

The Migraine Syndrome - A Lifetime Condemnation to Pain

By Shujin

© 1998 - 2008 All Rights Reserved

It was a Tuesday evening. No, Wait. Wednesday. Or was it Monday. Whatever day it was, it was my first migraine and the first day of a quarter century of pain, misery, and prescription drugs. My mind refuses to relive that infamous night. Though I do remember that it was October 12, 1972.

I was living and working in Tokyo, Japan for the US Military. I was with friends in my small one room accommodation on the fifth floor of the six-story building in the Pacific Stars and Stripes Compound. We were listening to records and just hanging-out, or so everyone tells me. According to my friends, the events of that night were very unnerving and scary. I do not remember any details of that night and had to rely on the recollections of friends to piece it all together.

I apparently, started acting irrationally and ended up in the fifth story window. A few of my friends pulled me back inside and said I was teary eyed and whimpering, so they put me on the bed. Within minutes, they said, I had slumped into a coma-like state. My lips and fingers were blue, my skin a pasty white. My breathing had slowed and pulse faint. Sweat covered my body. When my condition did not improve within a few hours, they decided to take me to the nearest military hospital some 2 hours away by car. As they were carrying me out, a Captain stopped them and after seeing my condition told them to forget the long ride and take me to a local Japanese Hospital. They tell me that I was issued last rites by the chaplain on the way to the car. I was in the hospital until I recovered from the migraine. I was then taken to the military hospital for follow-up care. All tests were negative.

The Japanese stay was followed with treatment at the Army hospital at US Army Depot Command, Japan. The first medication Western Medicine prescribed: 250mg of Thorazine. I was prescribed my first of an unbelievable amount of potent prescription drugs. I took my prescribed dosage that Friday night and went to bed. Still in a daze, I awoke and went next door for breakfast at six a.m. I was shocked to find the facility still closed. It was not Saturday but Sunday and on Sundays they served a buffet from 8 - 11 a.m. I had lost a whole day. From that day forward, I slowly became a zombie. My dosage steadily increased as the potency of my migraines increased. Only after I saw the movie the Exorcist and heard the doctors prescribe Thorazine for the girl who was possessed did I protest and had my medication changed.

My symptoms? I was always warned of my migraine episodes by numbness in my left hand beginning in my thumb and progressing across my fingers, up my arm, across my face and tongue, and subsequently down into my legs. My eyes, of course, were extremely sensitive to light, my scalp became sensitive to touch, my psyche felt like I was in a different dimension. Nausea and general lightness throughout my body was the precursor for the sheering pain that was to come. The actual pain was as if someone was inside my head trying to stab his way out with an ice pick. The pain was

indescribable. I could only think of what I could do to stop it or redirect my attention to areas of lesser pain. I have been told that I used to knock my head up against the wall to redirect my pain from my migraine. They used to call me Doctor Jekyll and Sergeant Hyde at work. At times they had to strap me into an office chair on wheels to take me out of the office to get me to the paramedics (coming to take me to the hospital). Once during my 24 year treatment, the doctors referred to my affliction as "psychomotor seizures" but soon returned to classic migraine headache syndrome.

I wish I could meet the person who named it a "headache". They apparently never suffered from the devastation of one. At this point, my migraines lasted from 6 -12 hours, 3-6 times a week. I woke up in the middle of the night, numb and at the onslaught of an episode. I was taking 250mgs of painkillers each day, every day of my life. I prayed each day that I could just return to my normal self. I felt that our insane asylums were not filled with insane people, only those with migraine who could not handle the pain. My family was robbed of a husband and father and I of a normal life. If I had not of been in the service; my medical bills and heavy prescriptions would have bankrupted us.

