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7

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PRIMETIME

## Beyond medication

Working with the body can provide effective pain relief

Whether it is from a headache, sore joints or an injury, pain can negatively affect quality of life. Finding effective pain relief can be challenging. Pain medications may temporarily provide relief but may also cause drowsiness, nausea and other undesirable side effects. Here are two alternatives to medications that some have found to be effective.

### Energy from within

The East West Healing Center in Lombard offers patients traditional Chinese medicine treatments for pain.

"The biggest difference between Western medicine and Chinese medicine is that with Western medicine, medicine is brought from the outside to the inside of the body," explains Dr. Leon Chen, doctor of Oriental Medicine. "With Chinese medicine, we use the body's energy within to heal itself." Through the use of acupuncture, manipulation and herbs, Chen helps relieve pain. Chinese medicine is based on the concept of the body functioning as a whole with all parts connected. When there is an imbalance that blocks the flow of energy throughout the body, action is taken to restore the balance.

Chen completed his education in Traditional Chinese Medication in China. He has completed extensive research in the field and received several international awards for his work. He is licensed for acupuncture in the United States and also is an acupuncture instructor. When diagnosing a patient, Chen places three fingers on the inside of both the patient's wrists to tune in the strength and flow of the body's energy in the different body channels. Using this reading, he decides upon treatment.

One type of treatment is Tui Na,

a form of massage and manipulation to establish a more harmonious flow of energy. Another treatment option is acupuncture where thin needles are placed at specific points throughout the body to mobilize energy.

"The most common question the first time is 'does it hurt?' Most people feel nothing," says Chen. "The needles have to be placed at the right angle in the right place."

After placing the needles, the patient is asked to rest for 30 to 45 minutes before the needles are removed. Some patients experience quick relief but others need multiple treatments. In some cases, Chen also gives patients an herbal tonic.

Many seek help at the center for back pain but Chen also sees patients seeking relief from neck pain, tendinitis, plantar fasciitis and other conditions. Deerfield resident, Katherine Ritter, initially went to the center for upper back issues several years ago.

"Dr. Chen was able to relieve the back pain with acupuncture and Tu Na," says the 67-year-old. "As I age, I have learned to listen to my body and when I feel the pain coming on, I go see Dr. Chen. Afterwards, I feel like a million bucks."

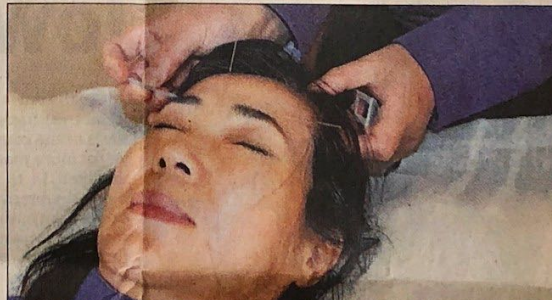
Since the initial treatment, Ritter and her husband have sought relief for several other pain issues. "I really like his treatments because they work, there are no side effects and they are non-invasive," she says.

Most of Chen's patients are women. The average age of both men and women is between 40 and 70 years old. Some insurance companies cover Chinese medicine treatments but it currently is not covered by Medicare.

"But Medicare is investigating Chinese medicine for back pain and hopefully will cover it soon," says Chen.



Photo courtesy of GhFITLAB



Top: Greg Hachaj works with a client on lower back pain.  
Bottom: Dr. Leon Chen treats a variety of pain issues with acupuncture.

Chen also see patients in Chicago and Glenview. For additional information, visit [eastwesthealingcenter.net](http://eastwesthealingcenter.net).

### Using muscles

Greg Hachaj maintains that the best way to address many types of pain is to repair the body rather than mask the pain with medications. Using his unique method at GhFITLAB locations in Glenview

and Chicago, Hachaj helps his clients return muscles to a fully functional status.

"What we do is not personal fitness training or physical therapy," notes Hachaj. "It falls somewhere between those two."

Hachaj developed his method from personal experience. As a young man living in Poland, he played soccer professionally until he broke his knee twice. He then

decided to come to the United States to pursue body building.

"When you are a body builder, you damage the muscle to build it up," Hachaj explains.

About 15 years ago, Hachaj was experiencing pain and exhaustion from his many injuries and strain. "Then I thought about trying to use muscles to relieve pain rather than create pain. By strengthening the muscle closest to the injury, I was able to repair the injured muscle. I found I could bring it back to functioning correctly. We use muscles in a medical way."

Hachaj works closely with each client to carefully repair muscles.

"We do this without sweating, without exhaustion and without feeling sore afterwards," he notes. "Every treatment is unique based on the pain being experienced."

A large number of the people who come to GhFITLAB are looking for relief from back pain but shoulder and knee pain are also common. Hachaj also works with clients who have undergone joint replacement but are still experiencing pain. In recent months, he has helped recovered COVID clients regain strength after their prolonged battle with the disease.

David, a Chicago area resident who uses the GhFITLAB, started having neck pain when he was in his late 50s.

"I tried to ignore it but it began to impact my quality of life," he explains. He sought help from his regular doctor and was given several treatments from shots to other procedures.

"Nothing was working. My wife who has MS was going to the GhFITLAB for treatment and she said I should try it."

After several sessions, the pain began to ease. "I have been going for two sessions a week for about a year and I have almost no pain. It is very structured and everything that I do has a reason. I don't break a sweat as we isolate a muscle and work it. It has been amazing."

Most clients come for two one-hour sessions per week for a period of two to three months. However, some clients need up to six months of treatment to be fully functioning again. The treatments are currently not covered by insurance. Hachaj has treated former Chicago Bears team members successfully and has earned a reputation of being able to relieve pain when other methods have failed.

For additional information, go to [GhFITLAB.com](http://GhFITLAB.com).