

CHINESE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE: AN INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

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Who comes for acupuncture, and why? A menopausal woman with heaving mood swings and drenching hot flashes seeking an alternative to hormone replacement therapy, an asthmatic child reacting poorly to prescription medication, a man with a history of unexplained bone fractures, a woman undergoing chemotherapy with profound fatigue, a computer programmer disabled by hand and wrist pain, and a man tormented by anxiety attacks are all likely candidates.

Whatever the complaint, the preponderance of those entering the acupuncture and herb clinics in the United States have already been seen by physicians. They venture beyond conventional medicine because nothing else has worked, because they hope for an alternative to pharmaceutical or surgical interventions, or to complement their present therapeutic regimen. According to Harvard researcher David Eisenberg, MD, 96% of the 22 million Americans who sought an alternative therapy provider in 1990 were also under the care of a conventional physician (note 1).

Sometimes acupuncture and herbs are used in tandem with prescription drugs; sometimes they can replace them. This determination is made with careful consideration and ideally is monitored by a cooperative primary care physician.

Over the course of 21 years of practice, the authors have observed that usually, but not always, Chinese medicine (note 2) helps. It appears to relieve symptoms, increase physiological com-

petence, enhance recuperative power and immunity, decrease drug-reliance, and contribute to a sense of greater health, expanding its users' capacity for pleasure, work, and creativity.

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

Chinese medicine is a comprehensive form of healthcare that has been in continuous use for more than 23 centuries. Codified during the Han Dynasty in the second century BC, the *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen* articulates the fundamental philosophical, diagnostic, and therapeutic concepts that form the basis of clinical practice today. Over the last millennia, this system has been carried throughout Asia, Europe, India, Africa, and the Americas. Records from the mid-19th century indicate that traditional Chinese doctors in Oregon and Idaho successfully treated respiratory, digestive, and reproductive infections as well as arthritis and symptoms of cardiovascular disease. Because the Chinese achieved such success with their "barefoot doctor" program in the 1960s, the World Health Organization (WHO) has supported the dissemination of Chinese traditional medicine in developing countries.

In the United States the popularity of acupuncture mushroomed after diplomatic relations with China were normalized in 1971. Americans were introduced to it when *New York Times* journalist James Reston was treated for postsurgical pain while on assignment in China, and he reported, "I've seen the past and it works!" Chinese medicine, however, is not limited to pain management. For more than a decade, WHO has listed problems such as bronchitis, flu, arthritis, stroke, infertility, dizziness, insomnia, and depression as amenable to acupuncture therapy. Acupuncture is also used in alcohol and drug detoxification programs, where it has reduced recidivism.¹

More than two dozen US schools have 3- or 4-year academic and clinical programs which, upon completion, qualify graduates for licensing exams in acupuncture in 25 states. There are now about 10,000 acupuncturists nationally.

Numerous schools of thought and diverse methods are found within the vast historical tradition of Chinese medicine. It has never been, nor is it today, a monolithic institution; millions of doctors over several millennia have practiced its techniques, developing and disputing its theories. Like those of Western medicine, its methods and interpretations are in constant evolution.

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Although this pluralistic body of knowledge contains many explanatory models within it, they exist within the framework of a common logic.

COMPARING EASTERN AND WESTERN MEDICAL CONCEPTS

Chinese medicine holds assumptions that diverge fundamentally from those of modern Western medicine. Incorporation of what is useful from this age-old system therefore requires acquisition of a conceptual vocabulary foreign to our own. The ideas that form the ground of a culture are so taken for granted that, like air, water, or gravity, other legitimate systems of meaning are difficult to imagine. Appreciation of Chinese medicine involves a willingness to entertain the possibility of merit in a point of view that differs from our own.

Every medicine is a language that presupposes the nature of the universe and, like religion, assumes tremendous power in a culture. It determines how we are born and how we die, defines health and sickness, and sets standards for how we care for ourselves day to day. Most important, medicine explains us to ourselves, establishing the categories within which we manipulate and construct our reality, how and what we name things. Every medicine reflects cultural values that are held sacred.

The Cartesian model, from which modern medicine emerges, pictured the world as a machine. Reality is located in the tangible structure of matter: that which can be measured, quantified, and analyzed. Descartes unequivocally separated mind from body, because consciousness could not be understood solely by physical evaluation. The body, perceived mechanically, was reduced into smaller and smaller constituent parts (Figure 1).

MAJOR CONCEPTS OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Chinese medicine rests upon another set of assumptions.² Within the Eastern worldview, the human being is a microcosm, a universe in miniature, the offspring of Heaven and Earth, a fusion of cosmic and terrestrial forces. People are recognized as beings with a self-aware mind cast in physical form. The unseen and the seen, psyche and soma, are mutually valid and cogenerative.

Whereas Western medicine relies on Cartesian-Newtonian science, Chinese medicine is embedded within a philosophy of nature. A postulate of Chinese medicine is that by observing patterns in the natural world, the dynamics of human nature are known. As above, so below. The world is a single, unbroken wholeness—Tao—that exists within. Chinese medical logic relies upon correspondence thinking: things that correspond to the same thing correspond to each other. Life arises from the magnetic interplay of the polar forces Yang and Yin, Heaven and Earth, heat and cold, sun and shadow, dryness and wetness, summer and winter. Just as these divisions are relational, so all living processes are seen as a mosaic of connected relationships and conditions.

In short, the human body is viewed as an ecosystem, and

the language of Chinese medicine is based on metaphors from nature. Each person has a unique terrain to be mapped, a resilient yet sensitive ecology to be maintained (Figure 2). As a gardener adjusts irrigation and applies compost, so the traditional Chinese doctor uses acupuncture, herbs, food, massage (Tui Na), and exercise (Tai Chi and Qi Gong) to recover and preserve health.

