

Cure Autoimmune Encephalitis with Western and Chinese Medicine

By Tseng Hsiu-Ying

Miss Liu suddenly passed out in Sept. 2017 and was hospitalized twice within a month. Her illness progressed so fast that she was immobile and was not breathing spontaneously, and during which her family received numerous calls from both hospitals that she was in a critical condition, and that the chance for her to regain consciousness is slim to none, and that they should let her go. After transferring to Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital, with the collaborative effort between the Western and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), where the TCM focused on protecting and waking the brain and the Western medicine confirmed her diagnosis as autoimmune encephalitis, a rare disease, after unconscious for half a year, Liu finally regained consciousness, and the family was extremely glad that they did not forfeit hope.



Neurologist Lin Shu-Han is explaining Ms. Liu's MRI.

Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital Neurologist Lin Shu-Han pointed out, diagnosing a complex case is time consuming, and it is precisely because the treatments in the first two hospitals were ineffective that prompted them to seek an alternative solution.

The onset of 37-year-old Liu's condition was rather violent. In Sept. 2017, while Liu was on her way to work, what was supposed to be a 5 minute drive turned into a 90 minutes of horrendous struggle, and by the time she arrived at work, she was experiencing delusional symptoms. After she was hospitalized, her neurologist draw out some spinal fluid for testing, and suspect her symptoms to be caused by herpesviral encephalitis. Liu was discharged after half a month of treatment, and less than 10 days her condition worsened and was hospitalized again. Three days later she went into a coma, could no longer move her limbs nor breathe spontaneously, and had to rely on endotracheal intubation to breath. She was subsequently transferred to another hospital where she received the same diagnosis as the previous one. Not only were the treatment ineffective, her condition worsened rapidly, with it the hope of recovery was fading. Liu was the patient of TCM doctor Chuang Chia-Ying at Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital before the incident, so her family decided to transfer her to Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital for a combined treatment of Western medicine and TCM. Later Nov., Liu was transferred to Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital. Her condition continued to deteriorate. The medical team worked collaboratively to bring Liu a glimmer a hope. The thought of autoimmune encephalitis crossed



Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital integrated Western medicine and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). From the left is Dr. Ou Tsung-Yi performing acupuncture, Dr. Chuang Chia-Ying preparing Chinese medicine, and Dr. Lin Shu-Han correctly diagnosed the disease and medicated accordingly, helping Liu returning to her normal life.

Neurologist Lin Shu-Han's mind. Not to miss any chance, he encouraged Liu's family to do a self-pay test. The test result, which came back before Liu was sent to the care center, proved that she was suffering from an extremely rare disease known as autoimmune encephalitis.

Dr. Lin Shu-Han pointed out that traditional encephalitis are caused by bacteria or virus, but autoimmune encephalitis occurs when autoimmune system attacks central nervous system. The reason why Liu was not diagnosed in the previous hospitals has to do with the fact that her MRI showed typical signs of viral encephalitis, he added, and it is possible that the autoimmune encephalitis was triggered by a virus, or the encephalitis is both viral and autoimmune-related.

With the diagnosis confirmed, Dr. Lin administered heavy dosage of

steroid to suppress Liu's antibody, then neutralized her autoimmune antibodies with immunoglobulin. The symptoms improved significantly after the treatment, as many conditions associated with the central nervous system gradually subsided. Liu was progressing so fast that she could talk, listen, and respond. Coupled with rehabilitation and TCM to stabilize her condition, she regained consciousness and control of her limbs at an incredible rate. Dr. Lin remembered clearly how Liu hold his hands excitedly the moment she awoke.

Physiatrist Hung Ta-Wei was overjoyed to see Liu's miraculous progression. TCM physician Chuang Chia-Ying and Ou Tsung-Yi pointed out that, from the TCM perspective, even when encountering a rare and complicated disease, TCM emphasizes on two main goals: strengthening health and dispel pathogenic factors. They would adjust Liu's medication constantly to correspond to the rapid changes of the disease, coupled with acupuncture to dredge her occluded meridians so the medicine could reach the lesion, and eventually overturned her conditions. According to Liu's husband, during the 6 month period she was diagnosed with over dozen diseases by different hospitals, varying from herpes virus, Japanese encephalitis, mad cow disease, to some other weird medical terms, and the family was notified



Liu's muscle strength is recovering with rehabilitation.

numerous times that she went critical. No one believed that Liu could recover, that a miracle can happen. They all tried to convince the family to give up. But they didn't give up, and they were fortunate enough to find Liu's saviors. On Jan. 2, Liu was diagnosed with autoimmune encephalitis and was treated immediately. On the following day she was able to move her entire body. After intense rehabilitation, her muscle strength recovered. Liu was eventually discharged 2 months later and successfully returned to her work.