

Book Reviews

Yin Lin Gai Cuo (Correcting the Errors in the Forest of Medicine)

Translated and commented on by Yuhsin Chung, Herman Oving and Simon Becker
Blue Poppy Press, 2007
ISBN 189184539X

Blood Stasis: China's Classical Concept in Modern Medicine

Gunter Neeb
Churchill Livingstone, 2007
ISBN 044210185X

Two recent related but different publications concern the Chinese medical concept of blood stasis. The first book is a complete translation of the *Yi Lin Gai Cuo (Correcting the Errors in the Forest of Medicine)*, originally written by Wang Qin-Ren, with the English version being translated and commented on by Yuhsin Chung, Herman Oving and Simon Becker. The book has two sections, the first being a translation of the original text and the second being a review of the contemporary clinical uses of Wang Qin-Ren's formulae. The original text, which was first published in 1830, is best understood as a 'foundational work in modern Chinese medicine' that introduced a number of important Chinese herbal formulae for treating blood stasis, such as Xue Fu Zhu Yu (Mansion of Blood Stasis-expelling Decoction) and Bu Yang Huan Wu Tang (Yang Supplementing Five [tenths] Returning Decoction).

Book 1 has 35 sections, each relating to a specific issue. Sections 1–7 focus on the anatomical revisions that Wang Qin-Ren made after observing corpses and dismembered criminals. Wang Qin Ren theorised that the dried blood (that collected in the area above the diaphragm, which he called the mansion of blood) observed in corpses was the source of most disease. These

sections are a fascinating read, especially when comparing these concepts to modern anatomy. There are numerous reproductions of the organs and ducts that assist the reader to understand Wang Qin-Ren's developing thesis. Sections 8–11 introduce the herbal therapy for blood stasis and outline the pathoconditions treated by the three major herbal stasis-expelling formulae, namely Tong Huo Xue Tang (Orifice-freeing Blood-quickening Decoction), Xue Fu Zhu Yu Tang (Mansion of Blood Stasis-expelling Decoction) and Ge Xia Zhu Yu Tang (Infradiaphragmatic Stasis-expelling Decoction). Sections 12–35 cover a variety of pathoconditions, including hemiplegia, scourge toxin, tugging wind, pox, pregnancy and impediment.

The text also has much to contribute to the clinical use of the herbal formulae, especially with the inclusion of Book 2. Here the translators have collected a variety of modern clinical reports that bring to life and explain in detail the nuances associated with the use of eleven of Wang Qin-Ren's formulae. The composition, preparation and original indications and modifications are given for each formula. This is then followed by modern functions and indications and an in-depth formula analysis and discussion. Several case reports from the

Chinese medical literature then follow that bring to life the clinical complexity of each formula.

A bibliography and glossary of comparative terminology (Pinyin, Chinese character, Eastland Press, 'Practical Dictionary' and Blue Poppy Press) complete the text and allow the reader to cross-reference technical medical concepts across different publishing terminologies. The translators have succeeded in producing a very scholarly and detailed translation of the text, with bilingual printing (Chinese and English in Book 1) for the adept readers of modern Chinese. The ample commentaries and endnotes from the translators explain and elucidate many of the technical concepts and theories in the text. It is evident that the three translators bring together a unique skill set that includes academic, clinical and English writing skills to produce a text that sets the standard for future translations of Chinese medicine texts.

Blood Stasis by Gunter Neeb covers very similar ground but is a lot broader in outlook than the previous book. Whilst acknowledging the integral contribution from Wang Qin-Ren to the concept of blood stasis, the author draws on older and contemporary Chinese medicine texts to produce a clinical manual on the Chinese condition of blood stasis. Section 1

relays the theoretical, historical and background knowledge of the concept of blood stasis both from a western and, more importantly, a traditional Chinese medicine perspective. The aetiology, diagnostic and syndrome differentiation, as well as principles of treatment, are explained in a clear and rational manner. Chapter 7 outlines 46 medicinals that are commonly used for blood stasis. Tables are included, detailing the pharmacological effects of the medicinals, as well as the more traditional Chinese medical concepts of their effect on channels, organs and site of action. Also included are summaries of the effects of combining blood stasis medicinals (Pei Yao) with other medicinals, such as exterior-relieving and Qi-strengthening medicines. Chapter 8 then introduces 32 commonly used formulae, outlining their composition, application, action, explanation and, where appropriate, suggested acupuncture treatment. Chapter 9 follows with 20 cases studies from famous ancient and modern TCM

practitioners that further elucidate the clinical usage of the blood stasis-expelling formula. The author has contributed a commentary for each case study that further examines the clinical reasoning underlying each case.

Section 3 (Chapter 10) again includes a translation of Wang Qin-Ren's *Yi Lin Gai Cuo*. Whilst covering similar ground to the previous text, the lack of commentary precludes the reader from a comprehensive understanding of some of the technical concepts associated with the text. Indeed, it is interesting to compare the two translations! Also included are excerpts from six other Chinese medical texts that contribute to the further understanding of the concept. The author has also included 63 colour tongue slides and sublingual photographs that exemplify blood stasis.

