



A Visit With Fountain Project's Chief Medical Officer

We asked Dr. Erlene Chiang, Fountain Project's co-founder and chief medical officer, to share her thoughts on our organization, her approach to acupuncture and her views of health and wellbeing.

Q: What was the original inspiration for The Fountain Project and how has it evolved since its founding?

A: The Fountain Project Foundation was born from a shared dream between myself and my late mother, Hui Chiang. Hui's vision was clear and compassionate; to one day build a retreat center where people could step away from the noise of daily life to practice



Dr. Erlene Chiang

Qigong, learn to eat nutritious and healing diet and cultivate a healthy lifestyle in mind, body and spirit.

My own vision has always been to bring healing directly to the people. To help individuals awaken to their own inner potential through the process of healing. Not by creating fear around a new condition or unknown environment, but by educating, empowering, and encouraging people to take an active role in their wellness journey.

The idea of a full retreat center was beautiful, but also immense. Financially, it was more than we could support at the time. But we realized something important; healing cannot wait. So in 2001, the Fountain Project began, not as a center, but as a movement of service, compassion, and a community based on healing. We began offering care in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and soon expanded our work to partner with Today's Youth Bureau, Bay Area

Rescue Mission, Greater Richmond Interfaith Program, Safe Organized Spaces, Wen Wu School of Internal Martial Arts, and other faith-based and community organizations.

Then in 2024, the birth of the Fountain Project Health and Wellness Center became a reality in Richmond, California. In our first year we offered 4,000 treatments and served over 1,000 patients.

Our mission remains rooted in that original dream: to bring accessible, compassionate, and culturally grounded healing through education and healthcare, to all people wherever they are.

Q: How did you become interested in becoming an acupuncturist?

A: Needle and a Dream. Since I was 8 years old, I've been drawn to the art of healing. Growing up in Taiwan, I received a doll as a gift—most children would have dressed it up, and styled its hair. But not me. Instead, I began inserting tiny cloth pins (like the size of a fine needle) into its arms and legs. The doll became my first patient.

For over a year and a half, my neighbor and I played Doctor every day. I was always the doctor, she was always the nurse. We took our roles seriously. My doll was covered with imaginary conditions, and I treated each one with care and intention: needles placed just so, as I already knew they had power. Looking back, I realize that moment wasn't just child's play, it was the beginning of a path I've walked ever since.



Q: In a nutshell, can you describe how acupuncture affects the body's metabolism, internal organs and systems to promote health and well being?

A: Acupuncture is a complete and sophisticated healing system built on the foundation of energy flow within the body. Each organ maintains its own balance through a unique combination of blood supply and energetic circulation (Qi flow). When an organ can sustain its own supply and demand, it functions well. And when each organ is able to maintain its own wellness, the body as a whole becomes capable of self-regulation, interaction and support, creating a lasting sense of equilibrium and health. Acupuncture works by inserting extremely fine needles, ranging from half an inch to five inches long, into specific points on the body called acupuncture points. There are about 400 recognized points, each connected to a

specific organ and located along an energy pathway called a meridian.

These meridians form a complex network that allows Qi (vital life force) to circulate throughout the body. When needles are placed into these points, they can stimulate both internal organ functions (as in internal medicine) and external physical structures (as in orthopedics). The points are able to conduct magnetic or energetic sensations, helping to realign the flow of Qi and blood, and return the body to a state of balance and wellness.

Q: Can you describe how acupuncture and other traditional medicinal approaches complement western medical practices?

A. Acupuncture is one part of the rich and comprehensive system known as traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). This system also includes Chinese herbal medicine, therapeutic diet, movement practices like Tai Chi, Qigong, meditation as well as hands-on therapies like Tui Na, moxibustion and cupping.

Unlike conventional Western medicine, which often examines health issues by isolating and treating specific parts or systems of the body, TCM takes a holistic approach. It views the human being as an interconnected whole body, mind and spirit, and aims to restore balance and harmony rather than just suppress symptoms.

