

An Introduction to Hùnyuán Medicine: Part 2 – Clinical Application

Abstract

In Hùnyuán medicine, effective diagnosis and treatment require a sound understanding of the principles explained in the first part of this article (*Journal of Chinese Medicine* 110, February 2016). In this second part of our introduction to Hùnyuán medicine, the practical methods of Hùnyuán medical diagnosis and treatment are explained, not only with reference to the theory upon which Hùnyuán medicine bases its understanding of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, but also through analysis of two clinical cases.

Introduction

Part one of this article (*Journal of Chinese Medicine*, Issue 110, February 2016) explained how the concept of ‘oneness’ that emerges from a close reading of ancient classical texts calls for an approach to Chinese medicine that deals with the intrinsic unity of human existence. According to these texts, human existence resonates with universal laws, that are expressed as Virtue (De 德) in a person’s heart (Dào-Heart 道心), and as synchronicity with the rhythms of nature in a person’s body. We explained that the pure Dào-Heart is where a person’s ‘true nature’ (Xìng 性) resides, which is intrinsically non-dualistic. We also explained how the human heart actively goes after its needs informed by desire. Without proper self-cultivation, this process can lead one to depart from one’s true nature.

A person’s energy waxes and wanes daily and throughout the year follows the cycles of the sun. This manifests as two consecutive cycles: one of activity, that stretches from midnight to midday and from winter to summer solstice - termed ‘separation’ in Hùnyuán medicine; and one of rest and recharging, that goes from midday to midnight and from summer to winter solstice - termed ‘unification’ in Hùnyuán medicine. These two aspects express themselves through six steps, which reflect Zhāng Zhòngjǐng’s (張仲景¹) concept of the ‘liù jīng’ (‘six spheres’).² On these grounds we explained how life comes about through the merging of qián-heaven-yáng and kūn-earth-yīn. In Hùnyuán medicine the vitalisation of kūn-earth by qián-heaven is called ‘Heaven’s Principle’ (life). In the previous article we explained how the human being is recharged throughout their existence by connecting with nature. We also explained how the living body is expressed by kūn-water (or ‘outer water circle’) and

the heart by lí-fire (also called the ‘inner fire circle’), and how the human organism can be conceived as a complex coherent system in which the organs, heart and consciousness move with the rhythm of the breath of the whole universe. When this resonance is broken, disease ensues.

This second part of our article will explain how diagnosis, treatment strategy and application are done in Hùnyuán medicine.

Diagnosis

In Hùnyuán medicine, diagnosis involves assessing three primary aspects:

The concept of ‘oneness’ that emerges from a close reading of ancient classical texts calls for an approach to Chinese medicine that deals with the intrinsic unity of human existence.

1. The strength of the recharging capacity,
2. The timeliness and propriety of the liù jīng (i.e. the process of unification and separation) as revealed by presenting symptoms,
3. Whether the patient’s emotions are regulated by Centre (as when they are not, their discharge makes the body ill).

This assessment leads to the treatment principle, strategy and method of choice: herbs, acupuncture or Xīnfǎ (心法, Heart method).

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Diagnosing the recharging ability

As a rule of thumb, people younger than 30 generally have a good recharging ability and therefore treatment is usually only necessary to assist their body so that it can maintain the timeliness of the processes of unification and separation. Older people generally have a weaker recharging ability and the general rule is to increase it. The second criterion for diagnosing the strength of the recharging ability is the duration and/or severity of a patient's symptoms. Someone who has been ill for just a few days will likely have a stronger recharging ability than someone who has been ill for a long time or who has suffered a particularly severe injury. The third criterion is to assess the recharging ability in relation to a patient's lifestyle. A person who works long hours in a stressful environment for many years will likely have a worse recharging ability than a person who works moderately in a friendly and calm environment. In Hùnyuán medicine this assessment is called 'evaluating number one.' It should be noted that this is the only time in Hùnyuán medicine when a condition is evaluated in terms of strength and deficiency.

Assessing the six stages

In Hùnyuán medicine, the myriad symptoms of the physical body indicate a disruption of the propriety of the six stages - both separately and as a group - in resonating with the rhythms of nature. In other words, parts of the body act too fast or too slow in relation to nature and are therefore described as being 'not on time'. In Hùnyuán medicine, physical symptoms are always viewed as a problem of synchronicity, rather than as a material problem located in the physical body.

The separation stage

- *Juéyīn* (厥陰) or 'concealed separation outwards': Waking up too early in the morning indicates that the 'concealed separation outwards' unfolds too fast, whereas waking up late in the morning indicates that it is too slow.³ *Juéyīn* is the phase when fire emerges from unification, and is also called 'water separation'.⁴ When this happens at excessive speed, everything becomes dry, including the skin, mouth, hair, eyes and menses, to mention but a few. If, on the contrary, this process happens at a slower speed than normal, it can result in symptoms such as aches, pains and oedema.
- *Shàoyáng* (少陽) or 'revealed separation': When Centre improperly regulates the separation of fire from unification, then emotions become chaotic, which gives rise to symptoms such as unilateral headache, bitter taste in the mouth, red eyes and thirst. The physical symptoms of *Shàoyáng* disharmony are

normally unilateral and acute. Since the root is to be found in the disharmony of the patient's emotions, the treatment of choice is that of helping Centre with *Xīnfǎ*.⁵

- *Tàiyáng* (太陽) or 'separation instrument': As *Tàiyáng* represents the point of maximum connection with nature, if it is too slow or too fast this connection is impaired to the point of endangering the cohesive whole. A slow *Tàiyáng* causes difficult urination, absence of sweating and a feeling of cold, whereas a fast *Tàiyáng* involves excessive, irregular and intermittent perspiration, frequent urination and heat floating to the surface of the body (as with fever).

