

News Autumn 2019



Dear Practitioner,

Autumn in New Mexico brings migrating sandhill cranes to our skies and the smell of roasted green chili to our local farmer's markets. Wherever you are, we hope that you enjoy our Autumn 2019 newsletter.

In it, Jake Schmalzriedt, DOM has contributed an article on understanding and coping with stress.

Yair Maimon is a TCM practitioner from Israel. A world-renowned expert on integrative therapies for oncology, he has extensive experience working with oncology patients in Israeli hospitals. His TCM Academy of Integrative Medicine is offering an NCCAOM approved certificate program in Oncology Acupuncture. We are offering the seminar here at Golden Flower Chinese Herbs June 6-7, 2020. Registration is open now and is expected to reach capacity! Save the date and your seat early!

Our very own New Mexico DOM, Van Warren, is presenting a seminar titled *The Tao of Conscious Living and Dying*. We have personally known Dr. Warren for nearly 40 years. He will be at our Education Center here in Albuquerque, December 7-8 and he has contributed a piece for this newsletter to give a taste of what the seminar will cover. It will be an enlightening pleasure to benefit from his experience and wisdom inspired from the Taoist classics.

This newsletter, past newsletters, and the many educational papers that we have published are posted on our website. They are a resource that we are happy to share with you! Thank you for your patronage and support.

Sincerely,

John Scott, DOM and Lorena Monda, DOM



Understanding Stress

BY JAKE SCHMALZRIEDT, DOM

(The full version of this article with techniques to manage stress and acupuncture treatment protocols is available on our website, www.gfcherbs.com)

EXPLAINING STRESS

Stress is part of normal life that every human deals with; it affects all ages. How we deal with stress can vary greatly from individual to individual. Stress is not always bad; it is part of our body's natural response to events in our environment, in our head or in our body. It can act as a defense mechanism when we sense that something is not safe or not right. In evolutionary terms, stress was simply a mechanism for survival. Problems occur when the body is in an excessive, constant, or prolonged state of stress. Just like leaving in acupuncture needles for too long can transform tonification into dissipation, stress that sustains past its stimulating evolutionary function, drains us instead of making us more alert, more ready for action.

Where does this chronic stress come from? There are

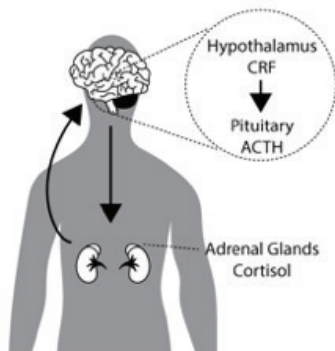
heredity risk factors, early childhood traumas/events, and traumatic events or long-term stimulation of the nervous system that can contribute to chronic stress. There are also environmental factors that elicit stress-responses. These stressors can be anything from living or working in an environment with too much commotion and noise to having a lot of demands on us. Overwork is a very common source of chronic stress. Extreme emotional states, arguing and fighting, as well as complaining and disappointment are characteristics of stressors. One major factor for chronic stress is the inability to let things go. Negative thoughts can and will exacerbate physical pain. Other common stressors include situations like death and loss, moving, divorce, and other major life transitions, and of course, financial concerns. Physical trauma is another cause of constant stress. Another common stressor, though not often thought about as a source of stress, is the lack of physical movement. It is important to note that different people will respond to the same situation differently; it is the individual's thoughts, judgements, and reactions to a specific situation that cause stress.

MECHANISMS OF STRESS

There are two mechanisms to stress. The immediate response is an intrinsic and unconscious response by your body over which you have no control. The sympathetic nervous system response initiates a hormonal release of epinephrine, also known as adrenaline. This is the body's fight or flight mechanism. Pupils dilate, sharpening sight, while hearing and other senses become enhanced. Bronchials expand allowing more oxygen to be sent throughout the body and to the brain, increasing alertness. Heart rate accelerates, pushing more blood to the muscles and other vital organs. Blood pressure is increased and an inhibition of peristalsis, salivation, and urinary function occurs. Epinephrine also triggers an increase of glucose into the blood stream. All of these responses provide your body the energy and reactivity needed to respond to an immediate danger.

The secondary response has three categories. They all create and sustain a state of fear, over-alertness, a sense of being trapped, etcetera: preparing our physiology "just in case" there will be a real danger. In the first category, our minds project potential danger into future (imagined) situations: *"What if I don't have enough money for retirement?" "Is my hotel going to be located in a safe neighborhood?" "Will I be able to keep up with my new job?" "What if I tell this person I love that I love them and they don't say it back?"* We can also have a delayed response to an event that already happened. Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) falls into the second category: the past imposes itself on the present moment and takes over. The third category is the chronic/prolonged stressors that turn on our response mechanism. The first two categories are created by our mental/emotional state and are therefore internally generated; the third is environmental and therefore externally generated. Physiologically speaking, all three categories of the secondary response are basically one and the same.

There are three main parts of the body, along with respective signaling pathways, that are looked at when dealing with chronic stress: the hypothalamus of the brain, the anterior pituitary gland located at the base of the brain, and the adrenal cortex located just above the kidney. This is known as the hypothalamo-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. The HPA axis is responsible for the management of stress. The hypothalamus releases corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF), also known as corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH) that binds to receptors on the anterior pituitary gland. This triggers a release of adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) that binds to the adrenal cortex and stimulates the adrenals to release cortisol. The HPA responds to stressful events and is responsible for returning the body to its normal, non-stressed state. Cortisol can be released for



several hours after encountering stressors. The body's initial response to HPA activation includes an increase in heart rate and elevated blood pressure. The liver releases more glucose into the blood; there is dilation of the bronchials, reduction of digestive activity, and an increase in inflammation. At a certain concentration level in the blood, cortisol exerts a negative feedback, causing a hypothalamic release of CRF, initiating a pituitary release of ACTH to help return the body to homeostasis. When there is repeated exposure to stressors, the body has a sustained HPA activation. The result is more or less a constant high level of cortisol.

Why is cortisol so important when discussing stress? Cortisol is an important hormone in maintaining the body's health and is involved in many physiological functions including help in metabolic regulation, controlling blood glucose levels, regulating blood pressure, and aiding in reducing inflammation, to name a few. Cortisol, a glucocorticoid, is also known as the "stress hormone" and, like epinephrine, is released by the adrenals. The difference between epinephrine and cortisol is that adrenaline/epinephrine is the hormone released for the initial stress response and is short-term; cortisol is the hormone released for the secondary response. It has a slower-acting momentum and a much longer effect. Cortisol redistributes energy to optimize the body's resources in adverse high stress situations. It also restores homeostasis after the immediate situation has passed. Constant and high levels of cortisol in the body contribute to many adverse effects on the body, affecting multiple systems. Some of these problems include digestive problems like decreased metabolism, weight gain, GERD, or always feeling hungry. Prolonged stress results in a decrease in immune system function and a decrease in the ability to fight infections and heal wounds. High blood pressure can result from prolonged stress levels. Constant stress can cause inflammation and develop into other chronic conditions like arthritis, chronic fatigue, and fibromyalgia. Inverted cortisol levels have been identified as a cause of chronic insomnia. A person can develop poor vision or emotional imbalances like being easily angered, having erratic mood swings, an inability to handle stress, difficulty with social interactions, and an increase in anxiety and depression. A decrease in concentration, memory loss, and poor decision-making have been observed in those with chronically high levels of cortisol. There can be an increase in the perception of pain. You may also observe physiological changes like decreased brain size and decreased mental function.

