

Treating the Patient and Not the Disease: A Lesson in Diagnosis Through Case Review

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Intake: What is my goal?

Sharon Weizenbaum asks us to think on this: What is the vantage point and role of the practitioner? What is my job?

- I want to serve, to help, to relieve suffering.
- The healing is a result of us effectively using those tools that we study.
- The intake is a way for us to gather information in order to use our tools.
- The key is that the intake is for me.

What do I need?

- What information do I need to understand their suffering?
- What information do I need to make sense of today?
- How can I direct this intake so that it serves my needs. How can I have authority over this intake?



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Case Study: Irregular Menses

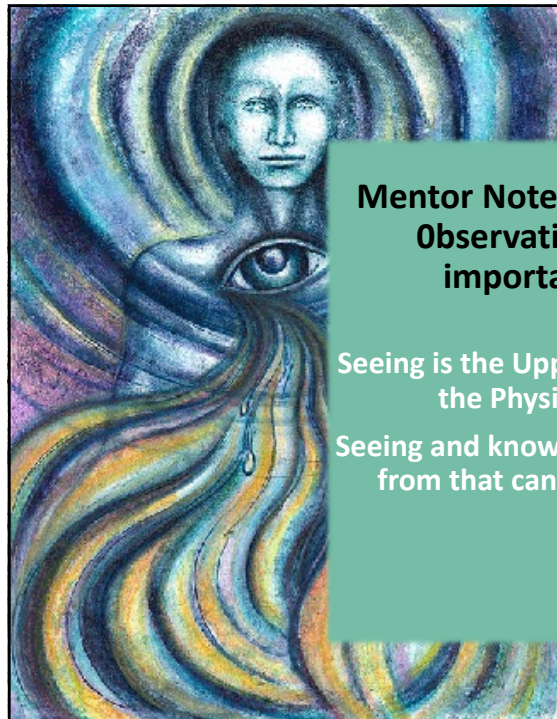
42 year-old female

CC: Irregular menses

Observations: She is tall and slender with long limbs and pale skin. The student observes that overall the patient looks thin in a deficient rather than healthy, even though her demeanor is strong. She is described as Type A personality, striving for success in work and is good at internalizing her anxieties.

Chief Complaint: Her cycles have become inconsistent, shorter. Heavier, longer flow with clots and pain. Three cycles of 21 days. She reports gushing for two days with red blood and black clots. Follicular phase feels very dramatic with extreme energy and high libido. Pre-menstrual phase she feels exhausted for 1 day.

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Mentor Notes: Why is Observation so important?

Seeing is the Upper aspect of the Physician:
Seeing and knowing/learning from that can guide us

What do you see/feel?

How is the patients demeanor, voice, body shape, complexion, shen and posture?

Before touching can you get an idea of the quality of the flesh/musculature?

What is the most striking thing you see/experience with this person?

What does this person need to feel more comfortable in themselves and the world?

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Diagnosis: Seeing and Touching

Body type: How to use it in intake and diagnosis?

- Body size: try not make assumptions based on body size. Not all large bodies are damp. Not all skinny bodies are healthy, etc.
- Body types: Huang Huang describes a small number of body types. They are useful. Be careful not to get trapped in them. They are just guidelines, not diagnostics. A Gui Zhi body type will often do well with Gui Zhi Tang based formulas but not always, and they are not the only ones to need Gui Zhi Tang.
 - Do not be limited by body type. The descriptions are code in the same way that the Shang Han Lun lines are code.
- Use words to describe what you see and feel. Try not to generalize and say, "Earth type". Describe it for yourselves and a reader so that you can recreate the image and feeling. Use words that help you know what to do: inward, outward, heavy, sinking, floating, hyperactive, wet, dry.

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Mentor Questions

How heavy is too heavy?

- We need more details.
- Do we need to stop bleeding?
- Why is this important

Pain:

- Better with or worse with.
- Location

How do we diagnose blood stasis?

- Pain during bleeding is blood stasis
- Blood stasis is always a branch

Ovulation signs?

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Mentor Notes and Questions:

Bleeding: Inquiry and Diagnosis

Asking about the bleeding:

- When in the cycle?
- How much? What protection is used and how often do you need to change it?
- Color, consistency, clots
- Accompanied by? Pain, headache, dizziness, fatigue?