The unification stage

- *Yángmíng* (陽明) or 'separation concealed inwards': A slow *Yángmíng* makes the process of concealing inwards slow, which in turns leads to a slow separation of Heaven's Principle from food matter. This makes it difficult for Heaven's Principle to be submerged, giving rise to symptoms such as a hot sensation in the body, dry mouth, excessive thirst for cold liquids, acute constipation and reversal movement upwards (*nì* 逆) that causes nausea and vomiting. Vomiting in particular is a sign of extremely slow concealing that can endanger the recharging ability and threaten life. The difference between the symptoms of dryness due to *Juéyīn* compared to *Yángmíng* is that in the former it is generalised and includes the skin, eyes and hair, the thirst is unquenchable and drinking water does not resolve the dryness, whereas in the latter the dryness involves just the mouth and the thirst can be quenched - at least temporarily - by drinking large amounts of cold water.
- *Tàiyīn* (太陰) or concealed movement inwards: An excessively slow inward movement of *Tàiyīn* leads to a feeling of bloatedness after eating, whereas when excessively fast it causes a strain in the process of unification so that heaven's principle is not brought to its destination and is forced out as loose stools or diarrhoea.
- *Shàoyīn* (少陰) or unification instrument: This is the phase where unification and recharging take place. During unification Heaven's Principle - a universal energy that is initially external and thus does not 'belong' to the person - now becomes 'theirs'. With regard to this process the terms used in Hùnyuán medicine are 'sufficient' or 'insufficient'. When sufficient, the person sleeps well, but when insufficient symptoms such as insomnia, irritability and heart palpitations arise.

The six stages and the severity of the problem

In Hùnyuán medicine, Juéyīn, Shǎoyáng, Tàiyáng, Yángmíng and Tàiyīn - five of the phases of the circle (see previous article) - are referred to as 'number two', as they pertain to the body's synchronicity with nature. Many problems seen in the clinic belong to 'number two' and can present with various degrees of intensity. Proper assessment requires understanding how fast is fast and how slow is slow. For instance, waking up at as early as three am every night and being unable to sleep indicates that the speed of separation of Juéyīn is much too fast and therefore the condition is severe. If, in addition, the symptom is chronic, this indicates an even worse condition, as the recharging ability will also be compromised. If, on the other hand, a patient has woken up at three am just a few times, the problem is mild and the recharging ability is unlikely to be compromised. Note that synchronicity in this sense has no excess or deficiency: it is either on time or not. For instance, heat symptoms in Yángmíng, are not viewed as excess heat, but rather as Yángmíng slowing down.

Shàoyīn, on the other hand is referred to as number 'one', denoting the unification ability and the resulting sufficiency or insufficiency of recharging. In Shàoyīn, symptoms such as insomnia do not result from a disharmony of speed, but rather from insufficient unification ability. The difference between insomnia due to Shàoyīn insufficiency and that due to the rapidity of Juéyīn is that with the former sleep is light and disturbed throughout the night, whereas with the latter a person wakes up very early in the morning unable to fall back to sleep.

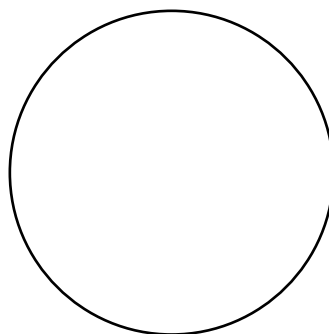
Assessing 'Centre' (Zhōng 中)

Rephrasing Confucius' anecdote that 'harmony is the result of emotions regulated by the centre',⁶ in ancient Chinese medicine it is held that 'all diseases start in the heart',⁷ or in Hùnyuán medicine terminology, from the 'inner fire circle' - the domain of the heart. All emotions have a function within the whole and none is inherently good or bad. Human beings have an inborn ability to discharge energy from a central point in a harmonious and proper way - a way that nurtures life. Indeed, the body only springs into action due to such emotional discharge. However, when the Centre does not regulate emotions appropriately it brings about decline and disease. Evaluating a patient's emotions and Centre can often identify the root of their problem. In Hùnyuán medicine, this assessment is called 'evaluating Centre'. Rather than assessing either quantity or speed, as in the previous two assessments, this involves evaluating the propriety of the patient's emotional discharge and the quantity and quality of energy separated⁸ from the Centre. 'Proper' emotions mean that energy separating from Centre increases life both for oneself and everyone else, whereas 'improper' emotions cause a gradual loss of

life. In such cases physical medicine that acts on the 'outer water circle', such as herbs and acupuncture, can only lead to partial recovery.

Treatment

After diagnosing the recharging ability, the synchronicity of the six stages and the Centre, the next step is to devise an appropriate treatment strategy that allows the affirmation of the principle of Tàijí (太極). At the start of treatment in Hùnyuán medicine a circle is drawn, which indicates that every new patient is simply a Tàijí in their own right.⁹



If both recharging ('one') and body speed ('two') are pathological, the practitioner has to decide which should have priority in treatment. When the recharging ability is severely impaired, treatment deals with this problem through a 'unification strategy'. In fact, without recharging, there would not be enough power (i.e. Heaven's Principle or 'life') to support the individual. When, however, the recharging ability is not compromised, but the body's speed is excessively fast or slow, the priority should be that of regulating the speed through a 'harmonising strategy'. When diagnosis reveals that recharging and body speed are equally compromised, one should adopt a combined unification and harmonising strategy. To further improve therapeutic effectiveness, the practitioner should evaluate Centre and the propriety of the patient's emotional discharge. If emotional discharge is either chaotic or inappropriate to circumstances, this should be treated with Xīnfǎ.

