going attitude to life.

#### Medical History

Anna attended speech therapy at 4-5 years of age, at this time she had difficulty pronouncing words with more than two syllables.

Most common reason for ill health – cough/cold.

Menstrual Cycle commenced aged 12 years.

Prone to dental caries despite good dental hygiene and 6 monthly check-ups.

Medication – Nil.

### Presenting Symptoms

On assessment Anna complained of mild lower backache, which she thought was caused by twisting at netball, this was the main reason for attendance. She also frequently felt tension /tightness between her shoulder blades. Anna complained of suffering from cold, sweaty hands and feet. This sweating could occur at any time i.e. when anxious before exams, relaxing in the evening and often during the night when she would wake up and put her feet out of the bed! Anna hoped these problems could be helped with regular shiatsu.

### 5 Element Associations

Anna's physical appearance with long bones, fingers and toes, and wide shoulders are body characteristics associated with the Water element. Her tendency for dental caries and current backache would perhaps indicate a deficiency in this element, since physically, teeth and bones and their associated problems relate to the Water element. Bone is the body tissue corresponding to the Water element. Finally, Anna likes her own company, this lack of confidence and difficulty with socialising also relates to a Water element diagnosis.

Anna's voice tends to be laughing and chattery, typical Fire voice qualities. Her neck is long and her body can appear soft and willowy, these body characteristics are associated with the Fire element, perhaps resembling the flames of a fire! Anna is artistic and creative these 'gifts' are commonly seen in individuals that have Fire qualities. Anna's speech problems in childhood and current problem with sweating are indicative of an imbalance in the Fire meridians since speech is the sense, and sweat is the fluid associated with the Fire Element.

### Treatments

Treatment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Date (2004)	1/2	29/2	21/3	29/3	5/4	13/4	20/4	25/4	16/5
Empty	ST	KD	SP	BL	BL	BL	BL	KD	BL
Full	GB	GB	TH	LV	HT	TH	HT	LV	GB

Anna was able to relax easily during treatments although she did at times 'assist' rotations until encouraged to 'let go'. Work over her back, using palming and two handed pressure, especially between the scapula often released tightness/tension. This area relates to LU and HT in Zen Shiatsu (back diagnosis). The tension here may have resulted from curling forward of her shoulders or 'slouching', and could be considered as a water imbalance affecting her upper back/neck area.



to control fire

As seen in the treatment table, Anna demonstrated 'empty' Water in 7 out of 9 treatments, 'full' Fire in 4 out of 9 and 'full Wood in 5 out of 9 treatments.

In relation to the Shen Cycle, full Wood is feeding Fire, which is also full, however in the process is further depleting empty Water. This can also be seen as Water nourishing Wood, thus yet further depleting itself!

When considering the Control Cycle it can be seen that Water is too weak to control Fire.

Despite 9 treatments Anna's Water element remains depleted. Ongoing treatments should concentrate on tonifying the Water meridians, using Water touch.

### Conclusion

At initial assessment Anna suffered from lower backache, this responded well to treatment. Shiatsu also helped to reduce tension held between Anna's shoulder blades and aimed to prevent chronic discomfort and deformity. Although regular treatments have not yet resolved Anna's problem with sweating this has certainly improved, and Anna appears more confident and at ease with herself, her studies and is finding time to 'switch off'. She has recently completed a week of exams during which she remained focussed and relaxed.

Anna enjoyed her regular Shiatsu and she was a pleasure to treat. She was always keen to attend for further treatments and willing to give helpful feedback. It is hoped that ongoing treatments together with dietary and lifestyle changes, which include Makko-Ho stretches and fruit in place of sweets after school, will correct general imbalances to include the strengthening of Water and calming of Fire meridians.

Finally, recognition of the changes that Anna is currently adapting to, together with emotional support should assist her transition from child to adulthood.

## **CASE STUDY 14**

**By Josie Pridmore, MRSS**

VN – 27 years old, had a back operation 7 years prior to the appointment.

Her discs in the lumbar region had been removed and had collapsed, it was starting to affect her bowel and she was waiting for an MRI scan at Southampton. She also complained of bad circulation in the left leg which was worse than the right, she also had coldness in the feet and buttocks.