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Diagnosis Notes on Bleeding: How Much is Too Much? What is Normal?

How many days of bleeding?

- A normal period is ideally about 5 days, with about 3 good red flow days and then a couple light days either at end or on either end.
- Brown spotting before or after is not normal. Trickling on for many days is not normal.
- Heavy flow for 5-7 days or even more is not normal.

How heavy is the bleeding?

- What does heavy mean to you?
- What do you use and how often do you have to change?
- Is it manageable or do you have leaks?
- Do you need more than one form of protection sometimes?

How much is too much? This can be hard to judge!

- Average fluid loss is 70-80 ml of fluid per period. Over 160ml per period would be considered excessive.
- A regular tampon holds 7ml, Super plus is about 13ml. The cup is the easiest to measure as each brand holds a specific amount. Period underwear is not regulated yet, so this is harder to judge.
- Changing a super pad or tampon every hour is too heavy.
- Needing a pad and a tampon at the same time is too heavy.
- Needing to stay home to manage bleeding is too heavy.
- Soaking through clothes even with protection is too heavy.

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Diagnosis Notes: Blood Stasis is Always a Branch

Trauma

Qi stagnation

Qi deficiency

Cold: Localized or systemic

Heat: excess or deficiency

Fluid/Yin/Blood damage

Dampness and phlegm

Bleeding

Chronic illness, old age, immobility, some prescription drugs

Long term emotional trauma/repression/unrest or severe sudden shock

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Diagnosis Notes: Dr. Qui Xiao Mei on Dysmenorrhea

The types of dysmenorrhea can transform and change into one another or combine with each other. Because of this one can't rigidly divide into categories.

In terms of diagnosis of dysmenorrhea, I think it is important to keep on mind the following points: " When Qi stasis is principle, distention is more than pain and the pain comes and goes. When blood stasis is principle, pain is greater than distention and it is more continuous. With regard to vacuity and excess, when the pain is before or during menstruation it is often excess while pain following menstruation relates to vacuity. If the pain responds favorably to pressure it is from vacuity while pain that resists pressure is related to excess. Cramping pain relates to cold while piercing pain relates to heat. If the pain is decreased with the application of heat it relates to cold while if it is worse with the heat it relates to heat.

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Diagnosis Points for Dysmenorrhea

Nature of the pain:

- Excess: pressure feels worse, tender to touch, severe colicky pain. Excess pain is before and during bleeding.
- Deficiency pain is mild, with weakness, or bearing down sensation, better with pressure, warmth and rest. It can be with period or two or three days into period.
- Qi stagnation is more distending and usually starts before the period, maybe be tight, pulling, gripping, cramping pain.
- Pain due to heat will burn and feel worse with heat
- Cold pain is severe, cramping and better with warmth
- Blood deficiency/dryness causes spasms of the muscles
- Pain that is better with passing of a clot is hardened blood and needs softening (salty)
- Pain that is better when flow starts needs some opening through

What is the location?

- Lateral sides of abdomen, radiation into medial thighs is liver/GB channel
- Dull heavy pain in lower back is kidney deficiency
- Severe pain in middle lower abdomen is blood stasis in uterus

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10 Questions: Additional Signs and Symptoms

Floaters and eye styes

Tendency to cold. Practitioner notes that she wears layers and comes in quite bundled, not taking sweater off for treatment even.

Neck and shoulder pain that continues to come back even after muscle release.

Digestion: Bowel movements tend to loose, especially with period

Fatigue: generally tired, worse with period

Sleep: waking up at 3am with lots of energy

Tongue thin, crimped, pale, peeled sides.

Abdomen: rectus very tight under sliding skin. Hypochondrium tightness.

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Mentor Notes and Questions

Cold: How to ask about cold? What do we need to know?

Ask “How do you feel about wind on your skin?” Why is wind important?

I want to know if she palpated the patient. Palpation is important!

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Touching as Part of Intake: What can we learn?

Touching is the middle level of physician.

- Skin texture: rough, dry or moist and clammy? Gives you information about the fluids.
- Quality of flesh: soft or hard, tight or squishy. Gives information about blood, spleen, fluids.
- When you feel the pulse, feel the arms a little . Is the skin rough or dry? Is it moist or clammy? Is it tight or soft and flabby.
- Feel below the knees. Check for puffiness, pitting, tight musculature, dry skin. Look also for spider veins, purple signs and varicosities.
- Channels: Start with just a quick exploration of each channel below the elbows and knees and see what you feel.
- Kidney 3 is a useful spot to check as well. Is it puffy or sunken?
- Abdomen/Fu Ku Shin: Even if you do not know the practice there is information you can gather.

