

FLEAS, PONIES, DOCTORS, ANGELS

*'A great healer does not work alone; a great angel is always by her side.'*¹

DIANA

Diana's shoulders hunched protectively, cradling her chest. Although her eyes met mine, it seemed they were peering through an invisible wall of armor. Pale ivory cheeks were softened by a thin rose blush. Encircling her eyes was the color of ashen snow. Undressed, Diana's 47-year-old body was well-proportioned with appropriate amounts of flesh hugging her bones, yet it hung without tenacity, somewhat spongy to the touch.

In April, 5 months before her acupuncture visit in October, Diana had been bitten by a flea. Diana's internist surmised that this was the cause of her irritatingly itchy allergic red rash which covered her arms, legs, and back. At that time, he prescribed a 10-day course of steroids which made the rash all but disappear. When Diana had finished the medication, however, the rash resumed, twice as virulent as before. Although Diana had continued to use antihistamines and medicated lotions, the rash had persisted and now covered her arms, legs, back, and chest. Exasperated, Diana complained:

The antihistamines leave me feeling drained and hung over. I have become so used to itching that I behave like a chimpanzee and, without thinking, reach up under my sweater to scratch, even when I'm in a business meeting. I'm at my wits end - my doctor said the rash is chronic and simply renewed my prescription for antihistamines.

In addition to the rash, Diana also complained of right hip pain (aggravated by weekly horseback riding), left elbow tendonitis (exacerbated by long hours on the computer), and weakness with limited range of motion in her right wrist (which she had fractured the year before). Each of these, together with mood swings, was stirred up by PMS.

When asked if there was anything else I should know, Diana said her father drank too much and her mother had been depressed and emotionally neglected. Diana was also a single parent of a 10-year-old daughter, and had been in psychotherapy for the previous 5 years.

SUMMARY OF CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS

- Itchy red rash on arms, legs, and back, worse premenstrually
- Pain and stiffness in right hip and left elbow
- Recurring hives
- Premenstrual mood swings
- Irregular, painful periods with premenstrual mood swings since birth of daughter 10 years previously
- Scanty menstrual flow since menarche
- Hot flushes in last year
- Head and pubic hair turning gray
- Skin losing tone, smoothness, elasticity
- Muscles flaccid, tender
- Tension, muscle cramps, pain in neck and shoulders
- Easy chilling and mottling of limbs
- Chronic scoliosis
- Poor skin healing
- Dry skin and hair
- Sore, hardened breasts
- Palpitations and restlessness with upset or fatigue
- Occasional vertigo
- Sensitive to wind, heat, noise
- Oral herpes triggered by exposure to sunshine
- Frequent nausea and intestinal wind
- Difficulty waking, morning fatigue
- Easily irritated, sensitive to insult, pain
- Sensitive, easily moved emotionally
- Easily startled and frightened
- Disconcerted by major or sudden change
- Morbid thoughts about dying at an early age
- Depression accompanied by melancholy, rage, despair
- Often worried and anxious
- Awkward when expressing feelings
- Feelings of social inadequacy, paucity of friends
- Pulses: weak, thin and tight
- Tongue: body pale, scalloped edges, white fur

TREATMENT

Diana described her experience of the first acupuncture treatment as follows:

I lay down on a purple-covered table, my head resting on a small red pillow, with Eastern melodies softly filling the room. The needles went in with a faint prick, each one followed by a different sensation. One felt like a dull ache, rippling out from deep under my skin, like a pebble thrown into a pond, with a power that made me catch my breath. Another felt as if the part of my body surrounding the needle had been dipped in cold water, leaving a tingling sensation close to the surface. Lying there I felt myself turning inward, losing interest in my surroundings and instead becoming highly conscious of my thoughts, feelings, and body.

For me, Diana's treatment was interrupted by Jill, a patient in an adjoining room, who cried out suddenly for help. Having suffered as a child, Jill was unexpectedly remembering being held upside down, her head dunked repeatedly in the bathtub. She was scared to revisit this experience alone so, placing my hand on Jill's abdomen, I listened.