Health results from the proper balance of contending forces. In simple terms, diagnosis identifies imbalance, while treatment seeks to restore harmony. Whereas in Western medicine, diagnosis is an attempt to name disease, in Chinese medicine the goal is to recognize patterns of disharmony. Health is considered to be the ability of the organism to respond appropriately to a wide variety of challenges while maintaining equilibrium, integrity, and coherence.

Ontology and pathology are closely linked: how people get sick is inextricably tied to who they are. Chinese medical thinking is holographic: each aspect of bodily life reflects the whole of which it is a part, all parts are in constant interaction with each other, and universal patterns are replicated at every level of human existence. The categories of classification in Chinese medicine are interdependent, exist along a continuum, and are neither fixed nor absolute. The body is viewed more as a functional entity than a structural one (Table 1).

Body Constituents: Shen, Qi, Moisture, Blood, Essence

Just as nature is the manifest union of Heaven and Earth, a person embodies the fusion of Shen (psyche) and Essence (soma) (note 3). As a landscape includes air, river, and soil, a human being is composed of Qi (pronounced *chee*), Moisture (body fluids), and Blood (tissue) (Figure 3).

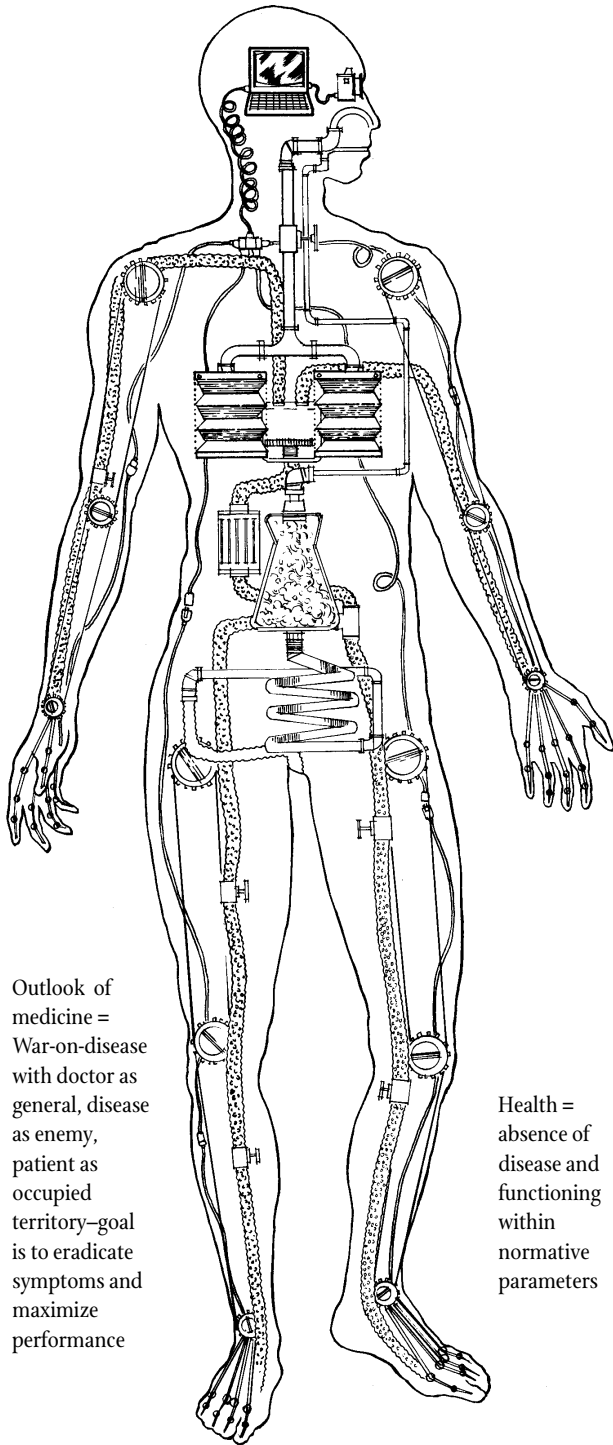
These basic constituents exist along a continuum that ranges from intangible to tangible: Shen, or Mind, represents the nonmaterial expression of the individual; Qi, the animating force that manifests as activity (moving, thinking, feeling, working) and warmth; Moisture, the liquid medium that protects and lubricates tissue, is tangibly more dense than Qi but less so than Blood; Blood, the material out of which bones, nerves, skin, muscles, and organs are created, is yet more substantial; and Essence (Jing), the most dense substance, is the fundamental seed of reproduction and regeneration from which the physical body arises.

The phrase Shen-Jing refers to the Yang-Yin totality of a person; Shen is the organizing force of the self reflected in the mental, emotional, and expressive life, and Jing or Essence refers to physical structure and sensate life. Qi can refer to vital functions (like movement and warmth) as well as the aggregate sum of life process and the organism's motive force. A Taoist text reads, "Tao originated from Emptiness and Emptiness produced the universe. The universe produced Qi... That which was clear and light drifted up to become heaven [Shen, psyche], and that which was heavy and turbid solidified to form earth [Essence, soma]."