Treating 'number two' implies the formulation of a method that either speeds up or slows down the aspect of the body that is not on time, by promoting harmonious unfolding of the processes of separation and unification. For instance, with a patient suffering from elevated liver enzymes (diagnosed by modern biomedicine), a Hùnyuán practitioner might do any of the following, depending on the case:

1. Slow down Juéyīn (if the patient suffers from overall dryness),
2. Facilitate and speed up the downwards movement of Yángmíng (if the patient needs to drink lots of cold water), or

3. Speed up Tàiyīn (if the patient suffers from abdominal bloating).

Acupuncture works better on ailments due to disruption of the mechanism of separation, whereas herbs work better on conditions born out of a disharmony of unification.

Thus, although modern medicine might diagnose a patient as having ‘elevated liver enzymes’, this would not be sufficient to inform Hùnyuán diagnosis and treatment. In fact, the aim of Hùnyuán medicine is never merely to address symptoms (the ‘square approach’ - see part one of this article), but rather to work with the underlying ‘circle’ problem (extensively discussed in part one of this article).

In Hùnyuán medicine, deciding the strategy of a treatment and selecting the appropriate methods can be complex. Generally speaking, there are four possible approaches:

1. Strengthening the recharging ability, as when this is weak the body lacks energy to perform its activities, leading to illness.
2. Solving problems with the body’s synchronicity (‘two’) in a patient where the recharging ability is strong. Speeding up or slowing down one or more aspects of the liù jīng can easily lead to acute symptoms, i.e. slowing down of Juéyīn causing acute menstrual pain.¹⁰
3. Strengthening ‘one’ and harmonising ‘two’ simultaneously, when the condition of both is severe.
4. Addressing the heart when the root of the problem originates from the patient’s Centre. In this case regulating separation or unification with acupuncture or herbs alone cannot solve the patient’s problem. This is when Hùnyuán medicine would apply Xīnfǎ.

In Hùnyuán medicine herbal medicine is used to promote both unification and separation by selecting herbs according to whether they speed up or slow down a specific phase of the unification or separation process. It also uses herbal preparations for unification purposes when the recharging ability is weak. Acupuncture is mainly used for separation strategies - treating the ‘water outer circle’ - and in addition, in a spiritual sense to reach the ‘inner fire circle’. Besides herbs and acupuncture, Hùnyuán medicine uses Xīnfǎ. These methods are briefly introduced below.

Acupuncture

According to the modern evolution of acupuncture

it is claimed that it can heal all sorts of symptoms. The acupuncture theory and practice used in Hùnyuán medicine is founded on Qibo’s (岐伯) explanation in the *Nèijīng* (Inner Classic) concerning the best clinical approach to diseases:

‘I heard that in antiquity, when treating diseases people only shifted essence, changed qì and made a blessing. That’s all! How is it that, these days, when poisonous herbs are used to heal the interior and needles and stones to heal the exterior, some people recover and others do not?’ the Yellow Emperor asked Qībó.

余聞古之治病，惟其移精變氣，可祝由而已。今世治病，毒藥治其內，鍼石治其外，或愈或不愈。¹¹

‘In today’s world one must use toxic herbs to attack the Centre, but sharp stones, needles and moxa to treat the exterior. How come?’

當今之世，必齊毒藥攻其中，鑱石鍼艾治其外也，何也。¹²

From the perspective of Hùnyuán medicine, the above quotes mean that acupuncture works better on ailments due to disruption of the mechanism of separation, whereas herbs work better on conditions born out of a disharmony of unification. Following this line of thought, acupuncture should be used for ailments of the musculoskeletal system such as sports injuries, as well as skin troubles¹³ and cold injury. However, in Hùnyuán medicine we have also developed a way of using acupuncture for unification. Separation acupuncture techniques of all sorts are in abundance today and require no further explanation.

The initial criteria informing a Hùnyuán practitioner’s point selection in the clinic are:

- a. Small separation (inducing a hint of separation): points from the abdomen to the hand,
- b. Great separation (inducing strong separation): points from the hand to the head,
- c. Small unification (inducing a hint of unification): points from the head to the leg,
- d. Deep unification (inducing strong unification inwards): points from the leg to the abdomen.

This understanding follows the idea that the centre of the body is the place where unification happens: the yīn channels of the hand come from the body’s centre and go to the hands, the yáng channels of the hand go from the hands to the head, the yáng channels of the leg flow from the head to the feet and the yīn channels of the leg from the legs back to the body’s centre. Thus, the channels complete a full separation-unification circle.

In addition to the basic guidelines above, and in agreement with the idea that a large number of needles cause the exterior to move and use an excessive amount of energy (or in Hùnyuán terms, create excessive

separation and thus threaten the recharging ability), for unification purposes Hùnyuán medicine normally uses only four points. A typical prescription has the following composition: one point below the elbow and three points between the knee and ankle, of which two are located on the medial and one on the lateral aspect of the leg. This criterion provides Hùnyuán practitioners with a guideline for choosing points that suit the specific condition of their patient, without compromising unification or recharging. Namely, even though different channels are used for different objectives, an overall strategy of unification is maintained. Out of the four points, the three on the leg increase the movement of energy toward the body's centre, whereas the one on the arms helps the movement of energy towards the body's periphery, or in other words, promotes an outward movement and slight separation. This combination is called 'great entrance and small exit' and usually uses the shu-transporting points. The following image explains this unification technique.