Returning to Diana I apologized for leaving suddenly, and explained that sometimes acupuncture dislodged buried memories and feelings, and that such an event had just occurred in the room next door.

On the next visit, Diana said, 'I was so grateful to learn that it's natural for acupuncture to precipitate a tumult of emotions. Nobody ever mentioned that to me and it has helped me account for my own response to treatment'.

Diana reported that she liked the herbal extract I had prescribed to help her skin and that drinking two squirts from the dropper, diluted in hot water; 5 times a day had definitely stopped her itching. Usually before her periods the rash got worse, but this time, it had improved. Diana also related that immediately after her initial treatment she had felt depressed, spacey, and off-centre, although a week later, on her second visit, she was feeling more like herself. Diana's journal entry after the first treatment reads:

It is as if I have gone inside myself, closed the door, and can't come out. I simply cannot focus on the world outside. I keep reliving old memories, becoming entirely caught up in their emotions. This has not been without cost. This afternoon at the stables, my horse reared up as I was bridling him and crushed me against the fence. Instead of calming him and freeing myself, I found myself screaming, 'Help me, won't somebody help me?' which is exactly what my mother cried out when the nurses turned her over, shortly before she died, because the movement was hurting her so much. In my mother's cry I heard all the resentment and betrayed hope of a lifetime. And in my cry, to my huge embarrassment, I heard the same. I was a pile of raw emotion, awed that after 5 years of therapy, there were still so many demons on the loose. Until now, however, I have rarely talked about my mother's death which was more than 20 years ago, when I was 23.

After the second treatment, Diana reported impressive relief from her rash, saying:

If I take the herbs, the itching seems to stop, although I still feel it lurking beneath the surface. My hip is extraordinary - I rode without pain or the usual hour of limping after dismounting. My chest, too, feels better although my shoulder hurts, with pain traveling to my head.

Diana wrote about another aspect of her experience in her journal, saying:

What is really remarkable to me is how much my life has changed since I've begun acupuncture. Frankly, I don't understand my sometimes overwhelming psychological reactions to this treatment. In 5 years of therapy I've never been so turned inside-out. The last session left me with a wonderful sense of wholeness within myself and a rather mystical separateness from the world around me - as if I'm a genie and can appear and vanish at will. At the same time, I feel friendly and tolerant toward co-workers and am full of good intentions about eating right, working sensible hours, and offering my gifts to the world. For years I had trouble washing the dishes right after supper. I was too tired and I could not see the point. Now I realize that I was probably too depressed. I think I have been depressed for longer than I like to admit, probably since my mother's death, and there is nothing like depression to sap energy. Now, I'm playing the Marriage of Figaro, singing as I wash away ... Ever since I can remember I have been shy, like my mother, and dreaded going to parties. I used to pluck up all my courage just to walk through the door. Then, tonight I was invited to a gathering and not only did I enjoy it, I looked forward to it all day. I feel as if a new person has come and lodged inside me, someone not shy at all.

In the middle of December, 6 weeks after beginning treatment, Diana was told by her gynecologist that he had found abnormal cells on her pap smear. Her mother had died of cervical cancer, so this threw Diana into a panic. In her diary, Diana wrote:

I haven't been to work for 3 days. One thing seems clear - I don't want to die. When I went for my acupuncture treatment today, Harriet told me in no uncertain terms that I am not my mother; that I can take a different path. I liked the idea, although the anguish I felt as I lay there full of needles was almost too much to bear. Both my mother and father died terrified of death, isolated in their fear while everyone around them pretended they were going to get well. Today I stared at the devil and the devil blinked. I believe I can live longer than my mother.