The first couple of weeks remain a blur to me. Even regressive hypnotism could not relieve the day of or days immediately following my first episode. The pain was so great that my mind will not, under any circumstances, re-experience that pain. So over the next three years, I saw a variety of Neurologists and had dozens of tests. I was placed on one drug after another. As my body adapted to one medication, they substituted another. A human guinea pig. I had no choice at this time: it was either side effects or the excruciating pain of the migraine. I have already described the extent of the pain so you know I had no choice. The side effects of my medication, at first, were subliminal. That is, I did not realize the effect they were having internally. I was in a daze continuously. My fellow workers describe me as really mellow and always on cloud nine. I honestly do not know how I even functioned back then. I revoked my own driving license. In Tokyo I jumped out of a moving car at the first sign of an attack (the numbing of my left thumb). "I" was driving the car at the time! I had become a Zombie. My whole life became a dream. My children had lost a father and my wife a husband.

At one point, my medication was changed and they forgot to tell me to have my white cell count checked monthly. Only when I returned to Japan six months later and saw a doctor who made me aware of the fact that the medication routinely depleted the white cell count. Luckily, my white cell count was acceptable. Meanwhile for the next 20 years, I changed medication as often as my body became tolerant of the current ones. AND I still had migraines while on meds but only about once or twice a week.

The only break was a two year period from 1981-1983. This is because in 1980 (while assigned in Japan), I was being railroaded out of the service (which is another story entirely, so let's say it was because of my heavy medication). I had 12 years in and was not about to forfeit my retirement benefits, so I decided to fight it. I was desperate. I saw a sign for acupuncture in the small Japanese town outside the base I lived on. So I built up the nerve and began treatment. What modern medicine could not

do in 6 years, he did in a matter of 3 treatments. I continued the treatments for another few months and then I was migraine free (relatively). One or two over the next eight months.

The Acupuncturist was an elderly Japanese gentleman in his seventies, yet he carried himself as a man of much fewer years. Thin, tall (for a Japanese), and agile in stature. He spoke no English to speak of. He rode a plain bicycle through the streets of the small town of Sagamihara. He did not own nor want to own a car. His office was on the second floor over a restaurant and was bare save a small desk, examining/treatment table, and a chair. The only instruments: a set of highly polished wooden acupressure prods, a couple of sets of acupuncture needles, and inline delivery needles. The requisite sterilizer sat on the table beside the instruments.

For the severity of my affliction, you would think this office would fall far short of successfully treating my migraine syndrome. As it turned out though, it was "modern" medicine with its multi-billion dollars of high tech equipment that fell short. CAT Scans, EKGs, EEGs, MRIs, X-rays, and more. Thorazine, Sansert, Inderal, Caffergot, Propanolol, Nitroglycerine, Motrin, Valium, Fiorinol, Pamelor and too many more to name. Treat the symptoms, never treat the cause. Each treatment had its own side effects which also ended up being treated. It seemed to always be the lesser of two evils (either the side effects from the drugs or the migraines) instead of none of them.

It was out of desperation that I finally overcame my fears and went to see him. The first visit was intimidating to say the least. I remember that, at that time, if I missed one dose of my medication, I would go into a migraine within a couple of hours. Without medication, my migraine would normally last 6-8 hours each and I would have normally 5-6 migraines each week. I would awaken in the middle of the night, my face and hands numb, a sharp excruciating pain behind my right eye. During a normal migraine, I would feel disassociated with reality. Numbness would start in my left thumb and spread across my hand. Up my arm and across my neck, cheek, tongue, and nose. Then the numbness spread down to my legs. My vision would blur. At this time the sharp stabbing pain would begin above my right eye. I became extremely sensitive to light, particularly fluorescent lights. I could only think of the intense pain that was to envelop my very being. This was the severity the acupuncturist would have to deal with.

