



GOLDEN FLOWER CHINESE HERBS

News  Spring 2012

Dear Practitioner,

Happy Spring! We hope that this Year of the Water Dragon is a positive and dynamic one for you.

We recently mailed out the latest paper in our series of formula monographs. This paper, on **General Tonic Formula** (*Shi Quan Da Bu Wan*), will hopefully provide you with a deeper understanding of this classic formula. It is available upon request or can be downloaded from our website under "Professional Education/Papers." There will be another monograph coming out very soon!

We are excited to have a great lineup of Seminars for our Professional Education program including Thea Elijah's illuminating class, *Spirit of the Herbs* and Will Morris' classes on *Pulse Diagnosis and Divergent Channel Treatments*. Articles by both of these esteemed practitioners are included in this newsletter, along with another contribution by the folks at KPC herbs on *Cold Hands and Feet*.

Check out our Facebook page!

Sincerely,

John Scott, DOM and Lorena Monda, DOM



What is Sympathy? Reflection on Si Jun Zi Tang by Thea Elijah, M.Ac.

Thea Elijah will be offering her class, Spirit of the Herbs at Golden Flower Chinese Herbs on April 21-22, 2012.

I say sympathy is the way of total acceptance and total transformation. Total acceptance being the stomach and total transformation being the spleen. This is the highest skill of the Earth element: total acceptance, total transformation. What most of us work with in life is partial acceptance and partial transformation. And this is not enough.

On the most simple physical level, at first all of our digestion is done for us through the umbilical cord. Everything comes predigested. Next we have milk, something very, very simple to digest, that we can accept and transform into us. Next we have some solids, something with a little more foreignness that we have to *accept*—we can't receive nourishment without starting with acceptance. And then we transform it. When

it comes in, it isn't *gu qi*. When it comes in it is a *foreign element* that does not look like nourishment. What is food? It is something that *could* be nourishment, after the acceptance and the transformation.

So this is the skill of Earth: first, the total acceptance of that which sure doesn't look like nourishment. Because this is true of every piece of broccoli you eat. It is a piece of broccoli; what *is* that thing? And every other new food that comes along—it is another foreign object that you have to accept. *Completely*. You have to swallow it. Take it in. And then transform it into nourishment. What does transform mean? All manifestation arises out of source. Our digestive system's job is breaking it down to get the sweetness out of it. Getting to the heart of the manifestation; that is what nourishes us.

This is an important process, and it is important in this process not to skip steps. We are talking about the way

of total acceptance and total transformation. You don't get to the transformation until after the acceptance. A lot of what I see in spiritual practice, whether it is overt spiritual practice or "I'm just trying to make my life better" is skipping that step of acceptance before transformation, and taking a more surgical approach. I see a lot of confusion about the difference between transcendence and avoidance. Yes, we want to go beyond manifestation and not be *stuck* with just the material stuff and get to the heart and be with that non-material reality that is the source of it all. But you can't just skip over manifestation. Whatever the manifestation is, for instance: "I have a stomach ache." The manifestation is "My muscles hurt." The manifestation is "I can't stop worrying about whether my Mother's okay." The manifestation is "I'm scared shitless of people." Whatever it is, don't try to jump straight to bliss, union. You have to break down that broccoli and the nourishment is *in* whatever it is you've got on your plate and now in your stomach.

First, be present to the manifestation. It is not a distraction from non-material reality; it is the *doorway*, it is the *cradle*, it is the child; material reality is the *child of source*. Every manifestation is the child of source. So what do you do with your children—ignore them until they are grown up? "Oh I'm sorry I have this pathology; this pathology is a child of source but it hasn't yet grown up into a virtue yet. So I'm going to ignore it until it has—but who will raise it?" No, hold it in its junior perfection, now, all the while knowing that it is going to have to transform deeply, to grow up to bear its fruit.

We have said that the pathology contains the virtue. The pathology is the youth of the virtue. All pathology, all manifestation, whether you are enjoying it or not (so pathology is included) is incompletely transformed food. When you have completely transformed it and gotten to the heart of the matter, then you taste the sweetness—and then you easily let go of the form; at this point it is not difficult; it is not an effort.

When we are looking at the virtue of Earth and giving sympathy to people we are talking about *Si Jun Zi Tang* (Four Gentlemen Formula). Various people may need more of one ingredient than another.

Does the situation need *ren shen* ginseng; do I need

to be the ground, the stability for someone? There are times when to give sympathy means giving the other person the feeling that you are there for them like ground under their feet; that you will hold them and that you will be steady. You will be their ground point. You will be a basket, if they need to be a basket case for a little while, the total acceptance from firmness, from strength. This is the steadiness, the support, the "I am here for you" that gives rise to suddenly being able to see myriad possibilities for transformation. This is a form of sympathy, that *fidelity*, that ground.