CHINESE MEDICINE TREATMENT FOR STRESS

The four most common formula categories for stress include **adaptogenic formulas** (a modern category for supplements), **liver-regulating formulas**, **shen-calming formulas**, and **kidney nourishing formulas**. Note: It is important to treat patients using differential diagnosis when prescribing herbal formulas.

One approach to combating stress is the use of adaptogenic herbs. Adaptogenic herbs (adaptogens) are a class of sub-

stances used to help the body adapt when under extreme physical and mental stress and/or adverse conditions. This class of herbs improve physical and mental function and help to bring the body back into homeostasis. Adaptogens can decrease and help regulate cortisol. The herbs in this category are generally safe with little to no side effects, and most of them have a long history of use. Some well-known examples of adaptogenic herbs include ginseng (*ren shen*), astragalus (*huang qi*), rhodiola (*hong jing tian*), ashwaganda, eleuthero or Siberian ginseng (*wu jia shen*), schisandra fruit (*wu wei zi*), cordyceps (*dong chong xia cao*), and reishi (*ling zhi*), to name a few.

Golden Flower Chinese Herbs formulas that fall into this category include **Ginseng Endurance Formula** (*Ren Shen Pian*), **Sheng Mai Formula** (*Sheng Mai San*), and **Eleuthero Tablets** (*Wu Jia Shen Pian*). **Ginseng Endurance Formula** (*Ren Shen Pian*) is an excellent qi, blood, and yang tonic, while also invigorating and oxygenating blood. This formula consists mainly of adaptogenic herbs, plus a few more. While the formula was originally designed to help improve athletic performance, it is also beneficial for addressing chronic stress, especially the exhaustion that can come with chronic stress. **Sheng Mai Formula** (*Sheng Mai San*) is best known for restoring a damaged pulse, but with ginseng (*ren shen*) and schisandra (*wu wei zi*) in the formula at 37.5% and 25% respectively, this formula is a powerful adaptogenic strategy. The third herb, ophiopogon (*mai men dong*), a yin tonic, is best known for nourishing lung and stomach yin, but it also has the function to nourish the heart, clear heart heat, and calm the *shen*. **Eleuthero Tablets** (*Wu Jia Shen Pian*) supplement spleen and kidney qi and invigorate blood. The single-ingredient tablet uses the adaptogenic herb, eleuthero (*wu jia shen*), to help counter the effects of chronic stress through its ability to normalize/decrease cortisol levels. Eleuthero is one of the most popular adaptogenic herbs and has become increasingly popular over the past 70 years.

One cannot discuss stress without mentioning liver-regulating formulas such as **Bupleurum and Tang Kuei Formula** (*Xiao Yao Wan*) and **Free and Easy Wanderer Plus** (*Jia Wei Xiao Yao San*)—two of the most popular Chinese herbal formulas in the world. One of their main uses is as stress management formulas. These two formulas do an excellent job of regulating stress and stabilizing emotional imbalances by smoothing the liver qi and supporting the blood and spleen. Both formulas have been shown to ameliorate the effects of high stress. This occurs through the signaling pathways and the inhibition of hyperactivity of the HPA axis.

Bupleurum and Tang Kuei Formula (*Xiao Yao Wan*) and **Free and Easy Wanderer Plus** (*Jia Wei Xiao Yao San*) ad-

dress liver qi stagnation with underlying spleen qi and blood deficiency. Constraint of the liver qi is a common Chinese pattern seen today, and common in emotional imbalances. Liver qi can easily stagnate due to stress, and this stagnation in turn exacerbates stress and other emotional imbalances. The liver is responsible for maintaining free flow of qi. When liver qi is well-regulated and flowing smoothly, the body is better able to handle life's stressors.

By supporting spleen qi and blood, **Bupleurum and Tang Kuei Formula** (*Xiao Yao Wan*) and **Free and Easy Wanderer Plus** (*Jia Wei Xiao Yao San*) supplement and support post-natal qi, which boosts overall health and vital energy.

This adds strength and resiliency that can help the body to work through situational stressors.

For easy differentiation between these two formulas: if heat symptoms are present (irritability, agitation, red on the tongue, restlessness), choose **Free and Easy Wanderer Plus** (*Jia Wei Xiao Yao San*); if there is an absence of heat, use **Bupleurum and Tang Kuei Formula** (*Xiao Yao Wan*). Because qi stagnation easily turns into heat, **Free**

and Easy Wanderer Plus (*Jia Wei Xiao Yao San*) tends to be the more common formula for the treatment of stress.

Another group of formulas that provide a beneficial treatment for chronic stress are the formulas that calm *shen*. The stagnation of qi that we just discussed can lead to heat and poor fluid distribution, which over time results in “phlegm clouding the mind.” The heat can be addressed by **Free and Easy Wanderer Plus** (*Jia Wei Xiao Yao San*), and both **Bupleurum and Tang Kuei Formula** (*Xiao Yao Wan*) and **Free and Easy Wanderer Plus** (*Jia Wei Xiao Yao San*) support spleen function to transform and transport, resolving the damp accumulation. However, when there is more heart involvement, other formulas become more suitable. It is interesting to note the link between the modern Western idea of nerve function and its relation to *shen* or spirit. The Chinese character for nerve is *shen-jing* (神经) and nerve signals is *shen-qi* (神气), these modern characters are bringing the idea from ancient times that nerve function belongs to *shen*. When using Chinese herbal formulas or acupuncture points that calm *shen*, there is an action to address the nervous system.

Shen-calming formulas can be especially beneficial when chronic stress is associated with insomnia or anxiety issues. Formulas to consider include **An Mien Formula** (*An Mien Pian*) and **Zizyphus Formula** (*Suan Zao Ren Tang*). **An Mien Formula** (*An Mien Pian*) focuses on the heart. It nourishes the heart and calms the *shen*, while also clearing heart heat. This formula is good for stress that is coupled with insomnia and anxiety. **Zizyphus Formula** (*Suan Zao Ren Tang*), like **An Mien Formula** (*An Mien Pian*),



addresses the heart, but also addresses the decline of yin. This formula nourishes heart yin and blood, supports liver blood, and calms the *shen*. **Zizyphus Formula** (*Suan Zao Ren Tang*) is particularly beneficial when the symptoms of stress include insomnia and irritability.

Kidney-supplementing formulas are a category of herbal formulas that benefit chronic stress. The continuously high levels of cortisol from chronic stress eventually contribute to cortisol depletion following prolonged or excessive secretion. This may lead to adrenal dysfunction, which can present as fatigue, lethargy, even the feeling of constant exhaustion. This is kidney depletion in Chinese medicine. Kidney-tonifying formulas work to support the adrenals and return them to normal function, bringing the body back into homeostasis. It is interesting to note that cortisol levels raise naturally as we age and that the hypothalamus and pituitary become less sensitive to negative feedback. So as we age, returning to homeostasis becomes more challenging. This phenomenon makes supporting the kidneys that much more important for senior populations. When choosing a kidney formula there should be a focus on rehmannia (*di huang*) formulas. Rehmannia (*shu di huang*) is also an adaptogenic herb and specifically supports the adrenal glands. This herb supports normal HPA axis function and has been found to be a key herb to support adrenals, when they are depleted. A popular formula example is **Rehmannia Six Formula** (*Liu Wei Di Huang Wan*). This key formula has been shown to reduce cortisol while supporting adrenal function. Some variations of this formula you may also want to consider include **Eight Immortals Formula** (*Ba Xian Chang Shou Wan*), **Ming Mu Formula** (*Ming Mu Di Huang Wan*), **Rehmannia and Scrophularia Formula** (*Zhi Bai Di Huang Wan*), or **True Yin Formula** (*Zuo Gui Jia Er Zhi Wan*).