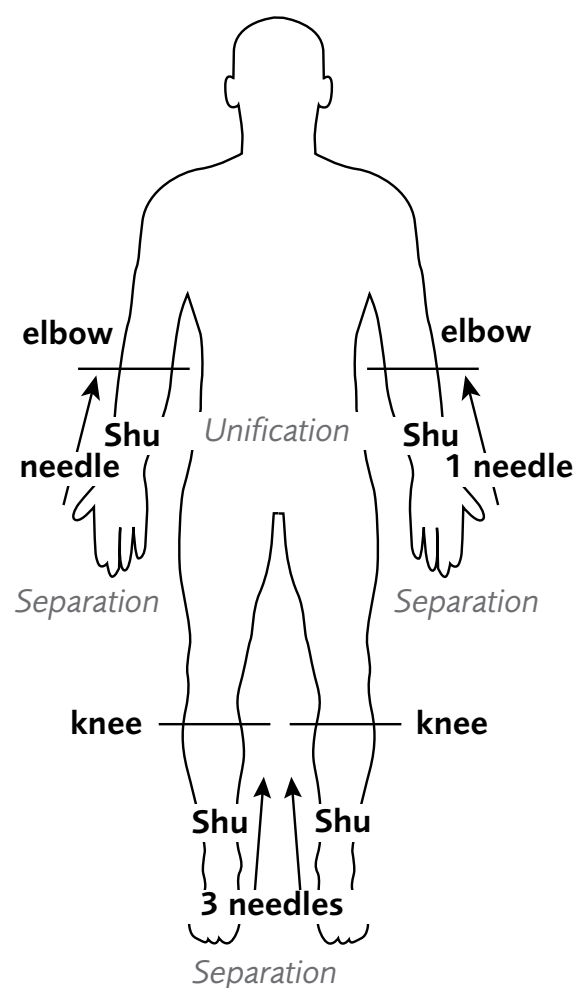


Figure 1: Hùnyuán acupuncture unification method

In addition to the above technicalities, in Hùnyuán medicine the practitioner using acupuncture aims to connect with a patient's Centre. To understand this

spiritual aspect of Hùnyuán medicine one should first realise that acupuncture points are not merely physical entities. In ancient times they were described as follows:

The Yellow Emperor asked: 'I heard that the 365 qì holes react to one year, but as I do not know their place, I would like to finally hear about this'. Qíbó bowed his head twice to the ground and said: 'All 365 holes are where needles can engage with origin.'

余聞氣穴三百六十五，以應一歲，未知其所，願卒聞之。岐伯稽首再拜對曰凡三百六十五穴，鍼之所由行也。¹⁴

The Emperor said: 'A person has essence, qì, fluids, four extremities, nine orifices, five zàng 臟, sixteen sections and 365 conformations where the hundred diseases may generate.'

帝曰：人有精氣津液，四支九竅，五藏十六部，三百六十五節，乃生百病。¹⁵

The twelve channels all weave together 365 conformations, when disease resides in these conformations, this is carried by the channels. All channels may have deficiency and excess, how can one merge [all the different aspects] together?

夫十二經脈者，皆絡三百六十五節，節有病，必被經脈，經脈之病，皆有虛實，何以合之。¹⁶

The above text talks of acupuncture points as 'jié' (節, 'conformations'), a term that defines the place of connection between heaven and the body. The Lingshū also explains this concept when it states that:

The 365 connections are the 'conformations' merging. Knowing their essence can be summarised with one sentence, whereas not knowing their essence would cause one to be scattered endlessly. What is called a conformation is the site where spirit and qì travel, enter and exit. It is not skin, flesh, tendon or bone.

節之交，三百六十五會，知其要者，一言而終，不知其要，流散無窮。所言節者，神氣之所遊行出入也。非皮肉筋骨也。¹⁷

It is thus clear that in ancient times the intention of inserting needles into acupoints served a different purpose than mere physical manipulation of anatomical structures such as skin, muscles and nerves. The above quotations seem to indicate that the practice of acupuncture is essentially a spiritual endeavour aimed at connecting Dào, spirit and heaven with the patient's heart. The aim of acupuncture practice is revealed in the last line of the following quote, according to which a practitioner who is able to connect to spirit can help the patient do the same:

When [a conformation] in the channel has arrived, carefully guard it from loss and do not modify it. Deep

or shallow are [mastered] within the [practitioner's] will, as he knows the interior and exterior of a disease. Distant and near appear as one, deep and shallow align their measure. As if standing upon the edge of the abyss and not daring to fall in, as if trying to catch a tiger to take its strength, the [practitioner's] spirit is not distracted by things, but observes the patient with a peaceful mind, avoiding looking left or right. If one does not want to lead evil down [with the needle into the patient], one must make his spirit proper and gaze into the patients' eyes wishing to control their spirit. This causes qì [of the universe, practitioner and patient] to flow easily [and connect].

经气已至，慎守勿失者，勿变更也；深浅在志者，知病之内也；远近如一者，深浅其候也；如临深渊者，不敢堕也；手如握虎者，欲其壮也；神无营于众物者，静志观病人，无左右视也，义无邪下者，必正其神者，欲瞻病人目制其神，令气易行也。¹⁸

The actions needed to restore harmony in the body are very limited in number - the liù jīng' only need to either speed up or slow down, and thus there is no need to have many drugs for many diseases.

This passage suggests that the practice of acupuncture should not be concerned with mere technicalities of which point might address which symptom, but rather with how it is possible to reach Centre - the site of the patient's 'true nature'. When this aspect of acupuncture is reached then diseases originating at a deep level of the heart can be remedied. This quality of treatment is only achieved when practitioners are able to reach Centre within their own self. Acupuncture then becomes more than just a mechanical therapy focused on physical stimulation of the body. Since the last century, mainstream acupuncture has lost this aspect of the cultivation of the patient's true nature. Hùnyuán medicine aims to bring this understanding back. Thus, in Hùnyuán Xīnfǎ, acupuncture is used along with other techniques of heart cultivation, and the selection of points has little to do with contemporary descriptions of their physical therapeutic properties.

