

Role of Chinese Medicine in the United States

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I. Preamble

I am going to talk about a medicine that is gentle, effective humanistic medicine, proven over a long period of time, with all of the tools for prevention from the beginning of the disease process, capable of treating complex chronic disease, and capable of doing it cheaply

II. Chinese Medicine Treats More than Pain

Chinese medicine is a complete internal medicine, one that has treated billions of people over thousands of years for every disease known to mankind. Pain is about ninety-five percent of what is treated in the US, but only five percent of the medicine in China. Ninety-five percent of treatments traditionally fall into the purview of 'internal medicine'.

For example:

Mr. R. was a 45 yr. old college professor who was accompanied by his wife. His complaint was long-standing knee and low back pain that interfered with his ability to engage in his favorite exercise, tennis. He had been treated unsuccessfully by every relevant form of biomedicine and alternative medicine, including acupuncture. He denied any past physical trauma or emotional shock.

Signs:

Pulse: When I took his pulse I was most impressed by his Left Distal Position that was Flat and a little Slippery His Rate was Slow. He showed no signs of physical trauma [very Tight] or sudden heart shock [Rough Vibration] on the pulse and particularly the Proximal Positions [Kidneys] were not remarkable.

Tongue: Slightly pale; some contraction and redness at the tip. No purple blister

Eyes: Under lower eyelids, slightly pale and no horizontal line.

Face and Hands: Face slightly more red than hands

Structure: No Long Leg Syndrome or subluxations.

Formulation

The Flat quality at the Left Distal Position indicates that the Qi [and possibly blood], of the Heart is stagnant. The contraction and redness at the tip of the tongue supports this impression. The Slipperiness is a sign of Phlegm Misting the Orifices, a common finding in this condition indicating diminished awareness.

Since the Proximal Positions [Kidneys] were relatively sound and the Lungs not Flat, the event that caused the 'Heart Closed' condition did not occur at or before birth. However, the Flat quality indicates that at the time of insult to the

heart Mr. R.'s energy was low, usually a finding in growing children up to the age of 14-18, when all the qi is being used for maturation.

Questioning regarding a possible emotional shock during childhood revealed, when reminded by his wife, that Mr. R's mother died when he was five years old. At that age a child is unable to cope emotionally with such an emotional trauma and the feelings of loss and abandonment are repressed which appears as the Flat quality at the Heart positions. Qi is subsequently relatively unable to easily enter the heart. [At a later age when Qi is stable the quality would have been Inflated.]

The stagnant heart Qi diminishes the peripheral circulation necessary to heal his damaged knee.

Management: Primarily to open the heart and renew peripheral circulation of qi and blood and open the heart orifices [phlegm], related to awareness and supplement heart qi. Acupuncture and herbs for this purpose alone led to the complete relief of his complaint within three weeks.

In this instance our concern was the relationship between an emotionally traumatic event that occurred when he was a child, his heart and circulation and their relationship to the healing of trauma to his knee. Without taking into account all of these variable no solution was possible.

III. Methodology of Study: Is Chinese Medicine Scientific or Proto-science?

According to the Oxford Twentieth Century Dictionary, science is defined as "knowledge most severely tested, coordinated and systematized, especially regarding those wide generalizations called the laws of nature".

Chinese Medicine is a pragmatic discipline that meets that definition having developed through 'trial and error' and 'trial and success' for at least three thousand years. The knowledge has been exhaustively tested, coordinated and systematized and theorized into principles known as 'the laws of nature'.

Chinese medicine is not statistically verifiable in the Western sense. Western science, including biomedicine, eliminates variables and studies one vector or etiology at a time. The standard deviation eliminates everything that could have happened by chance, and in the West anything that could have happened by chance is not accepted as knowledge. On the other hand, Chinese medicine functions on the relationship between etiologies and the organs and relationships between the organs themselves.

According to the founder of standard deviation and statistical significance, who spoke to my medical school class in 1949, his introduction of these concepts caused the loss of more knowledge because information could have happened by chance than any gains from its use. He expressed deep regret about his life's work

that he said he wished he could undo what has now become the foundation of biomedical science.

Chinese medicine has not eliminated knowledge that might be chance occurrences. It eliminated only knowledge that did not over time prove clinically useful.

IV. Focus of Study

We have briefly discussed the methodology of Chinese medicine as a developing body of knowledge. Our next relevant is question 'what' did the Chinese study.

While they were aware of anatomy in the Western sense, and performed surgery, all Orientals were more concerned with what makes these anatomical structures, organs, muscles etc. alive than with describing them in detail.

They studied 'life' and called the essential ingredient of life Qi. They observed that movement was intrinsic to life, something that impressed me first during my Internship when I had the misfortune of pronouncing hundreds of people dead.

