

Special
Report

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Rehabilitation After Brain Damage Makes It Possible



**Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital Rehabilitation
through Joint Efforts of Western and
Traditional Chinese Medicine**

By Chen Hui-Fang

Yang San (Last name Yang and “San” is Japanese pronunciation for Mr.) is seventy-two years old. He has severe brain disease. Two years ago, he was admitted to the Taitung Hospital for hydrocephalus, meningitis and stroke. He was then released from the hospital after two months of treatment. Even though Yang San survived serious brain damage and neuropathy, he suffers continuous

sequelae such as hearing impairment, language obstacles and weaknesses. Often, he is confused, unable to tell day from night, and is emotionally unstable.

Yang San has three children and they either stay in another country or work in other Taiwan cities. His seventy-year-old wife is his only caretaker. After his discharge from the hospital, outside helpers were hired to take care of him.

However, because he was extremely difficult to handle, none of the helpers stayed long. He also was sent to a nursing home. But there his health degraded rapidly. The family decided to take him back. Mrs. Yang closed her home rental business and hired a helper just to take care of him. Meanwhile, Yang San went to Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital for physical therapy, followed by Traditional Chinese medicine treatments.

Yang San made himself known in the hospital because of his thundering voice. Being emotionally unstable, he would often yell loudly. At the beginning, hospital staff thought he was fighting for something, but eventually they got used to the unpleasant sound. The hospital

staff knew that Yang San was around as soon as they heard a sputum clearing sound beginning in the elevator from the physical therapy room in the basement all the way up to fifth floor Chinese



Mrs. Yang brings up the brain diseases of her husband in the Chinese Medicine Department. Dr. Tsou Mu-Fan wants to see the patient first.



Chinese Medicine Dr. Lee Ying-Te took over Yang San's treatment. With the combined treatment of Chinese Medicine and physical therapy, Yang San's condition obviously improved.

medicine waiting area.

It has been a full year since Yang San started the Chinese medicine treatment under Dr. Tsou Mu-Fan. Dr. Tsou recalls that during the first visit, Mrs. Yang told her that other doctors all indicated that it would be a miracle if Yang San would one day stand up and perform some simple movement. Dr. Tsou wasn't sure that miracle would come true. But she wanted to give it a try.

At his first visit to Dr. Tsou's office, March 29, 2021, Yang San was in a high back wheelchair, with a nasogastric tube inserted, and a urine bag on him. He was confused and uttered meaningless words. Since that date, he underwent

routine twice a week Chinese medicine treatments.

Dr. Tsou's treatment focuses on the acupuncture points of the head, in order to stimulate the brain nerves. She also



Three physical therapists utilized various methods to help Yang San go through the difficult stage of recovery.



applies low frequency electric current to the patient's limbs, and at the same time she uses infrared rays to improve the blood flow of the deep vessels. In about a month's time, Yang's condition notably improved. He was in higher spirits. He could eat with his own mouth, without the help of the nasogastric tube. He could open his eyes and look around. His hands could move much more easily. He was able to say his and his wife's names. Dr. Tsou also encouraged the medical staff to interact with Yang, helping him practice reading simple words and doing simple counting, and encouraging him to recognize people. On every return visit, Dr. Tsou would ask him a question such as "Grand Pa Yang San, who am I?" When Dr. Tsou started her advanced studies, Yang's treatment was turned to Dr. Lee Ying-Te. Thanks to the cooperation of Yang San and his family's support, the subsequent treatments were effectively continued, and the improvements reported were even ahead of schedule.

As Yang's Chinese medicine treatment was progressing well, his physical therapy was also continuing. He went to the therapy center once a week and took one and one-half hours of training each time. The therapy included using a standing bicycle and treadmill and gait training. Other exercises included walking on crutches and standing on



Physical therapist Lin Cheng-Nan bought up a mathematical problem to test Yang San's arithmetical ability. Yang San read out the problem in Japanese. Lin then requests for answer from Yang San.

an inclined bed. During this training the therapist, Lin Cheng-Nan, usually utilized voice, light and word games to enhance and stimulate Yang's senses. Such stimulation would also improve short-term memory and face recognition.

With the help of the Chinese medicine treatment, Yang San was rapidly improving. Therapist Lin Cheng-Nan said, "At the beginning Yang San was not very cooperative. He would sit down on the machine halfway through the treadmill session, for example. He would also throw the ball away instead of passing it back to the therapist. He would make all kinds of noises when he was in a bad mood, he would cry loudly when he remembered his long-ago deceased parents, and he would also say dirty words and beat up people.



The three physical therapists take turns conducting conversations with Yang San using the white board. Other patients stay in class to witness the interesting treatment.