Then there is *fu ling* poria, that plain, simple-spoken clarity; it's *practicality*, i.e., the kind of sympathy that allows you to say, in simple words, what is up with you. Earth virtue is the ability to be—just be—to be at home, not in a sense of comfort, but plainspoken, an ordinary vessel for everyday use. And a level of clarity comes from that—simple concrete direct unvarnished statements, like: "I'm sad." It is a kitchen table conversation. It is not a horizontal plane representing a level of abstraction and talking around the issue that Earth can get into. Sitting across the kitchen table from somebody—how often is that incredibly useful when you've got a problem, whether there is a kitchen table there or not? Things suddenly



become very clear, like *fu ling* poria, very clear once you are actually sitting down across the table from somebody who wants to understand. It's no longer felt as just a big mush, "Oh I got **problems!** I feel so **bad!**" Does the person need *fu ling* poria, a kitchen table discussion where you plainly state very clearly what are the issues in simple words. Clarification by plain-spokenness. And all of a sudden you feel so much better; it's more manageable.

You get how it is a different thing to give sympathy in terms of *fu ling* poria kitchen table talk, versus *ren shen* ginseng "I'll be your rock"? When you know that you've got a rock, you can change because I'll hold steady. This is a different need than, I'll sit down across the kitchen table from you and try to spell out together what it is that's bothering you.

Another very common form of sympathy a person might need is *bai zhu* atractylodes: support for transformation. This is about *qi for change*. It's

Continued on page 3

Si Jun Zi Tang (continued from page 2)

for a person who feels tired and bogged down, overwhelmed: you look at your desk and you can't even get started. This kind of sympathy gives energy earmarked for the sake of slogging, for the sake of change. When a person gives you this kind of sympathy, it's almost like they've hitched right up next to you; instead of being one donkey pulling a cart, now there are two. Shoulder to shoulder with you and your issue, "Let's hitch up let's pull together to get this wagon moving." Yoked together, it's possible to get some momentum going, and often this is what a person needs—sympathy—that gives enough energy to get action started. Then once somebody has actually helped us get started on our desk or get started on *whatever* the issue is, we are able to complete the transformation process ourselves; we just needed somebody to say "Oh man, *I get it.*" Sometime that is enough, just to have somebody temporally hitched next to you in the harness saying, "Wow, that is a heavy load to pull." What's most helpful is when the person is actually trying it on with you and pulling it with you, just for a few steps. The load feels a lot easier the moment that somebody else is willing even for a moment to try on that yolk and say "That must be really hard," and take that next step pulling with you, then one step more, and one step more. Transformation can happen step by step by step. A lot of things take a while; and Earth is the fidelity-through-the-whole-mix phase; this means being able to stick with a process like endlessly changing diapers, raising a child—*bai zhu* atractylodes is the energy to stay with that long transformational process. This is the kind of sympathy that *bai zhu* atractylodes offers. It's energy to slog, power to trudge, by offering to fall into step and trudging *with...* for a few steps.

Note that both the *fu ling* poria and the *bai zhu* atractylodes person feels bogged down and overwhelmed; it is a damp situation. There is this stuff that is midway between nourishment and crap and there may be confusion in you about which it is. With *fu ling* poria it is clarification that is needed, the sitting down at the kitchen table, so that unclarity can drain out and we see what it is we've got. This is a different approach to a bog-down than the *bai zhu* atractylodes, which is the power to trudge and the falling into step and the getting of momentum. Again, both treat dampness in different ways; both give sympathy in two different ways. What do you need? Someone to fall into step and help you trudge? Someone to sit down across the kitchen table and plain talk? Or *ren shen* ginseng, someone to be steady for you like the ground under your feet?

I've been deliberately leaving *gan cao* licorice for last. Have a guess why? In ever so many situations it is a completely inappropriate form of sympathy: just to give a little sweetness. It is, however, the most over-used form of sympathy. So often, *gan cao* licorice sweetness is not what's needed. "C'mon help me pull. Sit down at the kitchen table and let's talk turkey. Be firm for me, be ground, not mush. I don't need you to get all soft on me, man, I want you to help me get solid." So if *gan cao* licorice **isn't** what is needed **don't give it!** The most over-used knee jerk quick fix-it may not be the form of sympathy that is needed.

When it is needed, it is really great. When it is sincere, sometimes that is actually what we really need: a little bit of milk straight from the mother's breast. For instance, to get really, really physical, sometimes there is just no way that I can eat my lunch until I have some apricot juice first. I can't get right down to the hard work; I need to have a little bit of harvest now before I can get out in those fields and till the soil. When a person looks at their life and all they can see is a *pile of rocks* that they are going to have to accept and transform into nourishment, some *gan cao* licorice may be called for.

When we are faced with someone in that situation, there is this feeling that happens in the stomach meridian, especially when someone is crying... For instance when you are a nursing mother and you go to Babies R Us. Any time a baby cries, every woman in the store has a soaked blouse because there is this feeling that happens in the chest area. I am sure it must happen to men too; otherwise they wouldn't have nipples. We just want to give. I never knew before I had a child the meaning of this familiar feeling in my chest that happens whenever somebody is sad and in pain. I didn't know that this feeling is the stomach meridian letting the milk down, the milk of kindness. This is *gan cao* licorice; this is that moment when all you've got to eat is rocks, and I know that that is what the Tao has given you for food, but can't I give you a little bit of apricot juice so that you are not *starving* between now and when you have tilled and tended and harvested from your own rocky field?