After, obtaining my medical history and certifying that I had already been to a medical doctor, he examined me by running his hands over every inch of my scalp, face, neck, and shoulders. As his fingers passed over the crown of my head, he paused. In Japanese he remarked that I had been hit in the head with a heavy object when I was very young. He continued with his examination without waiting for a reply. As his fingers traced my vertebrae down my neck, he again paused. This time it was over my 4th vertebrae (C-4). Here he remarked that I had broken my neck recently. He then proceeded to finish the examination. Meanwhile I started to question my whole decision and his competency. I mean, with his bare hands, he diagnosed an accident that supposedly happened 26 years previously. AND what about using his bare hands

to determine that I had broken my neck? Come on now, I think I would have known if I had broken my neck! I was seriously questioning my sanity at this point. He broke my train of thought when he said that I would have to cease all medication if I wanted his help. I mumbled to him that I would start having migraines again within 2 hours after missing my next dose. I said quite clearly that it was no meds or no help. Since there were so many variables that could be causing my particular migraines, he would have to know if his combination of nerve stimulation was working or not. If I were to remain on medication, he would not know which was stopping the attacks; his treatment or the medication. Even though this made sense, coupled with what had just transpired, I still decided not to go through with the acupuncture treatment. I apologized to him, thanked him for his examination and paid him his fee. I left his office not to return and thinking the old man to be a complete quack.

Here we are again. It is the evening after my experience with the Acupuncturist. I really did not know how I was going to make it through the discharge the military was planning. The meds were extensive but they were a doctor's prescription and a military doctor's to boot. I just knew acupuncture was not the way. I started to put away some old photos and clippings in our family photo album. Hey, these pictures are from Germany when I was just a lad. My first haircut! He he he - this is me climbing up the slide the wrong way. What kids will do.....wait a minute! Wait a minute! This picture was taken moments before the accident. A kid on top of the slide, let loose of a Tonka toy truck down the slide. I looked up and saw the truck on collision course with me, turned around and booked down the slide. The truck met up with my head, leaving a sizeable gash in my skull. It hit me exactly where the acupuncturist said I was hit with a heavy object when I was small. If he was right about that, could he be right about breaking my neck and not knowing it. Couldn't he?

I made an appointment with the Navy Neurologist the next day. At least, I will get an X-ray and put it all to rest. The X-ray will dispel any rumors the acupuncturist may be fabricating. During my appointment, I explained what had transpired with the Acupuncturist to the Neurologist. He quickly explained to me that the Acupuncturist was a Quack and couldn't possibly have made that diagnosis without an X-ray machine and certainly not with his bare hands. The Neurologist said I had nothing to worry about since even if by some slim chance, he was right, that type of spinal injury could not possibly cause migraines. I was dismissed without an X-ray. I asked him for an X-ray just to be sure and erase all doubt. The Neurologist replied with the standard "X-rays are dangerous if given too often or unnecessarily." pitch. The more I insisted on the X-ray, the more he refused to authorize one. So I stood in his waiting room until he gave me one. Each time he came out of his office to greet a new patient and saw me, he said "No!" and I said "I can wait!". After many hours, he finally gave in. He wrote out the X-ray form and sent me off to Radiology with a "Tell them I want them back wet. Don't come back without them. I will dispel this boloney once and for all." So I went down to Radiology and seated myself for the long wait.

I was called and the X-rays taken. I explained the Doctor's explicit instructions to bring them back alive (wet). The X-ray Tech told me to have a seat outside while he

processed them. I waited and waited. I glanced up and saw the Radiologist go into the X-ray room. After a few minutes, the Tech came over to me and said, "Go get your Doctor and bring him here!". I reiterated my Doctor's literal instructions and the Tech repeated his. I mumbled all the way back to Neurology. When the Doctor saw me coming back without my X-rays, his face started to contort. "I thought...." I replied that I was just following orders and that I had passed on his instructions explicitly to the X-Ray Tech. The Neurologist stormed off in the direction of Radiology, mumbling some incoherent junk. He made it there well before me so I waited outside for him. A few minutes later, the X-ray Tech came out again, this time waving me inside. The Neurologist and Radiologist were studying my X-rays stuck up on those lighted devices, a finger pointing to one of my X-rays and the other hand askew on their hips. When I approached them, the Neurologist pointed to one of my X-rays and said, "See here. This is your 4th vertebrae. See this fine line? This is a scar of a hairline fracture. You broke your neck. But it still doesn't mean that this is the cause of your migraines." I remembered the car accident that I had a few months prior to my first migraine. I had swerved to avoid an animal and my front right wheel caught a grating and propelled the car up and over a five foot transformer fence. I felt fine then but that was probably the shock setting in. Anyway, I reversed my previous decision and made an appointment with the Acupuncturist.

