

Acupuncture as Surgery – A Whole New Paradigm in Care

When Dr. Juliet Decaestecker first watched an integrative vet place acupuncture needles in a small dog who had been limping, and afterwards, run out of the exam room, she knew she wasn't witnessing the placebo effect. That moment marked the start of her 'happy pet, happy owner' work.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Today's Pet Game Changer is Dr. Juliet Decaestecker, an integrative veterinarian with a practice in Belgium; Dr. Juliet's motto is 'happy pet, happy owner'
- Dr. Juliet realized as a child that she wanted to work with animals to help and heal them and she has spent every day since then learning, doing, and teaching
- Dr. Juliet's marvelously busy life today includes her husband, four children, an integrative veterinary consultancy, and a teaching slot at the Belgian Veterinary Acupuncture Society

My guest today is integrative veterinarian Dr. Juliet Decaestecker, who was nominated for a Game Changer award by Nisha P. Game Changers are amazing souls from around the world doing important, blessed work saving animals in their own communities.

Pursuing Her Life's Passion

Dr. Juliet explains that her work as a veterinarian is her life's passion. Even as a little child, she knew she wanted to work with animals to help and heal them. She attended veterinary school at the University of Liege, a major public university of the French Community of Belgium based in Liège, Wallonia, Belgium, and received her degree after six years of study.

"It was when I started working that I realized there was something more," Dr. Juliet explains. "I asked myself, 'Will I be doing the same thing day in, day out, prescribing the same anti-inflammatory or antibiotic, the same kind of protocol medicine?'"

I was treating a symptom or a multitude of symptoms with a drug or a multitude of drugs. I knew there had to be more, and then I found a veterinarian who was treating dogs with acupuncture."

Dr. Juliet watched the vet place acupuncture needles in a small dog who had been limping and thought to herself, "That's strange. What are the needles going to do?" After the treatment, she watched the dog not only walk, but actually run out of the exam room, and she knew it wasn't the placebo effect she was witnessing.

"I started to get interested," says Dr. Juliet. "I called one of the pioneers of acupuncture and Chinese medicine in Europe, Dr. Emiel Van den Bosch and told him I wanted to learn about alternative medicine."

Van den Bosch told her "If you want to learn, you must learn the basics. You must have a good basic background to be solid enough in front of the veterinary community, because you will need to be a good, how do you say, occidental [allopathic] medicine vet. You will be diagnosing in a different way, seeing patterns, and searching for the cause of diseases."

Studying at the 'University of Life'

Dr. Juliet went on to study acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine with human medicine doctors and osteopaths.

"Acupuncture, for me, is my surgery," she explains. "I keep things moving. I make sure the chi is free flowing. I use Chinese herbal medicine, because what is no longer in a patient's body, I replace with herbs. The third branch of Chinese medicine is nutritional therapy. So, I kept studying, I kept learning, and I started treating."

I also took a trip around the world with my husband for nearly four years. We drove around the world with our own car. Our goal was to find endangered species in their natural habitat. I wanted to show the world that we are part of a big ecosystem. I wanted to help animals survive in their natural environment.

Our trip was our 'university of life.' I got the chance to work with indigenous people, with local people and healers. Whenever I was in someone's kitchen, I would see that they could do amazing things with simple herbs and simple remedies — knowledge we've lost in many cultures."

After their trip around the world, Dr. Juliet and her husband settled back in Belgium and had four children. Eventually, they had the opportunity to live in India for five years, where Dr. Juliet stood out as a white, Belgian, non-traditional veterinarian who honored and applied ancient healing knowledge.

Happy Pet, Happy Owner

These days, back in Belgium with her family, Dr. Juliet is working as a consulting integrative veterinarian while she and her husband build a straw bale house for their family. She also teaches acupuncture and Chinese nutri-therapy as a member of the Belgian Veterinary Acupuncture Society (**BEVAS**).

Dr. Juliet has created a beautiful life for herself, her family, and so many she has encountered in her journey. I asked her what she loves most about her work.

"I always say happy pet, happy owner," she replies. "Everything is linked. We are all linked together. Making a change in an animal's life makes a change in the owner's life, because that animal is so bonded to the owner. It makes me so happy to see animals doing better, and their owners asking, 'Is that the same for us? Is that also something that would apply to us? Can it make us better, too?'"

As veterinarians, we don't always succeed. We need a network of colleagues we can call and ask, 'What do you think?' The goal is to improve the quality of life of the animal, which makes the owner happy, and the kids, and the whole family. They start to think about what they're eating, how they're living.

I'm only a little drop, but I'm happy that my passion can perhaps contribute to a better world. After a few years of practicing, it doesn't feel so much like a dream."

If you'd like to learn more about Dr. Juliet, you can find her website at [**Dr. Juliet**](#). She also has a [**Facebook**](#) page.
