

My Personal Journey with Rheumatoid arthritis

To understand what Anat and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) have done for me requires an understanding of rheumatoid arthritis (RA). RA is a chronic autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system attacks the body. It is considered to be very similar to Lupus. This autoimmune response creates serious inflammation throughout the body which destroys the joints. RA can affect even the eyes, heart and lungs. I read that 50% of patients diagnosed with RA become disabled within 5-6 years. I also learned that the medical community can not determine what causes RA but my rheumatologist was quick to point out that the current prescribed first course of treatment is a chemotherapy drug called methotextrate which "subdues" the immune system. The next level of treatment is Enbrel a more potent "biologic response modifier" and then the final level of treatment is a drug they use in organ transplants to minimize rejection of the transplant by virtually eliminating the immune system.

Not a rosy picture as my knuckle joints swelled and reddened and my ankles and feet stiffened making walking painful; and, the prescribed ibuprofen I was regularly taking on the rheumatologist's recommendation, started to cause the predictable adverse gastrointestinal distress. I knew only one thing: it made no sense to undertake an attack on my own immune system to address symptoms for which the medical community admittedly has been unable to identify a cause.

Once I was diagnosed, I kicked into gear. I was, after all, in a battle for my life (at least the quality of my life). The first thing I did was read everything I could about RA and I listened to my body in light of what I read. I detected that, in fact, I had symptom flare-ups when I ate certain foods (most notably eggplant and dairy products). This was consistent with what I read and my reading (together with what my body told me) led me to conclude that RA could be controlled in part by what I ate which makes perfect sense since many foods are highly inflammatory and some foods have an anti-inflammatory effect.

All of this self teaching gave me the impetus to believe that alternative medicine might be an effective way to deal with RA. So, I started TCM with Anat. Eighteen months later (doing everything Anat said I should do), I very rarely have even a single red knuckle, my ankles are not swollen or stiff, and my feet do not hurt when I walk. What did Anat tell me to do you ask? In my mind, she coached me to commit to my long term health and do whatever was necessary to take and maintain control of my RA. My treatment started with weekly acupuncture and a twice daily cup of tea derived from a special formula of herbs. Some say the tea really smells and tastes awful; but, for me, it is medicine and sure enough, over time, I really did get accustomed it. I also take the supplements that Anat recommends for my RA. In some ways I fell very lucky. My RA diagnosis was a real wake up call for me. I actually feel healthier today than I have been in at least the last fifteen years. I have a new found respect for my body and what I put in it. I finally understand that we are what we eat.

There is no question that all of this has been expensive in a monetary sense, primarily because insurance does not cover a lot of it when they should! I have no doubt that I have saved the insurance company lots of money because I elected to forego expensive treatments that would have been covered by insurance. And, of course, I have not received any credit for such savings.

But it has all been well worth it. The measure of inflammation in my blood test is now in the normal range. I have much more energy and my outlook is very positive. I continue to eat right and I exercise regularly with ongoing coaching from Anat. I lost 45 pounds and my co-workers can not help but comment on my dramatic physical transformation. I feel like I have never been healthier. Oh yes, and my rheumatologist said he would discharge me as his patient but for my prior blood work showing that I have a factor in my blood showing RA. I simply can not tell you the appreciation I feel when I sit with others at a meeting table all day long, and I am the only one who gets up without feeling stiff or when I get out of bed in the morning and do not have to hobble to the bathroom.

When I think of where I was when diagnosed with RA and where I am today, the word “miracle” is what comes to mind and I thank Anat in large part for my new found health.

C. M., CT