



# Douliou

## Persistent Coughing Caused by Sympathetic Type of Cervical Spondylosis

October 27, 2020

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, wearing a face mask becomes a habit for the general public. Furthermore, people are extremely sensitive with coughing.

For the 38 year-old Ms. Chiu, who has been suffering persistent symptoms of dizziness, stuffy nose and coughing for many years. It is extremely embarrassing to be in public with these COVID like symptoms during the pandemic. To avoid those suspicious eyes from the crowd, Chiu visited many medical centers and hospitals. But no doctor could pinpoint the source of her problems. Until one day, Superintendent Chien Jui-Teng of the Douliou Tzu Chi Hospital diagnosed her problem as Sympathetic type of Cervical Spondylosis. Her years of suffering was then relieved through surgery.

Chiu stated that over three years ago she was involved in a motor cycle accident. Shortly after that, she was bothered by frequent headaches, dizziness, scapular soreness, indigestion, chest tightness and short of breath. However, tests after tests in major



**Ms. Chiu suffered for many years and visited many hospitals without identifying the culprit of her symptoms, until Superintendent Chien Jui-Teng of Douliou Tzu Chi Hospital (first from left) solved her problems.**

hospitals, the source of her problems was still unknown. She even consulted psychiatrist without any success. As time goes on, her problem became more persistent. In addition to headaches, her blood pressure elevated, feeling palpitations, difficult to breath, tearing

pain on her neck and shoulder. Yet, the most threatening symptoms were the persistent stuffy nose and coughing. These problems were getting worse. The sound of coughing scared friends and family members, even her children. Some of her friends told her to just relax and let the problem go away with time.

Determined to identify the cause of her illness, Chiu continued to visit different specialists. She even took a full body MRI test, paid out of her own pocket. The only thing they discovered was degeneration of intervertebral discs, between the fourth and fifth, and between the fifth and sixth disks of her cervical spine. The specialists told her that the degeneration was mild and had nothing to do with her symptoms. Her problems such as headaches, dizziness and blood pressure should be cured with proper medications.

With her positive attitude, Chiu did not give up. During one visit to her ENT clinic in March of 2020, Chiu read an article in the “Tzu Chi Medical and Nursing Care” Journal (Chinese version). The article described a case of Sympathetic Nerve Problem of the Cervical Spine. The symptoms discussed in the article were similar to what she had for many years. Chiu saw the light of hope at the end of a tunnel.

With the help of the Google map, Chiu went from Taipei to Douliou to

find Dr. Chien who confirmed she had Sympathetic Cervical Spondylosis. On September 30, 2020, Dr. Chien conducted an intervertebral discs removal and fusion surgery. After the surgery, all of her problems such as headaches, dizziness, chest tightness, and short of breath, were significantly improved. Even the most threatening stuffy nose and coughing were getting much better instantly.

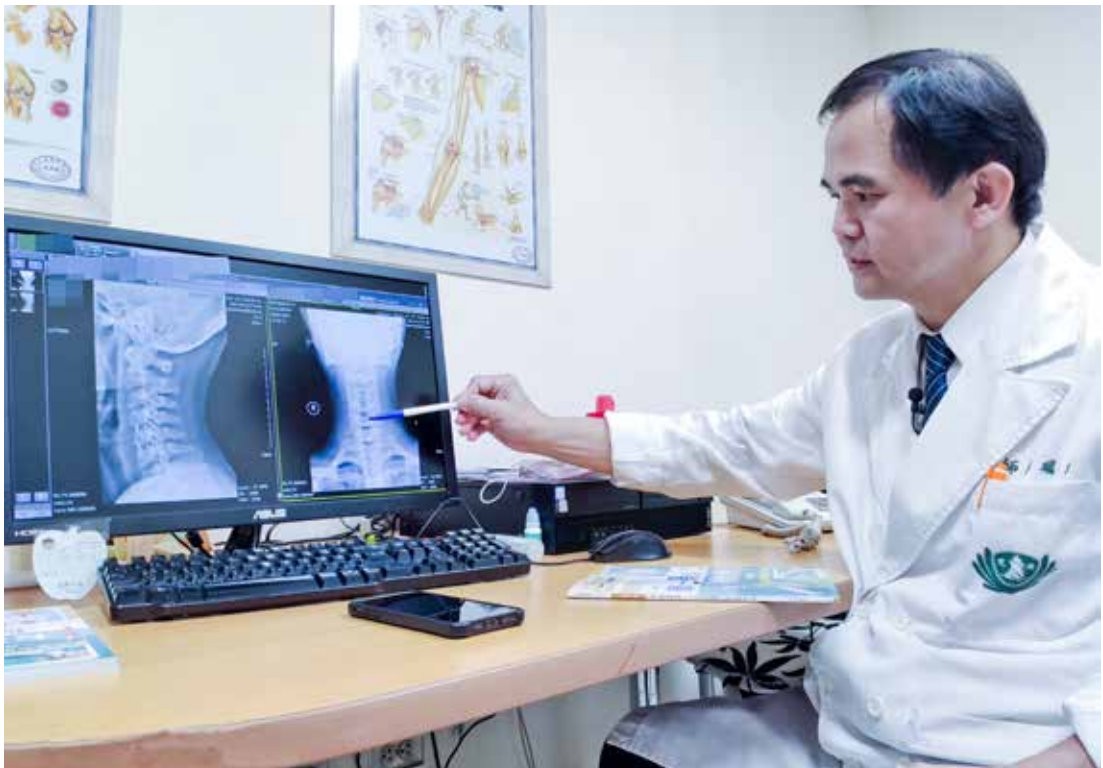
Superintendent Chien indicates that the sensory and motor nerves control the activities of our arms and legs. Similarly, the sympathetic nerves integrate and regulate the activities of our important organs. Our brain circulation, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal tract, skin glands, urinary system, as well as our five senses (i.e. ears, nose, eyes, mouth and tongue) are all controlled by these nerves. When degeneration intervertebral disk of our cervical spine occurs, it “irritates” the surrounding sympathetic nerves. The confused nerves trigger many discomfort of our body. That could be headaches, dizziness, tinnitus, stuffy nose, dry cough, blurred vision, palpitations, chest tightness, stomach upset, difficulty urinating, and many more problems.

Dr. Chien also states that unfortunately, most physicians only correlate cervical spine degeneration with ‘typical’ sensory and motor nerves

disorder symptoms, such as: numbness in foot and/or hand, weakness of limbs, walking unbalanced. They usually fail to correlate the cervical spine degeneration with the ‘atypical symptoms’, even though MRI or X-ray images clearly indicate degeneration or dislocation of the cervical spine degeneration. Therefore, the proper treatment is delayed and causes unnecessary frustration of the patient.

Not knowing where to seek medical advice is a dilemma of patients with similar symptoms. Dr. Chien suggests

that after all specialists were visited and the possibility of all major diseases were excluded, cervical spine disorder should be considered as the cause of the problem. Dr. Chien also thinks that because cervical spine disorder requires timely and proper treatments, the patient should not only rely on Google search and messages from friends. Dr. Chien even made a resolution to conduct seminars and to publish research results in academic journals to educate the general public and for the benefits of more patients.



**Superintendent Chien Jui-Teng indicates that after all specialists were visited and the possibility of all major diseases were excluded and yet the “culprit” is not identified, cervical spine disorder should be considered.**