

# An Interview with Gracie Yuen, D.C.

by Mark Huberman

**Gracie Yuen, D.C.** turned around her own health after changing her diet and fasting. She then decided to obtain a B.S. degree in Nutritional Sciences from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and went on to complete a Doctor of Chiropractic degree from the National University of Health Sciences in 2010. She worked with Drs. D.J. Scott and Alan Goldhamer for six years until opening her own health center, Dr. Gracie's Wellness Center, in West Farmington, Ohio in 2016. She credits Divine Providence with leading her on her remarkable journey and bringing her to where she is today. She can be reached by email at [graciyuen@uwalumni.com](mailto:graciyuen@uwalumni.com) or phone at (330) 989-8099.



## What first interested you in the NHA health program?

In the early 1990s, I developed a lot of respiratory infections and allergies, as well as fatigue and stress. Then I found out I had genetic anemia, which kind of scared me. I was only in my early thirties, and I was looking for answers. A friend of mine gave me the book *Fit For Life*, and it made sense to me. I joined the NHA and started getting *Health Science* magazine, which I would read from cover to cover as soon it arrived. I started changing my diet and lifestyle, and my health began to really improve. Eventually I was inspired to attend one of the NHA conferences.

## Was it at the conference that you first learned about water fasting?

I had read about water fasting, but yes, hearing about it first-hand was very enlightening. I particularly remember the late Dr. D.J. Scott explaining the significance of the lab work he did on his patients. He would put the results up on a screen and point out how the liver, heart, or whatever organ he was describing, would go through different phases during a water fast. The lab numbers would get worse, then they would get better, then he would break the fast, and the patient would get better. I thought that was pretty powerful.

## Have you undertaken a fast?

In 2004 I went on a 25-day fast under the care of Dr.

Scott. I had just finished my undergraduate degree in nutritional sciences, and had spent six years under a lot of stress. I knew I needed to regroup and rest. I remember when I called him, I said, "Well, I don't really have anything wrong with me," to which he replied, "That you know of!" This was a phrase I would hear him use a lot!

*"Fasting was an amazing, eye-opening experience. I particularly enjoyed learning from my roommates and other fasters. Many people got well, some with very serious conditions."*

And what do you know, when I arrived, Dr. Scott found that I had an irregular heartbeat. It was skipping every three to four beats. My heartbeat became normal on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of fasting. But he didn't want me to break my fast until my lab numbers improved; there were a couple of heart markers that were slightly elevated. During the course of my fast, these markers elevated somewhat, then eventually came into a healthy range, and I got better.

## What did you think of the fasting experience?

Fasting was an amazing, eye-opening experience. I particularly enjoyed learning from my roommates and other fasters. Many people got well, some with very serious conditions. It was actually during that time that I decided to become a doctor.

## Did Dr. Scott encourage you to go to chiropractic college?

Yes he did. I remember asking him at the end of my stay, "Dr. Scott, what do you think of a person of my age

(45), with my condition (pre-ventricular contractions) going to school to become a doctor?" He became excited and said, "Oh, absolutely you could do it." He recommended his Alma Mater, the National University of Health Sciences, which is where I ended up going.

### Was there any nutritional education?

Yes, we did receive four or five classes in nutrition. They didn't emphasize plant-based nutrition, but I knew about that already. They encouraged us to be broad-scope chiropractors.

### Following graduation did you spend any time interning with Dr. Scott?

Yes I did. I had kept in touch with Dr. Scott during my schooling and we'd talk every couple of months. He wanted me to continue his work. So after graduation I went straight to his center and worked there for two months. I had a great time following him on rounds and learning about his lab work. Unfortunately, an issue arose over which we differed and I ended up leaving. I found that you had to do things his way, and if you didn't, it didn't go over very well.

### That sounds just like the Dr. Scott that a lot of us knew! So how did you make your connection to TrueNorth Health Center?