All through my teenage years, I was sent to many a shrink to try and do something about me. There was one who—she did not necessarily do me all that much good—but there was this one moment in which she did me *so much good* with exactly the *gan cao* licorice type of sympathy... She was this very old woman,

Continued on page 4

I didn't know how old she was, she looked like she was in her seventies or something. Just this little old woman listening to this fifteen year old talking about all the crazy absolutely horrible mayhem that a teenager in Manhattan could be into. And at the end of listening to it, she sighs and says "Would you like some tea?" And I actually really got it that she really got it, that there *actually* is not anything that she could do to *change it* except give me some tea. And I really *appreciated that*, you know? I really appreciated somebody getting that they are actually not going to be able to make it better, and so they are giving me a sweetie, some little sweet thing—like, you got a *disaster* would you like a cookie? It is not *in any way* saying that this is *transformation*. That is going to take a long time. But it may at least help with the acceptance, so you can get it down your stomach. When you life is like nothing but a field full of rocks, sometimes some *gan cao* licorice that is really sincere, that is offered from the heart, that "Can I give you *something* sweet to eat right now?" is really, really helpful and really, really nice. So I do not in any way want to disparage the spirit of sympathy of giving *gan cao* licorice. Some times it really does save your life to have somebody just give a kind word. It gives you ability to taste the sweetness, the ability to taste what transformation is for, and then you have a little more stomach for your field of rocks.



Chinese Herbs & the Middle Jiao

by John Scott, DOM

When we are using acupuncture to balance the channels and collaterals we can guide and direct the flow of qi just about in any direction for any purpose that the presenting pattern dictates. Using herbal medicinals is a different matter. We can use Chinese herbal medicine to change, adjust, or regulate the body function in nearly any way conceivable. Because anything that is ingested orally must be processed by the digestive system or the middle *jiao*, stomach/spleen system we must take into consideration the ability of this system to assimilate the herbal formulas

being considered. This ability or lack of ability to assimilate food, herbs, and experience is an essential life process.

When we prescribe formulas that supplement yin and blood or are damp in nature we must take into consideration the function of the middle *jiao*. These kinds of substances are by nature challenging to absorb. If this function is impaired or weak for any reason, the patient may experience nausea, loose stools, diarrhea, or discomfort in the abdomen due to stagnation in the middle *jiao*.

There are particular commonly used herbs, such as: rehmanniae radix both prepared and raw (*shu di huang* and *sheng di huang*), polygoni multiflori radix (*zhi he shou wu*), angelicae sinensis radix (*dang gui*), mori fructus (*sang shen*), cistanches herba (*rou cong rong*), platycladi semen (*bai zi ren*)—while these herbs are not the only herbs that either lubricate the intestines or supplement the yin and blood, they do challenge the middle *jiao*.

There are also commonly used Chinese herbal formulas such as **Heavenly Emperor's Formula** (*Tian Wang Bu Xin Dan*), **Ming Mu Formula** (*Ming Mu Di Huang Wan*), **Essential Yang Formula** (*Jia Jian Jin Gui Shen Qi Wan*), **True Yin Formula** (*Zou Gui Jia Er Zhi Wan*), **Rehmannia Six Formula** (*Liu Wei Di Huang Wan*)—or any modification of *Liu Wei Di Huang Wan*—that can also challenge the middle *jiao*. Some patients may experience symptoms related to middle *jiao* stress immediately after taking one of these formulas or herbs, or some may have these symptoms after taking the herbs for weeks or months. Using these herbs consistently enough to substantially supplement yin and blood may also challenge the function of the middle *jiao*.

There are a great many of our patients who experience both yin and blood deficiency while simultaneously experiencing deficiency in the function of the middle *jiao*. When faced with a patient presenting these combinations of patterns and symptoms, we must either select a formula that both supplements yin and qi or blood and qi or combine formulas that perform both of these functions. **Women's Precious Formula** (*Ba Zhen Tang*) and **General Tonic Formula** (*Shi Quan Da Bu Wan*) combine herbs that supplement yin and blood while using qi herbs to support digestive function. **Sea of Qi Formula** (*Qi Hai Yao Fang*) supports kidney and spleen yang in a way that supports digestive function. **Jing Qi Formula** (*Jing Qi*

Middle Jiao (continued)

Pian) supplements both yin and qi.

One can also jointly prescribe a formula like **Ginseng & Astragalus Formula** (*Bu Zhong Yi Qi Wan*), **Ginseng Nourishing Formula** (*Ren Shen Yang Ying Wan*) or **Six Gentlemen Formula** (*Liu Jun Zi Tang*) to support digestive function with one of the yin or blood supplementing formulas mentioned above. I recommend adjusting the dosage of both formulas to emphasize which treatment strategy you wish to focus on primarily. You may also want to start off with a lower dose of the yin or blood supplementing medicinals. Just because your patient would benefit from a supplementing yin or blood therapy does not guarantee that their middle *jiao* function can cope with those substances. This strategy helps to ensure that your patient's digestive system can handle the treatment you are providing them.