A few days later, I made my visit with him and my first day begun without any medication. I was scared, panicky, and desperate. You must also understand the Acupuncturist. He was a tall, thin, Japanese male of seventy years. He rode a bicycle everywhere he went and at a pretty good clip too. He was very alert and active. And I say this with no hesitation; I dreaded his hands more than the needles. His hands were like vice-grips. The massages he gave were like iron clamps grabbing my flesh. I was greatly relieved when he left the massage and returned to the needle work. I went every day at first. Then every other day. After a month, I was going about once a week. Eventually I would only go when I felt a migraine coming on. No matter when I went to the Acupuncturist, I always came out sleepy (could hardly keep my eyes open) and hungry. His office was atop a restaurant and inside I would go after each session even if I had just eaten before the treatment. Sometimes I think he was in cohorts with the restaurant. **(Hint: this means that if you are going to build a restaurant - a perfect location for said restaurant would be over or near an Acupuncturist or holistic center.)**

The year: 1980. The place: Camp Zama, Japan. This quiet Army base outside of Tokyo is also where I went to High School some fifteen years before. I saw less and less of the acupuncturist for my migraine and more and more for other situations. My migraines had slowed to almost non-existence and the prescription drugs drifted into obscurity. I felt great for only being under the acupuncturist's care for half a year.

I had a friend who was being discharged from the military in 2 weeks for being 27 pounds overweight, so I took him to see my acupuncturist to lose the weight in a relatively short period of time. Being in the retention field, I knew the military was serious about forcing him out if he didn't lose all of the 27 pounds by the discharge

date. The acupuncturist promised 2 pounds a week loss regardless of what he ate. Unfortunately, he needed to lose the weight within 2 weeks. We pleaded with the acupuncturist. He said that although he could do it, he would not. His purpose was to keep us out of the hospital not put us in the hospital. That much sudden weight lost would have done just that. My friend was forced out of the military two weeks later. On the other hand, the acupuncturist did help the wife of another friend of mine - a very thin Thai woman who wanted to **gain** weight. He sent her down to the Japanese supermarket to buy a toilet brush with stiff, rugged bristles. He instructed her to stroke her stomach counter-clockwise, in a circular fashion. She gained weight. Other cases the acupuncturist helped us with are documented on the other testimonial pages.