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Symptom Analysis:

Sign/Symptom	What does it tell us	Ideas, paths to explore
Short menstrual cycles	Menses is coming too early	
Heavy menstrual flow	Too much blood coming out	Look for main causes of bleeding: heat, qi deficiency, blood stasis
Clots in the menses	Blood stasis	Blood stasis is a branch
Pain with bleeding	Blood stasis	
Manic energy in follicular phase	Energy uncontrolled in follicular phase	Why is the yang flaring upward and agitating?
Fatigue/exhaustion	Energy not available	
w/w PMS	Wood related energy not available	
Floaters	Blood deficiency	
Cold	Cold	
Neck and shoulder tension that does not resolve	Undernourished muscles	Look at the blood and the surface

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Symptom Analysis:

Sign/Symptom	What does it tell us	Ideas, paths to explore
Insomnia	Shen affected	
w/ Waking at 3am with excessive energy	Yang not contained in night	
Loose bowels	Poor t&T	
W/W period		Look at direction of movement, what is not supporting.
Thin/flat tongue	Deficiency of yin aspect	
Crimped tongue	Wood constraine	
Pale tongue	Deficiency	Can be qi, yang or blood xu
Rectus tension	Blood deficiency	
Hypochondrium tension	Wood constraint	
Scalloped tongue	Spleen deficiency	

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Diagnostic Process

8 Principles Yin/Yang:

- Interior/Exterior: Interior
- Excess/deficiency: deficient
- Hot or cold: cold
- Wet or dry: dry

Qi, Blood Fluids:

- Qi is deficient but not severely, some stasis
- Blood is deficient and stuck
- Fluids are dry

Zang Fu

- Liver, spleen, heart

What about 6 conformations?

- Jue yin

What doesn't make sense? Are there signs or Symptoms that I can't explain? Is there anything I want to leave out

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Following the Great Sweeping Motions

Tai yang: Moves from the north to the surface consolidating into Ying and Wei

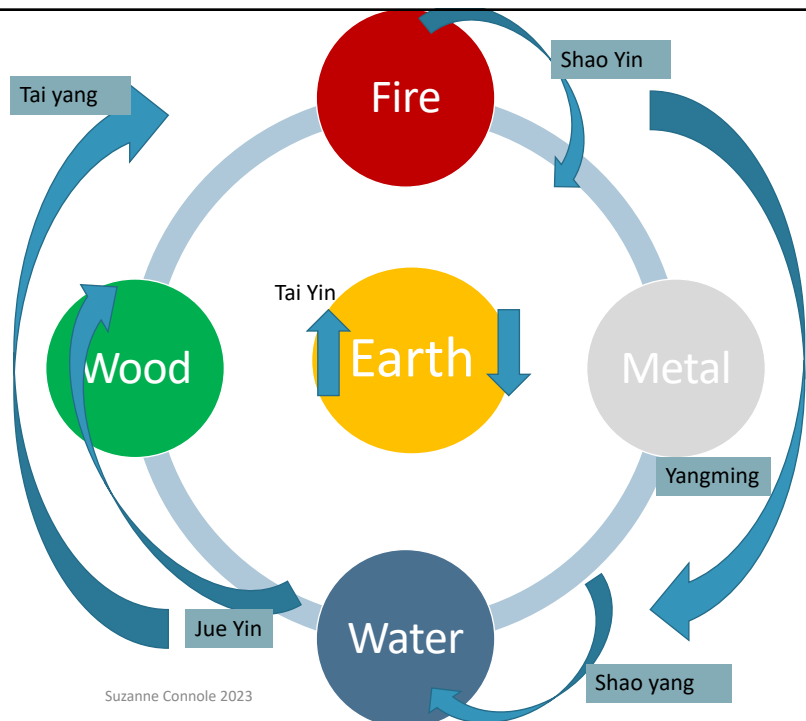
Yangming: Downward movement drawing life into the body

Shao yang: Pivots to allow fire/life to root below.