Exceptional Results in TCM & Oncology Focusing on Dryness and Heat

BY YAIR MAIMON, OMD, PHD

RADIATION (EXTERNAL DRYNESS)

The treatment of cancer patients in TCM presents new challenges and great opportunities for acupuncturist in the emerging field of Oncology Acupuncture (OA). Understanding and deepening our knowledge of Chinese medicine in an oncology setting has a broader application. Many of the same strategies can also be applied to the treatment of immune system and prevention of disease in general.

Over the last several years there has been ample research of Chinese medicine in the field of OA. Getting acquainted with the research results and protocols can enable TCM practitioners to communicate better with the western medical community, helping to bridge East and West. Recent studies include observing the effects of OA on the quality of life at different stages of cancer treatment. Studies like these have been conducted alongside chemotherapy, post-surgery, and radiation. One major area of study is the treat-

ment of hot flashes caused by hormonal therapies in both breast cancer and prostate cancer. Immune system support in cancer patients is another important area of study that has demonstrated promising results. This article will focus on some of the research conducted on the treatment of dryness, which is a common side-effect of cancer treatment. There are two types of iatrogenic dryness that can occur during the treatment of cancer, one is from external causes due to radiation treatments, while the other is from internal causes, mainly due to use of anti-hormonal (especially anti-estrogen) drugs.

Radiation is considered toxic heat. Heat, particularly in such high concentrations, has a tendency to create dryness. This is especially true when the radiation is affecting the mucus-producing cells, such as we find in the mouth and the digestive system. Head and neck cancers treated with radiation, for example, often result in damaged mucosa. In TCM we can classify such damage as heat and dryness in the *yangming* (Stomach and Large Intestine channels.) The *yangming* channels themselves can be used to treat this condition, since they have the capacity to reduce heat and promote the production of mucosa throughout the digestive system.

One of the main points which is used to reduce dryness of the mouth is LI-2, the water point on the arm *yangming* channel. An interesting study has measured the effect of this point both by functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) changes and saliva production. The study clearly shows that during the needling of LI-2, there are specific changes in the brain simultaneous with increased production of saliva. This study confirms the classical indication of using LI-2 to treat dry mouth. Activation regions shown by fMRI signals associated with true acupuncture were compared to those from sham acupuncture.ⁱ

Another study of head and neck cancer that has promising results showed that 86% of the patients in the group treated by acupuncture (including electro-acupuncture) had a positive treatment response to xerostomia (dry mouth) symptoms. This study used a preselected group of acupuncture points applied bilaterally: (Sp-6), (St-36), (LI-4), and (CV-24). The treatment was administered twice weekly for a total of 24 sessions given in 12 weeks.ⁱⁱ

Comment: Personally I would have liked to see a more thoughtful point selection such as the use of the *yangming* water points LI-2 or St-44. It is obvious that the selection of Sp-6 was for its influence on the yin, yet perhaps Kid-6, which strongly tonifies yin and has a well-known action on the throat or Lu-5 (the water point and interiorly-coupled channel of the LI) may have proven interesting and effective choices. I believe these points reflect a deeper TCM understanding. However, I do congratulate them on using CV-24 in their study.

INTERNAL DRYNESS (HORMONAL TREATMENTS)

Internal dryness is mainly the result of anti-hormonal

(especially anti-estrogen) treatment. This type of treatment is often given over long periods of up to 5-7 years for women diagnosed with estrogen receptor type breast cancer, in which the cancer cells are sensitive to estrogen.

The use of anti-estrogen hormone treatment (such as tamoxifen) causes hot flashes and is actually drying the *chong mai*. One interesting study was carried out on breast cancer patients receiving anti-estrogen drugs and suffering from hot flashes. The study compared two groups, one group receiving an antidepressant drug (venlafaxine), which is also commonly used in the treatment of hot flashes; the other group received only acupuncture for the hot flashes. The results not only showed improvement in hot flashes in both groups, but also significant improvements in mental health. After the treatments ended, both the acupuncture and drug group were evaluated. It was interesting to note that the acupuncture group continued maintaining the benefits of fewer hot flashes, as well as reports of increased sex drive, improvement in energy, clarity of thought, and sense of well-being. The drug group hardly had any long-lasting effects. The treatment duration in the study was 12 weeks. All patients in the acupuncture group were treated using primary acupuncture points: BL-23, Kid-3, and Sp-6 for general menopausal symptoms. Secondary points were used as needed according to the TCM diagnosis. They included: Du-14, GB-20, Lu-9, Liv-3, Du-20, St-36, Ren-6, Pc-7, and Ht-7.ⁱⁱⁱ

Two studies by Bokmand (2013)^{iv} and Liljegren (2012)^v on the treatment of hot flashes resulting from anti-hormonal treatment used points from the heart and kidney channels. Bokman used Ht-6 and Kid-3 while Liljegren used Ht-6 and Kid-7. In both studies Liv-3 and Sp-6 were used and Liljegren added Li-4, Liv-3, and St-36. Good results were observed in both studies.

Comment: I find that the selection of the points in these studies does not reflect in an accurate way the TCM diagnosis of dryness, which from my point of view needs to address the *ren mai* and *chong mai*. Nevertheless, even the above point selection showed good results.

PROTECTION FROM SIDE EFFECTS AND MORE LCS101 (Protectival), a scientifically validated TCM herbal formula for cancer patients

In the last decade, we have conducted a study in the hospital's department of oncology and in four cancer research centers and cancer laboratories, which included a series of studies on one formula. The human trial showed that the Chinese herbal formula, LCS101 (Protectival), which was administered to breast cancer patients during chemotherapy, had a significant clinical benefit preventing side-effects from chemotherapy. Specifically, anemia, leucopenia, fatigue, vomiting, and overall quality of life of cancer patients.^{vi}

Reducing chemotherapy side effects of (WBC, RBC) by more than 50%.

More studies on LCS101 (Protectival) demonstrate its multifaceted effects on the immune system, protection against the side effects of chemotherapy, and at the same time, providing an anti-cancer effect. This multi-compound herbal formula is an indication of the essence of Chinese medicine and its holistic approach.^{vii}

To learn more about LCS101 research in cancer care visit: <https://www.tcm.ac/course/tcm-botanical-formula-lcs-101-research-and-use-in-cancer-care/>

Final note: Combining different strategies in TCM both in acupuncture and herbal medicine has had a vast contribution in allowing faster and better healing with fewer side effects for cancer patients. By fusing oncology and biological science with TCM traditions, we can validate the importance of the TCM paradigm, and move a step forward in integrating such healing options in cancer care.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Gary Deng at el, Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) changes and saliva production associated with acupuncture at LI-2 acupuncture point: a randomized controlled study. BMC Complement Altern Med; 2008; 8: 37.