I discovered TrueNorth through the NHA magazine and the conferences I had attended. I called TrueNorth's founder, Dr. Alan Goldhamer, and told him I wanted to do a six-month internship, and he immediately encouraged me to come to the center. He then called Dr. Scott, asking him about me, and Dr. Scott actually gave me a good recommendation.

### It sounds like going to TrueNorth was the best thing that could have happened to you.

You know, I think that's true. Professionally, it was a wonderful surprise, as I didn't know what to expect. Later on, Dr. Scott acknowledged that he thought I could learn a lot at TrueNorth, and that after spending some time there I could come back and help him. Unfortunately, he didn't live long enough for that to occur; he passed away in 2011.

### Tell me about your experience interning at TrueNorth.

It was amazing. Before I arrived, Dr. Goldhamer would email me, saying, "We're really looking forward to having you here," and he didn't even know me. When I arrived, I was the only intern, and they really needed somebody. Back



*Dr. Gracie with her mother Elsie in 2010*

then there were 16 to 27 patients at a time, so it wasn't like today where there can be 50 to 60. But the interns then had more duties, and there were a lot of patients for one intern to keep track of morning, noon and night. I just dove right into a very intense experience and I learned a tremendous amount.

### Who were your mentors at TrueNorth during your internship?

Drs. Steve Helms (he was in charge of intern training), Peter Sultana, Michael Klaper, Erwin Linzner and, of course, Dr. Goldhamer. Dr. Sultana, Dr. Klaper and Dr. Helms were the attending physicians, so they were in charge of all the patients. As an intern I would go around and gather information, report back to them, and write my notes. If there was anything that came up that was urgent, I would let them know and we would discuss what to do. I learned a great deal this way. At one point Dr. Goldhamer asked, "Have you thought about getting a California license?" and he said I could stay on as a staff physician!

### Were you expecting that?

No, I wasn't and it caught me by surprise. Before coming to California, my friend Joan and I only packed one carload-full of our belongings, and we left everything else in storage in Ohio, since it was just going to be a six-month internship. And a six-month internship turned into five years!

### What impressed you most about TrueNorth?

I was impressed by the number of fine, hard-working, dedicated doctors there who really cared about patients and were actually helping them get well. The Monday meetings, in which the doctors discussed all the patients and their progress, were the highlight of my week. I used to "pinch myself" to see if I was really in their midst. I knew I was in the company of a very exceptional group and treasured the camaraderie we enjoyed.

### Once you became a staff physician, what was your primary role?

I was part of the rounding team. We took vitals, made sure the patients were doing okay, and getting the proper food if they were not fasting. I was also involved in intern and resident training. The task of "making sure everything got done" also became mine. As far as my practice, I would see all of the patients on rounds, and if I thought I could help anyone through chiropractic care, I could see these patients and co-manage them with the attending physicians. I developed my style of practice while helping many

people and conferring with experienced doctors. I called it my “doctor playground.”

### **In the Winter 2016 issue of *Health Science*, you wrote an article about pain management by identifying trigger points. Is that an interest of yours?**

Very much so. The prevalence of trigger point involvement in chronic pain syndromes is huge. Most of the patients that I see with a chronic pain complaint have trigger point involvement. It can be back pain, neck pain, headaches, knee pain, hip pain, shoulder pain, hand or wrist pain, foot pain, leg pain, groin pain, you name it; sometimes even chest pain. Arthritic patients usually have trigger point involvement as well.

While I was at TrueNorth, I began working on people using trigger point therapy, and the patients were getting amazing results. Patients with long-standing chronic pain were becoming pain-free, and some would come back the following year and tell me they were still doing great. It seems too good to be true, but it isn't; people don't have to grow older and be in a lot of pain.

Trigger points can also be involved in many other conditions. For instance, there was a patient who had come for a fast, and she had severe constipation even though she was eating plant-based. It was so severe that she had to schedule colonics on her vacations because she couldn't go at all on her own.

She was told that she had “pudendal nerve entrapment” (the pudendal nerve is the main nerve of the perineum), so I studied the course of the pudendal nerve, and found that it was vulnerable in the sacral area. Upon examination, I found trigger points in that exact area. I released those trigger points, as well as others, and by the time she finished her fast and was re-feeding, she had a bowel movement on her own and continued to do so! It was very exciting.