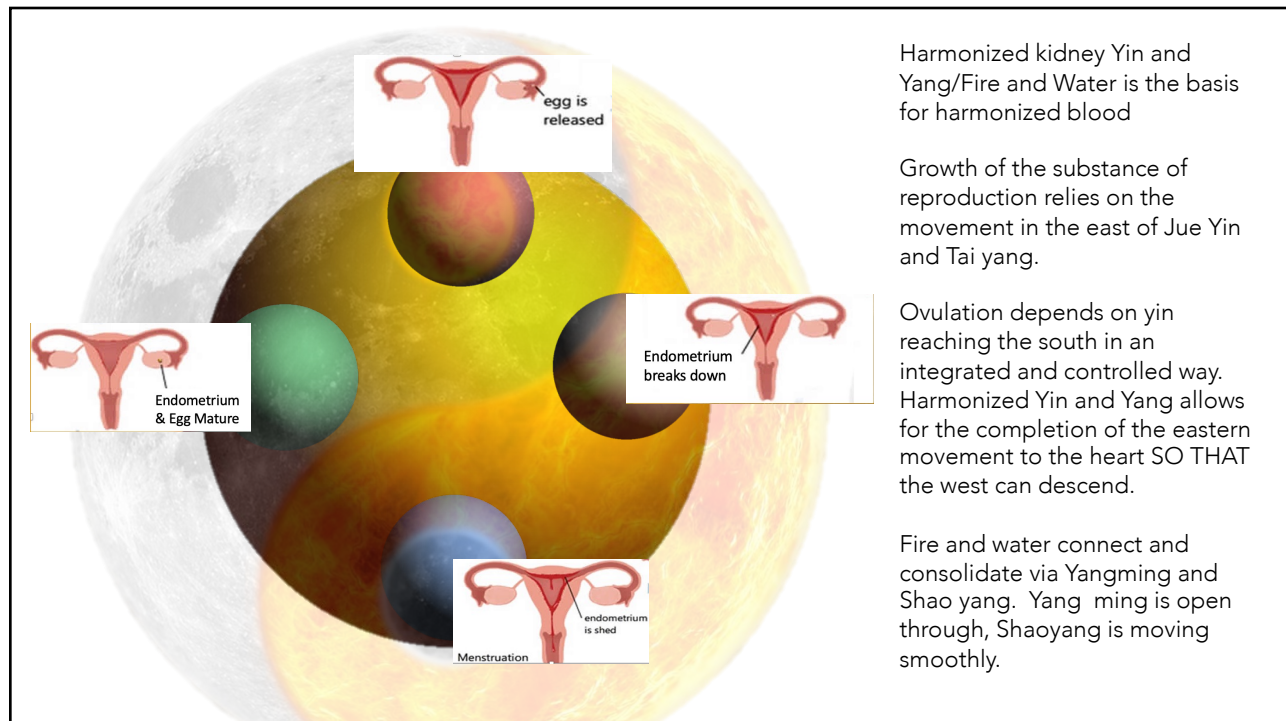
Tai yin: Moves from the center, absorbing in and upward, raining downward