Now back to my affliction. For the rest of the year and into the next year, I only visited the acupuncturist a few more times for migraine. I was then transferred to Fort Monmouth in New Jersey in 1981 where I remained for the next 4 years. In 1985 my Japanese wife left, leaving me with three teenagers to raise. She said that I no longer needed her so she was off to find her own self. Raising 3 teenagers and maintaining a military career - Now there's a challenge! Trying to remain close to her in order to put our lives back in normalcy, I accepted a transfer to Fort Dix about 45 minutes south of Fort Monmouth. It was at this point when I started to experience the same excruciating migraines again. But this time, I could not get the treatment which had stopped them before. At that time in New Jersey, you had to be referred to an Acupuncturist by a medical doctor in order to legally be treated. And I was getting closer to retirement. I had seen a few of my friends medically discharged for various ailments just before retirement. I did not seek help for my migraine from the military hospital for fear of losing my regular retirement benefits and thusly prevented the referral to the acupuncturist. Civilian care was too expensive. I learned to rely on my knowledge of Ampuku® related pain management and meditation techniques to see me through those rough times. Even though they came back, the migraines were not as quite as devastating as my earlier ones. Once I passed the twenty year mark (preserving my retirement benefits), I returned to the care of a military physician. I was rated at 30% disability for migraine and I retired in 1988. During the seven years since my acupuncture treatment ended upon my return to the United States, I only had the first two years migraine free. However, the next three years were spent with oriental pain management techniques and Tylenol® Extra Strength. Once I gained my retirement eligibility, I began another decade of Western medicine which equated to no more than prescription drug therapy - Treat the Symptom not the Problem. Once again I went from one drug to another. As I built up a tolerance to the current medication, the doctors would switch me to another. They were pretty tolerable if you didn't consider the havoc they were playing with my chemical balance. But it wasn't until I moved here to Florida and in late 1996 that I was placed on **Pamelor**. The doctor said there were two side effects: dry mouth and a change of tastes. A while later, after I bought a Pharmaceutical CD-ROM, I looked up the drug online. I was shocked: 26 "major" side effects to include sterility and heart palpitations. When confronted with this, my physician replied: They have to say those things so they won't get sued. (You can't sue a military doctor, by the way, that would be the same as suing the government). Over the next year or so, under Pamelor, I gained 100 pounds plus and added 8 inches to my waist. When I asked my physician to

transfer me off Pamelor to another medication, he refused, stating that although not stopping my migraine completely, Pamelor was preventing the majority of them. Only someone who never experienced a migraine could say such a thing. Even one migraine is devastating.

Finally, in 1997, after I had given up smoking using Utara Reikon and other techniques, I decided to stop the abuse to my mind and body from the prescription drug therapy. I did some research and luckily, a friend mentioned an Acupuncturist here in Tampa Bay that was also a Chiropractor and was studying for his medical license. I checked him out and found out he was of Chinese heritage and he came from a long line of Holistic practitioners. I told him that I was going to wean myself off the medication with or without him, but preferred to have him there to provide whatever support he could. I am glad he agreed. I would have been going against my own advice if I had to have done it alone. I was desperate and if that was to be the only way I could do it, I believe I would have, but only after extensive efforts to find an appropriate practitioner failed. I weaned myself off the medication. I had four migraines the first week for which he treated me. They grew less severe with each successive attack. Then after three weeks, they did not come back and that was eleven years ago. (I haven't been back to the acupuncturist either). If I miss breakfast or go without proper nourishment, my eyes still go fuzzy and I feel light headed **BUT** no pain. I still am Prescription drug and pain free. The acupuncturist did say that I may never return to the exact chemical balance I was before the drug therapy started; so I may never return to the slim, lanky, virile person I once was; but I will not have to endure the pain I had over the past quarter century.

I can only thank God for Alternative Medicine and the Holistic care it provides. If you are intimidated by the acupuncture needles and are living in hell because of it, please remember this. I was issued last rites when I first succumbed to migraine. They totally incapacitated me. When others described their pain, I always "thought" yeah, right. No one could possibly have them as bad as I do. Maybe you feel the same way. The needles don't even come close to the pain you currently are enduring. Do your research and decided for yourself. In the Tampa Bay area, here is the acupuncturist my wife and I went to:

Dr. John Chiang, 2901 4th Street North, Saint Petersburg, Florida 33704. Tel: 727-821-5575 (Coincidentally, he is the only source I know of for the Mentholated rub-sticks I describe in the product testimonials. He got them from China and they worked wonders. 5/25/2004: It is unfortunate, but Dr. Chiang passed away due to lung cancer. A friend, who also went to see him regularly, was shocked that he had cancer since he did not smoke. Please remember, **Cancer is indiscriminate**. It does not bypass non-smokers. Do not believe you are immune to cancer just because you do not smoke.

Update: 06/16/2008. Almost 11 years and still migraine and prescription drug free (not even one).

Jack Feeman, Shujin, Ampuku® Wellness Therapy, ©1988-2008 ETC³