



Working with Cancer Patients with Classical East Asian Medicine

with Sharon Weizenbaum

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, participants will be able to:

- **Describe** cancer through the lens of classical East Asian medicine as a disruption of the body's fundamental physiological movements, including opening, descending, pivoting, storing, and transforming.
- **Differentiate** the roles of the Six Conformations (*liù jīng*) and the Great Sweeping Motions in the development and progression of chronic illness, and apply these principles to clinical pattern differentiation.
- **Analyze** complex clinical cases using classical diagnostic principles to identify dysfunction of physiology and select appropriate herbal treatment strategies grounded in the *Shāng Hán Zá Bìng Lùn*.
- **Develop** treatment strategies that support physiological function in patients with cancer, including those undergoing chemotherapy or advanced illness, by restoring movement, protecting Yáng, regulating fluids, and strengthening the body's capacity for transformation and regulation.

This course begins October 2 and meets from 10 - 11:30 on the following dates:

- October 2, 16 and 30
- November 6 and 20
- December 11 and 18
- January 8

About the Course

This course presents a classical East Asian medical approach to working with cancer patients, grounded in physiology rather than disease naming.

Rather than treating “cancer” as a singular entity, we explore how illness arises from the breakdown of the body’s fundamental movements, opening, descending, pivoting, storing, and transforming. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of Yang as the motive force of life, and how its constraint, collapse, or misdirection leads to the formation of masses, accumulation, and systemic decline.

Students will learn to recognize cancer as a process involving failure of movement, transformation of fluids, and loss of proper containment, often rooted in *shàoyáng* pivot dysfunction and progressing into the *tàiyīn*, *shàoyīn*, and *juéyīn* conformations in advanced disease.

The course draws on the clinical and theoretical foundations of Zhāng Zhòngjǐng and the *Shāng Hán Zá Bìng Lùn*, applying these principles to the understanding and treatment of modern chronic illness.

Throughout, Sharon draws on extensive clinical experience, presenting detailed case studies that illustrate these principles in real time and demonstrate how classical theory translates into treatment decisions across the course of illness.

Through classical theory, clinical reasoning, and case-based learning, this course offers a clear framework for supporting patients through all stages of illness, including during and after biomedical treatments. The focus remains on restoring physiological function, warming Yang, moving blood, transforming dampness, and reestablishing the body’s capacity for regulation.

Any student registered in the White Pine Graduate Mentorship Program is automatically enrolled in this course at no additional cost. For these students, who are engaged in a comprehensive study

of classical East Asian physiology, diagnosis, herbs, and formulas, the course provides an introduction to the clinical application of these principles. For those enrolling in the cancer course independently, tuition may be applied in full toward the Graduate Mentorship Program.

Class 1 — The Knowing How: Physiology as the Root

This opening class establishes the foundation of the course: the body is governed by an inherent intelligence that maintains movement, timing, and regulation. *Drawing from the Líng Shū*, we examine how health depends on the continuous circulation of the six Great Sweeping Motions, in accordance with heaven and earth. Disease is introduced as a loss of this coordinated movement, setting the stage for understanding cancer as a failure of physiology rather than an isolated pathology. Treatment is directed towards restoring the function of these motions.

Class 2 — The Great Sweeping Motions, Yin, Yang, and the Five Phases within the Promotion of Life

Here we explore the large-scale Great Sweeping Motions that govern life, generation, transformation, breakdown, and storage, as expressed through Yin and Yang and the Five Phases. Students learn to see physiology as a dynamic process unfolding over time. Cancer is framed as a disruption of these movements, where timing is lost and transformation becomes impaired, and aberrations appear.

Class 3 — Tàiáng Opening and Tracy's Case

This class focuses on the role of *tàiáng* in opening and regulating the surface, allowing the movement of qì and fluids to flow outward and through. When *tàiáng* fails to open, the body loses its ability to properly circulate and release, leading to accumulation and internal constraint. Students will explore how this failure contributes to the development of more complex pathology.

Through the detailed presentation of Tracy's case, Sharon demonstrates how restoring *tàiáng* opening can reestablish movement, relieve constraint, and shift the course of illness. The case illustrates how classical principles are applied in practice, emphasizing the importance of supporting physiological function rather than directly attacking disease.