Shao yin: Gathering and storing below

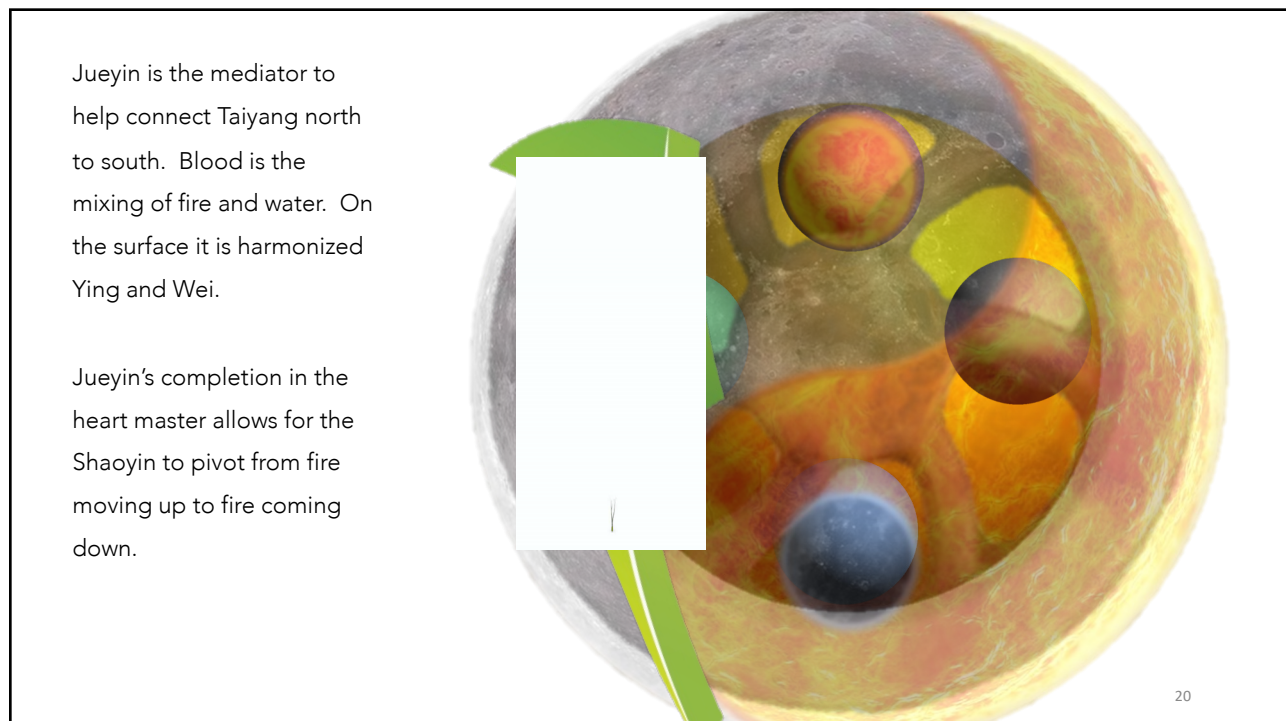
Jue yin: Coming back into life spreading upwards from below



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Cycle Review

Blood Phase/Period
Days 1-7
Follicular phase 4-14

The ability to fill depends on the
ability to be fully empty

- Period phase:
 - Yang has reached it's maximum; now it descends back inwards. Yang is hidden. This phase needs enough yin for yang to root deep and needs enough yang to begin transformation of substance.
 - Treatment Principle: promote the period and stop pain, anchor floating yang, harmonize and nourish blood, descend and open through, consolidate spleen and kidney qi
- Follicular phase:
 - This is the time of replenishment of lost nourishment. Growth of the substance of reproduction. **"Refill the cooking pot and turn on the burner"**
 - Treatment Principles: Root flaring Yang, stoke the fire under the cooking pot, Nourish Yin/Blood, Remove obstruction to all of these.

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Cycle Review

Ovulation:
Approximately Day 11-16

Luteal phase: 14-28

- Ovulation:
 - Yin reaches its zenith and transforms into Yang. Yang has gestated within yin, created substance and is ready to rise. Requires Yang qi to release and create movement. Requires smooth flow to transition.
- Luteal phase:
 - Yang increases in warmer part of cycle
 - Qi and Blood increase & Chong and Ren are full
 - Treatment principles: control yang, root yang, increase yang, maintain open pathway from heart to kidney

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Cycle Review

Pre-Menstrual Phase: Days 21-28

- Most abundant qi and blood. The potential for stagnation is greatest here before either letting go or the conditions allowing for implantation have occurred
- This phase is either the holding in via action of yang qi or it is the breakdown of the endometrium. Governed by the westward movement of Shao yin and Yang ming and then the turning of Shao yang
- Period is a release, a letting go. Qi stagnation is guided out by blood

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Gui Zhi Tang Constitutional Type

Huang Huang's Gui Zhi Constitutional Type:

- Thin body, fair skin with a fine texture, moist and firm flesh
- Abdomen is usually flat with tight musculature
- Spirited eyes
- Lips are pale red or dark
- Pulse is often floating and large. Tongue is soft and pale red or dark pale color, with a moist surface, white coat. Usually it is thin/flat
- Patient sweats easily or has spontaneous sweating, night sweats, or sweaty palms and soles
- Sensitivity to cold and wind, frequent colds, tendency to abdominal pain, palpitations, shallow or dream-filled sleep, or muscle spasms.
- Gui zhi constitution patients tend to present with Gui Zhi Tang type conditions. Think carefully when prescribing to a heavy hot person.