Herbal preparations and strategy

Out of the hundreds of herbs used in Chinese medicine, in Hùnyuán medicine only 30 to 40 are utilised. The reason for using a small number is twofold: firstly, it has taken the authors years to research the behaviour of each herb in terms of its effects on the concealing/moving inward and separating/moving outward; secondly, the actions needed to restore harmony in the body are very limited in number - the liù jīng only need to either speed up or slow down, and thus there is no need to have many drugs

for many diseases. Only the most effective herbs to restore correct speed are used. The herbs listed below have been tested by the authors over the last two decades, and found to yield clear and predictable responses in terms of their behaviour in any given prescription:

1. Herbs for Yángmíng: Shēng Gān Cǎo 生甘草 (Radix Glycyrrhizae Uralensis), Zhī Mǔ 知母 (Rhizoma Anemarrhenae Aspheloidis), Bái Sháo 白芍 (Radix Albus Paeoniae Lactiflorae) and Huáng Qín 黄芩 (Radix Scutellariae Baicalensis) to speed up Yángmíng and help its concealing.
2. Herbs for Tàiyīn: Làn Guì 爛桂 (Ceylon Cinnamon), Ān Guì 安桂 (Vietnamese Cinnamon), Shān Yào 山药 (Dioscorea Opposite), Dǎng Shēn 黨參 (Codonopsis Pilosula), Shēng Jiāng 生薑 (Rhizoma Zingiberis) and Zhì Gān Cǎo 炙甘草 (Prepared Radix Glycyrrhizae Uralensis) to speed up Tàiyīn, or Bái Zhú 白朮 (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae) and Ròu Guì 肉桂 (Cortex Cinnamomi) to slow it down.
3. Herbs for Juéyīn: Dāng Guī 当归 (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) and Xiǎo Huí Xiāng 小茴香 (Fructus Foeniculi) to speed up Juéyīn or Shēng Dì Huáng 生地黃 (Radix Rehmanniae), Gǒu Qǐ Zǐ 枸杞子 (Fructus Lycii), Nǚ Zhēn Zǐ 女真子 (Fructus Ligustri Lucidi) and Hēi Zhī Má 黑芝麻 (Sesame indicum) to slow it down.
4. Herbs for Shàoyáng: Chái Hú 柴胡 (Radix Bupleuri) to speed up Shàoyáng.
5. Herbs for Tàiyáng: Má Huáng 麻黃 (Ephedra Sinica) and Guì Zhī 桂枝 (Ramus Cinnamomi) to speed up Tàiyáng.¹⁹

As explained above, before prescribing, a Hùnyuán practitioner always takes into account the patient's age, the severity of the condition as well as 'one' and 'two'. For instance, a young person coming to the clinic with a Tàiyáng cold injury slowdown can safely be prescribed Má Huáng Tāng (麻黃湯, Ephedra Decoction), whereas an older person with the same problem and a weak recharging ability should additionally be given a mixture of the herbs that work on the right side of the circle, i.e. Shēng Gān Cǎo and 'Fire Water'.²⁰ This way of operating follows a principle similar to the Shānghán Lùn²¹ strategy of using formulas such as Má Huáng Fù Zǐ Gān Cǎo Tāng (麻黃附子甘草湯, Ephedra, Aconite Accessory and Licorice Decoction) and Má Huáng Xì Xīn Fù Zǐ Tāng (麻黃細辛附子湯) in order to address both the interior and the exterior simultaneously. With young patients, Má Huáng Tāng will swiftly resolve a cold invasion, whereas in the older patient Má Huáng Tāng could further deplete their recharging ability. In Hùnyuán terms it is a formula that encourages separation. Whereas in a strong person separation can resolve a slowdown, in a weak person it could bring a collapse. Without awareness of the principles of unification, separation and recharging, this mistake is unavoidable.

Hùnyuán Xīnfǎ

Unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this article to present the subject of Xīnfǎ in depth. Suffice to say that in Hùnyuán Xīnfǎ the root of a person's emotions are investigated, including the selfish desires that arise after birth and give rise to disharmony and eventually physical disease. Thus Xīnfǎ aims to find and heal diseases that stem from beyond the physical realm.²² In terms of its method, amongst other things Xīnfǎ includes personal observation (including keeping a journal), specific self-study, self-cultivation and putting one's resolutions into practice. Besides being beneficial in helping the patient's personal growth, this practice brings about the awareness that unregulated emotions waste one's recharging ability and lead to the slowing down or speeding up of specific aspects of the six stages, thus causing disease.

Clinical case studies

The following case studies are presented to show how Hùnyuán medicine operates in clinical practice. However, to present a full case with the frequent modifications that occur through the course of treatment is likely to cause more confusion than clarity. These two cases therefore represent a 'snapshot' of a single point in time at the start of both treatments.

Case 1

Female patient, 43 years old

Main complaint: Infertility - diminished ovarian reserve.

Main symptoms: Inability to conceive for five years, three failed in vitro fertilisation (IVF) attempts. Feels generally tired, works long hours, thirsty (but prefers to drink warm liquids). Menses used to be painful when younger, but not anymore. Sleep is light and easily disturbed.

Pulses: thin, weak and slightly rapid.

Tongue: red tip, but overall pale and slightly cracked.

Diagnosis

Diminished recharging ability, slow Juéyīn, now without symptoms due to weak unification. Xīnfǎ measures are needed.

Explanation

The ability to conceive a child, besides requiring proper physical conditions such as open fallopian tubes and an appropriately thick uterus lining, also relies on the strength and quality of the egg and sperm. In Hùnyuán medicine, the sperm and egg are respectively called 'male pivot' and 'female pivot',²³ as at time of ovulation and ejaculation the egg and the sperm acquire life energy from the mother and father. This pivot is strong in the young, but weak in the elderly, matching the fact that one's unification and recharging ability decline with the years (which causes the ageing process). Clinical experience, as well as contemplation of the concept of pivot, show

that the amount of pivot in the egg and sperm fluctuates depending on the strength of unification in the mother and father. For example, when the mother is weak or sick the quality of the egg and the ability to conceive decreases, yet when she recovers and becomes stronger her ability to conceive increases. It is therefore not likely that the quality of the egg and its pivot are variables determined by age alone. This is supported by our experience that 95 per cent of Hùnyuán patients, who previously experienced failed or poor response to IVF treatment, responded more positively after a period of six to nine months of Hùnyuán unification acupuncture and herbal prescriptions - despite being older. A good recharging ability is essential in the female in order to produce a powerful pivot in the egg and thus conceive. In this case, the patient's age and lifestyle of excessive separation, with long working hours involving considerable emotional stress, caused a premature decline of her unification ability. As explained in the first part of the article, the excessive emotional discharge causes excessive separation from Centre, and consequently failure of unification and exhaustion of Centre. Symptoms such as the weak pulses, tiredness and light, disturbed sleep confirmed this diagnosis.