I saw this patient again the following year and she was still doing very well. I think between the fasting, plant-based diet, and soft tissue work, it's really phenomenal the results patients can experience, and I find this very rewarding.

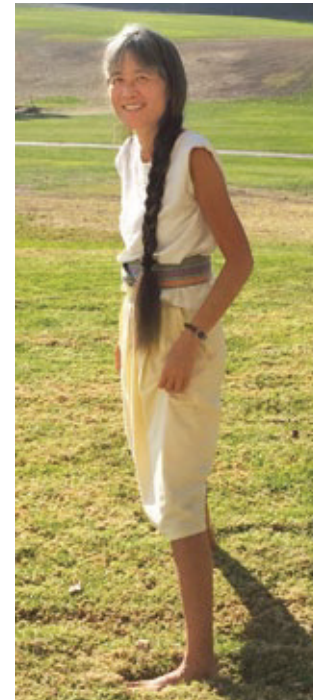
### **What are the benefits of combining your chiropractic practice with fasting and a whole-food, plant-based diet?**

I think that chiropractic care can contribute to the success of a patient who is fasting and adopting a health-promoting diet, and conversely, fasting and/or a health-promoting diet can contribute to the success of a chiropractic patient. Doing these things together will make the healing process go quicker than just doing one at a time, and will optimize the chance that a patient will get well, from whatever problem he or she is having.

I apply principles of chiropractic neurology, along with releasing trigger points, to restore motion to the spine, which helps the brain and nervous system. The goal is to

restore proper muscular function and proper neurologic function to all of the organs in the body. Fasting helps to decrease inflammation and clear away all the metabolic waste that these trigger points are dumping into the system when they are being released. A whole-food, plant-based diet will also help to clear away these waste products, though not as quickly, and will help the patient maintain the gains received.

I recall a 40-year-old athletic patient who had a urination problem to the point that it took him 10-20 minutes to get things going (and it wasn't his prostate). After starting his fast, I discovered that he also had trigger points in the sacral area affecting his pudendal nerve. After releasing his trigger points, he obtained results within one week of fasting. By the time he left TrueNorth, his urination problem had fully resolved!



*Dr. Gracie Yuen in 2015.*

### **How would you describe the power of fasting?**

It is the mysterious and highly intelligent ability of the human organism to heal itself that is unleashed when the consumption of calories ceases. Somehow, the body knows what to do, on its own. Instead of using energy to process food and perform work, this energy is redirected to the healing process, and the body realizes, “Oh, I have time to clear out all these cellular closets!” Dr. Scott used to say the Creator has placed within every cell the power to heal. It is quite astonishing.

### **During your couple of months with Dr. Scott, your five years at TrueNorth, and now with your own facility, what conditions have you seen respond most powerfully to fasting?**

High blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, chronic pain syndromes, autoimmune disease, heart conditions (Dr. Scott would say “the heart heals first”), and cancer (I saw quite a few breast and prostate cancer recoveries at Dr. Scott's).

### **When people came to TrueNorth on medications for diabetes and heart disease, sometimes for many years, were they actually able to get off those medications after fasting and changing their diet and lifestyle?**

Absolutely. They may have to wean off certain drugs while eating first, and then fast, but I saw many people get

off medications. People would come in with bags full of pills, and leave with hardly any. Blood pressure medications were commonly eliminated, and people with type 1 diabetes, when eating at TrueNorth, would typically reduce their insulin to one-third of what they came in on. Heart disease patients improved in general, but didn't always get off all their meds, depending on the problem. Serious pain medications could be eliminated, and I really enjoyed participating in that process by providing care in many cases. That was very rewarding for me.



*Dr. Gracie's Wellness Center, West Farmington, Ohio*

### **Can people fast while still taking medications?**

Not generally. At TrueNorth, the only medication that we routinely fasted people on was for the thyroid, and that was adjusted. So now when I talk to my patients I tell them that they have to be off their medications when they come here and to discuss that with their prescribing doctor.

