

## Healing herself

# A physician badly injured in an accident finds recovery in helping others

By Marcie Kagawa



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Dr. Theresa Wang and her husband, David Chen, watched a television interview Wednesday that was part of her presentation at a seminar on frontal lobe function and traumatic brain injury at the Plaza Club.

A Hawaii island physician who was severely injured in a car crash two years ago involving former University of Hawaii quarterback Colt Brennan reached an out-of-court settlement Wednesday in her personal injury lawsuit, her lawyer said.

Dr. Theresa Wang had sued Shakti Stream, Brennan's girlfriend, who was driving a sport utility vehicle on Nov. 19, 2010, that crossed the center line of Queen Kaahumanu Highway in North Kona and crashed head-on into a sedan Wang was driving. Brennan was a passenger in the SUV.

Wang sued Stream in December 2010. Ian Mattoch, Wang's lawyer, said Wednesday he could not disclose terms of the settlement because of a privacy clause.

Hawaii County Deputy Prosecutor Kimberly Taniyama said authorities are still reviewing a negligent-injury investigation against Stream to see if there is enough evidence to charge her.

Charges must be filed by November, when the statute of limitations ends.

Wang, 49, and her husband, David Chen, said Wednesday they hold nothing against Stream, but believe it would be beneficial for her to do community service.

"The positive thing that we could see come out of a prosecution is that she (Stream) may be required to do community service, maybe go to schools and speak about the dangers of distracted driving or the dangers of reckless driving and how it can affect not only the person who's injured, but also the person who caused it, too," Chen said.

Wang and Chen were in Honolulu Wednesday to speak at a seminar about frontal lobe function and traumatic brain injury.

Wang walks with a cane and a bit of a limp, and sometimes still struggles with short-term memory loss and other problems, but said her experiences have given her much to be thankful for.

"I think a lot of times, people are down because they feel useless and they don't have a purpose in life," said Wang, who was a family physician at West Hawaii Community Health Center in Kailua-Kona. "The focus is always on the life they had before.

"But now I've got a new track, another road to discover. I can't recover what I lost, except for maybe walking a little bit and going back to hula, but those are physical things, those are actually, on my scale, kind of superficial.

"The deeper part is to impart more wisdom, insight and hope to other people and to the world."

Wang said she's looking forward to her new role in educating physicians about her experience, what she's learned about traumatic brain injury and how to treat it. She said she comes from three perspectives: that of a physician, patient and wife of a patient (David Chen had a brain injury in 1992).

After the accident, Wang underwent more than a dozen surgeries for injuries, including fractures of her neck, spine, arms and legs, broken ribs, a collapsed lung and brain swelling.

"The odds were always against her," Chen said. She spent seven weeks at the Queen's Medical Center and about seven months at in-patient rehabilitation facilities on the mainland, followed by a year of outpatient therapy on Hawaii island.

Dr. Mark Ashley, founder and CEO of the Centre for Neuro Skills in Bakersfield, Calif., where Wang stayed for four months of rehab, said, "When Dr. Wang came (to CNS), she was functioning at a much, much lower level than what you see today. She worked very hard and the staff worked very hard with her and you can see it."