After the first session she slept better, drank more water and even reduced her smoking habit. The fourth session her circulation had improved and bowels were nearly back to normal. The fifth session she felt more focused, energetic and everything had improved. At the sixth session she was feeling much better overall. She had her MRI scan results and she was delighted that she did not have to have another operation. She also had a 'stop smoking' hypnotherapy session and this was also successful.

## **TESTIMONIALS**

“The nature of my role means that I spend the majority of my working day at a computer keyboard, I’m overweight and suffer from bad posture and often find that by the end of the day I have headaches and/or back pain. I’ve now attended 2 sessions with James Hunter and leave the chair feeling several stone lighter, clearheaded and re-invigorated. I find that I walk a little taller in the days following my sessions as my back feels completely relaxed.”

Margaret Wenham, Communications Executive, EDF Energy

## ARTICLES

### Stepping through pain barrier

#### Taken from the Gazette (South Shields) 19<sup>th</sup> September 2006

The name literally means ‘finger pressure’ in Japanese and it’s increasingly relieving the stresses and strains of modern life for people who’ve found that other, more conventional therapies just haven’t worked.

This is National Shiatsu Week, and features editor Janis Blower has been speaking to two South Tynesiders who reckon the treatment more than lives up to its Far Eastern promise.

Stephen Wiberg had played three solid hours of table tennis just a few days before we met. Nothing unusual in that for such a top league player. Except that there was a time when it would have left him hardly unable to get out of bed in the morning.

“I’d have had to take painkillers the night before and then, the next morning sit on the edge of the bed for half an hour before I could even think about moving,” he said.

The 45 year old father of three, who owns A & S Cycles in St Aidan’s Road in South Shields, spent seven years crippled by back pain.

“I think the cause was just wear and tear “, he said. “I’ve always been in the bike trade and I think continually lifting heavy bikes had just taken its toll. It was really bad – I used to walk around hunched up.”

Anti-inflammatory drugs and osteopathy only ever proved temporary solutions.

“The effects would only last a few weeks and then they would wear off,” he said.

Eventually, he plucked up the courage to try something different - Shiatsu, the eastern therapy which has its roots in Chinese medicine. He visited James Hunter whose practice, Shiatsu Works in Wawn Street in Shields, is seeing an increasing number of people turning to it for relief from both physical and stress related problems.

Stephen saw James once a month for four months and was astounded by the results.

“It’s not like osteopathy which just treats the damaged area. It goes from head to toe,” said Stephen. “The first time I went, I felt I could jump over a car when I came out, I felt that good. I’ve now been off painkillers for a long time.”

Said James: “Stephen had tried other various therapies in the past. After two treatments and undertaking some recommended stretching exercises, his back pain had gone.

“He still attends monthly treatments for health maintenance and for what he calls to-ups.”

More and more people are becoming aware of Shiatsu, said James

“Word of mouth is getting around about its benefits and it’s now something that most people in South Tyneside have heard of. I have clients who initially come with physical problems, such as joint, back and shoulder problems, sports injuries repetitive strain injury etc. The negative effects of stress, in particular, are something which I am seeing regularly”.

### Conditions

“The number of people who come with stress-related conditions is on the increase. They range from headaches, sleep problems, fatigue, emotional problems, muscular aches in shoulders, neck, back, and digestive Sugen conditions like irritable bowel syndrome, also mouth and stomach ulcers. Stress also contributes to, and aggravates, chronic conditions like osteo/rheumatoid arthritis.”

A shiatsu session usually lasts an hour.

“It’s very nurturing and deeply relaxing, which is something people aren’t used to experiencing anymore,” said James. “People keep coming back to experience shiatsu on a regular basis as it is such an effective therapy which helps them to maintain their health and wellbeing”.

James will be offering fee taster treatments at the Health Works information shop in Fowler Street on Thursday between 10am and 3pm. To book a place, telephone Mike Lowthian at Health Works on 497 5907. Shiatsu Works, telephone 536 1309, or visit [www.shiatsuworks.co.uk](http://www.shiatsuworks.co.uk)

## **Further Reading**

**Backcare** [www.backcare.org.uk](http://www.backcare.org.uk)