Later it was established that the abnormal cells were neither problematic nor pathological. Two months after receiving weekly acupuncture and drinking herbal extracts daily, Diana said her rash was gone, her wrist was better, and her hip and elbow were no longer in pain. She also said, as the effect of acupuncture wore off, that:

I find myself at war between my three separate parts - my sense of wholeness disintegrated. On Monday my mind took over and I stayed up all night writing, skipping dinner and breakfast. On Tuesday my body demanded attention, craving dinner at a good Thai restaurant and 15 hours of sleep. On Wednesday the day went by and I did not write at all - instead I wrestled with my spiritual demons, perched by my ear whispering to me that I had no talent. I was acutely aware that my mother, who dropped out of nursing school, never found her vocation before she died. Was I afraid to succeed where she had failed? Despite this turmoil, I am grateful for the new vigor and awareness that comes with it.

After 30 acupuncture visits and a year of drinking herbs, Diana reflected:

My physical ailments are no more, but even more importantly, I am no longer the person I was a year ago. Now I have the energy to get through each day, weathering ups and downs more cheerfully, and surprisingly, I am much more outgoing. It seems clear to me that more than infected fleas were the culprits. I believe many problems were the result of a long overdue conversation between my body, mind, and soul - the result of which was a mutiny. They had to get my attention somehow (and having succeeded, they have been warring like jealous siblings ever since). Or was it my mother, soul to soul, so to speak, who put them up to it?

POINTS PRESCRIPTION

LU7 lieque or 'broken sequence' is also known as tongxuan or 'child mystery'. It is a luo point that activates the Conception Vessel (ren mai). Sedation of this point loosens the Lung qi, allowing the chest to open and the pectoral or zong qi to disperse and descend. Combined with P6 neiguan, the diaphragm relaxes, permitting natural peristalsis and respiration to resume. The name 'child mystery' may suggest that this point helps one gain access to early, forgotten, or hidden information.

P6 neiguan or 'inner pass' is a luo point that activates the Penetrating Vessel (yin wei mai). Sedation aids the relaxation of the chest, diaphragm, esophagus and stomach. This point calms the Mind, and promotes harmony between the Heart and Spleen by regulating the qi of the Upper and Middle Burners. It restores the buffer between the shen and the body and between the shen and the external world. The combination of P6 neiguan with LU7 lieque also harmonizes the relationship between the shen and the po, the psychic aspects of Fire and Metal.

L111 quchi or 'pool at the bend', also known as shangsanli or 'upper three mile', is an Earth point and a helpful local point for the elbow. When combined with ST36 zusanli, it helps tonify qi and Blood by promoting the digestive and eliminative functions of the Stomach and Intestines. Tonifying the Earth points on these two channels enhances the relationship between Earth (Spleen) and Metal (Lung). In addition, L111 quchi is one of the Thirteen Ghost Points and is named guichen or 'ghost minister'. The ghost points have the purported ability to expel either obstinate negative influences that have penetrated the individual from the outside world, or persistent negative thoughts that have formed inwardly as a consequence of psychological trauma, e.g. clinging to the memory of a deceased loved one as if she were still alive. This point was used on the left.

ST36 zusanli or 'leg three mile', also known as xiaqihai or 'lower sea of qi', is an Earth point and is the major point on the Stomach channel for strengthening and harmonizing the Spleen and Stomach. Combined with P6 neiguan (which is sequentially connected with the leg jue yin Liver channel) it helps to encourage normal peristalsis and appetite, and allays nausea caused by visceral tension and emotional friction between the Heart, Stomach and Liver. Tonifying ST36 zusanli also promotes the generation of postnatal Essence which helps to restore the Essence of the Kidney. S36 zusanli is another of the Thirteen Ghost Points known as guixie or 'ghost evil'.

KID7 fuliu or 'recover flow', also known as fujiu or 'deep lying mortar', is a Metal point. Tonifying this mobilizes the relationship between the Lung and Kidney (Metal supplements Water) which strengthens the Kidney, anchors the Kidney and Lung qi, fortifies the zhi (will or primal instinct), and helps the Lung to release its fixations and disperse stagnant qi. The alternative name 'deep lying mortar' suggests that this point can influence the deep Essence or Marrow (sui), the foundation substance that sustains the body's structural components including the brain, bones, and joints.

