

# NEUROPATHY

## ALLIANCE of TEXAS

*Living Well with Neuropathy*

### Member Spotlight



#### **Don Kalal**

NATX Member since 2014

Don Kalal is a dedicated participant and presenter at the Georgetown support group meetings, and often shares his personal research findings on neuropathy treatments with the group. Don has a rich and diverse background. Based on his excellent presentation skills, it's no surprise that he spent 42 years teaching real estate to over a half million students. Originally from Southern California, he obtained a business degree from Loyola, and served in both the U.S. Army and the Military Intelligence Reserve unit. He has also been a trumpet musician, all-around athlete, a competitive dancer for eight years, and then of course teaching, all of which required (more than) a considerable amount of physical stamina.

Don never experienced health problems until about 12 years ago and he was diagnosed as pre-diabetic. He has been on a prescribed medication, but never insulin. About nine years ago, during a foot massage, he noticed extreme discomfort. He mentioned this to his doctor, and was referred to a neurologist who diagnosed neuropathy. The symptoms were minimal at first, with discomfort in walking and hot feet at night. However, Don's life has been adversely affected since that time. Walks and dancing are no longer possible. His balance is also affected.

Don moved to Texas about five years ago to be closer to his daughter (an Occupational Therapist), who lives in Belton. Since that time, he has had more testing (including electrical) and has tried various treatments, including hemp oil, foot creams, acupuncture, Gabapentin, foot shots, and neuropathy shoes. He found out about NATX from Sun City in Georgetown, where he resides, and has attended support group meetings regularly. He appreciates the input from the presenters and attendees, which he says gives him hope and optimism that someday he will learn of a treatment (perhaps a "magic potion?," he says) that will reverse the progression of the disease so that he can get back to normal life.

NATX is grateful to Don for his continued support of our mission and for sharing his story.

## What did they do 3,000 years ago for Neuropathy?

by Jimmy Yen, L.Ac. Acupuncturist, owner of Achieve Integrative Health, and NATX Medical Advisory Committee member

Back then, the Chinese were already diagnosing and treating neuropathy. While they didn't call it neuropathy; the treatment principles and strategies that were used 3,000 years ago are still being implemented in hospitals all over Asia today. Yes, times have changed and the human body has evolved, but many treatment principles remain.



Acupuncture is one of best medical treatments to circulate your blood circulation to anywhere in your body. The belief behind acupuncture as a treatment for neuropathy is that if more blood is moved to the peripheral nerves, more nutrients can be carried in and more waste accumulation (aka inflammation) carried out. This will lead to healing of the nerves. So, if we can stimulate your brain to move blood to your peripheral nerves we will be bringing your nerves new nutrients and removing waste from them. Wow, what a concept, right? What could you be doing if you didn't have the numbness, tingling and burning in your feet? Would you be out on the dance floor dancing? Would you be driving all around town? Or would you be able to be more independent?

At Achieve Integrative Health we have developed a specific Acupuncture Protocol to address neuropathy that has worked wonders for many of our patients. Acupuncture is not a cure all, but may be worth a try. We now have two convenient locations to serve you. Please visit us at our new Central Location at 1305 West 34<sup>th</sup> Street #407 (phone number 512-953-8063) or our original location in Cedar Park at 715 Discovery Boulevard #412a (phone number 512-260-1710). To find out more, please visit the website at [www.achieveintegrativehealth.com](http://www.achieveintegrativehealth.com)



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### November is Caregiver Month

Caregivers often feel isolated and alone. Whether you are looking for information, education, ideas or an understanding ear, there are resources to help you and your loved one navigate the challenges of neuropathy and other issues. AGE of Central Texas offers free caregiver classes in multiple locations. Call 512-600-9275 or email [info@ageofcentraltx.org](mailto:info@ageofcentraltx.org) for more information.



### *New!* **Ask-A-Doc** We need your QUESTIONS...

NATX is piloting a new column for our quarterly print newsletters. We would like to hear from you what questions you have for our Medical Advisory Committee (MAC). Our MAC consists of top neurologists and health care providers in Austin. Each quarter, we will select one or two questions to be answered and printed in the newsletter. The questions will be anonymous. Unfortunately, we won't be able to answer every question. Questions will be selected based on its appeal to the general neuropathy population. So, start asking those questions!!! We hope to initiate this new column in 2019. Please send your questions to [info@neuropathyalliancetx.org](mailto:info@neuropathyalliancetx.org).