While certain conditions, such as acute trauma or surgical emergencies, are best addressed by Western medicine, TCM and other integrative modalities often excel in managing chronic conditions, reducing inflammation, supporting organ function, and even helping patients avoid unnecessary surgeries by treating root imbalances early on.

The strength of TCM lies in its ability to promote long-term health, resilience, and inner balance, working with the body's natural healing capacity rather than overriding it.

Q: Why is an integrated health approach, combining traditional and western medical practices, more beneficial than just either one alone?

A: Whenever there is integration, it means we are combining the best aspects of two or more systems to create a more complete, effective approach. Western medicine has its strengths, and so does Eastern medicine. Each system offers unique insights, and when brought together, they can complement and enhance one another. Therefore, I believe one of the greatest healing tools is available through integrative medicine.

Western medicine excels in its diagnostic precision, with advanced imaging, lab tests and surgical interventions. But sometimes, symptoms persist without clear findings in blood work or scans. In these cases, we must look deeper, not just at parts, but at the whole person. This is where complementary or integrative medicine, such as traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) becomes invaluable. TCM examines health through a holistic lens seeing the body as an integrated system of energy, function, and balance. It allows us to explore subtle patterns of disharmony that modern tests may miss.

Ultimately, the goal is not to divide these systems but to use them together for the wellbeing of the person. TCM has served humanity for over 3,000 years, long before imaging machines and blood panels existed. For a system to endure this long, it must carry a profound truth and practical value that still resonates and supports us in modern life.

Q: How do you define success for your patients? And how do you try to direct treatment towards successful outcomes?

A: At Fountain Project, we believe that our success is rooted in our patients' success. When our patients feel better physically,

emotionally and energetically, then we feel better. Their healing is our purpose.

Our treatment philosophy is simple but powerful: listen first, treat second. We follow what the patient truly needs and craft a personalized treatment plan that meets them where they are. Whether through acupuncture, body work, Yoga, Qigong or mind-body practices, we aim to support the whole person, not just the symptoms.

We view our patients as our greatest teachers. Every interaction in the treatment room deepens our understanding and refines our approach. Through open communication and trust, we grow, not only as practitioners, but as people. Healing is not something we do to someone, it's something we experience with them.

Q: What is your biggest challenge as an acupuncture practitioner?

A: I have been in practice since 1985, when acupuncture had only been legalized in California for about 10 years. In those early days, all of us in the field faced a common challenge: being seen as equal partners in the mainstream healthcare system. We worked not only to treat our patients, but also to educate, advocate, and pave the way for greater acceptance of TCM.

Today, my challenge has evolved. It's no longer about being accepted, it's about being accessible. At Fountain Project Health and Wellness Center (FPHWC), our vision has always been to bring high quality, whole person care to everyone regardless of income, background, or circumstance. But the truth is, we still haven't reached the core populations who need this care the most. I believe that medicine should be for the people. Whether rich or poor, healing should not be a privilege, it should be a human right. And yet, many individuals and communities continue to go without the services we know can transform their well-being.

This weighs heavily on me. We care deeply for each patient who walks through our doors, but I remain deeply concerned for those who have not yet been able to reach. Expanding access to integrative, holistic care is not just a dream-it is my ongoing mission.

Q: What do you find most rewarding as a practitioner?

A: The most rewarding moment is seeing your patients are getting better and can sustain their wellness independently. This includes a reciprocal participation of both the practitioner and the patient. Without each other's commitment, the results can not be sustainable.

Q: How can healthy lifestyle choices (e.g., diet, hydration, exercise, sleep, meditation) compliment the affect of acupuncture treatment?

A: A healthy lifestyle is not just about doing more, it's about finding balance between activity and quietness. Too much physical activity without proper rest can lead to inflammation, fatigue or even injury. On the other hand, too much stillness and inactivity can result in stagnation, poor circulation and declining health.