GB30 huantiao or 'jumping circle', also known as shuzhong or 'pivot centre', is a major point for clearing obstructed qi of the Gallbladder and Bladder channels, especially in the area of the hips, pelvis, legs, and lumbar region. Static Liver qi is often shunted into the Gallbladder channel as a result of long-term frustration, emotional restraint, or over-control. This point relaxes muscles, tendons, and ligaments, soothes nerves, and defuses pent-up rage. The names 'jumping circle' and 'pivot centre' suggest that this area of the body is central to the organization of flexibility, agility, and the coordinated movement so essential for adapting to the inner and outer vicissitudes of daily life including coping with obstacles and transitions. This point was used only on the right.

Needles: were 32 gauge, 25 mm and remained in place for 30 minutes with the lights dimmed, music playing, and a heat lamp over the legs for warmth.

CHINESE HERBS

Diana's herb prescription consisted of two separate formulas from 'Chinese Modular Solutions'. The first formula addressed the rash and consisted of the modules 'Purge External Wind (qu wai feng)', 'Strengthen Lung (qiang fei)', 'Harmonize Heart and Lung (tiao he xin fei)', and 'Comfort Shen (an shu shen)'. It was to be used before breakfast and as needed during the day. The second formula was to be used before bed and contained 'Harmonize Liver and Spleen (tiao he gan pi)', 'Tonify Blood (bu xue)', 'Strengthen Liver (qiang gan)', and 'Comfort Shen (an shu shen)'.

The herbal formulas support the acupuncture treatment by helping to sustain its effects and accelerate the process of change and resolution. In this case the morning formula addressed the acute condition and the evening formula the chronic constitutional pattern. Whilst the morning formula concentrated on correcting the disturbances of the Heart and Lung networks whose qi was waxing in the early part of the day, the evening formula concentrated on rectifying the deeper distortions of the Liver network whose qi was ascendant at night. Together the formulas addressed deficiencies and excesses, stagnation and instability, psyche and soma.

Patterns, etiology, and pathology

Diana can be identified as a Wood type, a person moved by the yearning to break through whatever limits or confines her. Resolve is characteristic of Wood types. Diana continued to horse ride, undaunted by the fact that doing so aggravated her hip and made her vulnerable to injuries such as the crushed ribs and broken wrist. She was a single mother with a professional career and a fervent desire to make her life count in an individually creative way.

The organ network of Wood, the Liver, is responsible for mobilizing activity by creating pressure. Pressure is mounted by regulating the volume and force of Blood and qi. People instinctively seek out circumstances that permit or encourage them to do what comes naturally and easily. Wood types exhibit certain proclivities. Often those good at building pressure and galvanizing power are not equally adept at relaxing and resting. Under prolonged or extreme stress they become tense and fatigued, which leads to the craving for more stimulation to maintain their customary level of performance and arousal. This process eventually leads to their becoming erratic, irritable, volatile and weary.

ORGAN NETWORK DISHARMONIES

Liver Dominance

- Irritable
- Sensitive to pain, wind, heat, noise, sun
- Muscle cramps
- Easily startled
- Depression with rage
- Hot flushes
- Painful, stiff hips
- Elbow tendonitis
- Painful, irregular periods
- Premenstrual mood swings
- Symptoms worse premenstrually
- Dry skin and hair
- Chilly mottled limbs
- Pulse: tight in the Liver position

Heart Shen Disturbance

- Anxiety
- Sensitive to insult
- Easily moved emotionally
- Palpitations
- Easily frightened
- Hot flushes

Spleen Deficiency

- Weak, tender muscles
- Sensitive to pain
- Worry, upset by change
- Socially deprived
- Nausea, gas
- Tongue: scalloped
- Pulse: thin, weak

Lung Fixation

- Sensitive to insults
- Morbid thoughts
- Depression with melancholy
- Stiffness of body
- Poor healing of, and dry, skin
- Itching, hives, rash
- Inhibited expression of feelings
- Sadness, grief
- Pulse: tight, weak in the Lung position