ⁱⁱ Raimond K. at el, Phase II Results of RTOG 0537: A Phase II/III Study Comparing Acupuncture-like Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation Versus Pilocarpine in Treating Early Radiation-Induced Xerostomia; Cancer. 2012 September 1; 118(17): 4244–4252

ⁱⁱⁱ Walker EM, Rodriguez AI, Kohn B, et al. Acupuncture versus venlafaxine for the management of vasomotor symptoms in patients with hormone receptor-positive breast cancer: a randomized controlled trial. J Clin Oncol. 2010 Feb 1;28(4):634-40.

^{iv} Bokmand S, Flyger H. Acupuncture relieves menopausal discomfort in breast cancer patients: a prospective, double blinded, randomized study. Breast. 2013 Jun;22(3):320

^v Liljegren A, Gunnarsson P, Landgren BM, et al. Reducing vasomotor symptoms with acupuncture in breast cancer patients treated with adjuvant tamoxifen: a randomized controlled trial. Breast Cancer Res Treat. 2012 Oct;135(3):791-8.

^{vi} Yaal-Hahoshen and Yair Maimon at el. A Prospective, Controlled Study of the Botanical Compound Mixture LCS101 for Chemotherapy-Induced Hematological Complications in Breast Cancer; The Oncologist 2011; 16: 1197-1202

^{vii} Yair Maimon at el. Botanical Formula LCS101: A Multi-Targeted Approach to Cancer Care. Integrative Cancer Therapy I 2018 Dec;17(4):1020-1026

Oncology Acupuncture Workshop with Yair Maimon, OMD, PhD



Almost all TCM practitioners see patients affected by cancer. Oncology acupuncture is a specialty field, which offers distinct tools to help both patients with cancer and patients who have had cancer in the past. The combination of the Western and TCM approach will also enhance the skills to communicate better with Western medical oncology care.

June 6-7, 2020
at Golden Flower Chinese Herbs
Albuquerque, NM
16 PDAs (pending)

The Tao of Conscious Living and Dying

BY VAN WARREN, DOM



We have all heard it said that death and taxes are the two inevitabilities of life. I'm not here to talk about taxes, so that leaves the other subject, death. In the world of 10,000 things, everything has its yin and yang counterpart. The opposite of death is life. It has been stated that in order to have a good death one must have a good life. That's what I want to talk about, having a good life.

I've been a Doctor of Oriental Medicine for over 30 years and have found myself increasingly assisting friends, family, and patients through their dying process. We may have also heard it said that "We are all going to die, and no one knows when that will be." If it's such an inevitability, it seems to me that we should start making our preparations for that transition as soon as we can face our fears and denials about it. As physicians, we also need to learn how to help others through their transition.

My early training was in TCM, and most of what I learned and practiced over the years has been with an eye toward relieving suffering, illness, and restoring health to the best of my ability. As I looked more deeply into the ancient writings (referred to as classical Chinese medicine, or CCM), I found a wealth of information about how to live a conscious life and how to assist others in doing the same, beyond just treating the illness of the day. These ancient writings reflected a deeply spiritual worldview that is the basis of our medicine. For the purpose of this article, I would like to look at chapter 8 of the *Lingshu*. The opening verse states that "For every needling, the method is above all, not to miss the rooting in Spirit." What does this mean for our selves and our patients?

This verse has two implications. One, the doctor needs to be "rooted in spirit" and two, the doctor needs to be able to connect with the spirit(s) of the patient. Again, what does this mean for us to be "rooted in spirit?" The answer to that is given over and over throughout the ancient writings and always comes back to "being in harmony with the Tao," the source of all. These writings have laid out a clear path (cosmology) of how Tao becomes "one", divides into yin and yang, becomes the four directions, the five elements, and then, the 10,000 things. (Of course, there are lots of details that I am not going into here!).

The authors tell us how Heaven and Earth join in the sexual union of sperm and ovum and then the individual life is

created. We are told how spirit enters the forming physical body at CV-8 (*shenque*, "Spirit Deficiency/Spirit Tower," one of six different names for this point), and moves to *mingmen/dantien*, the area between the kidneys. This becomes the repository for *jing*, our individual inherited potential. From the *jing*, *shen*/spirit rises to the heart and takes its place as the ruler of our individual self, and ultimately over the 10,000 things. Some authors say that this pathway is the *chong mai*.

These ancient authors inform us that from the open space within the heart, the spirit has the capacity to rule the 10,000 things and to feel the suffering of all of humanity. Therefore, it is said that the heart is the center of "propriety and compassion." From its place in the heart, as ruler, *shen*/spirit shines its light into the developing organ systems and allows the rise of the individual spirits to assist it in ruling the kingdom. These spirits in the organs are named the *zhi* of the kidney, the *hun* of the liver, the *yi* of the spleen, and the *po* of the lungs.

For the *shen* to rule appropriately it must maintain a connection to the Source; this term is called *jing-shen*. A big clue in living a good life is in keeping this *jing-shen* pathway open so that the *shen* can maintain communication between Heaven (source) and Earth (the 10,000 things, the external world). For the practitioner this can be done with meditation and qigong. Our patients may not be inclined toward such activities and we may need to help them keep the *jing-shen* connection intact and open. There are numerous acupuncture points that can be used for this purpose. Ki-3, coupled with Ht-7 (both source points on their respective channels) is one such powerful point combination. Another treatment to assist in keeping the *jing-shen* pathway intact is to use moxa at the umbilicus and the lower CV line which warms the *mingmen/dantien*). The idea here is that since *shen*/spirit enters at CV-8, by keeping this point free of stagnation and obstruction, then spirit has a greater ability to communicate with Source from which it came. We can also touch the "root of spirit" through compassion and loving kindness where our own spirit reaches out to the spirit of our patient.

The ancients frequently wrote about the value of longevity. We have all read the phrase from the *Shen Nong Ben Cao* that states that the upper class of medicines govern the nourishment of destiny and are concerned with the promotion of longevity. Was the author just telling us we should help others live longer? Yes; and this term "longevity" also has a deeper meaning. Since the Tao is infinite, this verse implies that by joining consciously with the Tao, we merge with the infinite Source. That part of us that merges with Source, the *shen*, then takes on conscious immortality. That's what the image of the Taoist Immortals implies. Certain alchemical Taoist practices are aimed at the fusion of the spirits (*zhi*, *hun*, *shen*, *yi* and *po*) so that the consciousness of the individual, with all its accumulated

wisdom, moves on intact at death (of the body). Now that is longevity! We can assist our patients and those who are in the stages of dying toward that end. Each of us has the possibility of merging with the Source even up to the moment of our last breath.

It is been my experience in helping people through the dying process that acupuncture is not always the most effective treatment modality at that time. In some cases (possibly most cases) acupuncture may be too stimulating during this phase of life. Since the energy of the person is withdrawing from the physical body, too much stimulation may make it harder for the spirit to smoothly accomplish this transition. I do use acupuncture for pain control when needed, but to assist the “return to Source,” I prefer the approach of balancing the five elements with appropriate essential oils, tuning forks, and indirect moxa. The oils create a gentle energetic balancing which allows the virtues of the elements to express themselves more easily. I find moxa especially useful at CV-8 and surrounding area. CV-14 (the *mu* point of the heart), CV-15, and the lower CV line are useful for providing a soothing and warming affect. In some cases, spray moxa or smokeless moxa is the most appropriate. In all cases when treating the dying with moxa, they may have diminished sensory capacity and one must be particularly attentive to avoid burning the patient.