Living well means knowing your body, not just through numbers like blood pressure, blood sugar, or cholesterol levels, but by cultivating the ability to sense subtle internal changes. For example, feeling when your blood pressure is rising, even before taking a measurement, is a sign of true body awareness.

This level of sensitivity allows us to respond in real time, before imbalances become illness. It may mean adjusting your diet, drinking more water, adding more movement or outdoor time, practicing meditation, or simply reconnecting with nature. Wellness isn't one-size-fits-all, it's about staying in tune with yourself and making small, wise adjustments that keep you in harmony.

Recent 2025 Events and Activities

Chinese New Year Luncheon at BARM

On January 29, 2025 Fountain Project volunteers gathered at Bay Area Rescue Mission (BARM) to cook and serve a delicious lunch for BARM residents and guests in honor of the new Year of the Snake. The event was very well attended with over 240 people being served by an incredibly hard working cook staff! What better way to begin a new year than by reaching out to serve our community!



Smiling Chefs

One Heart Clinic at BARM

On March 1, 2025 Fountain Project volunteers and practitioners staged another successful One Heart medical clinic at Bay Area Rescue Mission in Richmond. We provided acupuncture, massage, chiropractic and counseling health services. Clinic patients also received free blood pressure and glucose tests, and participated in several movement classes, musical events and raffles. A fun and productive day!

See our team in action:



FP Volunteers Assemble Early at BARM



Registration Desk Last Minute Prep



Practitioners Ready to Roll



Blood Pressure and Glucose check



Child Care Faculty, Lucinda, Ivy, and Sophia



Acupuncturist Team Ready to Open



Kung Fu class



Massage Room



Acupuncture Room



Lottery Drawing, BARM President Bram Begonia and
and Dr. Erlene Chiang



Lottery Winners' Circle



Thanks for coming! Our next BARM One Heart clinic will be on October 4, 2025

FPHWC One Year Anniversary Party

The Fountain Project Health and Wellness Center completed its first year of operations in February. In our first 12 months of operation, we provided 4000 services to over 1000 patients. We celebrated the occasion on March 15, 2025 with a delicious hot pot dinner at Wen Wu School. It was a culinary delight!



Hot Pot creations by Dr. Michael Stacey, Yanny, Peggy Dey, and Jerri Miner



Ivy, Kenia ,Judy, Sophia, Angela, Yanny, Erlene, Dagmar

FP COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

New Fountain Project Director and Co-Chair

We are very excited to announce that Dr. Michael Lerner has joined the Fountain Project Board and will serve as Co-Chairperson of the Board of Directors. Michael has broad experience as a public health advocate. Co-founder of Commonweal, Michael has worked extensively in health and justice, integrative cancer care, and the polycrisis awareness movement. His current work is centered on personal and planetary resilience. He is a MacArthur Fellow and author of “Choices in Healing.” Please join us in welcoming Michael to the Fountain Project!



The Fountain Project and You

For those of you who may be new to the Fountain Project, our mission is to provide free healing health services and classes to those most in need. We interact with several key community partners, including Bay Area Rescue Mission, Greater Richmond Interfaith Program, and Safe Organized Spaces, and offer regular bi-weekly clinic hours at the Fountain Project Health and Wellness Center. All services and classes are FREE! See clinic information below.

Update on Fountain Project Integrative Practices Clinic

Third year residents in the Lifelong Family Medicine Residency Program recently completed the first Fountain Project integrative medicine practice rotation, and are now preparing for their board exams. Each resident participated in six intensive modules to gain hands-on experience in the approaches and techniques used by Fountain Project practitioners. As they now go on to join the medical profession, they will bring with them a better sense of alternate medical practices from their clinic experience, thereby helping to enhance patient outcomes. We will be welcoming the next class of Lifelong first year residents into the Fountain Project Integrative Practices rotation starting in June to build on this success.