Unregulated emotions waste one's recharging ability and lead to the slowing down or speeding up of specific aspects of the six stages, thus causing disease.

Treatment strategy

When weighing 'one' against 'two' in this case, it was apparent that the proper measure was to use a unification strategy. However, it was also important to bear in mind the patient's past history of Juéyīn slowdown (manifesting as painful menses), as upon strengthening unification this may resurface. To deal with this patient the following two steps were required:

1. Unification herbal strategy to increase the patient's recharging ability;
2. If and when Juéyīn presents symptoms of slowdown, with recurrence of painful menstruation, the original prescription should be modified and acupuncture employed to speed up Juéyīn.

The unification strategy aimed to submerge fire into the body to convert into the body's own energy. This required specific hot herbs that increase fire, submerging herbs that submerge fire and prevent it from floating, as well as exiting herbs to release the added compression and facilitate harmony. Note that not all hot herbs can

accomplish this task, and that the correct hot herbs needed to be combined with the appropriate herbs to assist the process of submerging and concealing in order to achieve the desired result.

As this patient suffered from heart exhaustion caused by daily work-related emotional stress it was paramount, in addition to herbs and acupuncture, to teach her Xīnfǎ.

When the mother is weak or sick the quality of the egg and the ability to conceive decreases, yet when she recovers and becomes stronger her ability to conceive increases.

Herbal treatment method

Hot unification strategy:

1. Herbs to increase fire: Fire Water²⁴ 1 dropper, Ān Guì (Vietnamese Cinnamon) 30g and Lán Guì (Ceylon Cinnamon) 25g.
2. Unification herbs (not hot in nature: Shān Yào (Dioscoreae Rhizoma) 30g and Dǎng Shēn (Codonopsis Radix) 20g.
3. Submerging herbs: Zhì Gān Cǎo (Glycyrrhizae Radix preparata) 30g (prepared with organic molasses rather than honey, as it should not be too sticky²⁵ as this would slow down even more the already slow Tàiyīn).
4. Spinning herbs²⁶ that harmonise and submerge the hot herbs: Shēng Jiāng (Zingiberis Rhizoma recens - without skin²⁷) 30g
5. Small separation herbs: Dǎng Guī (Angelicae Sinensis Radix) 25g and Xiǎo Huí Xiāng (Foeniculi Fructus) 15g

Speeding Juéyīn modification (should menstrual pains resurface):

1. Decrease Ān Guì (Vietnamese Cinnamon) and Lán Guì (Ceylon Cinnamon) to 15g each and reduce Shēng Jiāng (Rhizoma Zingiberis) to 10g.
2. Add Xiāng Fù (Cyperus Rhizoma) 20g from five days before the expected date of menstruation until two days after they start
3. On day three of the menstrual cycle remove Xiāng Fù (Rhizoma Cyperi) and increase Xiǎo Huí Xiāng (Fructus Foeniculi) to 20g and Dǎng Guī (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) to 30g

Acupuncture treatment method

During the initial phase of treatment, unification acupuncture was indicated. As mentioned above, in unification acupuncture one uses three needles on the leg and one needle on the forearm. The needles between the ankle and knee increase energy flow toward the centre of the body and thus increase unification. The needle between the wrist and elbow serves as small exit

or separation to prevent congestion and loss of harmony. Different points may be used; here, as an example, a good combination would be Zú sān lǐ 足三里 ST-36, Tài xī 太溪 KID-3, Yīn líng quán 陰陵泉 SP-9 and Shǒu sān lǐ 手三里 L.I.-10. During modification, if Juéyīn needed speeding up, Zú sān lǐ 足三里 ST-36 should be removed and Wài guān 外關 SJ-5 added in its place.

Precautions

When menstruation is no longer painful the practitioner should stop the modified formula and prescribe the original hot unification combination of herbs again. It is important that the practitioner pays close attention to the slightest disharmony resulting from hot unification herbs and modifies appropriately when needed. Some signs to look out for when prescribing unification herbs are:

1. If the patient develops even a moderate thirst, this indicates that Yángmíng has started slowing down. In such cases the practitioner must immediately add Shēng Gān Cǎo (Radix Glycyrrhizae Uralensis) 10g in order to increase its speed.
2. If the patient develops even slight bloating after taking unification herbs, this indicates a slow down of Tàiyīn. In this case, it is beneficial to immediately decrease the dose of Shān Yào (Dioscorea Opposite) and add Xī Shā Rén (Fructus Amomi) 西砂仁²⁸ 10g to speed up and dry up Tàiyīn.

Case 2

Male patient, 48 years old

Main complaint: Type 1 diabetes since age 34

Main symptoms: Continuous sensation of heat, desire for large amounts of cold drinks, mild tiredness in the afternoon, slightly pale complexion. Sleep, bowel movements and urination were normal. Centre seems proper.

Pulse: strong, surging and slightly rapid.

Tongue: red, dry and slightly long.

Diagnosis

Greatly diminished recharging ability, extremely slow Yángmíng. No Xīnfǎ needed.