Kampo presentation

- Generally deficient and cold presentation
- Nobose: flushing upwards
- Rikyu: rectus tightness
- Katakori: tension and tightness at the nape and neck
- Pulsations: abdominal pulsations that reflect a counterflow upwards

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Gui Zhi Tang Constitutional Type

Gui zhi Presentation:

- Fever or a subjective feeling of fever; sweats easily even to the point of spontaneous sweating; aversion to wind, sensitivity to cold, joint pain
- A subjective feeling of upward movement or pulsations in the abdomen; palpitations, being easily startled, feeling flushed.

Gui Zhi Tang Emotional Patterns:

- Vulnerable to the exterior, people and environment, easily overstimulated
- Shyness, stage fright, social anxiety, panic attacks, tension and stress, insomnia with sweats, excessive vulnerability

In Summary: Diagnosing Gui Zhi tang patterns:

- See blood deficiency, spleen deficiency, poor quality blood, shen affected, flushing upwards that affects shen, surface, digestion, leakage,

What Does Gui Zhi Tang Do?

- Gui Zhi Tang: calms hyperactivity, bring wei into ying, calms nervous system, redirects upsurging of yang, calms heart and palpitations

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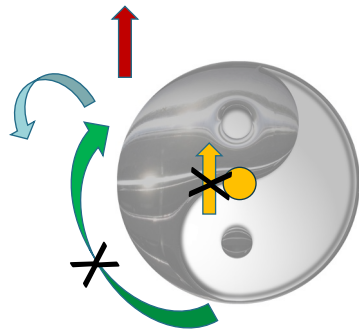
Formula: Wen Jing Tang Jia Jian

- Final diagnosis: Liver blood deficiency and stasis, spleen qi deficiency dry type . Jue Yin too fast, not connecting in the south
- Treatment principle:
 - Warm, nourish and harmonize blood, contain and harness yang, support spleen
 - Promote Jue yin movement by warming, nourishing and moistening.
- Wen Jing Tang has within it:
 - Si Wu Tang
 - Gui Zhi Tang
- What about the bleeding?

Wu zhu yu	3
Gui Zhi	9
Dang gui	12
Chuan xiong	6
Bai shao	9
Sheng di huang	9
Dang shen	9
Mu dan pi	6
Mai men dong	6
Ban xia	6
Sheng jiang	6
Bai ji li	9
Huang qi	15

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Putting it on the Wheel



Spleen is not supporting upbearing

Blood is cold, dry and stagnant, not harmonized, yin and yang separate and Jue yin cannot complete.

Diagnosis

- Liver blood deficiency
- Liver blood stasis
- Secondary: Spleen qi deficiency
- Jue Yin too fast, not connecting in the south

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Formula Discussion: Wen Jing Tang

- Wu zhu yu enters the liver and draws warmth into the blood. It is especially good when there is pain due to cold in the liver. Blood is of the liver.
- Wen Jing Tang moistens and nourishes yin starting from kidneys to the liver and then warms and infuses the blood with acrid warming herbs that move and spread Jueyin upward and outward to plug in at the south. This coming to life is harmonized Yin and Yang, Yang contained within Yin. Jue yin moves wood to fire with orderly/controlled spreading.
- Wen Jing Tang treats a cold, dry, blood deficient pattern with blood stasis.

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Results of treatment

- Patient picked up the herbs, took them for just over 1 cycle and didn't come back for 6 months!
- When asked how her periods were, she responded as if she had forgotten all about it!
- She replied she took the herbs and her cycles were back to regular timing and pain free. Her neck issues and fatigue did continue though.

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Intake: 6 months later

- The patient has now been diagnosed with a stomach ulcer via endoscopy. She experiences localized pain in the epigastrium and nausea. Her gallbladder was checked and it is fine. Pain is tight, spasmy with some burning but there is no rising up sensation. When she has pain she experiences chills on the surface of her body. Pain is ok if she completely avoids trigger foods such as citrus, coffee, tomatoes, ice cream.
- She shares that her whole life she has had hunger pains that feel better with food.
- She is overall cold. She has floaters in her eyes.
- T: less pale but still pale, fuller than before, less crimping, scallops, peeled pale sides, no SLV
- Abdomen: Overall tight and hard, pulsation above umbilicus, rectus tension, hypochondriac tension, okestu at umbilicus

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Mentor Notes and Questions

Red Herrings here: stomach ulcer!!!!