Tuning forks have a profound effect and I highly recommend them. They provide a deeply relaxing experience and patients frequently report that they feel more “open” and “at peace” after using them. I tend to use the tuning forks for opening the Eight Extraordinary Channels, the chakras and wherever my intuition leads. Frequently, people who are dying are filled with anger, regrets, fears, and attachments to life that disturbs and agitates them deeply. The vibration of the forks on appropriate points for these issues helps to remove blockages and helps them let go and see the higher virtues (gifts) behind these emotions. A quite common example of this is fear of the unknown. Fear and its counterbalance, courage, are water phase related and treated through the kidney channel. By picking appropriate points, vibrating away the “stuck-ness,” the virtue of wisdom can arise. Here is a quick cheat sheet for treating emotions: for anger, Liv-4; anxiety, Ht-3; worry, Sp-1; sadness, Lu-10, and fear, Ki-3. The tuning forks themselves provide the “*da qi*” effect without using the patient’s qi. Source points can certainly be used here as they tap into the source of primordial, untouched qi.

This brings me to the last few points that I want to make in this article. The two most important elements to assist anyone in their journey through life and their return to Source, are “presence and skill.” Since the *shen* is what bestows consciousness on the individual, “presence” implies the ability of the consciousness to be aware of the Tao unfolding in this very moment. The word “Tao” has at least two meanings, one meaning is “Source” and the other is “path.” The *Tao Te Ching* (道德经; *pinyin*: *Dao De Jing*) tells us that we cannot

understand the Tao as Source (verse one: “The Tao that can be spoken is not the true Tao,” etcetera) but we can see the Tao as a path unfolding in this present moment. When I speak of “presence,” I’m referring to our cultivated ability to sit in the heart and observe the unfolding of the path in each moment. This is the most advantageous position for Spirit to take for appropriate and successful ruling over the 10,000 things. This is similar to mindfulness, except that with mindfulness we are observing what is going on in the mind and with the development of “presence” we are sitting in the heart and being aware of the unfolding of Tao in this present moment. Mindfulness can lead to the same place, but “presence” implies a more direct approach (for me).

“Skill” refers to our ability to successfully rein in the tendencies of the outgoing faculties, to temper our desires and our work toward developing “presence.” Skill also refers to our diagnostic abilities, techniques that we have learned, and our ability to touch another soul with love and compassion.

In closing, I would like to leave you with an outline of a meditation technique that helps *jing-shen* flow and develops “presence.”

Sit in a comfortable position with your spine erect and open. On the inhale, imagine the breath coming in through the mingmen/dantien area in the lower abdomen and rising to the heart. On the exhale, allow the breath to drop back down to mingmen/dantien. Use this gentle belly breathing technique which oxygenates the system and allows for greater relaxation.

After a few breaths, imagine this pathway being open and energy between the heart and mingmen/dantien flowing freely in both directions. As you continue breathing in this fashion, put your attention at the heart and begin thinking of something that you are grateful for. Once you feel gratitude in your heart, allow it to expand and fill the heart completely. Allow it to continue expanding until your entire body is filled with gratitude. Imagine an energy field surrounding the body that extends a few feet in all directions, including above your head and into the ground. Continue this expansion of gratitude until it fills this energy bubble completely.

Now extend that gratitude-filled energy field until it encompasses the entire earth and everyone on it. Continue expanding out to the entire universe. After you have expanded as far as you can, forget about the process and just merge with the infinite Source, that which is outside of time and space. Just let go and experience Oneness. Stay in that space for as long as you like. When you are ready, bring your awareness back to the heart, keeping that connection with Source.

As you go about your day, give that quality of spirit away to every sentient being that you encounter. This is one way to be sure “not to miss the rooting in the spirit.”

This meditation, and many others, facilitates our return to Source, consciously, while we are alive. The more that we traverse this path, the easier it will be for Spirit to return to Source when it is our time to die. Not only that, it will help us live a happier and more beauty-filled life!



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BUILDING BLOOD SUFFICIENCY THROUGH KITCHEN MEDICINE

By Andrew Serman

Most people take their blood for granted. It's there when we expect it, and we seem to have plenty of it if some is drawn for lab tests or if we donate to a blood bank. Yet, Chinese medicine teaches us that blood sufficiency is not to be presumed. In the clinic we are alert for signs of blood deficiency during pulse taking, when examining the tongue, by noting complexion, and through association with a wide variety of symptoms.

Most people ignore their bodies until a problem arises. As we inspire and educate our patients through the multiple lenses of Chinese medicine, one of the important shifts we can help people make is to treat our blood as the treasure it is. To do this well, it's useful to have a working overview of blood in both Western and Chinese medicine terms, and to have a list of blood-building foods and recipes easily in mind.

BLOOD IN SIMPLE TERMS

In the modern biomechanical model, the main functions of blood are to:

- Transport oxygen throughout the body while removing waste gas (mostly carbon dioxide).
- Transport nutrients, proteins and hormones while removing metabolic wastes (such as lactic acid and urea).
- Regulate body temperature and pH.
- Provide fluid where needed (think of blood as the connective tissue of the fluid system).
- Control loss of blood through clotting.
- Carry immune response substances to the site of an injury or infection.
- Play key roles in both female and male fertility.

To this, Chinese medicine adds its unique insights:

- Blood ensures the transport of moisture, fluids, and nourishment.
- Blood sufficiency underlies the strength and flexibility of tendons, joints, and movement.
- Blood has an intimate connection with qi, together supporting fine motor skills and acuity of the sense organs (including skin), enabling a sensitive relationship with the world.
- Blood is considered the mediumship for spirit and consciousness, in other words, our blood provides the material basis for awareness and emotions. (Chapter 22 of the *Ling Shu* clearly directs us to look to the blood to understand and treat overwhelming emotions or disturbances of spirit).
- Blood, as an aspect of mediumship, has crucial roles to play for the support of latency and deep health preservation.
- Blood sufficiency is necessary for restful sleep, good memory, mental focus, and emotional integrity.

While lab tests check for markers that can signify 'borderline anemia,' Chinese medicine sees a larger scenario of blood deficiency. Signs include:

- Inability to finish projects or bring things to completion. Sufficient blood provides enthusiasm (heart blood), impetus to keep moving (liver blood) and deep-seated confidence (kidney blood). Heart blood sufficiency provides integrity to desires or our vision of what we can create, liver blood provides integrity to our capacity to get things done in the world of people and things, while kidney blood provides integrity to our will (*zhi*).
- Various thin, tight, or even rapid pulses. Remember, in the pulses we are seeing not only a condition but the body's complex responses to it.
- The body of the tongue may appear pale (pay attention to the color of the tongue beneath the coat or on the underside of the tongue, as needed).
- Other signs of blood deficiency include pale or chapped lips, dry fingernails, visual 'floaters', numbness or weakness of the limbs, headaches, dizziness, vertigo (particularly when standing up), light men-

strual periods (or heavy flow if a cause of blood deficiency), mental fog, memory problems, trouble finding words, and anxiety. Blood deficiency can also underly poor fertility (male and female), GYN issues, hormonal imbalances (deficiency in one type of medium often leads to the body gathering too much of another), depression, nagging financial worries, insomnia (both as cause and as effect), constipation, restless leg syndrome, food cravings or eating disorders, and auto-immune issues.