Explanation

The patient's age and the chronicity of his problem clearly showed the weakness of recharging. However, with such a decline, the pulse should be weak, and the patient should feel cold and desire warm liquids. Here, on the contrary, the pulse was big, and there were feelings of heat and thirst for cold drinks, which confirmed the slow down of Yángmíng.²⁹ The difference between an acute and a chronic Yángmíng disease depends on whether there is strong or weak recharging. Normally, when recharging is weak, the symptoms are milder since the body energy

is low. In this case, however, although the recharging was weak, the symptoms were strong. This indicates that a severe slowdown was in progress. Understanding this principle means the difference between success and failure.

Treatment strategy

In this case, when weighing ‘one’ against ‘two’, it was apparent that using a unification strategy alone to address the weak recharging would not be appropriate. Here, it was best to intervene on two fronts:

1. Submerge and speed up Yángmíng with a heavy dose of mildly cooling herbs, in order to avoid damaging the recharging ability,
2. Strengthen unification, while guarding Yángmíng from slowing down again.

Explanation

Herbal preparations enter the body through Yángmíng - the mouth and stomach. When administering hot unification formulas to draw heaven’s principle into unification, hot herbs can make Yángmíng slow down. This may cause an acute aggravation of symptoms, and in a case as extreme as this the additional slowdown could lead to Yángmíng stopping altogether. When a part of the circle of unification and separation comes to a complete halt - even for a split second - in that moment life itself stops. This scenario should be avoided at all cost.

In addition to the above considerations, it should be taken into account that when Yángmíng displays heat symptoms two different treatment strategies are possible: submerging or cooling. To submerge Yángmíng means to speed it up. This, without putting the fire out, eases the slowdown and the symptoms it causes. To cool Yángmíng means to relieve the hot symptoms by draining the heat. Since this patient’s fire (i.e. yáng or Heaven’s Principle) was already greatly deficient in the recharging instrument, it would have been an error to use ‘cooling’ rather than ‘submerging’ measures. Cooling, in fact, tends to be more appropriate for younger patients with a strong recharging ability.

Thus, in this case a delicate balance was needed to address both the dangerously slow Yángmíng and the severely weak recharging ability. Having given the appropriate formula to speed up Yángmíng, once the thirst and heat symptoms decreased it would then become possible to gradually introduce a hot unification formula whilst continuing to prevent Yángmíng from slowing down again (by including herbs that submerge Yángmíng).

Herbal treatment method

Submerge Yángmíng strategy

1. Herbs to submerge Yángmíng: Shēng Gān Cǎo (Radix Glycyrrhizae Uralensis) 40g, Bái Sháo (Paeoniae Radix Alba) 50g and Zhī Mǔ (Anemarrhenae Radix) 30g.
2. Unification herbs (that are not hot): Shān Yào (Dioscoreae Rhizoma) 30g, Dǎng Shēn (Codonopsis Radix) 30g and Zhì Gān Cǎo (Glycyrrhizae Radix preparata) 20g (prepared with organic molasses – see ‘Case 1’ above).
3. Small exiting:³⁰ Dāng Guī (Angelicae sinensis Radix) 10g.

Hot unification strategy

When thirst and heat subside, the herbal medicine should be changed to a hot unification formula, starting with small heat and gradually increasing it. The following should be borne in mind:

1. Yángmíng should still be guarded with Shēng Gān Cǎo (Radix Glycyrrhizae Uralensis) 30g, Bái Sháo (Radix Albus Paeoniae Lactiflorae) 30g and Zhī Mǔ (Rhizoma Anemarrhenae Aspheloidis) 5g.
2. Strategy to introduce hot unification herbs: Add Làn Guì (Ceylon Cinnamon) 20g and gradually increase it to 40g. After two months add Ān Guì (Vietnamese Cinnamon) 10g and then increase it to 20g. After one or two more months, add one dropper of Fire Water. Four to Five months into treatment, parallel to increasing the fire in the formula, decrease Shēng Gān Cǎo (Radix Glycyrrhizae Uralensis) to 10g and increase Zhì Gān Cǎo (Glycyrrhizae Radix preparata) from 20g to 40g.
3. Small separation: With the increase of fire it is also appropriate to increase Dāng Guī (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) from 10g to 35g.

Precautions

If and when Yángmíng starts slowing down, herbs that speed it up should be added back in, whilst herbs that increase fire should be decreased. Normally the hot ingredients are taken out of the hot unification formula gradually and in the following order: Fire Water, Ān Guì, and lastly Làn Guì. Changing to a unification strategy can only begin when Yángmíng speeds up, nears proper harmony and the symptoms are resolved or eased. In order to ensure the appropriate guidance, patients should have the option to report their symptoms to their practitioner daily. This allows for swift modification of the prescription. Neglecting to pay attention to a patient’s symptoms for even one week can be dangerous, and all chances of recovery may vanish.

Conclusions

In the 20th Century, Chinese medicine tried to advance and match up to modern medicine. It improved its scientific standing and expelled superstition. However, to achieve this 'upgrade' it also neglected 'circle medicine' and became more physically-focused and symptom-based. Hùnyuán medicine is based on the circular motion of unification and separation and the principle of recharging life. It offers new options of treatment or, more accurately, reintroduces old options and further develops them. At a time when many modern methods reach a dead end in the treatment of disease, a newly redeveloped ancient circular idea of medicine promises great value for society as a whole and for individuals seeking other treatment options. The 'science of the circle' is still at the beginning of its rediscovery and must undergo a thorough and rigorous process of development. Our wish is to be of benefit in the 21st century in the battle against disharmony with nature.

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Vita Revelli graduated in 1982 from the College of Acupuncture (Leamington Spa) directed by J. R. Worsley. From 1984 to 1989 she lived in Beijing where she studied TCM gynaecology and herbal medicine at the Beijing College of TCM and privately with master Pang Yiwu. After returning to the UK, she taught herbal medicine at the London College of Herbal Medicine and in 1992 she moved to Greece, where in 1996 she founded AOM (Art of Oriental Medicine). Between 1989 and 2004 she travelled extensively to teach Chinese medicine in various European countries. She holds a BA in Chinese & Social Anthropology (SOAS). Fascinated by authors of the Ming Dynasty (Zhao Xianghe, Sun Yihui, Zhang Jiebing) and their discourses on how life comes about, she has spent years researching and translating their work, which led to her embracing Hunyuan medicine, which she now practices and teaches. She lives and works in Athens (Gr).