### **What brought you back to Ohio?**

I consider myself a Midwesterner, so it was sort of a homecoming. Also, during chiropractic school I had in my mind that I was going to help Dr. Scott, and during the two months that I worked with him, I obtained my Ohio Chiropractic license. Even though it didn't work out with Dr. Scott, I knew that Ohio had a very good scope of practice for chiropractors, and even though Dr. Scott had had some problems with the Chiropractic Board, they had allowed him to fast patients for 60 years.

I also was especially interested in carrying on the great work he did with his lab. I learned via Dr. Scott's best friend, who had helped him establish the lab, that it was acquired by the Amish shortly after Dr. Scott died. His friend kept telling me what was happening and urged me to come back. So, I made a trip back and met some of the Amish people that were going to be using the lab, and heard about their plan to open their own facility for Amish patients, particularly those with mental illnesses, and that really intrigued me.

The Amish told me that if they did get the lab going that other doctors could use it for their patients, and that opportunity intrigued me as well. I took another trip to the area and located a home for my center that's about two and a half miles away from the Amish facility. (The lab and Amish facility are not yet open, but hopefully they will be soon.)

### **Tell me about Dr. Gracie's Wellness Center.**

It's a beautiful, spacious, seven-bedroom, Amish-built home on eight acres out in the country. It's very peaceful and a fun place to live.

**From my experience at TrueNorth, I know that patients enjoy flat-panel TV's, Wi-Fi and a lot of comforts of home. From my recollection of Dr. Scott's institute, it was much more spartan and unwired. Is your facility more**

### **like Dr. Scott's or Dr. Goldhamer's?**

It is more like Dr. Scott's in that it is quieter. We don't have television here, but we do have wireless internet and adequate cell service. I purposely came to the country so it would be quiet and rest could really be emphasized.

### **One of the things that stirs a bit of controversy in our health movement is the role of supplements. Do you recommend B12, vitamin D, DHA, or any others?**

The only supplements that I recommend on a regular basis are B12 and vitamin D. I try to stay away from supplements as much as possible and emphasize whole food.

### **What is Dr. Gracie's ideal health program?**

It's pretty simple: proper diet, sufficient rest, pure water, clean air, adequate sunshine, emotional poise, exercise, and supportive relationships. Although diet gets most of the attention, and can be the hardest part, I really emphasize the need for sufficient rest and sleep, and not doing too much. People, in general, become stressed trying to accomplish too much and allow themselves to be pulled in too many directions. Dr. Scott used to say that we all need to learn to live within our physiologic limitations. That's not something that is easy to do these days.

### **Do you think Dr. Scott's greatest legacy is the blood work that he did?**

Yes I do. Unfortunately, he wasn't the greatest historian, so the records that he left are severely lacking. But I did learn a fair amount about what he did, including the tests he used and how he used them. I am also learning a lot from his patients who are coming to see me. Someday I may try to glean more from the lab records he left behind.

### **I remember Dr. Scott always making the argument, "You are what you assimilate." Did you ever hear him say that?**

Yes I did. He was big on eating only the foods that went

well with your physiology, and he taught patients to use the ferric nitrate urine test after meals to see if the foods just consumed were properly assimilated.

### Do you practice what you preach in terms of diet and lifestyle?

Yes I do. I prefer salt-oil-sugar-free plant fare and eating at home over eating out, and try to live within my limitations; this is the hardest part. One of the habits I really liked about Dr. Scott was that he would take the winter off. He would either fast or rest and let his staff do the same. I'm definitely planning on taking enough R&R time so I don't burn myself out.