DIAGNOSING THE CAUSES OF BLOOD DEFICIENCY

There are a variety of different reasons someone may show signs of blood deficiency. A good differential diagnosis including an understanding of etiology is crucial for selecting dietary changes for best effect. In the clinic, check for the following:

- Does the patient show signs of cold, and if so where? Do the spleen and stomach pulses show that the digestive tract is warm and strong enough to transform food to begin the process of building blood?
- What is the status of kidney yang? Deficiency of kidney yang qi will adversely impact digestion and the ability to build blood.
- Is there food or blood stagnation present (including constipation)?
- Is there qi deficiency, or problems with transport?
- Are there leakages of blood, yang qi, or is there sexual excess (leakage of *yuan qi*)?

Match this with the basic description of how blood is made in the Chinese medicine model. Blood is a product of digestion and relies on good stomach function (ripening and rotting of foods), good pancreas-spleen function (transforming what the stomach has prepared), and the separation or extraction of pure and turbid from what has been transformed (in the small intestine but under the power of pancreas-spleen qi). The digested substance—a component of *gu qi*—ascends to the chest where food's essence combines with *da qi* (celestial breath). In the chest, the 'red substance' (not blood quite yet) is completed as the lungs mix in celestial breath and pass the substance to the heart which confers *shen*. The blood is now complete, ready for the liver to govern its storage and distribution.

If blood deficiency is found in the clinic, it is crucial to assess whether there is leakage (internal bleeding of various types) or problems affecting any of the stages of blood production. An active clinician will see both frequently (although probably far more often problems of blood production).

CONNECTING BLOOD WITH DIET

Certain foods help or hinder any of the stages of blood production. As with all healing, avoiding what causes (or prolongs) problems is often enough to allow the body to heal. Therefore, even though it may sound somewhat negative, it's important to begin with knowing which foods to avoid. Said another way, simply adding 'superfoods' to a problematic diet will not be successful.

Since blood is a product of digestion, any foods that slow or hurt digestion can impair building of blood. This is particularly crucial for those who tend toward chronic blood deficiency.

- Cold foods slow or damage digestion. These include iced drinks, ice cream, raw foods, even salads and juices one hopes will enrich blood. Low stomach fire can impede absorption of iron necessary for the creation of good quality blood. Care must be taken. Ask yourself if cold in your diet is damaging digestion.
- Erratic meal times stresses digestion, such as skipping breakfast, eating late, fasting and binging, etc.
- Since blood is fluid, foods that have a drying effect can impede blood production (e.g., popcorn, wheat toast, hot peppers, dry snacks, etc.)
- Foods that cause dampness or phlegm (for the individual) get in the way of good digestion. The clinician should have a mental list of

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2 BUILDING BLOOD

foods that commonly cause dampness or its advanced form, phlegm: dairy (especially cheese), fried foods, gluten (if at all sensitive), alcohol excess, cold foods, overeating, or poor food combinations. It is common for patients to combine some or all of the above.

Look honestly at habits that impede best production of blood and eliminate them.

Adding foods that help build blood can begin to actively reverse the problems just listed above.

- ♦ Eat all cooked meals (or nearly so), avoid raw or cold things, including cold drinks. (Lightly cooked vegetables are fine, food needn't be overcooked.)
- ♦ Eat meals in fairly regular timing or rhythm, including not skipping breakfast.
- ♦ Include more moistening foods. Water alone is not enough for good hydration; wet-cooked foods provide 'time-release' hydration that is particularly beneficial. Wet-cooked breakfasts include oat or millet porridge and rice congee. For lunch and dinner, steamed grains are moistening for the stomach and intestines, as are soups and stews. One of the biggest shifts in diet over the last few generations has been the fading away of daily soups and porridges. Reviving wet-breakfasts and soups as standard part of diet can be one of the most powerful changes you can make for good health.

With this overview in mind we can identify foods that help build blood in specific ways.

First, it's always important to insure that the stomach energy is descending, particularly for patients who may have the common combination of blood deficiency and appetite problems, for example, those with eating disorders, depression, or are taking medications or chemotherapy. To help appetite and stomach descension, include:

- ♦ Grains (see just below for best grain choices).
- ♦ Kale and other greens have a descending and soothing effect on the stomach.
- ♦ True appetizers (bitter things like olives, artichoke hearts).
- ♦ Fermented foods (miso, kombucha, kimchi, apple cider vinegar).

Second, tonify the pancreas-spleen so digestion can better transform and assimilate our diet:

- ♦ Rice, millet, oats, and corn moisten the stomach, nourish stomach yin and help tonify pancreas-spleen.
- ♦ Sweet potatoes, beets.
- ♦ Soothing foods for digestion (zucchini, squashes, or pumpkins).
- ♦ Red Chinese dates called jujube or *da zao*.
- ♦ Gently cooked foods strengthen stomach and pancreas-spleen, especially those that are steamed, soups, or stews.

Third, provide building substance for blood:

- ♦ Red meat (beef, bison, lamb, duck, dark meat of chicken or turkey).
- ♦ Beets (beets contain nutrients that improve oxygen utilization).
- ♦ Plenty of dark leafy greens for the minerals they provide.

Protein and iron are necessary for the liver's role synthesizing compounds from nutrients, but more is needed. The liver must successfully hold or store completed blood. To help with this aspect of liver function, include:

- ♦ Berries (blueberries, raspberries, etcetera).
- ♦ Goji berries deserve a special mention—their sweet, tart redness makes them a special food for building and storing blood.
- ♦ Tartness is important, also include some good quality vinegars, lemon or lime.
- ♦ Wine has a special connection with blood; include some red wine in your cooking.

Vegetarians can successfully build blood through diet, of course, but without the easy source of blood-building nutrients and energetics from red meat, special care must be taken. Vegetarians can rely upon:

- ♦ Dark leafy greens (necessary for meat-eaters, too).
- ♦ Beets and berries.
- ♦ Certain beans, particularly red lentils, black beans, black soybeans and adzuki beans.
- ♦ Non-glutinous grains, especially rice and millet.

Fourth, to nourish the kidney aspect, or resolving what is often called adrenal exhaustion, it is essential to adjust lifestyle factors:

- ♦ Get more sleep, have less stress, exercise moderately, experience some quiet or meditation.
- ♦ Dietarily, we usually focus first on kidney yin: eggs, clams, caviar, oysters, scallops, abalone, mussels, and vegetarian options of mushrooms, seaweeds, nuts and seeds.
- ♦ Kidney yin along with more rest will naturally replenish kidney yang, but to reach kidney yang more directly with diet, select the shellfish with feet: shrimp, crab, or lobster. Perhaps more important than these 'red shellfish' are warming spices (see below).

Fifth, always keep in mind the overall process of building blood sufficiency: our diet must be rich enough in proteins, minerals, fats, and moistness. Our diet should be good to our stomach, pancreas-spleen, small intestine, and liver systems, in other words, support the organs of digestion themselves. Yang qi of the kidneys is the foundation of all digestive qi and therefore must be well supported. This requires good hydration, enough healthy fats, and for most people an increase in rest and a reduction of stress. It can be thought of as the pilot light beneath the controlled flame of the digestive tract. The lungs and heart (breath and circulation) complete the production of blood, in the chest. The kidney yang pilot light is the flame of the lower burner, digestive fire is the flame of the middle burner, and the glowing flame of the heart in the chest is the upper burner. All three burners need to work together for producing and completing blood. Once the basics of digestion in the lower two burners have been addressed, it's time to consider the role of the lungs in the chest, or upper burner.