Kidney Weakness

- Stiff, painful hips
- Increasingly irregular menstrual cycle
- Chronic scanty menstruation
- Early graying of head and pubic hair
- Loosening of skin and muscles
- PMS since childbirth
- Hot flushes
- Chronic scoliosis
- Difficulty arising in morning
- Fear and expectation of early death
- Despair and hopelessness (can't imagine a future)
- Social isolation
- Pulse: thin, weak

The power of Wood is in ascendance in spring, a time when existing disharmonies of the Liver network become accentuated. Incited by an infected flea bite during this season, Diana's Liver engendered Heat and Wind which assaulted the Lung network, producing an irritable, red, itchy rash. Initially Diana's determination to become free of this problem led to an escalating level of frustration. Eventually, because she would not accede to a poor prognosis, she ventured into the unfamiliar territory of Chinese traditional medicine. Already we have a vivid picture of the power of Wood to disrupt the status quo and propel an individual forward into a new realm of experience. It is as if her vital force would not settle for a simple and direct outcome - what appears to be a superficial Wind Heat rash has become a somatic metaphor for a deeper, older, buried struggle between movement and stasis, growth and resistance.

Diana had a history of chronic dryness, probably due to deficiency of Blood. Her skin and hair were dry, her menses scanty, her skin healed slowly, she had palpitations, restlessness, emotional reactivity and sensitivity, and occasional vertigo. Her tongue was pale with scalloped edges and white fur and her pulse tight, especially in the positions of the Liver and Lung. Dryness due to Blood deficiency adversely affected the Liver, creating a propensity for the generation of internal Heat and Wind. She also began experiencing signs of menopausal deficiencies such as graying hair, hot flushes, mood swings, anxiety, depression, and increased premenstrual distress.

Deficient Blood

- Dry skin and hair
- Scanty periods
- Poor skin healing
- Muscle cramps
- Palpitations
- Irritability
- Stiff, painful hips
- Emotionally sensitive
- Easily startled, frightened
- Tongue: pale
- Pulse: thin, tight

Deficient Qi

- Morning fatigue
- Loss of skin and muscle tone
- Poor skin healing
- Sensitive to insult and pain
- Tongue: scalloped
- Pulse: weak

Deficient Essence

- PMS since childbirth
- Irregular periods
- Early grey hair
- Poor skin and muscle tone
- Chronic scoliosis
- Hot flushes
- Despair and hopelessness
- Expectation of early death
- Pulse: thin, weak

Stagnant Qi

- Nausea, gas
- Neck and shoulder tension
- Premenstrual mood swings
- Painful, irregular periods
- Awkward expression of feelings
- Pulse: tight
- Wind-heat in the skin
- Itching red rash
- Recurring hives
- Sensitivity to heat and sunshine
- Sensitivity to wind

Like other Wood types, Diana tends to rob herself of Blood and Moisture, and squander qi as a result of her drive to maintain a high degree of internal pressure and level of striving. As a Wood type, Diana also swings between states of collapse and exaggeration. Collapse means that Diana behaves like a Water type, retreating to her inner world, feeling shy, retiring, self-enclosed, grumpy, grim, and preferring solitude to socializing. Exaggeration means that she behaves like Fire, rushing about in a hyperactive, manic state, unable to find time to sleep or eat with regularity, preferring stimulation and activity to quietude.