Qi is considered to be both ethereal and substantive. Harvard Sinologist Nathan Sivin says this is a difficult idea for

WEST

Body As Machine



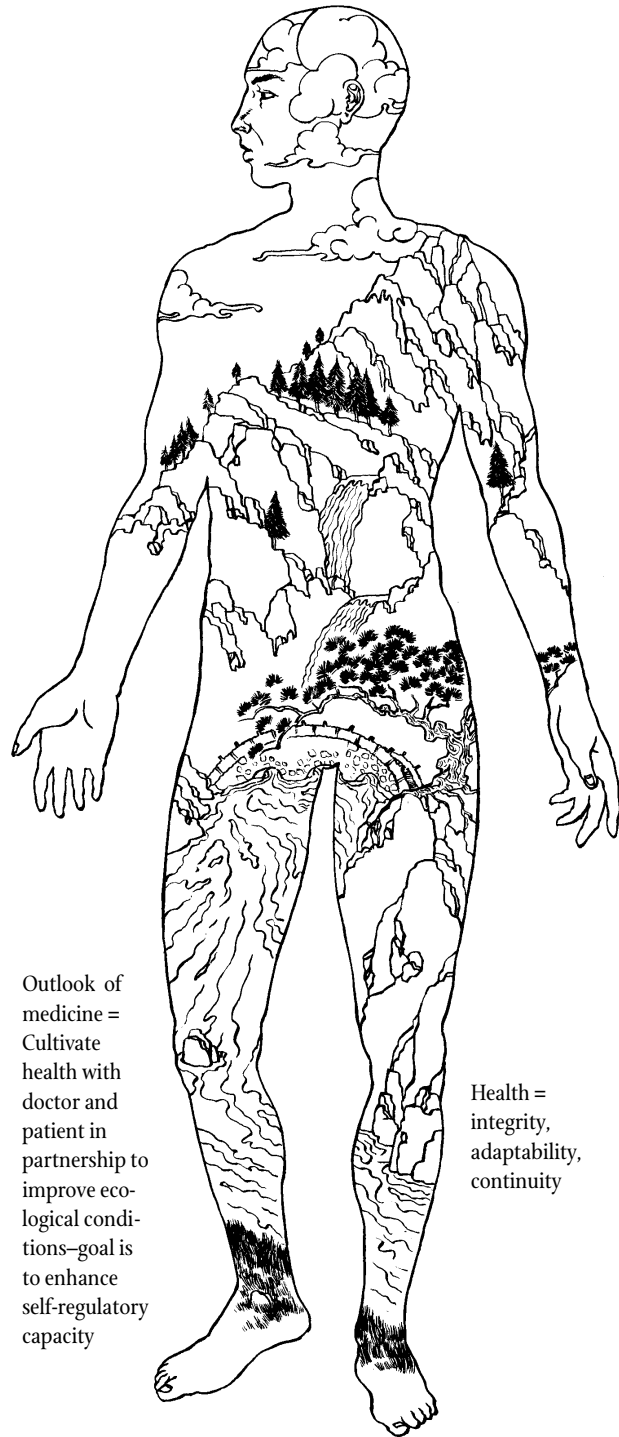
Outlook of medicine = War-on-disease with doctor as general, disease as enemy, patient as occupied territory—goal is to eradicate symptoms and maximize performance

Health = absence of disease and functioning within normative parameters

FIGURE 1 Body as machine. The body is like a machine that can be dismantled and reduced into smaller and smaller constituent parts with the heart as pump, the lungs as bellows, the joints as gears and levers, the nervous system as electrical circuitry, the brain as computer, the eye as camera, the stomach as chemical beaker, the intestines as plumbing, and the liver and kidneys as filters. (Figures 1 and 2 used with permission.³)

EAST

Body As Garden



Outlook of medicine = Cultivate health with doctor and patient in partnership to improve ecological conditions—goal is to enhance self-regulatory capacity

Health = integrity, adaptability, continuity

FIGURE 2 Body as garden. The human landscape embodies the primal forces in nature—Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, Water—that organize the body's inner air, rivers, and mountains. Five functional systems called Organ Networks—the Liver, Heart, Spleen, Lung, and Kidney—govern particular tissues, mental faculties, and physiological activities, generating and regulating the body's constituents—Shen, Qi, Moisture, Blood, and Essence.

TABLE 1 Assumptions

EAST

Assumptions of holographic model

Humans are a microcosm of nature

Reality is one unified matrix within which all things are connected and cogenerated

Seen/unseen, Earth/Heaven, Yin-Yang, soma/psyche are contending dualities in a continuous process of transformation that can be described and understood

Functional interactions – Process – Pattern

Each person has a unique terrain to be mapped—a resilient, sensitive ecology to be maintained

Thinking: holistic, both/and, syncretic

Knowledge is subjective and relative

Cyclical progression of events: mutual arising and recurring

“The mechanical view of the world simply did not develop in Chinese thought, and the organismic view in which every phenomenon was connected with every other...was universal among Chinese thinkers...The harmonious co-operation of all beings arose, not from the orders of a superior authority external to themselves, but from the fact that they were all parts in a hierarchy of wholes forming a cosmic and organic pattern and what they obeyed were the internal dictates of their own natures.” –Joseph Needham

“Illnesses may be identical but the persons suffering from them are different. The emotions and excesses affecting people are not the same. If one treats all patients who appear to suffer from one identical illness with one and the same therapy, one may hit the nature of the illness, but one’s approach may still be exactly contraindicated by the influences of Qi that determine the condition of the individual patient’s body.” –Hsu Ta-ch’un in 1757

WEST

Assumptions of biomechanical model

Humans are an autonomous system within nature

Reality can be reduced into smaller and smaller discrete constituents and substantiated concretely

The composition of matter, fixed and unchanging, can be measured, quantified, and replicated

Mechanical structures – Substance – Evidence

Uniformity of body parts allows for standardized procedures

Thinking: reductive, either/or, synthetic

Knowledge is objective and absolute

Linear progression of events: cause and effect

“All science is certain, evident knowledge. We reject all knowledge which is merely probable and judge that only those things should be believed which are perfectly known and about which there can be no doubts.” –Descartes

“I do not recognize any difference between the machines made by craftsmen and the various bodies that nature alone composes.” –Descartes

“There is nothing in the concept of body that belongs to mind; and nothing in that of mind that belongs to the body.” –Descartes

moderns, with their clear distinction between substance and function—but Qi is synchronously “what makes things happen in stuff,” “stuff that makes things happen,” and the “stuff in which things happen.”³ This lack of distinction can be likened to the modern physicist’s inability to distinguish particles from waves. There are different forms of Qi: condensed, Qi assumes physical form, but it manifests also as mind and the ineffable quality we call spirit. Types of Qi include inherited, nutritive, respiratory, and defensive. Its functions are to transform, transport, contain, lift, protect, and warm. Pathologies of Qi manifest as deficiency, collapse, stagnation, and rebellion.

