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Chinese Medicine heals chronic pancreatitis

Treating the inflammation, blockage and pain of pancreatitis without drugs

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In December of 2006 I was in the emergency ward of a local hospital in Montreal visiting a sick friend who was dying of cancer. I was leaving the ward when I spotted an acquaintance of mine, Mike J., lying on a stretcher in the hallway. The pain from his inflamed pancreas was excruciating and all doctors could give him was morphine. Mike was sad and depressed and it was at that moment I offered my help and he scheduled an appointment to come and see me. Chinese medicine has helped to change Mike's life. This is his story.

Mike had a total of four pancreatic attacks over a two year period with two of them resulting in hospital stays. He attributed these attacks to a poor diet, mostly of fast food high in fat and sugar. After his last hospital stay (December 2006), doctors ran blood tests and a CT scan and confirmed he had chronic pancreatitis. Through further testing with ultrasound they found the head of the pancreas to be swollen and they discovered a 7mm stone inside the pancreatic duct. Mike took immediate action by modifying his diet and starting massage therapy.



Western medicine defines pancreatitis as a chronic inflammation of the pancreas which if not successfully treated can result in diabetes or pancreatic cancer. Chinese medicine focuses on strengthening the spleen, transporting dampness, invigorating blood and clearing heat which helps to control symptoms such as diarrhoea, emaciation, malnutrition and abdominal distending pain.

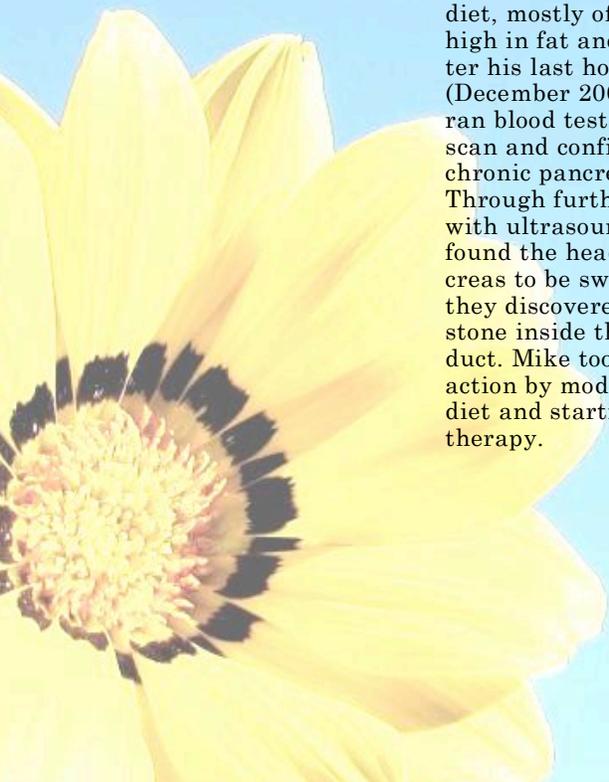
Pancreatic Enzymes

Mike's physician put him on pancreatic enzymes (Cotazym ECS-8) right away after he was diagnosed in January 2007. He started taking one capsule before snacks and two capsules before meals.

Massage Therapy

Mike came to see me for Chinese massotherapy once per week. I started working on the acupressure points for digestion (spleen, triple burner, large and small intestine) immediately. Many of the acupoints were blocked and he complained about the pain when I pushed on them confirming that his digestion was very badly blocked. After each massage he felt the heaviness and stiffness in his stomach prior to massage would disappear. We added in abdominal massage using Tai Chi circles (clockwise circles around the navel) to stimulate digestion and dissipate pain. Mike reacted well to this. Chinese massotherapy seemed to benefit Mike a great deal.

For information on
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Chi Kung

About five weeks into 2007 I added Chi Kung to Mike's regimen. Since Mike identified stress as also being a factor in his pancreatic problems, as it turned out stress reduction was an important step in his recovery. Chi Kung consists of breathing exercises, stances and movements designed to reduce stress and restore health. Mike was taught Chi Kung over a six-week period. He was instructed to practice on his own at least 3-4 times per week for at least 25 minutes per session. He reported that his stress was greatly reduced and he enjoyed practicing to a tape we made at the office with my voice guiding the meditation. Mike also reported that the MRI technician was impressed with how he (Mike) could control his breathing during follow-up exams resulting in excellent MRI images. He attributed his breathing control to his Chi Kung practice.

Antioxidants

About 27 weeks into his recovery I suggested to Mike that he consider using antioxidants to help him to reduce swelling and pain. I had read a study done on pancreatitis patients in Manchester U.K. where doctors had successfully treated pancreatitis patients with antioxidants. Mike started taking the recommended antioxidants for about five months after which he stopped, as he claimed he felt no affect.



Chinese Patent Medicines

I suggested two different Chinese patent herbal medicines to Mike. The first one was called Xiao Chai Hu Tang Wan. I recommended this formula because of its excellent track record with acute pancreatitis. Mike tried this formula for almost five months and discontinued using it because it seemed to have no affect for him. After more research I recommended a second patent medicine called Shen Ling Bai Zhu San. I recommended this formula to Mike specifically because of its benefits to the spleen. It expels dampness which is what causes chronic pancreatitis according to Chinese medicine. We started this formula at week 60 and are still monitoring results.

Results

In the summer of 2007 Mike's pancreatic biopsy results showed no signs of cancerous activity. Endoscopic ultrasound found that the 7mm blockage was gone and the inflammation had been greatly reduced. At this point Mike believed that the diet change (including eating less and eliminating alcohol), receiving regular massotherapy and practicing Chi Kung were what helped him most. At the present time he is still following the same protocol and he hasn't had any attacks for over 16 months. I will continue to follow Mike in his recovery process.

For a more in-depth look at this case, please visit the Case Studies page at risingtao.ca.



Craig Cormack is a consultant at the McGill University Sports Medicine Clinic, a member of the National Association of Naturopaths and President of l'Association de massage chinois Tuina du Québec.

Craig and Rising Tao Integrative Health will work with you, your doctor, therapist or caregiver to help you in your healing process. Visit our website for more information.

Rising Tao also offers you courses and sessions in Chinese Massotherapy, Tai Chi and Chi Kung. For details call Craig Cormack directly at 514 369 7860.