Lung-Liver Disharmony

- Depression with feelings of rage, sadness
- Dermatitis with predominance of itching, dryness
- Unpredictable moods
- Physical, emotional stiffness and inflexibility
- Hypersensitive, highly reactive to outside influences
- Muscle cramps

Kidney-Heart Disharmony

- Fear, anxiety about future
- Lack of self-confidence and optimism; despair
- Hot flushes

Heart-Lung Disharmony

- Easily hurt, insulted
- Suppressed grief, pain
- Melancholy
- Vulnerable to outside influences

Diana's primary conflict was between the Liver and Lung, initiated by suppressed grief and rage over her mother's death (Fig.1). Treatment addressed this central dynamic as well as the deficiency and stagnation of qi and Blood. The secondary tensions between Lung-Heart and Kidney-Heart contributed to Diana's depression, evidenced by her hyper-vigilance, anxiety about the future, hopelessness, melancholy, and fear of death. Disorganizing the pattern of conflict between the Lung and Liver loosened the other knots that had developed between the other organ networks, especially the Kidney and Heart.⁴

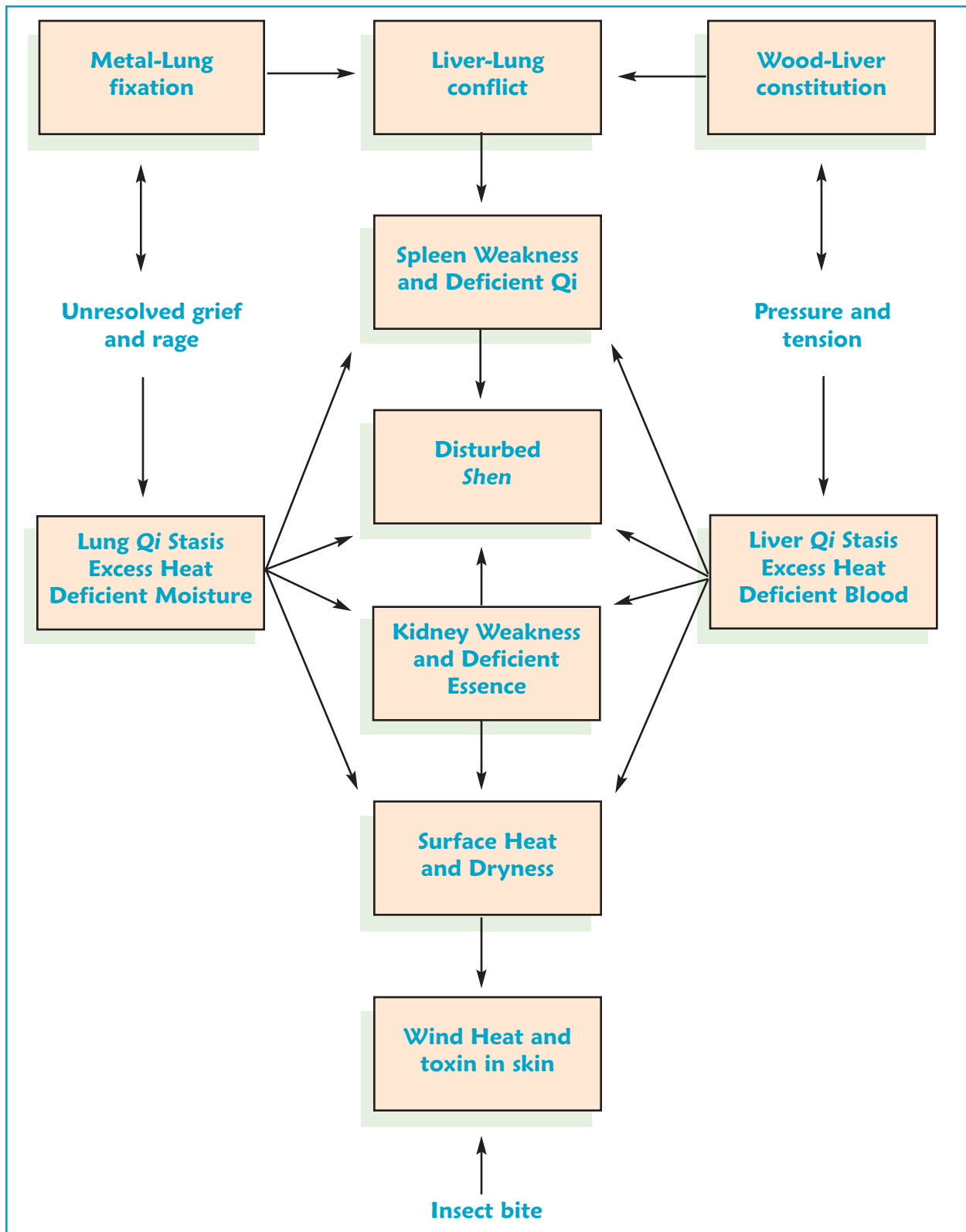


Fig. 1 Etiology and pathology diagram. Diana, being a Wood type, is predisposed towards pathogenic Heat and Dryness which, together with suppressed and unresolved grief and rage, over-inhibit Liver-Wood and create stagnation of Lung-Metal. Injuries by insect toxins induce an external Wind-Heat illness that, in turn, brings out the chronic underlying disturbances. Long-term Lung-Liver constraint and conflict lead to depression and isolation, with consequent weakening and instability of the Heart, Spleen and Kidney (shen, qi, jing). Chronic Yin deficiencies (Blood, Moisture, Essence) set the stage for aberrations of Yang activity (Heat, Wind, panic, rage).

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

In Chinese medicine, pathology and ontology are inextricably linked - how we get sick is tied to who we are. If we assume that a pattern of illness arises from the distortion of a person's true nature, then illness becomes a heuristic window through which the imperative of the vital force may be observed. Within a constitutional approach, the process of resolving symptoms becomes one of reinvigorating a person's promise or destiny (ming).

The routes by which people find their way toward healing are both intriguing and mysterious. Diana's story is exemplary of the seemingly - always in retrospect - fortuitous sequence of events that initiated not only recovery, but also a process of reclamation.