Put simply, health exists if adequate Qi, Moisture, and Blood are distributed equitably and smoothly. Symptoms as varied as joint pain, edema, dizziness, dyspepsia, and cough occur when this circulation is disrupted. Illness is understood as a consequence of either depletion or congestion of Qi, Moisture, and

Blood. Depletion leads to weakness, fatigue, frequent illness, poor assimilation, and inadequate blood flow. Congestion results in stiffness, pain, abdominal distension, irritability, and swelling.

Blood governs tissue, Moisture engenders fluid, and Qi initiates the activity of the body in the process of forming itself. The body is completely dependent on their interaction. Without proper Moisture, the Qi becomes hot and agitated and the Blood dries up and congeals. Without Blood, Moisture is dispersed and Qi is scattered. Without Qi, Moisture and Blood stagnate, coagulate, and cease circulating. All functions and processes are cogenerated and mutually regulating.

But Qi may also imply the totality of Blood, Moisture, and Qi—the sum of the life of the organism. Just as ice, water, and steam are three manifestations of the same molecular entity, so Blood, Moisture, and Qi are three manifestations of the same “life force,” the coalescing of Yin-Yang in human shape.

Organ Networks: Liver, Heart, Spleen, Lung, Kidney

Nature can be further differentiated, beyond the duality of Yin-Yang, into five primal powers (wu-xing)—Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water. Correspondingly, the body is divided respectively into five functional systems known as Organ Networks: Liver, Heart, Spleen, Lung, Kidney. These Networks regulate the basic constituents—Shen, Qi, Moisture, Blood, and Essence—organizing them into the complex life of the body.

Each Organ Network refers to a complete set of functions, physiological and psychological, rather than to a specific and discrete physical structure fixed in an anatomical location. These systems are identified by the name of the Yin Organ, but include a paired Yang Organ as well as corresponding mental faculties, emotional states, tissues, sense organs, and channels within their sphere of influence. Whereas in Western physiology, thoughts and feelings are localized in the brain, in the Chinese view they exist in the realm of the Organ Networks, and their expression is attributable to the character of the Organs and their reciprocal interactions. Thus, emotions affect the state of each Organ Network, and by treating the Organs, emotional and mental processes can be modulated and enhanced.

To summarize these relations: the Liver Network governs Blood; tendons and nerves; the volume, pressure, and evenness of circulating Qi and Blood; and temperament and judgment. It is damaged by excessive anger and frustration. The Heart governs the Shen; arteries; the propulsion and perfusion of Blood; joy, clear perception, and intuition. It is damaged by overstimulation. The Spleen governs Moisture, muscles and flesh, assimilation of nutrients, and the capacity for thinking and remembering. It is damaged by worry and inertia. The Lung governs the Qi, skin and body hair, the rhythm and tempo of respiration and circulation, and subconscious drives and appetites. It is damaged by excessive grief and longing. The Kidney governs the Jing necessary for development; bones, marrow and brain; and instincts. It is damaged by overwork and pessimism (Figures 4 and 5).

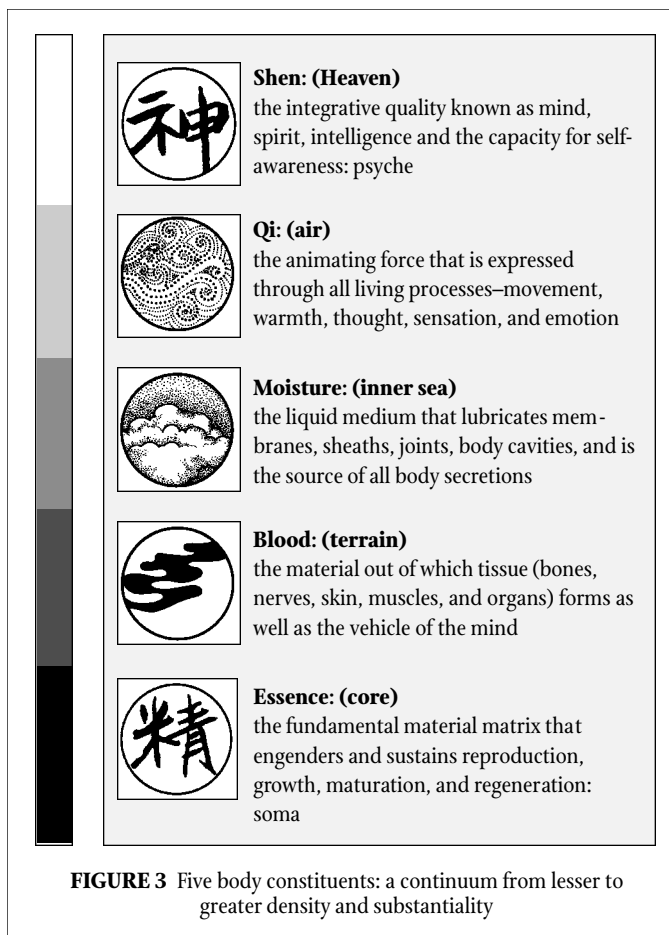
Thus, the Kidney Network includes, yet extends beyond, fluid metabolism, which we in the West associate with the kidneys. The Kidney stores the Essence that is responsible for reproduction, growth, and regeneration. It controls the teeth, bones, marrow, brain, inner ear, pupil of the eye, and lumbar region, and is associated with the state of alarm, the will, and the capacity for sharp thinking and perception. Problems such as retarded growth, ringing in the ears, infertility, low back pain, paranoia, fuzzy thinking, weak vision, apathy, and despair are viewed as symptoms of impaired Kidney Network function.