Class 4 — Yángmíng Blockage-Stan, and Shàoyáng Pivot-Ted

This class focuses on *yángmíng* as the pathway of descent, examining how blockage in *yángmíng* leads to the accumulation of great heat and the formation of mass, particularly in the chest. When descent fails, heat cannot be conducted downward and instead binds, condenses, and begins to take form.

Through Stan's case, students explore how obstruction in *yángmíng* gives rise to dryness, internal binding, and the development of heat-driven accumulation. This illustrates how failure of descent leads directly to the formation of pathological mass.

The class then turns to *shàoyáng* through a new case, Ted, focusing on the function of the pivot. Here the emphasis is on how *shàoyáng* governs the ability of qì, heat, and fluids to change direction and continue their movement. When the pivot fails, movement loses its coordination, and heat and fluids become constrained, impairing transformation and circulation.

Class 5 — Shaoyang Pivot, Frank, Dispersion Thirst, and the Yin Great Sweeping Motions

This class completes the study of *shàoyáng*, focusing on the consequences of pivot dysfunction through the case of Frank. When the pivot fails, qì, heat, and fluids lose their capacity to change direction and continue their movement, leading to disorganization of distribution and transformation.

Particular attention is given to dispersion thirst, in which fluids are not properly conveyed and instead become depleted in some areas while accumulating or stagnating in others. This reflects a deeper failure of coordination within the system, where movement no longer supports nourishment.

Through Frank's case, students see how prolonged dysfunction of *shàoyáng* combined with dispersion thirst leads to increasing imbalance and depletion.

The class then introduces the Yin Great Sweeping Motions, shifting the focus from disorders of movement into disorders of storage, depletion, and loss of physiological integrity.

Class 6 — Tàiyīn and the Central Axis: Marianne and Michael, and Integrating Herbal Treatment with Chemotherapy

This class introduces *tàiyīn* and the central axis, focusing on the role of the middle in transformation, nourishment, and the generation of qì and fluids. When the central axis is

weakened, the body loses its capacity to properly transform and distribute, leading to dampness, depletion, and loss of coherence in physiological function.

Through the cases of Marianne and Michael, students explore how dysfunction of *tàiyīn* manifests in the context of cancer, particularly in patients undergoing chemotherapy. Emphasis is placed on how damage to the middle affects appetite, digestion, fluid metabolism, and the body's ability to recover.

The class also addresses how to integrate herbal treatment with the side effects of chemotherapy, focusing on supporting the central axis, protecting qì and fluids, and maintaining the patient's capacity for transformation without further burdening the system.

Class 7 — Shào Yīn, Kate, and the Beginning of Jué Yīn with Dave

This class focuses on *shàoyīn* through the case of Kate, examining its role as the axis of life and death and the critical importance of preserving Yáng in advanced illness. When *shàoyīn* is weakened, the body loses its capacity to sustain warmth, movement, and coherence, and the trajectory of disease deepens.

Through Kate's case, students explore how *shàoyīn* dysfunction manifests clinically, and how treatment must prioritize the protection and restoration of Yáng while maintaining circulation of qì and blood.

The class then introduces the beginning of *juéyīn* through the case of Dave, exploring how further breakdown in physiological regulation leads to increasing disorganization of movement, blood,

and connection. This marks a deeper stage of pathology, where the integrity of the system is compromised and the coordination of the whole becomes more difficult to maintain.

Class 8 — Jué Yīn Completion: Blood and Fluids, Dave, and Working with Dying Patients

This class completes the study of *juéyīn*, focusing on the relationship between blood and fluids as seen in Dave's case and in cases from Chinese physicians translated by Sharon. At this stage, the coordination between blood, fluids, and qì is profoundly disrupted, and the integrity of the system is increasingly difficult to maintain.

Through these cases, students explore how the separation and mismanagement of blood and fluids leads to complex presentations of depletion, stagnation, and accumulation. Particular attention is given to how treatment can support connection and coherence within the system, even as overall vitality declines.

These cases also demonstrate how herbal treatment, when applied according to classical principles, can at times have remarkable and profound effects, even in advanced stages of illness.

The class concludes with a discussion of working with dying patients, emphasizing presence, clarity of intention, and the role of treatment in supporting comfort, dignity, and the remaining movement of life.