Both myself and Chien-Chi had been his victims.” His day care giver also complained that Yang San once bit her hand. Lin Cheng-Nan handled Yang San’s emotional behavior calmly. When asked if he ever lost his patience, Cheng-Nan said, “No! I understand that he is suffering from his illness.”

As Yang San’s condition improved, the frequency of his negative moods decreased significantly. He would actively wave his hand and say hello to the hospital staff. In the afternoon of Thursday, April 7th, people heard cheerful, laughing sounds from the basement physical therapy room. Within the conversation,

one could recognize some Japanese words. It was Yang San teaching Japanese, and the student was Cheng-Nan, his therapist. This was because Cheng-Nan wanted to encourage Yang San to speak out more. Therefore, Cheng-Nan suggested Yang San be his Japanese teacher. From then on, Yang San became a class teacher. Whatever Cheng-Nan wrote on the white board, Yang San would convert into Japanese, instantly, even if it was a mathematical problem. However, in front of other two physical therapists, Maidaer Ispalidav and Pan Jian-Zhi, Yang San would automatically switch to Taiwanese or Mandarin.

The physical therapists used a white board to communicate with Yang San because his hearing ability was damaged. So vocal conversations routinely led to misunderstandings. Hand and/or body language worked better. They also discovered that Yang San attempted to read the words on the badges of the hospital staff. With this discovery in mind, Cheng-Nan tried to communicate to Yang San with pen and paper and the results were positive. This new tool of communication significantly improved Yang San's training. Later, instead of pen and paper, Cheng-Nan would utilize the more convenient white board. When Yang was working hard

in his training, Cheng-Nan would write "You are doing very well today!" on the board. Some days when Yang San was loafing, the words on the board would nevertheless remain encouraging.

On certain days, when Yang was in extremely high spirits, the therapist would increase the variety of his training, such as by printing out the lyrics of certain songs for him to sing, passing the ball around, etc. When the therapist tried to get Yang San to play a game of 'carrot squat', Yang San first happily accepted the challenge. However, when he realized that the moves of the game involved 'squat down and stand up', he immediately shook his head and pointed



Yang and the rehab team put up interesting posture for a group picture.

to his handicapped legs. The class understandingly switched to take a group picture. Yang San gladly went along with this and posed in the same posture as others in the class.

Mrs. Yang indicated that the doctor told her that it would be very difficult for her husband to walk on his own feet again. The path to achieve that goal would be very long and hard. So, she didn't think it would be possible to reach the goal. Her best hope would be that Yang San's condition would not get worse. However, with the dual treatment of Chinese medicine and physical therapy, Yang San recovered about 70% of his memory. Still, he still needed help

to walk. His recovery is way ahead of her anticipation. By witnessing the interesting interaction between her husband and the physical therapists, Mrs. Yang is full of gratitude and hope. She said, "They take care of Grand Pa full heartedly. To express my appreciation, I am bringing some fruits and refreshments for everybody to share."

It has been two years since Yang San's first illness. It is a hard task for Mrs. Yang to take care of him. She lost some weight. The path to full recovery ahead is still long and hard. Hopefully, with the love of relatives and professional medical expertise, the light at the end of the tunnel is near.



Mrs. Yang brought in 'Sun Cake' from Taichung to share with the therapists.

Feedback from the Daughter

To be very honest, when my father started the treatment in the Tzu Chi Hospital, he was in terrible condition. That was not just his mental condition. He was totally unable to control his limbs and his emotions. I remember that during the first rehabilitation session, he was yelling, screaming and not willing to cooperate. However, the patience of our therapist, Lin Cheng-Nan, overcame all the difficulties and brought father to the right direction. Lin also provided us with the medical insight and taught us how to overcome the obstacles. He made us realize that father's mental instability was just part of the process. So, he advised us to be patient and be confident. In addition, Lin told us the Chinese medicine treatment is a part of father's rehabilitation process. At that time, this was unthinkable to me. I thought, at that moment, father was not able to calm down for just five minutes, how could he lie down and endure the unbearable acupuncture? But, like a miracle, father's condition clearly improved with dual treatment of physical therapy and Chinese medicine. With all this, all I can say is to thank the medical team of Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital (including the home nurse Chiu Yen-Ting). Thank you all, thanks for your professional medical skills and your love and care that accompanied my father to go through his rehabilitation process. Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital may be just a small hospital in a small town, but ever since my father's illness I realized that besides modern medical equipment, there are more important factors for a good hospital, including the patience and love of the medical staff and the care of the patient's families. Sincerely, accept my gratitude again. (Add a +)