- A disease diagnosis, whether it is a Western or TEAM disease does not get you to a formula or a treatment.
- Western medicine struggles with symptoms when a disease cannot be found. TEAM is able to make sense of the disease through signs and symptoms.
- Only look at signs and symptoms that are there.
- See symptoms for what they are.

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Mentor Questions: Clarifying the Diagnosis

Details on the nausea.

- Where is it?
- What does it feel like?
- Is there a rising sensation like you are going to vomit?
- Is it full feeling, full too fast, just icky?

What makes it better and what makes it worse?

Is stress a factor?

Check for signs of phlegm?

Is it worse with cold food?

Palpate the stomach area. What do you feel?

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Symptom Analysis:

Sign/Symptom	What does it tell us	Ideas, paths to explore
Epigastric pain	Stasis in epigastrium	
w/chills on the surface		Not enough yang at surface?
w/w acidic foods	Worse with acidic foods	
b/w eating	deficiency	
Cold	cold	
Floaters	Blood deficiency	
Pale T	deficiency	
Scalloped T	Spleen qi deficiency	
Pale, peeled edges T	Blood deficiency	
Tight and hard abdomen	Dry deficiency	
Pulsations above umbilicus	Counterflow from stasis	
Rectus tension	Blood deficiency	
Hypochondrium tension	Wood constraint	
Okestu sign	Blood stasis	

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Diagnostic Process

- 8 principles

- Interior
- Deficient
- Cold
- Dry

- Qi Blood and Fluids

- Qi is stuck in the middle/epigastrium
- Qi is deficient
- Blood is dry, deficient and stuck
- Fluids are dry

- Zang fu:

- Stomach, Spleen, Liver

- 6 Conformations

- Tai yin, Jue yin

- Full diagnosis:

- Spleen qi deficiency, dry type
- Liver blood deficiency and stasis
- Qi stasis in the middle
- Tai yin, Jue yin

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Spleen Deficiency:

There is more than one type!

Spleen deficiency is spleen qi deficiency. It can be wet, dry, loose or tight, cold

- Often patients are combinations of these. But it helps to look at the whole picture when we see spleen signs as these signs can direct us to a formula group. In addition, deficiency can be complicated by excess/stagnation and heat.

Watery Type:

- Puffy tongue, absorption and fluids disorders, watery secretions, soft abdomen.
- Bai zhu and Fu ling.

Dry Type:

- Deficiency and dry with tight abdomen and musculature, emaciated/malnourished
- Gui Zhi/Bai shao/Ren shen/Da zao

Cold Type:

- Can combine with either watery or dry.
- Gan jiang or Gui zhi.

Lax Type:

- Similar to watery but with spilling out of blood/fluids/flesh.
- Huang qi.

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Formula: Modified Xiao Jian Zhong Tang

- Treatment principle: warm and relax the middle jiao to stop pain, nourish qi and blood, moisten and tonify spleen

Indicated for middle jiao cold with qi and blood deficiency. The key is deficient, tight/dry and cold

Tightness cannot bring in nourishment. We need to soften and reduce spasming so that nourishment and warmth can come in.

Flavor profile; Acrid and warm herbs to melt the earth and start T&T. Sweet and nourishing herbs to relax, soften and nourish. Sour to relax and contain the yang

Gui zhi	9
Bai shao	18
Gan cao	6
Gan jiang	6
Da zao	6
Mai ya	9
Bai dou kou	3

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Formula Unpacked: Tiny Formulas and Additions

- Gan Cao Gan jiang Tang: Gan jiang melts the middle when the earth is frozen. Gan cao moistens, nourishes earth. Together generating yin and yang, warm steam.
- Shao Yao Gan Cao Tang: This combo, with a high dose of bai shao, brings moisture into the muscles by softening, moistening and relaxing. It is for a pathological spasming and pain due to spleen and liver dryness.
- Gui Zhi Gan Cao tang: This pair is about the floating yang, the "flushing upwards" of yang. Gui zhi brings yang back into right relationship. Gan cao proves the yin moisture to hold it there.
- Mai ya: Gentle grain to nourish spleen, calm liver. Sweet and easy nourishment, like Yi tang.
- Bai dou kou: gentle, aromatic opening of the epigastrium. A good choice to avoid excessive drying of many acrid aromatics.

