

The Principle of Supporting Yang

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HERE I WOULD MAINLY LIKE TO DISCUSS THOUGHTS about and establish a foundation for understanding the principle of supporting Yang. But before embarking on this topic, I'd like to first touch on some related issues. As people living in the 21st century, there are many questions we should consider from a more traditional, Chinese medicine point of view. For example, many people in China say that the role of Chinese medicine as a therapeutic modality is shrinking. So are we to think that after diseases once commonly treated with Chinese medicine have started to disappear, our medicine no longer has a place among the modern weapons against disease? This question is worth every Chinese medicine practitioner's consideration. As a medicine in the modern era, of course it is important for Chinese medicine to connect with modern society, and to win the support and understanding of contemporary people. However, what exactly is the best strategy to do this? Will studying foreign languages and research methods in order to prove Chinese medicine in terms of modern science yield the most fruitful results? Or should we understand the internal logic of our own system first?

To make an example, in China, every year we have our week long vacations for Labor Day in spring and National day in fall. In the last few years there has been a major shift in the travel trends of the nation. In the past, where did Chinese all flock for

a vacation? Mostly we went to large cities such as Beijing or Shanghai. But where do we go now? We head for the mountains or to places of natural beauty such as Jiuzhaigou and Huanglong (in Sichuan Province). So did we first build an airport and modern transportation for getting to these scenic places and then create the destinations themselves?

arise in arthritis--pain, joint obstruction and joint swelling. Using Chinese medicine theory I think we have no problem arriving at an effective treatment for the symptoms of pain and obstruction. Let's start by looking at the *Huangdi Neijing* (The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine). When going back to the classics, the first step is to

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Of course these places already existed and then, as the need arose, we built roads and airports to allow more people to visit. As times marches forward our technologies advance; and yet as we move towards the future we find that all people need a connection to their traditions and natural heritage. Rather than having one to the exclusion of the other, we can use modern technology to bring nature closer. This is an example of the traditional and modern connecting and communicating.

As Chinese medicine practitioners we must first understand our medical system on its own terms before trying to explain it with modern science. If you build an airport to a destination without first building the destination, who would come visit? So in understanding Chinese medicine there is no need to reinvent the wheel by using modern science to explain this system. First we need only understand what we already have.

A Classical View of Arthritis

We can use arthritis as an example--a disease that is truly deserving of modern research, especially Chinese medicine's effects on treatment. Understanding how cells changed or how T cells may have been impaired, for example, is very important and deserves our respect. But are modern experiments the only way we can understand this disease? If we return to China's medical classics, how would we understand arthritis? How would ancient Chinese doctors view this modern disease?

Let us first look at the primary symptoms that

look at individual characters to begin our thought process. So let's look at the characters for pain--in Chinese, 疼痛 (*tengtong*). What is pain? What are its main causes? How can we treat it? The answer to these questions is both very complicated and very simple. Starting with what's simple we examine the characters for pain. As we'll see, the ancient Chinese were ingenious in their creation of these two words, for everything we need to know is built into the characters themselves.

Looking at the first character, 疼 (*teng*), what do we see inside? Within the radical meaning disease, 疒 (*chuan*), we see the character 冬 (*dong*), meaning winter. In Chinese medicine as soon as we see the word "winter" we think of the seasonal influence that belongs to this time of year--cold. In physical manifestation winter is represented by water and the direction of North. Therefore it says in Chapter 6 of the *Neijing*: "The North generates cold, cold generates water." So we can already understand just by looking at the character 疼, that pain has a clear relationship to cold. Without cold and water, there would not be the phenomenon of pain. We find that the chapter of the *Neijing* entitled "The Treatise on Types of Pain" supports this line of thought. From the title and the simple but clear prose in this chapter we can understand that it is primarily a collection of examples of different types of pain--14 in total. In the development of this chapter, however, a curious phenomenon arises. Following the statement that "All disease is caused by the Six Pathogenic Qi--wind, cold, summer heat, dampness, dryness and fire", we