Very soon after beginning acupuncture treatment, Diana is faced with powerful memories of her mother's death, the recognition of her unabated grief, and the specter of her own fear of dying like her mother. She is surprised, having presumed that this had all been reconciled through psychotherapy. Perhaps the trauma had been resolved at a mental or cognitive level, but not in the spiritual and bodily realms.

Loss and its consequent feelings of sorrow and emptiness injure the Lung. If such experiences are not integrated at all levels of the self, a lesion or scar is created that becomes an area of stasis, a part of bodily life that is cut off from sensory and emotional experience. This is what occurred in Diana at the age of 23. When pain is felt as unbearable, the body adapts by contracting in the area of pain in order to squeeze off the feelings and sensations. As a result, a kind of fixation develops that not only obstructs the circulation of qi and Blood, but inhibits the developmental process of growth and maturity. Diana informs us that immersed in the upheaval of her thoughts and feelings about her mother and her death; she is feeling like her younger self.

This can be viewed as a successful effort by the Liver--her organizing force--to undermine the Lung's fixation. She began to free herself from her identification with, and loss of, her mother. What carried her through the ensuing period of turmoil was a clearer sense of herself, her capacity, and her own destiny. Once the lesion was opened, the vital force asserted itself, expressed as the beginning of being 'at war between my three separate parts - my mind, body, and spirit'. Out of this struggle emerged self-assurance and renewal. A disorganization, reorganization, and reintegration of the tripartite self - the shen, qi, and jing - is underway, which in spite of its discomfort, is felt as fundamentally affirming and unifying.

Upon regaining self-confidence, Diana became more gregarious, and immersed herself in her deeper, inner nature which she described as her spiritual side, imagining a future in which she would be alive and well past the age at which her mother succumbed to a life of 'resentment and betrayed hope'. It dawned upon her that she was strong where her mother was weak; she was determined where her mother was resigned; she had a life full of possibilities, while her mother relinquished her yearnings to fate. Upon uncovering her hidden self, her mission was clarified and she decided that she no longer required treatment. She had become realigned with her true nature and empowered to pursue its fulfillment on her own.

In this scenario, the dynamic dual nature of illness can be seen. On the one hand it is a perverse force that can drive Diana into submission and despair, and, on the other hand, it is a subversive force that coerces Diana into radically rearranging herself.