The lungs will benefit from the descending influence of the root vegetables mentioned above in the context of opening the stomach to enliven appetite, but the diffusing aspect of good lung function needs to be supported, and this is done with warming spices. Kitchen herbs and spices have the effect of moving fluids to the exterior, which makes it easy to understand why a diet with too many hot spices can be dehydrating internally. But the warming spices are not dehydrating and fulfill two essential roles in helping to build blood: they support the diffusing (or relaxed-active-opening) of breath and also help invigorate blood as it is completed. It is essential to ensure the invigoration of blood as its production is increased to avoid stagnation or stickiness. This role, played in herbal medicine by herbs such as *chuan xiong*/ligusticum wallichii or *xiang fu*/cyperus, is fulfilled in our diets by the warming spices, including ginger, turmeric, scallion, chive, leek, cinnamon, saffron, cumin, rosemary, oregano, and so forth. Garlic and the nightshades also warm and invigorate blood, but care should be taken as overuse can easily be overheating, at which point these foods are doing more harm than good. Use garlic in moderation to gain its benefits without the potential problems.

Sixth, the possibility of blood leakage is important to consider for those showing blood deficiency. Blood leakage within the intestines will show as a black color in the stool. Although treatment may be necessary, treatment from any medicine will be more effective if diet is correctly managed. First, identify and eliminate any gastrointestinal irritants (for example, gluten, alcohol, or blood thinning foods such as garlic, onion, hot peppers or other nightshades). Reduce or rotate medications that irritate stomach or intestines, including NSAIDs. Then, soothe the intestines with foods mentioned above as 'pancreas-spleen foods': zucchini, butternut squash, sweet potato, rutabaga, congee, millet, etc. A strong pancreas-spleen is needed to 'hold blood in its banks.'

And of course, diet is enhanced by gentle exercise with conscious breath-



ing, such as qigong. Even a simple walk will help, perhaps 20-30 minutes after finishing a meal. Digestion and the production of blood can be improved by relaxing while eating and 'breathing to the food,' or in more classical language, bringing celestial qi into the belly to spark digestion. Our food is mixed with breath at two stages, first in the belly and later in the chest. We're all breathing, but consciously inviting the role of breath in digestion is easy, free of charge, and powerful. Try it now; you'll know you have the idea when a subtle smile spontaneously opens on your lips. Breathe again to the belly and the chest and feel the hint of a smile that is in response to nothing but the healthy energetics within.

With this information it's possible to create your own recipes that help build, invigorate, and store blood in specific ways based on an understanding of food energetics and various different problems that commonly occur. To start, here are a few that I have adapted and often recommend.

RECIPES

Steel Cut Oats with Blueberries

- 1 cup steel cut oats
- 3 cups water
- pinch of sea salt
- 1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries
- generous sprinkling of ground cinnamon

Bring the oats to a boil with the water and pinch of salt, then reduce to a simmer and cover loosely to avoid boiling over. Cook 30-40 minutes (5-10 minutes in a pressure cooker, then allow pressure to coast before releasing). Meanwhile, cook the blueberries very lightly—they will break open and form a beautiful syrup, nothing else needed. We want the sweet and tart quality of the berries (avoid masking a sweetener). This recipe serves four (and is easily adapted for more or fewer). Add ground cinnamon when serving.

Oats are very soothing to digestion, correct problems of descension, aid peristalsis, and help hydrate. This works with the digestive side of blood building: stomach, pancreas-spleen, intestines. The blueberries provide material nutrients for blood and support the energetics of the liver aspect. Cinnamon is a warming spice that has an energy of spreading and invigorating upward and outward. Equally important to these details is simply that this is a warm, wet-cooked breakfast that protects digestion, far superior in the morning to cold foods or dry baked goods.

Steamed Beets with Olive Oil, Blood Orange, Fresh Mint, and Pistachio

- 1 medium beet (beetroot) per person
- 1 blood orange per person
- pistachio nuts (shelled)
- mint or shiso leaf
- olive oil
- sea salt

Cover raw beets (unpeeled) with water, bring to gentle boil for 30 minutes. When soft to a fork but not mushy, hold one at a time under running cold water and rub to remove the peels. Cut into 1/4 inch slices before arranging portions on a plate, a whole medium-size beet per person. While the beets are cooking, peel and similarly slice one blood orange per person (removing seeds as you go). Arrange with the beets. Sprinkle a quarter-palm measure of shelled pistachio nuts over the beet/orange slices. Tear leaves from the stalks of fresh mint or shiso, sprinkle over the plate (use more than a garnish but not so much as to overwhelm either the appearance or the energetics of the dish). Drizzle a good olive oil over primarily the beets, and likewise a very small pinch of good salt.

Beets are a blood-building superstar. Traditional medicine points to the law of signature tested over time; biomechanical medicine points to how they are rich in the betaine group of nutrients known to improve blood quality and the utilization of oxygen upon exertion (betaine takes its name

from the root vegetable). Citrus helps relax the liver. (Include some of the peel if the fruit is organically grown.) Blood oranges also include a law of signature note for building blood that is corroborated in modern terms as richly providing antioxidants, micronutrients, and dietary fiber. Pistachios have a heart affinity in classical dietary theory, bringing the heart and the idea of relaxing the *shen* into this dish. Use other nuts to shift focus to other aspects of building blood. (Walnuts, almonds, pine nuts, or even pecans would be useful choices, but don't mix too many aspects together at once.) If digestion is weak, dry-roast the nuts briefly. Mint is cooling and the type of spicy referred to as 'refreshing' or 'acidic,' good to use if there is inflammation or trapped heat present. Mint soothes digestion (shiso even more strongly), helps move fluids, and prevents stagnation. The olive oil adds a bitter note (bitter helps cool inflammation and reinforce the descending directionality of digestion) and here, the very tiny amount of salt acts as a harmonizer—its influence might be missed but a salty taste should not be noticed.

Zucchini with Goji Berries

- 2-3 medium zucchini
- 12-24 goji berries (a handful or so)
- 8-12 red jujube dates (optional, omit if unavailable, do not substitute other dates)
- 8-12 longan berries (another Chinatown ingredient, omit if not available)
- 1 handful tree ear mushrooms, soaked, drained, chopped (substitute shiitake mushrooms as desired)
- 1/4 cup sake (rice wine)
- 1 Tbsp grapeseed oil
- 1/2 tsp toasted sesame oil
- 1 Tbsp kuzu (kudzu) powder or cornstarch to thicken, mixed with 1/4 cup cool water
- 2 thin slices fresh ginger, slivered
- 1-2 scallions, sliced
- pinch of salt
- fresh cilantro as an optional garnish

Wash the zucchini, trim tops and bottoms, cut into three sections across the middle then cut each section into four segments lengthwise (like broad carrot sticks). Soak the tree ears in warm water, rinse, chop.

In a large pan or pot, heat the grapeseed oil, add the ginger, scallions and pinch of salt. Add the goji berries, red dates, tree ears, and longan berries. Feel free to omit the longan berries or red dates if difficult to find, or substitute shiitake mushrooms for the tree ears. Goji berries are a trendy food and therefore are very easy to find; the dish works well with goji berries alone if jujube and longan berries prove elusive to find. Add the zucchini pieces and the sake, cook over medium-high heat until the zucchini is just slightly tender, about five minutes (lid is optional).

Add the kuzu or cornstarch that has been mixed with cool water to form a slurry. This thickens the pan juices into a sauce (kuzu and cornstarch thicken when heated). If too thin, add a bit more thickener; if too thick, simply add some water to open it again. With practice you'll know how much works well. The sauce should thicken enough to hang onto the zucchini without being 'gloppy'. Add the toasted sesame oil just before serving. Serves four. For a complete meal, combine with adzuki or black beans and steamed rice or millet.