Cold Hands & Feet by KPC Herbs

Despite the fact that the body is able to regulate its temperature, cold hands and feet are common problems for many people, especially in cold climates. This article will discuss the symptoms and Chinese herbal medicine treatment and dietary suggestions for the various types of cold extremities. It will also introduce the novel treatment of warming the umbilicus with mugwort floss, *tomenta artemisiae argyi* (*ai rong*).

In general, the majority of patients with cold hands and feet have it because of a deficiency cold or yang deficient constitution. These patients feel cold easily in cold and windy environments and thus, it is worse in autumn and winter. In more severe cases, the hands and feet may feel numb as well as cold. Other symptoms include stomach regurgitation, pallor, mental confusion, somnolence, coldness on the back of the torso, lack of appetite, and loose stools. Male patients may present with spermatorrhea and impotence, while female patients may present with infertility problems.

In the most severe cases, accompanying symptoms and signs include pallor, whole body cold, listlessness, soreness and weakness of the waist and knees, and frequent diarrhea with undigested food. This type of person's metabolism is extremely depressed, and in Oriental Medicine it can be considered a failure of **yang qi**. This condition can be treated by opening the channels with **Aconite, Ginger & Licorice Combination** (KPC 0950 *Si Ni Tang*) or **Ginger, Aconite, Hoelen & Peony Combination** (KPC 2580 *Zhen Wu Tang*), both of which can be modified.



In milder cases, patients may present with cold extremities, pallor, a lack of clarity in thinking, and poor energy levels. This is a **kidney yang deficient** condition. Acupuncturists can suggest to patients that they add foods like loganberries, beef, and mutton to their diets in order to support and supplement their yang qi.

During cold winter times, for individuals who feel that their level of physical energy is low, or even for those who think that their facial features are aging ahead of their time, an Oriental Medicine practitioner can supplement their **qi and blood** by suggesting that they eat a special congee of mutton, **Tangkuei** (KPC 8360 *Dang Gui*), **White Peony** (KPC 5680 *Bai Shao*), **Cooked Rehmannia** (KPC 8670 *Shu Di Huang*) and **Fresh Ginger** (KPC 5990 *Sheng Jiang*).

From a *zangfu* organs pattern differentiation perspective, cold hands and feet may present in **spleen and stomach deficient cold, heart qi and blood deficiency, and kidney yang deficiency** patterns.

In **spleen and stomach deficient cold** patients, symptoms like frequent diarrhea, abdominal pain, abdominal distension and yellowish complexion may be present. In ancient Oriental Medicine texts it says, "If spleen qi is healthy, then the extremities will be warm." It is necessary to circulate qi and blood so that it can warm the kidney and fortify the spleen. In this case, you can use **Ginseng & Ginger Combination** (KPC 2970 *Li Zhong Tang*).

Symptoms and signs accompanying cold hands and feet in a **heart qi deficiency** pattern include fatigue, generalized muscle weakness, faint voice, diaphoresis, indigestion, and a thin, soft, and weak pulse. Qi deficiency will influence a person's ability to concentrate on their studies. So for families with children in school

Cold Hands and Feet (continued)

or adolescents preparing for exams, it is important to remember to occasionally and appropriately supplement their qi. A sample formula could be to use **Tangkuei & Jujube Combination** (KPC 3530B *Dang Gui Si Ni Tang*) combined with the **Major Four Herb Combination** (KPC 0960 *Si Jun Zi Tang*) and add a small amount of **Cinnamon Bark** (KPC 6130 *Rou Gui*) and **Polygala** (KPC 8510 *Yuan Zhi*). This not only supplements qi, it also benefits the heart and kidney. So in addition to improving the cold feeling of their hands and feet, it also enhances their ability to concentrate and improves their memory.

Kidney yang deficiency refers to a systemic decline of body metabolic processes, a portion of which are related to endocrine and energy metabolism problems. In addition to the foods mentioned above for kidney yang deficient constitutions, Oriental Medicine recommends these patients supplement their diet with foods like leeches, durian, ginger, onions, garlic, walnuts, and shrimp. They should also regularly visit an acupuncturist for herbal medicine treatment. A formula such as **Cyathula & Plantago Formula** (KPC 4070 *Ji Sheng Shen Qi Wan*) can be used.

Clinically, patients with cold hands and feet often have a decline in heart function, leading to reduced blood flow to the extremities. Often, low hemoglobin counts can also be seen. In Oriental Medicine terms, this is a problem of qi and blood. This is because **blood and qi deficiencies** can lead to poor blood circulation.