The Heart not only propels blood through the vessels, but harbors the Shen and governs the mind. Symptoms as varied as panic, restless sleep, angina, and palpitations occur when the Heart is agitated. The Spleen is in charge of the assimilation of food and fluids, as well as ideas. When this Organ is disturbed, indigestion, bloating, fatigue, scattered thinking, and poor concentration ensue. The Liver is responsible for the storage of Blood, flow of Qi, and evenness of temperament. When the Liver is thwarted, tension in the neck

and shoulders, high blood pressure, headaches, cramping, moodiness, or impulsive behavior follow. The Lung sets the body rhythm, defends its boundaries, and affords inspiration. A troubled Lung might trigger tightness in the chest, skin rashes, vulnerability to colds or influenza, rigid thinking, and melancholy.

Pathological Conditions: Cold, Heat, Damp, Dry, Wind

In nature, extreme wind, dampness, dryness, heat, and cold wreak havoc in the world. These same forces derange balance within the human body, weakening or obstructing the movement of Qi in the Organs. As wind shakes trees, scattering leaves, internal Wind manifests as vertigo, unsteady movement, and trembling. As saturated earth generates swamps, so Dampness becomes edema and phlegm. As aridity withers vegetation, so Dryness causes chapping or cracking of mucous membranes. Just as ice inhibits the rush of winter water in a stream, so internal Cold retards circulation and depresses metabolism. And just as fire scorches the earth, so internal Heat



may inflame tissue or generate fever.

These internal and external pathogenic agents also contribute to the congestion or depletion of body constituents. Chinese medicine identifies five pernicious body climates as Cold, Heat, Wind, Dampness, and Dryness. When fire burns the skin, it causes redness, swelling, and pain. According to correspondence logic, when these symptoms arise spontaneously, they are due to the pathogenic influence of internal fire, or Heat. The source of this fire cannot necessarily be seen, but its effects can be observed. Because Heat produces inflammation and agitation, such symptoms are referred to as signs of Heat.

Similarly, a person exposed to icy weather shivers and becomes lethargic, dull, and unresponsive. When these symptoms arise regardless of the external temperature, the person is manifesting the condition of Cold. Coldness is associated with lowered metabolic activity, depressed mental function, retarded circulation, weakness, and malaise.

Jerky movement, dizziness, incoordination, or discomfort that migrates from one region to another, appearing and disappearing suddenly, suggests the presence of Wind. External Wind manifests as soreness, tightness, itching, and sensitivity of the skin and muscles. The common cold is an example when symptoms include dizziness, migratory pain in the joints, muscles, and head. Internal Wind is characterized by labile emotions, vertigo, spasm, and emotional instability. Chills, body ache, and clear, runny secretions are indicative of Wind-Cold; fever, thirst, stuffy nose, sore throat, and yellow secretions indicate Wind-Heat. Wind-Damp produces neurologic disorders such as clumsiness, numbness, paralysis, disequilibrium, headache, vertigo, joint pain, and muddled thinking.

Dampness appears as swelling and a sense of fullness, heaviness, or indolence. It can appear on the surface of the body as oily skin, sticky perspiration, and subcutaneous edema, or instead as joint swelling, cloudy urine, and malodorous vaginal discharges.

Congeaed Moisture becomes Phlegm, recognized by heaviness of the head and limbs, dull pains, abundant sputum, gall or

kidney stones, mental illness, epilepsy, or nodular deformities and cysts. Dampness and Phlegm are similar, but Dampness tends to affect the lower body, whereas Phlegm invades the upper body. Signs of Damp-Heat are signaled by red, painful swelling, thick discharge, blisters as in herpes, and inflammations such as prostatitis, jaundice, dysentery, and bronchitis.

Dryness damages fluids and is manifested by symptoms of dehydration such as brittle hair and nails, wrinkled, cracked skin or mucous membranes, irritated eyes, dry stool or constipation, lack of perspiration, thirst, and scant urine. Dryness can generate irritation, inflammation, and Heat due to lack of lubrication and secretions; Heat may lead to Dryness.

Supplementing Moisture will relieve Dryness, just as eliminating Moisture will counteract Dampness. The principle of complementarity applies: for Cold, warm; for Heat, cool; for congested Qi, Moisture, or Blood, encourage movement; for depletion, nourish; for internal Wind, subdue; for external Wind, relieve surface congestion; and for Phlegm, dissolve.