Endnotes

- 1 Zhāng Zhòngjǐng 張仲景 (150—219 CE), doctor of the later Hàn Dynasty, contributed greatly to Chinese medicine by clarifying the theory of the six jīng 經 (conformations/divisions), already formulated in the *Huángdì Nèijīng* (Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic) and by establishing its clinical application.
- 2 Tàiyáng, Shàoyáng, Yángmíng, Tàiyīn, Shàoyīn and Juéyīn.
- 3 Too early or too late refer to the normal times for waking up as indicated in *Sùwén*, 2.
- 4 'Water principle' is another term for 'unification', where Heaven's Principle is submerged into the body; when energy begins to discharge from the centre outward it is called water separation.
- 5 For more information see Seidman, Y. & Jeansch, T.A. (2013). *Hùnyuán Xīnfā: Lost Heart of Medicine*. Hùnyuán Research Institute: Greenwich, Connecticut, USA.
- 6 *Zhōngyōng* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean)
- 7 'All diseases itchiness and carbuncles belong to the heart' (諸病痒瘡, 皆屬於心): *Huángdì Nèijīng – Sùwén* (黃帝內經素問, Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic – Basic Questions) (1982). People's Medical Publishing House (人民衛生出版社, Rénmín Wèishēng Chūbǎnshè): Beijing, 74, translated by Y. Seidman
- 8 Separation means moving away from unification and relative stillness in order to spring into action. When we say 'the heart separates' it means that the Heart is the first stage of action, which always starts with an emotion.
- 9 See Seidman, Y. & Revelli, V. (2016). "An Introduction to Hùnyuán Medicine – Part 1", *Journal of Chinese Medicine*, 110, 49-56
- 10 Here a unification strategy would not be beneficial.
- 11 *Huángdì Nèijīng – Sùwén* 黃帝內經素問, 13, translated by Y. Seidman.
- 12 *Huángdì Nèijīng – Sùwén* 黃帝內經素問, 14, translated by Y. Seidman.
- 13 The *Sùwén* states that the best practitioner treats at the 'skin level', which means both superficial problems or actual skin problems. Here our meaning is that 'separation instrument' problems – i.e. anything going from center toward the skin – can be treated with acupuncture.
- 14 *Huángdì Nèijīng – Sùwén* 黃帝內經素問, 65, translated by Y. Seidman.
- 15 *Huángdì Nèijīng – Sùwén* 黃帝內經素問, 65, translated by Y. Seidman.
- 16 *Huángdì Nèijīng – Sùwén* 黃帝內經素問, 62, Translated by Y. Seidman.
- 17 *Huángdì Nèijīng – Lǐngshū* 內經靈樞, 'Nine needles and 12 origins' (靈樞經 – 九鍼十二原), translated by Y. Seidman.
- 18 *Huángdì Nèijīng – Sùwén* 黃帝內經素問, 54, translated by Y. Seidman.
- 19 Tàiyáng and Shàoyáng speed up when unification is weak. Here the proper measure is to strengthen unification. Some herbs, like Wú Wèi Zǐ 五味子 (Schisandrae Fructus), slow down Tàiyáng and arrest sweating, although as this would only solve the symptom, it is advisable not to use it. Slowing down separation or slowing down unification are neither common nor recommended in practice.
- 20 The extracts from Làn Guì, Ān Guì, Gān Jiāng and Xiǎo Huì Xiāng are used in Hùnyuán medicine as an effective and safer substitute for Fù Zǐ (Radix Lateralis Praeparata Aconiti Carmichaeli). They help to increase recharging when combined properly with other submerging herbs such as Zhì Gān Cǎo.
- 21 The *Shānghán Lùn* 傷寒論 – full title *Shānghán Zāibǐng Lùn* (傷寒雜病論, Treatise on Cold Attacks and Miscellaneous) was probably written before 220 CE. In it, Zhāng Zhòngjǐng explains the clinical application of the theory of the six jīng (confirmations/divisions) and the six stages of disease. It contains 398 sections and 113 prescriptions.
- 22 For more information see Seidman, Y. & Jeansch, T.A. (2013). *Hùnyuán Xīnfā: Lost Heart of Medicine*. Hùnyuán Research Institute: Greenwich, Connecticut, USA.
- 23 The word 'pivot', rather than 'energy', indicates that it is a life seed transmitted from parents to their offspring.
- 24 See note 20.
- 25 After soaking the herb in a mixture of one-third molasses to two-thirds hot water (to dilute the molasses), this is then baked at low temperature to dehydrate it. In this way stickiness is greatly reduced.
- 26 Spinning means to merge the two herbs together so that neither floats or sinks; Zhì Gān Cǎo by itself would sink, thus speeding up Tàiyīn and causing loose bowels, whereas the cinnamons (Ān Guì and Làn Guì) by themselves would float.
- 27 To increase unification, as the peel (the most exterior part) would encourage separation.
- 28 Xī Shā Rén 西砂仁 comes from Burma and India and its action on the body is that of speeding up Tàiyīn, whereas Chūn Shā Rén 春砂仁 comes from Guǎngzhōu and slows it down.
- 29 Note that there is not necessarily constipation in Yángmíng disease. The *Shānghán lùn*, for instance, distinguishes between Yángmíng channel disease versus Yángmíng bowel disease.
- 30 As unification means sleep, immobility and emotional stillness, a small quantity of separation herbs in the unification formula guarantees continuity of flow.