The larger picture was that everything in the universe that moves is subject to the same force as the Qi that breathes life into a cadaver and makes it alive. The Chinese and other Orientals focused their attention on how Qi is organized in people, animals and the universe, beginning with the concepts of Yin/Yang, and going much further.

V. Diagnostic Systems for the Observation and Assessment of Qi

From these observations came a system of diagnosing disorders of Qi in individuals and an appreciation of the pathways of Qi in living animals that made it possible to intervene and correct these disorders. We call this acupuncture. Furthermore they learned that all living substances contain the properties of Qi associated with the organization mentioned above so that these could also be used to correct the distortions of Qi that led to disease.

Diagnosis depended entirely upon the senses and intelligence of an individual and was categorized as 'Asking, Looking, Listening and Touching'. Most important according to the Ling Shu of the Nei Qing is touching, especially the accessing the pulse, and in particular, the radial pulse.

These diagnostic methods make it possible to distinguish one person from another in what I call the individual 'terrain'. In the hands of a skilled diagnostician we have a complete picture of a person so that we can treat the same disease differently according to individual differences. Two people diagnosed biomedically with arthritis or fibromyalgia might be treated quite differently with herbs or acupuncture depending on the 'individual terrain'. We treat people, not disease.

V. The Patient-Doctor Relationship

Acupuncturists should be ideally trained to diagnosis through our senses bringing to bear all of our being in contact with the patient. The medium with which we work is Qi, the life force, or moving energy of the universe that is precisely the same in the patient as in the practitioner. The relationship between the patient and the practitioner is therefore less mechanical, alienating and impersonal, and more nourishing to both.

Though Oriental medicine at different times in its history has described thousands of disease states, the diagnostic process ends with the integral individual person. The illness is not separated from the person as a unit of disease. The illness is the person who has disease signs and symptoms. The polarities of Yin and Yang are diffused in varying combinations that is the person who defines and is defined by a unique combination of constitution and experience. The "healer" identifies the disharmony, prescribes to undo the damage, then points the way to prevention of future disharmony. The "healed" is responsible for his/her own harmony, while the unifying energy of healer and healed intermingle in ineffable exchanges to move in that direction.

Rarely will a patient feel that the doctor is relating mechanically to the patient as an assortment of chemistries or images. TLC [tender loving care] is inherent, not a superficial prescription on the patient's chart.

We have a system in which healer and healed are one, mind, body, and spirit are a unity, sickness is only a variation of health, and a signal of the personal violation of a person's own nature primarily by themselves. Man, as I have said elsewhere, is the only animal that has the freedom, the self-determination to defy his own nature.

VI. A Prognostic- Preventive Medicine

Using the diagnostic modalities listed above for assessing Qi, especially the pulse, we have a clear baseline of normality, Often our diagnostic findings are far ahead of symptoms, sometimes years. An orderly sequence of pulse findings and the prediction of disease [disharmony] is spelled out in my book, `Chinese Pulse Diagnosis: A Contemporary Approach". Therefore, especially a skilled pulse diagnostician has in his hands [literally] the only true preventive medicine in the world.

VII. Lifestyle

The Chinese diagnostic system gives us objective signs about the lifestyle of a patient that leads to disease. For example, qualities in the Liver and Heart on the pulse can distinguish between a person who is enervated because they work too

much and sleeps too little, take recreational drugs; on the Kidney pulse because they were born weak or have inappropriate sex; or on the Pancreas [Spleen] pulse because they eat irregularly, too fast, too much, or poor quality.

Most people come in order for us to help them continue to abuse themselves without paying the consequences. Lifestyle is important in this medicine because despite our best efforts, all our good work can be undone with one puff of marijuana, one night out on the town and figuratively, one snap of the finger. We have the diagnostic tools to detect what people do not often wish to reveal and which is the key to recovery or deterioration. The doctor can undo the abuses of the past, the future is in the hands of the patient. It is just as, or even more important for the practitioner to focus on the latter as the former.

VII. Treatment

Treatment involves a variety of modalities including the following. They are to be used concomitantly as part of the management of a person's treatment according to an individual's needs.

Acupuncture is the placement of needles in one or more of 365 points along fourteen channels of Qi and in special extra points that have been associated with special actions with regard to the regulation of Qi. Combinations of acupuncture points arrived at through long experience are identified with the treatment of particular symptoms and diseases. The needles move and balance qi and can enhance it using certain techniques.

Moxibustion is the use of a special preparation of the herb mugwort, burned on the needles or directly on the skin [usually with insulators]. Moxa has the unique ability to build Qi as well as move it and is used to strengthen the immune system. Used on some points it can also detoxify the blood.

