



Get a
FREE MEMORY UPGRADE
on select Dell PCs!

Offer expires 5/11

► CLICK HERE



TORONTO STAR
www.thestar.com

'My whole body came back into balance'

May 5, 2006. 01:00 AM

Barb Ciesla still remembers the feeling of being in traction at the age of 3.

"It felt as if I couldn't get out of it," recalls the North York interior designer, now 33.

What she couldn't get out of — and what had put her in traction — was juvenile rheumatoid arthritis diagnosed at the age of 22 months.

The pain and severe swelling in her knees were constant threads running through her childhood. As a schoolgirl, she thought of herself as having "grapefruit knees."

The disease caused wasting of the quadriceps in her right leg. Her range of motion became limited in her wrists, elbows and knees. Eventually she couldn't kneel at all. In her early teens, the disease spread to more joints, and was found in her jaw.

"Growing up, I had to mature very quickly," says Ciesla. "By age 13 I had to take the bus to my weekly injection and bloodwork. While they iced my knees, I'd be trying to catch up on my schoolwork."

Daily through childhood and into adulthood, Ciesla took an assortment of prescription drugs, and lived with the side effects, which were sometimes very difficult. "They compromise your liver, kidneys and adrenal system," she says.

Ciesla had surgery twice. The first time made her situation considerably worse, leaving her left knee frozen in a semi-flexed position. The second surgery, on her right leg, led to some degree of pain relief and allowed for some increase in the range of extension.

But the medication she required was proving more and more devastating to her body. A spot was discovered on her liver and she developed a "dry-eye" condition. A new drug triggered such severe reactions that she had pains and problems she had never before encountered.

"At the age of 26, I was beginning to feel hopeless," says Ciesla. "I have a really severe disease. I got to the point where I could no longer see any point in what I was doing."

Although skeptical about the idea of acupuncture, she decided to try it with a traditional Chinese medicine doctor her reflexologist had recommended, Stanley Gwo-Wuu Shyu.

He gave her regular acupuncture treatments and recommended Chinese herbs.

"On Aug. 10, 2001, I began acupuncture treatments with Dr. Shyu, and my mood changed immediately after the first session," Ciesla recalls. "I began to feel relief."

"On Sept. 6, after only four acupuncture treatments, I took my last drug."

She continued to get acupuncture treatments three times a week. The pain began to subside. The swelling decreased to the point where she could see the angles of her knee joint for the first time in years.

Four weeks after going off her prescription drugs, Ciesla had an appointment with her rheumatologist, who confirmed that she had less swelling in her joints and a better range of motion. She continued her \$8,000-a-year acupuncture treatments for several years, but stopped them about a year ago.

[Tag and save](#) this article to your Del.icio.us favourites.

[What is Del.icio.us?](#)

POWERED BY 

"Before acupuncture, I took medications pretty well every day of my life," says Ciesla.

"The only thing I take now is an Advil in the morning, and sometimes I go three or four days without that. I'm hitting five years drug-free, and I don't see myself ever going back to those medications."

Ciesla still walks with a limp, and can't sit in the back seat of a car because of stiffness in her knees. She feels a little pain and stiffness, and gets minor swelling. Her movement is still restricted from the surgery. But she says her life is much easier and less painful since acupuncture. And she no longer has to struggle with the side effects of heavy-duty prescription drugs.

She can walk to and from the convenience store now instead of driving.

"Dr. Shyu opened the door for me," she says. "My whole body came back into balance. He helped me to finally feel hopeful about my future."

An unusual added benefit of consulting Shyu was that Ciesla first met her future husband, Scott Hills, in his waiting room. Three years later, she is both healthier and married.

[Get great home delivery subscription deals here!](#)

[FAQs](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Webmaster](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [My Subscription](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | [Webmaking Blog](#)

[Home](#) | [GTA](#) | [Business](#) | [Waymoresports](#) | [A&E](#) | [Life](#)

Legal Notice: Copyright Toronto Star Newspapers Limited. All rights reserved. Distribution, transmission or republication of any material from www.thestar.com is strictly prohibited without the prior written permission of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited. For information please contact us using our [webmaster form](#). www.thestar.com online since 1996.