Qi and blood deficiency patterns are often seen in patients with chronic conditions and those with generally poor circulation. Inappropriate weight loss or dieting often leads to this dual deficiency. Clinically, patients may present with dizziness, shiny white complexion, palpitations, fear of the cold, fatigue, and cold hands and feet that occasionally itch, menstrual irregularities and, in more serious cases, amenorrhea. In this situation, herbal medicine is needed to promote the generation of qi and blood and formulas such as the **Ginseng & Rehmannia Combination** (KPC 0030 *Ren Shen Yang Rong Tang*) or a modified **Tangkuei & Ginseng Eight Combination** or **Women's Precious Formula** (KPC 0090 *Ba Zhen Tang*) can be used. If dizziness, palpitations, becoming easily fatigued, poor sleep quality, and uncomfortably cold hands and feet are pronounced, then one can consider the pattern a **heart blood deficiency**. The **Astragalus & Zizyphus Combination** (KPC 3900 *Yang Xin Tang*) with **Mulberry Twig** (KPC 7430 *Sang Zhi*) is good for this condition because along with

improving sleep quality, it also ameliorates the feelings of cold in the extremities.

Some patients with cold hands and feet also present with numbness. If cervical and lumbar vertebra problems are not present, the majority of patients with this problem have circulation problems. Therefore, in addition to supplementing qi and blood, one can also use **Spatholobi** (KPC 8980 *Ji Xue Teng*) or **Corydalis** (KPC6450 *Yan Hu Suo*) to move qi and activate the blood in order to improve the coldness and numbness of the hands and feet.

For patients who tend to be anemic, the pattern may present as **blood deficiency congealing cold**. In addition to the absence of blood in their complexion and cold hands and feet, symptoms include dizziness, extremely low tolerance to cold—for example exposure to air conditioning will lead immediately to headaches and aches and pains over the whole body; and, in more severe cases, they will complain that their lower abdomen feels cold. In this case, a modified **Tangkuei & Jujube Combination** (KPC 3530B *Dang Gui Si Ni Tang*) can be used.

In chronically ill patients, or for patients with excessive mental-emotional burdens, cold hands and feet may be related more to an **internal obstruction of yang qi** rather than its deficiency. In a yang qi constraint pattern, yang qi is obstructed internally and unable to reach the exterior. From a Western psychology perspective, it often correlates to a nervous disorder. This condition often manifests when the individual is under a lot of stress or pressure, and is accompanied by symptoms like chest distension and fullness, eructation, belching, abdominal pain, coughing, palpitations, and difficulty urinating. In this case, a modified **Bupleurum & Chih-shih Formula** (0970 *Si Ni San*) can be used.

Oriental Medicine also has a novel external treatment for this counter flow cold condition, namely warming the umbilicus with tomentum *artemisiae argyi* (*ai rong*). Warming the umbilicus is a moxibustion method. As early as the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic* we can find discussions on umbilicus-related treatments. The *Emergency Formulas to Keep Up One's Sleeve* of the Jin Dynasty and other texts in the Tang, Song Yuan, Ming, and even the late Qing Dynasties all have records on this method. A practitioner will first select the appropriate blood activating and qi moving medicinals, like **Ligusticum** (KPC 5270 *Chuan Xiong*), **Fresh Ginger** (KPC 5990 *Sheng Jiang*), **Vladimiria** (KPC 5511 *Mu Xiang*), **Clove**

Cold Hands and Feet (continued)

(KPC 5070 *Ding Xiang*), **Rhubarb** (KPC 5120 *Da Huang*), and **Cinnamon Bark** (KPC 6130 *Rou Gui*), grind them into powder and mix them into a paste. Then, she will spread an appropriate amount over the umbilicus, followed by placing a lit moxa cone on top of it. When necessary, an infrared light can also be used to increase the efficacy through its warming power, which increases penetration of the medicinals into the channels and collaterals.

To warm and open the channels, and harmonize qi and blood more directly, one can use moxibustion stick therapy. This therapy burns mugwort floss, *to-menta artemisiae argyi* (*ai rong*) in a stick form held over acupoints to warm the skin. It has great disease-preventing effects. Ancient Chinese combined its use with the qi nodes (solar terms), and often used it in the autumn. Even though the points selected in this therapy may cover the whole body, warming the umbilicus has the best effect. Oriental Medicine theory holds that the umbilicus is on the conception vessel and is the point *Shenque* (Gateway of the Spirit), which is connected to the 12 other channels and to all the organs. From biomedicine research, we know that the abdominal cavity houses several organs that play an important role in our immune response. Moxibustion therapy on the umbilicus can regulate the function of the organs of digestion, urination, and reproduction, and improve heart function and blood circulation while increasing physical and mental energy levels. It is a great point to improve immune response, prevent

disease, and enhance overall health and wellbeing.

Oriental Medicine theory on cold hands and feet is comprehensive. The term for this condition is **counterflow cold of the four limbs**, and it is a manifestation of the yin and yang being unable to mutually connect. In Oriental Medicine theory, our yang obtains qi through the four extremities and our yin obtains qi from the five organs. Yin and yang qi need to connect and penetrate each other. If they cannot, then counterflow cold will result and thus, the cold hands and feet. The reasons for yin and yang qi being unable to connect are numerous, but the patterns of reversal counterflow cold of the limbs can be summarized into the following pattern categories:

- **Cold counterflow:** due to insufficient healthy qi, qi and blood deficiency, or following exposure to pathogenic cold.
- **Heat counterflow:** caused by extreme pathogenic heat that has damaged body fluids.
- **Phlegm counterflow:** the result of the inhibition of chest yang diffusion.
- **Agitation counterflow:** agitation with qi movement disharmony leading to yin and yang qi disconnecting.