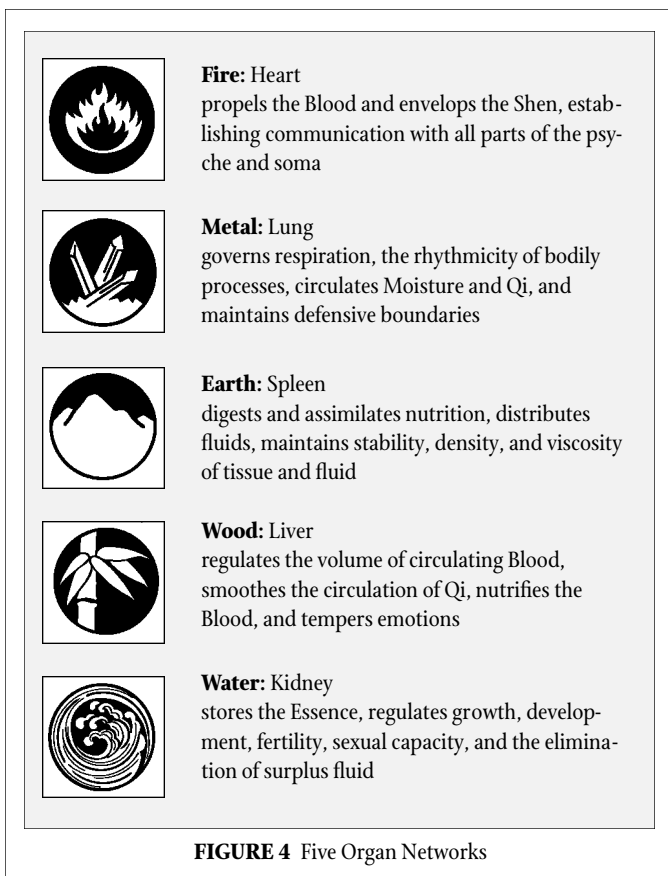


FIGURE 4 Five Organ Networks

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis seeks to determine the prevailing balance within the ecosystem of an individual by assessing the quantity and quality of Qi as it affects the channels and Organs. The physician uses himself as an evaluative instrument, using sense modalities to glean the essential clinical information necessary to formulate a diagnosis and treatment (Table 2).

Pulse diagnosis involves palpation along the radial artery at six positions and two depths. The positions reveal the state of the Qi and Blood within each Organ Network. Variable rates and qualities of the pulse provide information such as depletion or congestion of the Organ Networks and the presence of pathogenic factors such as Wind or Heat. For example, a rapid pulse indicates hyperactivity and Heat (Yang), whereas a slow pulse, hypoactivity and Cold (Yin).

Inspection of the tongue—observing its size, shape, and texture as well as the quality of its fur—reveals the severity, nature, and location of illness. A pale tongue with white fur indicates the presence of Cold, whereas a red tongue with yellow fur

indicates Heat. A flabby or thin tongue indicates deficiency of Qi and Blood, whereas a tense or swollen tongue suggests congestion of these constituents. A quivering or rigid tongue indicates the presence of Wind.

Feeling the temperature, tone, and moisture of the skin and muscles, testing the flexibility of the joints, and probing the sensitivity of the acupuncture points and channels provides further information about the state of the Organ Networks and the presence of pathological conditions.

Diagnostic categories can be correlated with configurations of symptoms. For example, blurry vision, restless sleep, muscle cramps, irritability, palpitations, and emotional sensitivity are all indications of deficient Blood. Because the Liver stores the Blood, many of these symptoms appear again under the category of disturbed Liver function.

TREATMENT

Acupuncture

Organ Networks communicate with each other via an invisible web of channels that transport Qi. Acupuncture points are located in small depressions in the skin called *shu* (hollow). Access to the internal circulation of Qi and Blood is achieved by inserting sterile, solid, slender stainless steel needles at these sites for the purpose of adjusting the flow of Qi within the channels associated with the Organ Networks. This technique influences not only functional or biodynamic processes but structural elements along and in proximity to the channels themselves.

Acupuncture and herbal medicine are known to be helpful in problems as varied as developmental retardation in children resulting from birth injury, meningitis, pain, infertility, colitis, stroke, flu, despair, irritability, and the side effects of chemotherapy and radiation.

Pain is considered to be due to congested Qi, Moisture, and Blood, and weakness, from their inadequate supply. Acupuncture increases the circulation of these constituents, relieving stagnation and obstruction. It stimulates the optimal function-

ing of the Organ Networks associated with the channels and, by so doing, enhances the self-regulatory, self-protective, and self-aware capacities of the organism.

The paradigmatic models within the acupuncture field are diverse. The languages of the explanatory models differ: the neurohumoral from the auto-

nomous nervous system to the electromagnetic or the holographic.⁴ A neurophysiologic effect of acupuncture⁵ has been demonstrated to be the release of neurotransmitters such as endorphins. Although thousands of clinical human trials have been conducted in China, relatively few in this country have been published.

Herbal Remedies and Supplements

Western pharmaceutical drugs capitalize on a single biologically active ingredient that produces a specific physiologic effect. This accounts for their potency but also for their secondary, or side, effects. Although drugs often control symptoms, they do not alter the pathologic process (antibiotics eliminate bacteria but do not increase a person's resistance to infection; diuretics rid the body of excess fluid without strengthening kidney function; aspirin controls arthritic pain

without altering the degenerative course of the disease). Sometimes further aggravations or adverse effects ensue (yeast infection may follow a course of antibiotics; kidney damage may follow long-term diuretic use; erosion of the stomach lining from long-term aspirin use may trigger internal bleeding).

With herbs, active ingredients are enfolded within the whole plant, and this tends to buffer their side effects. Also, herbs are often blended together to counteract undesired effects and enhance intended results. Chinese herbs address the underlying condition as defined by traditional diagnosis and, when used properly, rarely cause disagreeable consequences.