Herbal medicine is particularly effective in the treatment of a weakened body condition as seen in the chronically ill, constitutionally compromised or elderly. However, herbs can also be very effective for shortening the course of acute infectious disease of viral and bacterial origin and minimizing long-term repercussions. This may become an increasingly important use of herbs amidst the widespread resistance to antibiotics that is developing to bacterial pathogens. Herbal medicine can rectify the conditions within a patient's body that provide the opportunity for the proliferation of disease causing entities.

Herbal formulas continue to be created that provide remarkable therapeutic benefit to patients with autoimmune disorders, hypertension, high cholesterol, exposure to toxic chemical substances, diabetes, and hepatitis, among many other chronic conditions. A significant advantage to the patient of herbal medicine is the application of a therapy on a daily basis that is generally not available with acupuncture.

Chinese Massage, called Tui Na, includes pinching, rolling and pressing the acupuncture points principally on the back. It is used to stimulate the circulation of the Qi and Blood and reinforce the Qi and Blood of the organs which are accessed on the back along the channels of acupuncture points that traverse the back. These points directly affect all of the organs.

Exercise includes Qi Gong and Tai qi. There are many forms of each type of exercise which strengthen the inner Qi and Blood, Yin and Yang of the organs and reconstitute the stored energy that is depleted through everyday wear and tear and abuse such as overwork and tension. The Qi Gong can be individually designed to relieve individual ailments and strengthen physiological vulnerabilities. A strong emphasis is placed on breathing.

Foods in Chinese medicine are considered to be herbs and diet is designed to enhance the person's physiology according to the same principles that govern the herbal medicine. If a person is Yang deficient and cold one might prescribe a warming food such as lamb, or if the person is too hot, a cooling food such as pork.

Meditation is an important aspect of Chinese medicine usually involving the breath to achieve inner tranquility and therefore the relief of tension that is so important to health. A further purpose is to increase awareness and be more present in the world in the moment which is essential to relieving the mind of constant rehearsal that we call worry that is so draining to our inner strength.

VIII. Gentle

Chinese medicine in all of its aspects is gentle. There are few side-effects and according to a survey of the medicine in China and the US some years ago, for which I do not have the citation, there were no deaths from Chinese medicine. Chinese medicine is the embodiment of the Hippocratic Oath's dictum to 'do no harm'. This is in sharp contrast to the side effects and adverse warnings accompanying every allopathic medication. The Journal of the American Medical Association attributed about 230000 annual iatrogenic deaths in the USA to Allopathic medicine.ⁱ

Herbal formulas are balanced so that no one ingredient can exercise a dominating effect. The problems encountered in our time come from the ill advised use of a single herb, such as ephedra, over a long time. In other situations single herbs have been implicated in side-effects when in addition to being used as singles outside of a formula, the dosages have been dangerously high. Of course there are poisonous plants in nature that are known to cause serious illness and death. These do not find their way into Chinese herbal medicine except under highly controlled circumstances.

Needles in the hands of a trained Chinese medical practitioner rarely cause pain or damage. Acupuncture medical boards supervise licensed practitioners in almost every state. Morbidity is negligible and mortality unknown.

IX Mental-Emotional

Diagnostically we have the tools to assess many aspects of mental-emotional problems with pulse diagnosis. There is relatively precise correspondence between emotions and organ dysfunction rendering Chinese medicine a functional psychosomatic medicine. There is no distinction between body and mind and no disparaging concept such 'super-tentorial', when the medicine cannot explain a symptom. Treatment corresponds to the diagnosis in Chinese medical terms as the case cited above illustrates. A buried emotional problem that we accessed through the pulse manifested as a diminished circulation that interfered with healing. Using Chinese medical concepts we treat individuals rather than diseases. No two people with any mental or emotional problem has the same physiology according to Chinese medicine and therefore must be treated differently.

Alienation is the Greek word for insanity. A model of reality that encourages separation, delineation, is intolerant of paradox, defines logic as truth, reduces and analyzes rather than integrates and synthesizes, encourages alienation. When the perception of truth depends on the obsession with objectivity in which the observer and the observed are rigidly separated, we have a condition that engenders alienation.

The person who presents himself to this model is reduced to a series of units that are statistically organized by machines into diseases. Little energy is expended to bring the person and his/her life together with this "disease" unit. Alienation of the signal from the signaler is inevitable in this context.

Is it any wonder, therefore, that humanistic psychology, whose world work is the healing of the alienation of insanity, would find the model I have just described a distinctly uncomfortable fit? And is it any wonder that psychology, which is so preoccupied with the devastation wreaked by this pervasive alienation, inside and out, might find the former model, the Oriental, more comfortable and more productive in terms of mutual goals and strategies in the service of unity?

