

## **A Woman in Veil**

I never thought I was uneasy with people of other cultures until I came face to face with a woman wearing a veil. A patient from Afghanistan was referred to me for acupuncture treatment for her back pain. She came to me, hiding behind her veil, covering her whole body except her dark eyes, with her husband and a male translator. I don't know who was more afraid, she or I, but the translator told me she was in severe pain and wanted treatment with me. I told him that I needed her to be in an examination gown. Then the interpreter told me that this could not be done under the Islamic law and tradition. I told them I could not treat her unless she changed into a gown. We both finally compromised that she could lift up her burka, allowing enough for me to examine and treat her. Both her husband and translator hid behind the curtain that was drawn. I began treating her. It was quite a sight, she reciting her Koran loudly and I saying The Lord's Prayer silently.

After completion of the treatment, I thought I saw in her eyes a sense of gratitude.

She, her husband and the translator returned the next week wanting more treatment. I reluctantly provided my services to them. They then returned a total of ten more times, and each time they seemed at ease, and each treatment almost became a ritual.

Through gentle conversation with her husband and the translator during the treatment, I came to realize how wrong I was in many ways. You see, my patient had experienced tragic events that any mom should not go through in her life. All three of her sons were killed in the war. They were fighting for the UN troops against the Taliban. I developed a deep sympathy for her and her husband and we became good friends. I pray to God to comfort them in their suffering.

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