Certain herbs are nutritive—more like foods than drugs—and as such can supplement the diet as well as prevent or remedy ailments. Sometimes long-term herb use is advisable, whereas extended use of pharmaceuticals might not be healthy. Other herbs function in ways we do not associate with food, such as

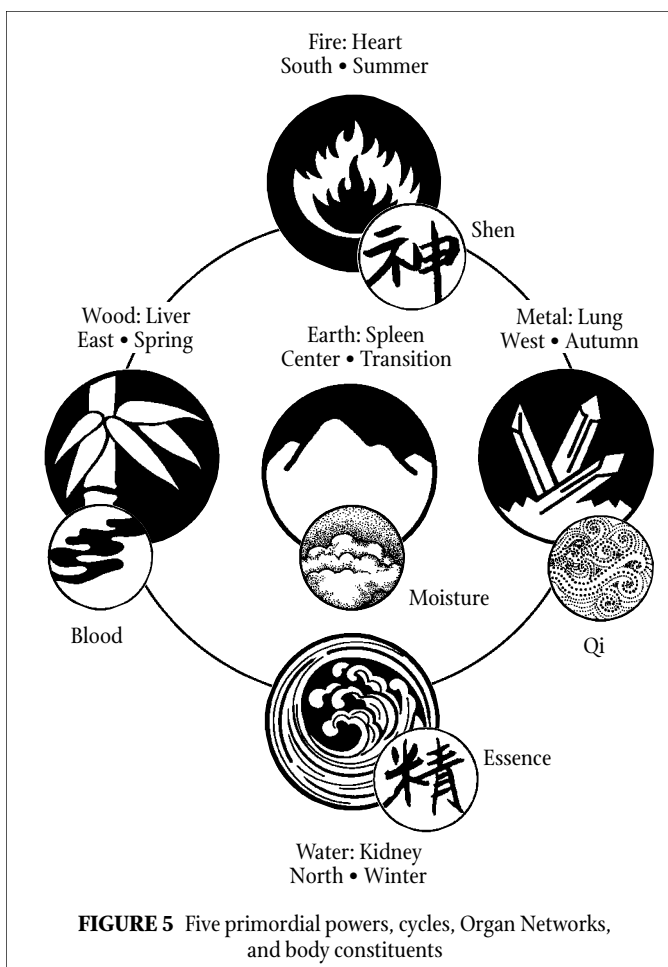


FIGURE 5 Five primordial powers, cycles, Organ Networks, and body constituents

TABLE 2 Patient assessment

Etiology: Pathogenic Influences			Pathological Patterns	
External	Internal	Miscellany	Organ Networks	
Wind	Frustration and rage	Diet	Liver	Depletion • Congestion • Conflict with Spleen and Lung
Heat	Pleasure and frenzy	Living habits	Heart	Depletion • Congestion • Conflict with Lung and Kidney
Dryness	Sadness and grief	Work, exercise, recreation	Spleen	Depletion • Congestion • Conflict with Kidney and Liver
Humidity	Worry and anxiety	Environment (social)	Lung	Depletion • Congestion • Conflict with Liver and Heart
Cold	Fear and fright	Hereditary and congenital conditions	Kidney	Depletion • Congestion • Conflict with Heart and Spleen
DIAGNOSIS			Body constituents	
Observing: eyes, tongue, nails, hair, gait, stature, affect, posture			Shen	Disturbance, detachment
Listening and smelling: sound, strength, and rhythm of voice, breath, odor of breath; skin; excretions, secretions			Qi	} Deficiency, stagnation
Interrogating: current complaints, family and childhood health history, inventory of body functions (ie, sleep, appetite, elimination, menses), quality of mental faculties, sensory modalities, emotional states and responses			Moisture	
Palpating: pulse, channels, muscles, joints, back, chest and abdomen			Blood	
			Essence	Erosion
			Yin/Yang	Yang: exhaustion of vital heat Yin: exhaustion of vital fluids
			Adverse conditions	
				External Wind
				Internal Wind
				Heat
				Cold
				Damp-Heat
				Phlegm

ridding the body of something unwanted, like Heat (anti-inflammatory) or Dampness (diuretic). Herbs tend to have greater concentrations of nonnutritive compounds than do foods (ie, glycosides, resins, alkaloids, polysaccharides, and terpenes), which contribute to their effectiveness as medicine, that is, a substance capable of promoting a desirable biologic process or altering a pathologic one. Chinese herbs are usually combined into formulas and made into tea, packaged pills, or bottled liquid extracts (note 4).

CLINICAL PRACTICE: CASE ILLUSTRATIONS

EF: Prostatitis

EF, a 47-year-old man, had chronic prostatitis since his early 20s. He reported that pain and discomfort in his prostate were precipitated by feelings of anger and incomplete ejaculation. Originally his complaints were associated with frequent sexual arousal without ejaculation, accompanied by feelings of frustration and rage. As a child EF had had frequent ear infections and was considered to be hyperactive. He complained that his bladder was uncomfortable when full, his hands and feet chilled easily, his neck and shoulder muscles were chronically tense, and he was often flatulent. His pulse was generally tight, especially in the position of the Liver, his Spleen pulse was thin and slippery, and his Kidney pulse was deep, thin, and tight. EF's tongue was red at the tip and sides with teeth marks along the edges, and flabby in tone, with sticky yellowish fur at the center and root. Examination of the body revealed tenderness of the neck and

shoulder muscles, stiffness of the lower back, and tightness and soreness of the Achilles tendons.

EF's history of sexual frustration and hyperactivity, together with his tense neck, painful Achilles tendons, poor circulation in the extremities, tight Liver pulse, and redness on the sides of the tongue indicated Heat and congestion of the Qi and Blood of the Liver Network. His bladder discomfort, stiff back, deep, thin, and tight Kidney pulse indicated weakness of the Kidney Network. The flatulence and indented and flabby tongue, with yellow, sticky fur, reflected a weakness of Qi and congestion of Heat and Dampness in the Spleen Network.

The diagnosis was chronic congestion of Liver Qi, leading to weakening of the Spleen and Kidney and the accumulation of Damp-Heat in the genitourinary system. Treatment objectives were to disperse the congested Qi of the Liver, purge Damp-Heat from the pelvic region, and strengthen the Spleen and Kidney. Weekly acupuncture treatment and twice daily ingestion of 4 mL of compound herbal extract resulted in complete remission of symptoms after 2 months.