Whatever counterflow cold of the limbs pattern one encounters as a Oriental Medicine practitioner, it is important to differentiate the patterns and choose the appropriate formula accordingly. Only in this way can clinical efficacy be guaranteed.



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REFLECTIONS FROM THE PATH OF PULSE: THE EIGHT EXTRAORDINARY VESSELS

By Will Morris, PhD. DAOM

Pulse diagnosis is an exquisite subjective window into the humanity we encounter as practitioners. There is nothing as nuanced, and therein lies the beauty and the beast. Fickle and reliable, such vagaries are the very reason to follow the path of the pulse.

Taking the pulse during the course of inquiry in a case provides the practitioner a direct biofeedback system in which the changes tell a story that the face, eyes, and mouth cannot. It is liberating and exalted – powerful. To touch and provide knowing support creates trust and a bond between the patient and practitioner, but also a non-verbal direct knowledge of the truth behind that which the patient speaks. As the story unfolds, pulse images arise with consistency in response to the emergent themes within the story.

It is important, when dealing with stories that have traumatic content, to have facility with the eight extraordinary pulses. The shape and form provides a backdrop with which the vagaries of force, depth, tension, and turbulence unfold.

The eight extraordinary vessel pulses may be used to describe the shape of the pulse and also speak to the vessels with which they are associated. The eight extraordinary vessels serve as reservoirs for the essential substances and connect across systems. Thus, they are trans-systemic fields within which our humanity takes form and operates.¹ They are rooted in the kidneys, connecting five systems: the reproductive system, endocrine system, central nervous system, urinary tract, skeletal, and hematopoietic systems.

For instance, the *chong* vessel connects with the reproductive, digestive, and vascular systems. Both the *yin qiao* and *yang qiao* vessels are connected with the endocrine, nervous, reproductive, and musculoskeletal systems. The *du* channel connects the central nervous system, endocrine system, limbic system, reproductive system, and organ functions through the peripheral nervous system.

The symptoms of the *yang qiao* include pain of the upper and lower back, epilepsy, aversion to wind, hemilateral withering, sudden collapse, insensitivity

of the extremities, and stiffness and insensitivity of the skin and body. It can be confirmed by the heel of the shoe wearing down medially. This is because the *yang qiao* vessel causes constriction in the adductors.

The *yin qiao* symptoms involve pain along the trajectory of the vessel in the lower abdomen, abdominal urgency, pain in the lower back down to the genitals, discharges, hernias, and accumulations. When this vessel is involved, there can be constriction of the abductors, leading to the outer edge of the shoe heel wearing down.

The belt channel can involve pain in the lower abdomen, pain radiating to the life gate, amenorrhea, breakthrough bleeding, genital pain, infertility, tormenting hypertonicity of the lower abdomen, and seminal emission. The *dai mai* may involve lateral connective tissues, including the pelvic floor, the thoracic diaphragm, and in general those tissues that affect circulation between the upper and lower portions of the body.

The *chong mai* is referred to as the “sea of blood,” “Sea of arteries and veins,” “sea of 12 primary channels,” “sea of *yuan qi*,” “primordial channel,” “ancestral channel,” “blueprint of life,” and the “thrusting channel.” The *du mai* is referred to as the “sea of yang,” “governor,” and “supervisor.” The *ren mai* is referred to as the “sea of yin,” “conception,” and “directing channel.” The *dai mai* is referred to as the “girdle,” “belt,” “holding” and “binding channel,” as well as the “sea of *ming men*.” The *yin wei* is referred to as the “yin-linking channel.” The *yang qiao* channel is referred to as the “yang heel,” “accelerator of yang” and “*yang qiao* vessel.” The *yin qiao* channel is referred to as the “yin heel,” “accelerator heel,” and “yin walker.” The *yang wei* is referred to as the “yang-linking channel,” “preserver of yang,” and “vessel of yang keeper.”²⁻⁴

There are three groupings of eight extraordinary vessel pulses that can be organized along the three axes defining a cube of space which provides a three-dimensional field in which both structure and function occur. In terms of pulse diagnosis, this context is not

2 REFLECTIONS FROM THE PATH OF PULSE

metaphorical, but rather, these vessels define a field of space. The *du*, *ren*, and *chong* vessels define an x-axis. The *yin qiao*, *yang qiao*, and *dai* vessels define a y-axis. The *yin wei* and *yang wei* define a z-axis.⁵