## Recent happenings: Highlights from Support Groups

### Meditation for Chronic Illness

Dr. David Zuniga presented at two recent NATX support group meetings and received outstanding feedback. As a certified expert of mindfulness and wellness, he has provided hundreds of customized mindfulness-based stress reduction seminars in a wide range of settings such as hospitals, businesses, universities, and wellness retreats. NATX support group participants gained insight into mindfulness to help cope with chronic illness, including neuropathy. He shared several resources with the groups including guided meditations, and several recommended readings on wellness, and anxiety, among other topics. His website is [www.drdauidzuniga.com](http://www.drdauidzuniga.com) where you can access these resources and more, free of charge.



Nancy Herlin, Co-founder and Chair of NATX with Dr. David Zuniga

### The Value of Support Groups

The ups and down of life with neuropathy can leave us feeling isolated and alone. That's where support groups can help. "People with neuropathy can benefit from support groups as well as their family members and caregivers," says Marty Meraviglia, RN, ACNS-BC, PhD, and NATX Director. Support groups have been shown through research to provide the following benefits:

- Finding out about other people who have similar experiences and feelings
- Learning more about the condition
- Improving coping skills
- Reducing stress, anxiety, feelings of loneliness, and depression
- Gaining practical information
- Connecting with local and national resources

While the idea of sharing in a group may be uncomfortable at first, Meraviglia says most people really enjoy participating after an initial period of listening to others and learning the group is safe and encouraging for all participants. If you are one of our clients or members who enjoy our eblasts, newsletters and online resources but have never attended a support group meeting, perhaps this month, or beginning in 2019, is the time to try.

When I first opened up it was simply by asking my question, yet the whole group was interested. Sharing leads to group understanding. We each give a little but everyone gains from the sum total. This reminds me of what Linus Pauling once said, 'The best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas.'  
— Bobby Rigney, NATX Member since 2015



### Support Group Meetings in November

**Austin—West - November 10, 10:30 AM – Noon**, 7127 Bee Caves Rd., Austin 78746  
**Group Discussion on Neuropathy**

**Georgetown—November 12, 1-2:30 PM**, 2423 Williams Dr., Suite 101, Georgetown 78628

**Neuropathy from the Perspective of a Neurologist, Adam D. Horvit, MD**

**Austin—Northwest Hills—November 26, 1:30-3PM**, 7300 Hart Ln., Austin 78731

**Tips for Dealing with Stress Over the Holidays, Marshall Lyles, LPC-S, LMFT-S, RPT-S, EMDRIA Approved Consultant**

**Houston— No meeting in November, moved to December 1, 1-2:30PM**, Memorial Drive United Methodist Church, 12955 Memorial Dr., Houston 77079

**Topic to be announced**

## Research

### Reduced Vitamin D Leads to Painful Diabetic Neuropathy

A recent study that accounts for the confounding factors of sunlight exposure and physical activity shows that lower vitamin D (25-hydroxyvitamin D) levels are found in patients with painful diabetic peripheral neuropathy (DPN) compared to those with painless DPN, patients with diabetes without any neuropathy, and healthy people. This suggests a possible role for vitamin D in the biological mechanism (or mechanisms) that leads to painful diabetic peripheral neuropathy. Further prospective and intervention trials are required to prove causality between low vitamin D levels and painful diabetic peripheral neuropathy. In the meantime, if you have painful neuropathy and have not had your vitamin D level tested, you may want to do that at your next medical visit. If low, your physician may suggest supplements to bring you into a healthy range. For more on this study <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/dme.13798>

### Benefits of Tai Chi

Studies have shown that Tai Chi practice increases the nerves' ability and speed of sending signals back to the brain and spinal cord. After only a few weeks of Tai Chi practice, patients with neuropathy can improve physical function through this safe and effective intervention. Tai Chi can significantly improve balance, reducing both the likelihood – and the fear – of falling. One reason Tai Chi is so effective is that it teaches you to re-integrate the muscle control of legs, hips and low back. People with neuropathy tend to be less active because of the pain and uncertainty that comes with movement. The less active they are, the more that whole body synergy is lost. Studies on Tai Chi show that the more someone with neuropathy learns to use their whole body for both exercise and simple daily tasks – even walking! – the less pain they experience, and the more comfort they have in their bodies overall.