Fountain Project in the News

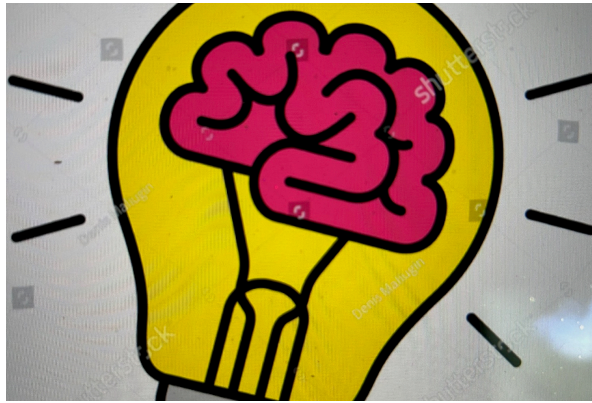
The growing success of the Fountain Project Health and Wellness Center is attracting media attention. The April 29, 2025 edition of the Richmond Standard featured an article titled, "Fountain Project brings holistic healing to people in need in Richmond." Watch this space! [add Richmond newspaper article link]

Support Us

Bringing successful health services to the communities we serve is largely based on your generous ongoing support. In the past year we have greatly increased the number of health patients we serve who are very grateful for the free services. Please consider donating any amount you can to help us to continue with our important outreach efforts.

DONATE: It's easy on our website (fountainproject.org).

VOLUNTEER: Please contact: info@fountainproject.org



??? DID YOU KNOW ???

In addition to using needles, acupuncturists have other tools they can use for treatment. These include the use of suction cups and moxibustion.

Moxibustion is a traditional Chinese medicine technique that involves burning moxa, a dried herb, on or near the skin. Moxa can be used directly by placing cones on the relevant meridian point(s), or indirectly by holding a burning moxa stick near the meridian point(s). Moxa sticks and cones are derived from the mugwort plant (*artemisia vulgaris*).

Cupping is an alternative therapy that can be used in conjunction with acupuncture to stimulate acupuncture points. The cups pull up the skin and soft tissue to improve blood flow and stimulate metabolic activity. It can also decompress muscles and soft tissue.



Artemisia Vulgaris

2025 Fountain Project Events Calendar

Upcoming

May 18	Health Clinic, City of Ten Thousand Buddhas in Ukiah
May 24-25	Health Clinic, Fremont Buddhist Temple
July 27	Health Clinic, City of Ten Thousand Buddhas in Ukiah
August 2	Richmond Block Party, partner with Bay Area Rescue Mission
Sept 28	Health Clinic at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas in Ukiah
October 5	One Heart Health Clinic, Bay Area Rescue Mission in Richmond
December 14	Health Clinic at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas in Ukiah

Past

January 29	Chinese New Year BARM lunch
February 23	Health Clinic, City of Ten Thousand Buddhas in Ukiah
March 1	One Heart Health Clinic, Bay Area Rescue Mission
March 15	FPHWC Clinic One Year Anniversary Party

Fountain Project Health and Wellness Center Hours

Thursdays	5:30 - 9.00pm
Saturdays	9am - 3:00pm

Lifelong William Jenkins Center
150 Harbour Way, Richmond CA

To make an appointment call
(341) 333-8595



Classes offered at LifeLong

Weekly Movement Classes:

Thursdays: 6-7pm qigong

Saturdays: 12-1pm yoga

Saturdays: 1-2pm qigong

Special Classes:

Healing Sounds (3rd Thursday at 6pm)

Everybody Can Move (3rd Saturday at 11am)

Blood Pressure Class (4th Saturday at 10am)

Please note the FPHWC will closed on the following dates:

May 24

October 4

November 27 and 29

December 25 and 27

January 1, 2026

Other Fountain Project Outreach Programs

Greater Richmond Interfaith Program (GRIP)

Acupuncture and Massage

Thursdays 1:30-3:30pm

165 22nd St., Richmond CA

Safe Organized Spaces (SOS)

Acupuncture and Massage

Fridays 10am-1pm

32 Harbor Way, Richmond CA

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