

Alameda Health System

Internal Company Blog

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Unless you were on the world's longest vacation, you are fully aware that the bay's very own Golden State Warriors won the 2015 NBA Championships, and the excitement of their first victory in over 40 years was felt around the bay. What you may not have known is that two of Alameda Health System's own acupuncturists, Kil-Young (Ky) Yu, L.Ac., and Christopher Randle, L.Ac. were a part of (and have been for the past 2 years) the Warrior's Medical Team which not only included acupuncturists, but also orthopedic physicians, physical therapists, sleep therapists and other types of specialty clinical practitioners.

Said sportscaster Nathan Diggmann:

"[The Warriors] were clearly blessed with excellent health. Though there were some minor injuries on the team, they were essentially just bumps and bruises in the grand scheme of things. While other teams struggled to grind it out with pieces missing for large portions of the season, Golden State was able to avoid the injury bug."

According to both Ky and Christopher, the supreme health of the Warriors could be attributed to the integrative medical approach JoHan Wang (Warrior's Director of Athletic Performance) took to putting his medical team together.

"He ran a tight ship," said Christopher, *"and had the insight to bring in acupuncturists."*

What you may be asking yourself right now, why did JoHan feel the need to bring in acupuncturists to be part of a medical team of elite athletes?

JoHan understood the importance of a holistic approach to a healthy body and keeping his players in tip top shape wasn't just about caring for the players once they were injured, but also giving them the tools they needed to keep from getting injured in the first place.

Acupuncture was one of those tools.

The term “acupuncture” describes a family of procedures involving the stimulation of points on the body using a variety of techniques including the use of very thin, disposable, stainless steel needles. Acupuncture attempts to adjust what in Traditional Chinese Medicine is known as “qi” or “life force / energy,” in order to heal and prevent injury.

Both Ky and Christopher pursued the field of acupuncture for different, but similar reasons. For Ky, it was bearing witness to the endless suffering and tragic death of his mother who passed away at the age of 49 from colon cancer. It was one of those life moments that make him stop, and take pause. Ky questioned his path in life and come to the conclusion that (1) he wanted to do something that made him happy, and (2) he wanted to contribute to the greater good of humanity.

“People suffer so needlessly,” said Ky, “I’m blessed, humbled and very grateful for the opportunity to teach people how their issues are preventable with simple lifestyle changes.”

For Christopher acupuncture, or Traditional Chinese Medicine in general, became a career pursuit after he witnessed a fellow Tai Chi student, who had struggled with MS for 7 years, overcome paralysis and begin walking within one-year of taking an integrative approach to her medical care, which included acupuncture.

“It’s so wonderful to treat the patients that come to Highland Hospital,” said Christopher, “They don’t have much money and they’ve never had the opportunity to experience this type of medicine. They’re so appreciative!”

Ky and Christopher are part of a team of 12-15 acupuncturists in the Department of Integrative Medicine (DIM) at Highland Hospital who donate their time, twice a week to provide services to over 700 patients annually. These patients are predominantly referred by AHS medical and nursing staff. By donating their time, these practitioners combat the simple fact that Medicare and Medicaid don’t fully cover the cost of these services.



Dr. Amy Matecki, MD L.Ac.,
Division Chief of the DIM, is looking
to expand clinic services to meet
requests from post-op patients,
Palliative Care, Hematology-

Oncology, and other service areas within the AHS network.

The Integrative Medicine discipline includes a host of Traditional Chinese Medicine practices: acupuncture, massage, acupressure, herbal medicine, nutrition, meditation, qi gong, tai chi, and more. Today, integrative medical treatments like acupuncture are being increasingly recognized by mainstream health practitioners for their effectiveness in treating illness. In fact the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the World Health Organizations (WHO) recognized the effectiveness of acupuncture in treating many conditions including:

- Chemotherapy-induced and postoperative nausea and vomiting
- Dental pain
- Fibromyalgia
- Headaches, including tension and migraine headaches
- Labor pain
- Low back pain
- Neck pain
- Osteoarthritis
- Menstrual cramps

“Integrative medicine may enhance patient care quality and lower health care costs because it is less invasive, and can be more efficient, and more effective than Western-style medicine in some applications,” said Director of Integrative Medicine, Alex Feng, L.Ac., OMD, PhD.

Alameda Health System is believed to be the first public medical center in the US to offer comprehensive inpatient and outpatient acupuncture by traditional (non-physician) Chinese medicine practitioners as well as by physicians, a service which began at Highland Hospital in May 2011. The DIM is run by Dr. Matecki and Dr. Feng.

The goal of the DIM is to promote an integrative model of Eastern and Western medicine which includes direct patient care, teaching and research. The DIM just completed a 6 month study, led by Dr. Colin Feeney and Dr. Matecki, on the feasibility of acupuncture in the ICU. The results of this study will be presented sometime this year.

To learn more about the Department of Integrative Medicine, including its research projects, [click here](#). To get a calendar of when acupuncturists will be on site for employees only, [click here](#).