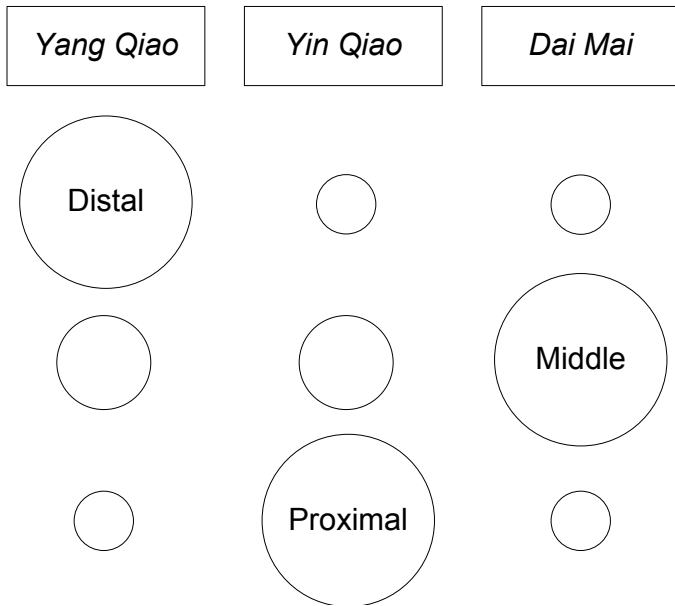


Figure 1. The *yin qiao*, *yang qiao* and *dai mai* shapes. (Author's image.) Note: The *qiao* group. The *yang qiao* is larger in the yang aspect (distal position). The *yin qiao* is larger in the yin aspect (proximal position). The *dai mai* is larger in the middle.

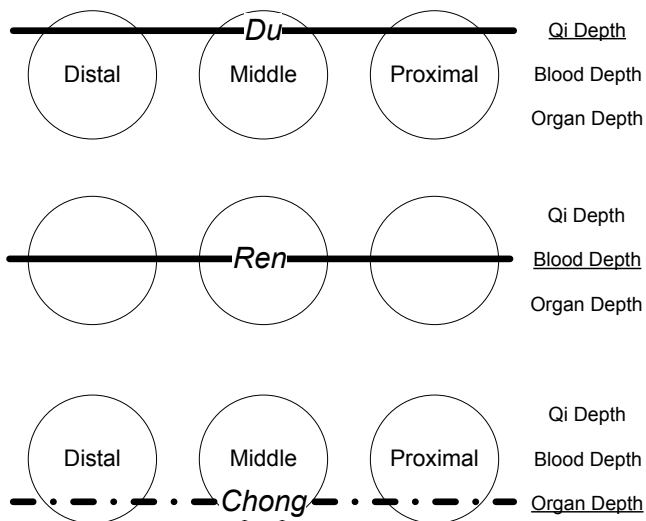


Figure 2. The *du*, *ren* and *chong* vessel shapes. (Author's image) Note: The *du mai* is superficial and the *ren mai* is a long even line at the blood depth. The *chong mai* tends to be a little rough and uneven at the organ depth.

TECHNIQUE

Place the fingers on one side as a unit (take care that the fingers are evenly distanced and that even pressure is used). Press until the first impulse hits the fingers. If all fingers are hit at once, it is a *du*, *ren*, or *chong* pulse. If the index finger is hit first, it is a *yang qiao* pulse. If the middle finger is hit first, it is a *dai* pulse. If the ring finger is hit first, it is a *yin qiao* pulse. One must roll the index finger toward the radius for finding a *yang wei* pulse and toward the ulna to identify a *yin wei* pulse.

Palpation of the *yang qiao* (yang walker vessel) involves the distal position, which is felt larger and first when pressing. The confirmation of *yang qiao* vessel involvement is based upon the pathology, its location and direct palpation of the *yang qiao* channel.

The *yin qiao* channel (yin walker channel) is larger in the proximal positions. This shape is a little less common than the *yang qiao* or *dai mai*. The *yin qiao* channel is found larger in the middle positions. When pressing, it is the first position where one comes into contact with the *du mai* (governing vessel) and is palpated most superficially in the *qi* depth. All positions are even. The *ren mai* (conception vessel) is palpated in the middle depth or blood depth. All positions are even. The *chong mai* (thrusting vessel) is palpated deeply at the organ depth. It may not be even due to changing intensity and volume between the positions.

The *yang wei* (yang connecting) and *yin wei* (yin connecting) vessels connect the inner and outer portions of the wrist. One must use a rolling method in order to discover their presence. Place the finger into the area of maximum impulse in the distal position then follow the vessel, rather than pushing, pulling, or sliding (see Figure 3).

If the vessel extends towards the radius, it may be a *yang wei* (yang connecting) pulse. One must confirm this by palpating the proximal position and rolling toward the tendon and ulna. If the distal position is radial while the proximal position is extending towards the ulna, it is a *yang wei* (yang connecting) pulse.

Conversely, place the index finger in the distal position and roll medially, following the vessel. If it extends, then check the proximal position to see if it is closer to the tendon flexor carpii radialis.