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Shang Han Lun Clause 100: *"When there is an urgent pain in the abdomen, first give Xiao Jian Zhong Tang."*

• Huang Huang Formula Presentation:

- "This is a deficiency-regulating formula with antispasmodic and pain relieving functions. It is suitable for treating deficiency disorders characterized by weight loss, chronic abdominal pain, and dry, hard stool"
- Chronic abdominal pain accompanied by palpitations, feverishness and chills, weakness, flat abdomen with tight muscles. Tender tongue (soft and shiny) with sparse coating.
- Weak constitution overall
- Abdomen is tight on palpation but empty underneath.
- Patient characteristics: thin build, tendency to pale/delicate skin, dry withered skin, thin hair, tendency to hunger easily but only eat a small amounts, sweet cravings, prone to irritability and agitation, tendency to fatigue, joint pain, sweating.

Xiao Jian Zhong Tang Presentation

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What about Li Zhong Wan?

- Both treat deficiency cold in the middle.
- Li Zhong Tang more directly warms and tonifies the center. Presentation is often be watery. See the presence of Bai zhu and Gan jiang.
- Xiao Jian Zhong Tang with a high dose of Bai shao, has ability to smooth and soften liver and the musculature. Presentation has more spasmodic pain. See Gui Zhi Tang constitution with exterior deficiency signs. Not watery! This is a pattern of deficiency, cold and dry.

Ren shen

Gan jiang

Bai zhu

Zhi gan cao

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Treatment Results

- Patient took the herbs and followed instructions on diet.
- Second endoscopy revealed that ulcer is completely healed! And symptoms are gone.
- Patient has booked more regularly for maintenance and continued care.



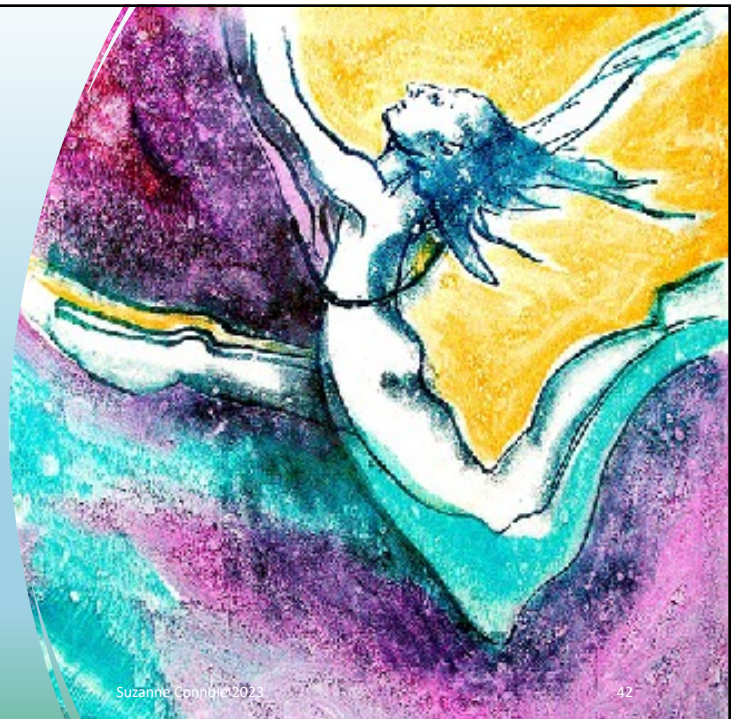
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What are the Lessons Here?

- Do not jump to conclusions based on a western disease or lab test.
- New condition but same patient with same constitution and still has the pre-existing pattern.
- Our treatment is always in the present but we can look to how she has presented in the past and what formulas and treatments helped her for guidance. In this case looking back would have informed my questioning and I would have first looked for cold and deficiency rather than looking at the disease first.
- Do use body type to inform our questioning and the pathways to check out. Do not use it without supporting it with signs and symptoms.
- It is ok to not get everything you need in one intake.
- When it turns in to a jumble in your head... Step back. Trust that there is always something that you know and always something that you can do. Back up until you see something that is clear and work from there.
- This patient needed follow-up treatment after her first formula. It can be really hard to convince patients that this is important. We have a place to educate. Here we actually see the same pattern manifesting itself in another system.

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Thank you!



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