The surge of the forces of Liver-Wood ultimately undermined the chronic Lung-Metal fixation. Out of this struggle emerged a new sense of expanded boundaries and a sort of reembodiment - a decision to 'breathe into the outlines of my body' and to 'stay rooted' within it. This represents a return of liveliness and elasticity in Lung-Metal which stretches the skin - the tangible limits of the self - to make room for increased energy and excitement. The original insult to Diana's Lung (Metal) that obstructed her emotional and spiritual growth is recast by a more mature awareness.

PROGRESS AND OUTCOME

- 'Massive amounts of energy'
- More cheerful and outgoing
- 'Feeling better than I have in 20 years'
- Skin clear, no wrist or hip pain
- 'Sense of being more in control of my life'
- Began journalism and creative writing class

THE PURPOSE OF MEDICINE

To treat illness is to liberate primordial energies. Chinese traditional medicine not only undermines the organism's ill habits, countering the momentum of illness, it also advances the intrinsic design - the li 5 - freeing the true self, replete with its drive toward self-realization (Fig. 2). Health is wholeheartedly pursued only when it is recognized as the way to satisfy one's deepest needs and yearnings. It is first imagined, and then assembled out of the fabric of our lived experience. While our failures and traumas may indicate how we lack competence and resilience, our achievements, however small, and our moments of transcendence, however brief, point the way back to the primal force which unconditionally affirms us, steering us further and deeper into life.

Medicine is science, art, and above all else, a language which generates a hypothesis that a given problem is caused by X, so intervention Y will antidote it. The only way to test our hypothesis is by clinical trial. However, when we do so, there are countless non-specific influences that elude control. In the end we do not know whether it is the needle in its position with such and such manipulation which is the positive trigger, the herbal formula with its composition, form, and frequency, or our intention to be helpful and wish for a right outcome that has provoked a course of change. There is an ineffable magic in medicine. Perhaps we merely offer an opportunity for the transformative process, already underway, to unfold.

The healing relationship dwells in sacred space. Like romantic love, it grows out of trust, derives power from the process of being heard, known, and touched, and demands a willingness to risk exposure. It is a cooperative venture in the misty realm of the unpredictable that involves the coming together of subjectivities, ours as healers with those of our patients, and the commingling of our destiny.



Fig. 2 Chinese letters for qi, li and ming.

Reprinted from *Acupuncture in Practice: Case History Insights from the West*, Edited by Hugh MacPherson, PhD and Ted J. Kaptchuk, OMD, Churchill Livingstone, 1997

NOTES

¹ Adapted from the Talmud.

² 'Chinese Modular Solutions' is an integrated herbal system formulated by the author and Efreim Korngold. Each formula is organized around a specific diagnostic-therapeutic focus. The category-specific formulae (modules), such as 'Tonify Blood', can then be mixed and matched to compose a prescription that more closely fits the problem or person.

³ Each person can be identified as embodying the power of one of the Five Phases (wu xing: Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, Water). These types represent five metaphors for the emotional, physical and spiritual dynamics that organize us. Each type has idiosyncratic traits, motivations and dilemmas - five styles of being in the world. Pre-disposition towards illness and predilection for the cultivation of virtue can be anticipated for each of the five. By helping people to recognize their type, habits of suffering can be interrupted and self-awareness can be enabled, preparing the ground for self-acceptance and mastery. For a complete discussion, see Five-Phase Archetypes in Beinfield & Korngold (1991).

⁴ The Heart harbors the shen (psyche, heaven) and the Kidney preserves the jing (soma, earth). Shen-jing is the embodiment of yin-yang. It is the marriage of our endowment at birth, our original nature, our potential (jing), with how we express that nature, or actualize it (shen).

⁵ Li can be understood in this context as the individual pattern that original (yuan) qi fashions in each person, also known as one's nature.

REFERENCES

Beinfield H, Korngold E. (1991) Between heaven and earth: a guide to Chinese medicine. Ballantine