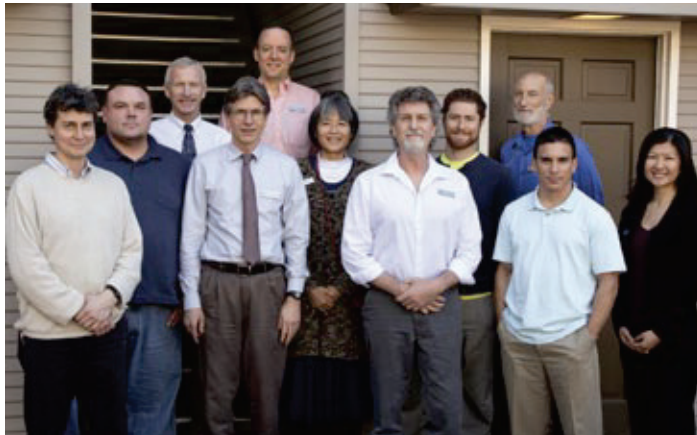
### Is that what Simon and Garfunkel had in mind when they sang, "Slow down, you move too fast, you've got to make the morning last"?

Absolutely. When I went back to school I always told people I took the turtle route. I took six years to finish my undergraduate degree, and five and a half years (two years longer than most) to do my chiropractic schooling because the full load was extremely unhealthy. I wanted to keep my health and enjoy the journey and not stress myself out over it.

### When you are not seeing patients, what do you do?

When I was in California, you could find Joan and me exploring the coast, the redwoods, Yosemite or relaxing in Napa Valley. I'm a pretty social person and I've often told people that I collect friends. Now that I have this little wayside place for people to stop by, I have quite a few friends on the east coast and Midwest that are starting to visit.

As for hobbies, I enjoy hiking in nature and growing things (I took care of orchids at TrueNorth). I also practice Foundation Training, a series of exercises to alleviate chronic back pain, improve posture, and enhance athletic ability. Growing up I enjoyed playing the piano and guitar, and took voice lessons, but I haven't done much of that lately. However, I did have an elderly patient stay with me over Thanksgiving that brought music back into my life. She came to fast for an extremely bad chronic pain syndrome, and was hardly able to walk. She did a short fast and received treatment from me and improved greatly. On Thanksgiving Day I pulled out my guitar and we sang Thanksgiving hymns with her and it was a wonderful time!



*Dr. Gracie, center, with some of her TrueNorth colleagues in 2014, including Dr. Sultana (far left), Dr. Goldhamer (above, to Gracie's right), Dr. Linzner (in front, to Gracie's right), and Dr. Klaper (in blue shirt, back right).*

### You are scheduled to speak at the upcoming NHA conference. What will your topic be?

I'm going to talk about the mystery of the trigger point. As I mentioned earlier, when I was at TrueNorth I found this little niche, and it's really a subject that is neglected by the medical community. When you think about it, we have neurologists for the nerves, gastroenterologists for the gut, heart and kidney doctors, and doctors for just about every aspect of the

body except the muscles—and the muscles are the biggest organ in your body by weight. The muscles can harbor these very nefarious trigger points that cause a lot of havoc and are often the source of great pain. We learned about them in school, but not to the extent that I've learned since, in terms of how important they are and what a big difference they make in our daily lives.

Chronic muscle pain is real, and unfortunately the remedy given to many people is opioids or other painkillers. A lot of times if doctors can't find the source of the pain—it's not showing up in an x-ray, MRI or elsewhere—they tell the patient, "Oh, it must be in your head or it must be some psychological problem you have." That's frustrating for the patient because they know it's real.

When I first see the patient, I ask them about the history of their problem: "When did this start? Did you have a fall, a motor vehicle accident, or some other trauma?" And this gives clues. When I go looking for the source of the pain by palpating muscles, I can usually find it by finding trigger points. I know their pain is real because I can reproduce it by pressing on the points, and make it go away by releasing them and restoring motion to the spine, all without drugs and surgery. And as I said earlier, regarding urinary and bowel function, trigger points can be involved in conditions other than chronic pain.

### So, I guess we can say Dr. Gracie is "quick on the trigger points"!

I guess you could say that!

### We'll look forward to seeing you at the conference, and thank you for sharing your journey and your philosophy of health.

Thank you so much for the opportunity! 