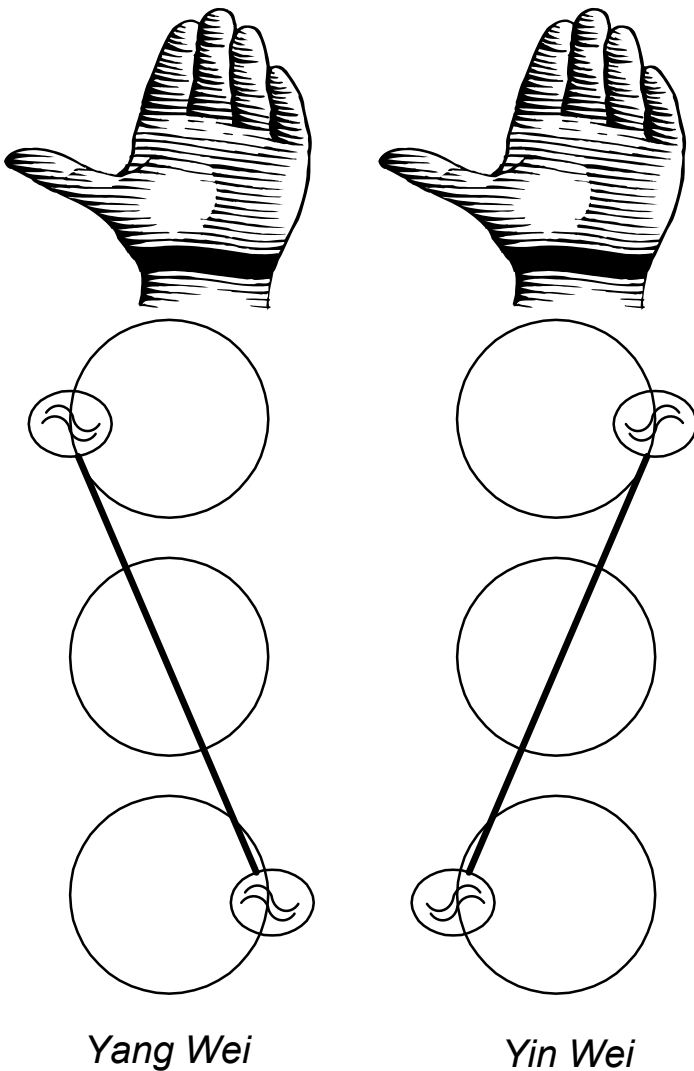


Figure 3. The *yin wei* and *yang wei* vessel shapes. (Author's image) Note: Palpate the distal position first. The *yang wei* vessel has a distortion toward the radius (*yang*—thumb). It must be confirmed by a distortion of the artery toward the ulna in the proximal position. The *yin wei* is reversed, it is distorted toward the ulna (*yin* little finger) in the distal position. Confirm the *yin wei* pulse by searching for a proximal displacement of the radial artery toward the radius.

A FEW FINDINGS FROM EXPERIENCE

An eight extraordinary vessel pulse is always present (this is because they show the volume distribution from position to position). If an image is changing, look for the dominant impression. Changes can be different from side to side and at varying depths of pressure. Images may also change when the amplitude is changing or when the patient is treated. When they are consistently the same everywhere, it is a compelling reason to use an eight extra channel method or related herbs. Various eight extraordinary

vessels may be combined freely. It is particularly effective to open the *dai* in combination with the *ren*, *du*, or *chong*. These pulse images may or may not reflect pathology, especially if it is a *du* or *ren* pulse, which may be considered ideal. These vessels effectively adjust adaptive capacity and serve in the treatment of the healthy patient. The eight extraordinary vessel pulse may provide a background of information that is not available when using standard pulse diagnosis methods.

There are some statements about the eight extraordinary vessels that have not proven true in the author's experience. Most of these ideas seem to relate to the statements *Do not use these vessels on the first treatment*, or *use the master and couple points together*, which are conventions that are not necessarily true in practice. In addition, there are no discussions in classical literature confirming the validity of these stylistic approaches.

One powerfully effective method is to needle the master point and then palpate the trajectory of the vessel for stagnations and accumulations, then needle these areas as well. This clearly gives the signal to open a particular vessel. Merely opening a pair of master points, regardless of sequence, and then combining them with a myriad of other points does not necessarily give a clear message to the body.

A patient spoke of her mother's child-molesting father. As she spoke, a distinct bright vibration took place in the left 3rd position of the kidney and in the shape of a *yin qiao* pulse. The kidney fits with familial patterns and imprints upon what I call the *jing* pool. It was fascinating to listen to her speak of people she had recently dated. One person in particular brought about the same pulse that she presented when speaking of her grandfather.

Will Morris, PhD, DAOM, is an internationally renowned expert on Chinese pulse diagnosis, his book on the subject was published by China Medical Publishing House in 2010. Practicing Chinese medicine since 1980, Will has published more than 50 articles. He currently is the president of the AOMA Graduate School of Integrative Medicine in Austin, Texas.

Dr. Morris will be offering two classes in Pulse Diagnosis at Golden Flower Chinese Herbs on June 2-3, 2012.

FOOTNOTES

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