This is adapted from a classic dish to nourish yin and build blood. Zucchini nourishes stomach yin, soothes digestion, and helps with blurred vision through nourishing blood. Goji berries also help vision (particularly important for 'floaters'), nourishes blood, and especially helps the liver store blood after completion (due to their sweet and tart taste). Goji berries also reach from the digestive level to the deeper constitutional level by nourishing liver and kidney yin and blood, effectively boosting essence. Longan berries have a more uplifting set of influences, nourishing blood through tonifying pancreas-spleen while tonifying the heart and shen,



4 BUILDING BLOOD

therefore being helpful for those suffering from overthinking, overworking, heart palpitations, insomnia, memory issues, or dizziness. The tree ear fungus has a moving quality, almost like a blood thinner, important for the strategy of building blood without causing stagnation. Tree ears also build back moistness and fluids, clear heat (especially in the chest or lungs, very good for smokers), support *wei qi* or immune integrity, all while moving *qi* and dispelling blood stasis (arteriosclerosis can be seen as blood stasis). A pinch of salt includes the kidneys' support (as would shiitake mushrooms if used in place of tree ears), as does the toasted sesame oil. Scallion stimulates digestion without causing excess digestive heat; ginger harmonizes the digestion while it also assists the lungs in diffusion. Kuzu is very soothing for any digestive upset; it calms excess stomach acid and protects the small intestine, an organ that is often overworked by consumption of irritants, poor food combinations, and overeating.

Black beans, black soybeans, or adzuki beans contribute to building blood while anchoring to the kidneys (and in the case of adzuki beans, also bringing the dish to the heart level). In place of beans, however, red meat, fish, or chicken would also contribute protein support needed for blood manufacture.

Steamed rice (or millet) is not an afterthought for this kind of dish. Rice and millet are both soothing for the stomach and small intestine, while tonifying pancreas-spleen function and nourishing stomach fluids (the stomach is the hub for all necessary internal fluids).

Chicken Soup with Herbs

Chicken soup is a traditional 'heal all' dish in many cultures. There is a version specific to the dietary branch of Chinese medicine, a soup made with black-skinned chicken, jujube red dates, goji berries, longan berries, tree ear fungus, black soybeans and sometimes *he shou wu*/Polygonum multiflorum (black chickens are a bantam size breed also called 'silkie' for their soft feathers, available fresh or frozen in Chinatown or specialty markets). The energetics of tree ear fungus, goji berries, longan berries, and black beans were described just above; *he shou wu* is, of course, commonly used as a gentle longevity tonic to nourish kidney and liver yin, moisten intestines, and support kidney essence.

This is a fine soup, a classic post-partum recipe that is also used for those who are anemic or may experience hair loss due to blood deficiency (including chemotherapy). But compliance is more important than theory, and if this soup seems too exotic or the ingredients too difficult to find, opt for a chicken soup more culturally familiar to you. Just as in superior acupuncture treatments, the cook's intention is enormously important and should never be seen as secondary to the recipe. We are accustomed to thinking of a cook's skill in technical ways or cultural fads, but not often enough do we notice that the cook's intention seemed particularly focused and the meal therefore exceptionally effective, even if many ingredients are 'missing' or different.

A basic chicken soup can therefore be made by adding one small organic chicken cut into pieces, with skin, into a large pot, skin side down, with a touch of olive oil to start if needed (or purchase two breasts and four legs if you don't want to cut a whole chicken yourself). Over medium-high heat, render some of the chicken fat and lightly brown the skin. Remove and set aside. In the same pot, add 3-4 medium carrots (diced), 2 medium leeks (white part only, cut broadly then slivered), 4 stalks celery (diced), 1 bay leaf, 1 tsp ground turmeric, 1/2 tsp whole black peppercorns, a generous chef's pinch or two of salt. Cook until vegetables soften, about 5-10 minutes.

Return the chicken parts to the pot, cover with water at least 3 inches above the solids, bring to a simmer and cook for 30 minutes. Remove the chicken from the soup, allow to cool slightly, then cut the meat from the bones before returning it in bite-size pieces to the soup. Taste for salt. Chop a whole bunch of parsley to add just before serving. It's a simple soup, easy to make and good to eat. Serve with cooked dark leafy greens and steamed rice for a complete meal that strongly nourishes the production of blood.

Chicken soup is warming and very easy to digest for most people, fulfilling the stomach and pancreas-spleen requirements when supplementing deficiency. (Chicken soup might not be not appropriate for those with true excess conditions.) The broth of the soup provides fluid, often a neglected obvious necessity when trying to build more blood. The carrots provide a descending energy, the celery is uplifting, the parsley helps diffuse and the leek invigorates blood. Turmeric warms digestion even as it clears inflammation.

Feel free to add herbal elements to make your own signature soup; include tree ears, jujube dates, goji berries or even *he shou wu*. When looking at other medicinal soup recipes, feel free to use herbs that are known to go into soup if you understand how they are being used, in other words, what part of the blood-building model they are addressing. For example, some restaurants offer chicken soup with ginseng, but I would be wary of the heat that ginseng confers unless very clear that a particular patient was blood deficient because cold was interfering with kidney yang (keep in mind that chicken itself is very warming).

Ground Bison with Ginger, Scallion, Warming Spices

Red meat provides perhaps the easiest ways to assimilate the nutrients and yang *qi* necessary to successfully build blood. Seen at the most basic level, meat is plant food that has been brought into the animal realm by game or farm animals; building blood from animal food is like taking stone blocks from a building nearby to build a new one rather than having to cut and haul new blocks from a quarry. There are very important ethical questions about meat consumption as practiced, but medicinal use of meat for those who need the most help building blood is necessary knowledge for a clinician to have.

The easiest way to assimilate foods for building blood is through eating soup. Bone broth may be best if problems are at the *yuan* or constitutional level, but if at the *ying* or nutritive level, use a soup such as Beef with Barley or a Beef with Potato Stew (many recipes are easily available). Since chicken soup is discussed above, here I am offering a ground meat recipe. Ground meat is the next easiest to digest and assimilate. Use beef or lamb if you prefer, but for building blood, bison is particularly helpful (and is increasingly available in good markets).

- 1 pound ground bison
- 1 Tbsp grapeseed oil
- 2-3 scallions, chopped coarsely
- 2-3 slices fresh ginger, slivered
- 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp tamari
- 1 Tbsp tamarind paste
- 1/4 cup each parsley and cilantro, chopped

Add a splash of oil to a hot pan, quickly toss in the scallions and the slivered ginger. Add the ground meat, stir. Add the balsamic vinegar, tamari, and tamarind paste. Stir to expose all the meat to the heat and mix the sauce. Taste for salt. Add a splash of water if the dish is too dry; turn up heat if too wet. Add the parsley and cilantro and serve over steamed rice along with a cooked dark leafy green.

Andrew Sterman is the author of *Welcoming Food: A Guide to Diet as Medicine for Home Cooks and Other Healers* (Classical Wellness Press, New York, 2019). Based in New York City, Andrew works with clients in the areas of dietary therapy, medical qigong and meditation. At home, Andrew cooks for his wife, author and acupuncturist Ann Cecil-Sterman, and their two children. Visit AndrewStermanFood.com on the web.