Source: [The Foundation For Peripheral Neuropathy \(https://www.foundationforpn.org/living-well/integrative-therapies/tai-chi/, retrieved 10/18/2018\)](https://www.foundationforpn.org/living-well/integrative-therapies/tai-chi/)

### Tai Chi Classes

*Beginners and first-timers are welcome!*

**Southwest Austin** – Unity Church of Austin, 5501 West Highway 290, Austin 78735. Thursdays 10–11 AM.

**Georgetown** – 2423 Williams Dr., Georgetown 78628. Thursdays 9–10:30 AM.

Register at: <https://neuropathyalliancetxt.org>

**Northwest Hills** – 7300 Hart Ln., Austin 78731. Level 1 Tuesdays and Fridays 9–10 AM; Level 2 Mondays and Thursdays 9–10 AM.

Please contact [annie.skelton@shalomaustin.org](mailto:annie.skelton@shalomaustin.org) to register.

## Thank you to our TOPGOLF Fall Fundraiser Sponsors!



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## Update from the Board

*By Jenny Park, PT, NATX Board Director*

I have been a physical therapist for over thirty years and have treated my fair share of patients with chronic illnesses. I prided myself on being able to empathize and really understand what that person was going through. I truly believed I could fully understand their experience. Until it happened to me.



I was initially diagnosed with GBS in 2012. My neurologist at the time could not explain what was happening to me. A second opinion with another neurologist resulted in the same outcome. I was told that it was “stress” or “anxiety” and that I would just have to live with it. I was completely frustrated and had begun to think that maybe it was all in my head. My friends and family even had a hard time reconciling my symptoms when I “looked so good.” I felt like I was deteriorating on the inside but had nothing on the outside to prove it.

Then something wonderful happened. I became friends with Nancy Herlin, one of the founders of NATX. She listened to my story and I finally felt that I was being heard. Through NATX I was able to find a neurologist who correctly diagnosed me with Small Fiber and Autonomic neuropathy. Even after being correctly diagnosed and beginning treatment, it took me a long time to come to terms with the fact that this condition was not going away and would affect me for the rest of my life.

Since becoming a NATX member, I have been able to accept that while this may be my new life parameters, it doesn't have to define my life. It is all about how I choose to respond to it. Through NATX, I found the tools and support I needed to live my life to the fullest within my new parameters. I can still do a lot of the same things I used to, just differently. I became a member of the board of directors for NATX as a way to help others live their full potential with neuropathy. I wanted to become an advocate for neuropathy patients. I wanted them to feel heard by someone who could do more than empathize. I now could truly understand.

### Thank you to our supporters since the summer newsletter

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David and Ann Miech  
Rebel and Tony Pais

#### Tributes

Jerome Adducie, in honor of Richard Beyer (\$100)  
Elizabeth Fitzgerald, in memory of Pete Herlin (\$100)

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## Update From the Executive Director

*by Kelli Craddock*

Hi everyone and Happy Fall!!! First, I want to thank our newsletter sponsor, Achieve Integrative Health! Jimmy Yen, the owner of Achieve Integrative Health, also serves on NATX's Medical Advisory Committee. Thank you Jimmy, and Achieve Integrative Health, for your continued support and dedication to our Mission.

As I reflect back on 2018, I am so very grateful and appreciative of all of you! NATX strives to empower the neuropathy community to live their best lives. We are here to serve those with neuropathy, their loved ones and caregivers. In doing that, I learn something each and every day from YOU. In this time of gratitude and family, I want to thank each of you for sharing your stories, for making donations to NATX, and for telling others about our organization.

The only way we can continue to reach more people with neuropathy is through your help. I look forward to seeing you at the November meetings. I'd LOVE to hear from you. Please email me at [kelli@neuropathyalliancetxt.org](mailto:kelli@neuropathyalliancetxt.org). With sincere respect and dedication, Kelli

*Our vision is that anyone in Texas afflicted with or affected by neuropathy receives the support and education they need to more effectively handle neuropathy and live to their fullest potential.*



@neuropathytx