A healing psychology is, by definition, one that serves to overcome alienation. This implies the need for a model which is itself an expression of, and strives for, unity and dynamic harmony; one where the healer searches beneath the signal for the person rather than a disjointed "disease"; one in which the healer is in touch with and trusts his informed intuition within the context of a need for "verification" and available knowledge; one in which the healer is a teacher who is ceaselessly learning to be healed by the recipients of his healing; one in which the healer's being and energy is available to the healed to face and live through the

worst; one in which precise knowledge and technology do not obviate the spirit; one where correspondences between physical and mental are clearly an integral manifestation of the model susceptible to a rational system of intervention; one in which harmony and not struggle is the *modus vivendi*.

Psychology is clearly not at home in the Western model of reality and medicine. It is, on the other hand, in need of a partnership with a medical model that supports its basic tenets. The Oriental model makes available a workable somato-psychic framework and potentially answers all of the needs summarized above.

While Western psychology requires a congruous medical model in which to flourish and be complete, so the Chinese medical model has needed a psychology in which to complete itself. This model, which I have found to be so compatible and useful to Western psychology, will benefit in kind from the interchange made possible in the West since this model has been deliberately cut off from its psychological and spiritual roots for centuries in China.

X. Cost

It is no mystery that the cost of biomedicine is astronomical, increasing and eliminates a significant segment of the US population from medical care and a very large part of what we call the Third World. The UN and World Health Organization recognized this almost from the beginning and developed free programs sending educated people from Third World countries to China to study Chinese medicine. I attended one of these courses in 1981.

In 1992 I was invited to be the keynote speaker at a conference in Japan called by the Japanese government to explore alternative health care methodologies. Indigenous practitioners were invited from all over the world to describe their medical practices, even as far as the Sami Lapland people. The object was to find cheaper methods of treating the Japanese people and especially to prevent illness. I was informed at that conference that the Mexican government had done something similar.

With Chinese Medicine there is no expensive technological procedure or instrument. The senses, training, experience and intelligence of the practitioner are the diagnostic tool. The costs are only the fees of the practitioner and the cost of the herbs, usually modest compared to biomedicine.

XI. The Role in US Health Care

There is reason to believe that as Chinese medicine draws closer to biomedicine in the West a struggle for power will occur, with the inevitable reductionism of Chinese medicine. This is already well under way, reducing

Chinese medicine to a treatment modality of biomedicine stripped of all its subtlety, its diagnostic acumen and its potential as a potent preventive instrument.

Intoxication with being accepted by biomedicine has already destroyed other valuable healing professions including Osteopathy and the Chiropractic. Now it is the acupuncturists' turn. Without Chinese diagnostics acupuncturists become technicians serving biomedicine. If one thinks otherwise one needs to learn about the nature of power. The great swallow the weak.

In a recent copy of *Acupuncture Today* an article on the inclusion of alternative care in an Israeli hospital states, "Complementary medicine techniques add therapeutic tools to the doctor's arsenal". Research projects are springing up in many hospitals similar to the one I know about at a major Eastern medical center where they are treating asthma with a simple protocol. One treatment for all; is this Chinese medicine?

Why should society care if Chinese medical practitioners become biomedical technicians? What is special about Chinese medicine? I have already said that Chinese medicine with its sophisticated diagnostic system treats people, not diseases. I get increasing requests for protocols for all kinds of medical conditions. My answer in reply to a recent request of a protocol for PTSD, [Post Traumatic Syndrome Disorder], for the NIH is: "Since I have long since learned to treat people and not diseases, I have abandoned treatment protocols, and instead I teach diagnostic skills that enable one to do just that. There are no two PTSDs that are the same."

Chinese medicine is concerned with relationships, with connecting the variables, not with reducing people and life to the invariable. This is a human field of interaction, where we accept the paradoxes and accept that life and healing is not simple but is always a mystery involving the inter-penetration of the field forces of the healer with the healed.

One cannot isolate the single factor that makes for illness or for healing, that single magic bullet of etiology and cure with which biomedicine is preoccupied. In the blind quest for acceptance by society acupuncture will surrender and sacrifice the mystery that makes healers for the approval of a medicine that in itself is the offspring of the very forces that create disease.

Let the two medicines live side by side, each serving their best function. If acupuncturists go forth into allopathic hospitals, I hope that practitioners of Chinese medicine will remember whom they are and why they are there. Chinese medicine is the alternative that is sought by the multitudes. That alternative is possible only if Chinese medicine is faithful to and skilled in the diagnostics that allows it to treat people and not diseases, people and not patterns.

I hope that the general public will be cognizant of this public health dilemma and be sufficiently informed to make the right choices for themselves and for society in general.

XII. Summary

We have described a gentle effective humanistic medicine, proven over a long period of time with all the tools for prevention from the beginning of the disease process. It is capable of treating complex chronic disease as well as acute disease and it does all of this relatively cheaply. Through its exquisite diagnostic systems, especially the pulse, Chinese medicine accesses and treats individuals, not diseases.

Bibliography

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ⁱ JAMA 284:483-485