JL: Menopausal Mood Swings

JL was a 56-year-old woman who reacted poorly to hormone replacement therapy—namely, she gained weight, had edema, cystitis, severe menstrual cramping, bleeding gums, breast pain, and abnormal body swelling. Yet JL was desperate to stabilize her volatile mood swings and end her fitful spells of weeping, which hormone replacement therapy had helped.

Without hormones, her moods were again intolerable, drenching hot flashes woke her several times a night, she had a flare-up of chronic arthritic pain, and her memory worsened dramatically. JL had a history of bronchitis, asthma, tendinitis in the right shoulder, pain in the elbow, index finger, and foot, leg cramps, and hip replacement at age 39 due to arthritic degeneration.

JL's pulse was generally tense, pounding, and weak under pressure. Her Spleen pulse was slippery, her Lung pulse was small and thin, her Kidney pulse was deep and feeble, her Liver pulse was large and ropey, and her Heart pulse was tense, inflated, and uneven. Her tongue was swollen, flabby, and pale, with a red tip and greasy yellow fur. Her flesh was puffy, flaccid, and tender, and her hands and feet were warm.

In Chinese medicine menopause is considered to be a result of the decline of Kidney Essence. Because the Kidney Essence is the source of Blood and Qi for the other Organs, its insufficiency will result in dysfunction of those Organs, especially the Liver and Heart. The history of JL's early development of arthritis, along with the deep and feeble Kidney pulse, confirmed the chronic deficiency of the Kidney Network. The puffiness of the limbs, swollen tongue, greasy fur, and slippery Spleen pulse suggested that weakening of the Spleen had led to generalized stagnation of Moisture. The volatile moods, leg cramps, tendinitis, and large, ropey Liver pulse indicated that the Liver Network had been severely congested, leading to the accumulation of internal Heat and depletion of Blood. The inflated, tense, uneven quality of the Heart pulse, weepiness, red-tipped tongue, and poor memory reflected instability of the Heart due to excessive Heat, deficient Blood, and stagnation of Qi. Finally, the small, thin Lung pulse was congruent with JL's history of asthma and bronchitis. The greasy, yellow tongue fur indicated Damp-Heat. The hot flashes, sweating, and mood swings were intense and unpredictable because of the obstruction of the circulation of Qi and Blood and because of the fundamental Kidney weakness and severe body congestion.

The objectives of treatment were to strengthen the Kidney Network, combined with aggressive purging of Damp-Heat, decongesting of Blood and Qi, pacification of the Heart, and strengthening of the Liver and Spleen. Weekly acupuncture sessions and 10 mL per day of compound herbal extract in four divided doses produced relief of mood disturbances within 2 weeks. Within 3 months, JL's hot flashes, night sweats, and muscle and joint pain ceased. In addition, the frequency and severity of her bronchial illnesses diminished markedly.

Chinese medicine is neither panacea nor placebo. For example, RG has been living with hepatitis C for 12 years. Having had a course of acupuncture and Chinese herbal therapy for the previous year, his liver enzymes were substantially lower than they had been in a decade. BR had been diagnosed with ovarian cancer 6 years previously and treated with surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. She sought acupuncture and herbs when her mild congestive heart failure, secondary to cardiomyopathy induced by Adriamycin, and kidney problems as evidenced by a creatinine level of 4.9 mg/dL disqualified her for another round of

chemotherapy. After a month of weekly acupuncture visits and daily doses of 9 mL of compound herbal extracts, her creatinine level dropped to 2.3 mg/dL, the lowest it had been in 3 years, she was no longer short of breath and was able to tolerate continued chemotherapy. For RG and BR, Chinese medicine produced tangible, dramatic, and measurable benefits without necessarily reversing the disease process. For others, anxiety attacks, chronic fatigue, high blood pressure, and arthritic pains subside altogether.

APPLICATION BY WESTERN PRACTITIONERS

Larry Baskind and Stephen Cowan, pediatricians in the Hudson Valley of New York, have incorporated Chinese herbal medicine into the management of a variety of common pediatric illnesses including otitis media, asthma, colic, sinusitis, tonsillar hypertrophy, and seasonal rhinitis. They have also used herbs as a component in the treatment of neurodevelopmental conditions such as attention deficit disorder. They summarized their approach by saying, "If it helps our patients, we'll use it. Herbal remedies are gentle, and kids are remarkably responsive to them. We have not seen any of the adverse effects associated with prescription and over-the-counter medications. For us, there's really no such thing as alternative medicine; there's just effective, compassionate patient care."

How the human body is perceived and explained varies East and West, as do the methods used to treat illness. What remains the same are patients and their quest. Increasingly, Westerners are exploring and manipulating a vastly different ground of symbol and metaphor so that they can use Chinese medicine as either a primary therapy or as part of their conventional Western practice.

Notes

1. Lecture, Philosophy and Medicine Series, California Pacific Medical Center, San Francisco, Calif, September 29, 1994.
2. Known as the methodology of traditional medicine, originating in ancient China, this term refers to a system of thinking and practice rather than to current medical convention in China. Many other countries in Asia have now contributed to the development of the body of knowledge and the techniques that are here referred to as Chinese medicine.
3. Specially defined Chinese medical terms are capitalized throughout the text to differentiate them from their common meaning, such as heart as an anatomically located organ in the chest versus *Heart* as an *Organ Network*, or wind that wafts through trees versus *Wind* as an adverse pathological phenomenon.
4. Information about an integrated herbal system formulated by the authors and accompanied by the text "Chinese Modular Solutions Handbook for Health Professionals" is available by calling (800) 543-5233.

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