Finally, there are nine appendices, including glossaries for both technical Chinese and western medicine terms,

and lists of Chinese medicinals and their western pharmacological actions. Appendices 4 and 5 consist of an index of medicinals and formulae, a bibliography, a listing of eminent Chinese physicians and their works, and a short bibliography of the author's publications.

Together these two texts present a formidable foundation for the study of blood stasis for the western Chinese medicine practitioner. The importance of the first book lies in its ability to allow access to and an in-depth understanding of an English translation of a primary medical text that has contributed to the contemporary practice of Chinese medicine. The second book amasses a broader and more clinical perspective. Together these two books complement each other and give a comprehensive and authentic basis for the understanding and treatment of blood stasis.

Reviewed by Chris Zaslowski

Currents of Tradition in Chinese Medicine 1626–2006

Volker Scheid
Eastland Press, 2007
ISBN 9780939616565

Volker Scheid, in his second book, sets out to look at the problem of tradition and Chinese medicine. He tackles questions such as 'how can a medical tradition with cultural roots very different from those in the West survive and even thrive in places as far afield as the US and the UK in the twenty-first century?' Scheid's method is to look at how medicine was actually practised in imperial China. This study carries us on a journey stretching from 1626 to 2006.

Scheid first provides as good an overall general picture of the development of Chinese medicine from the Song period until now as you will find in the English language. He draws on works in Chinese and English. His training as a historian means that he is able to tease out what is important for us to know. Scheid denies being a Sinologist, but I believe his love of Chinese medicine and his deep attachment to China bring new depths of nuance to the areas of both Chinese medicine studies and Chinese studies in general.

He then dives into a specific group of practitioners in China. This group came to be known as the Menghe current. This is where Scheid's attention to detail and his erudite scholarship really drew me in and stunned me. Scheid traces the lineages in detail from primary sources. He must have spent years going through old records and diaries, which most people would have found boring. From these old pages he has made these revered and amazing practitioners of imperial China come to life and made them real characters who we can identify with, as well as picking out their faults. We see these people – warts and all – in their daily practice and their daily lives, while we learn how they actually practised.

For those of us trained in the West, I believe that we are handicapped during our training by not having the stories that make it all real. A lot of the concepts are new and very abstract. We have discussed theories without really knowing the people who were the bearers of these traditions. This work makes it real. This is a story that humanises Chinese medicine.

Menghe is an area of China in Jiangsu. Many of our Australia-trained practitioners would be familiar with Nanjing, which abuts the Menghe area. Scheid goes on to show that the Menghe current had a huge influence on the development of the particular type of Chinese medicine that we are familiar with today. People as familiar to us as the recently departed and revered John Shen claimed to be part of the Menghe lineage.

The book comprises fourteen chapters, being a weighty study of the area. It is divided into three parts.

Part 1 deals with late imperial China, which formally came to an end in 1911. This period is fascinating as it represents imperial China in its maturity. Scheid shows us how the scholar-physicians reached a position of pre-eminence in Qing society.

Here we meet several families and learn of the beginnings of the Menghe lineage as embodied by people such as the famous Fei Boxiong. The scholar-physicians were at their peak in terms of respect, status and wealth. This was the last time that practitioners of Chinese medicine did not have to deal with the problem of what to do with western medicine. The scholar-physicians as paragons of virtue were confident and had their place in

the sun. This was not because of some mystical force which they inherited, but through hard work, a lot of study and, as Scheid shows us, through the ability to carry out the project of what it is to be human. Medicine was seen to be the art of compassion. Dripping through every page of this book is the idea that the never-ending project of self-cultivation or self-improvement sits at the heart of what it is to be a good doctor. Ethics, morality and good old-fashioned virtue were essential components of the project of medical practice.

Part 2 deals with republican China (the period from the fall of the Qing Imperial Court in 1911 until the end of the Nationalist Party rule in 1949). This period sees Chinese medicine moving into Shanghai. Scheid the historian gives us vignettes of the growth of Shanghai, now the largest city in China. We see the origins of its dynamism in these chapters.

We learn a lot about that giant of his time, Ding Ganren, and his medical clan and lineage. This was an intense period of questioning, not just in Chinese medicine, but Chinese thought in general. This was a period of turmoil in intellectual circles, one in which Chinese medicine nearly did not survive. We see how the practitioners of Shanghai and elsewhere cleverly negotiated the survival of Chinese medicine.

Part 3 looks at contemporary China and how the Menghe practitioners of Chinese medicine have managed the years of rule by the Communist Party, which took power in 1949. Maoist China saw sharp twists and turns in the fortunes of Chinese medicine and we see this through the stories of the survivors of the Menghe lineage. From

difficult beginnings an institutional infrastructure for TCM was established. Scheid summarises the vicissitudes of medicine in China and brings us to the present day. Here we meet revered practitioners such as Qin Bowei, Zhang Cigong and Cheng Menxue.

In the epilogue, Scheid signals a warning, and seems to be yearning for the preservation of the ineffable. His discussion is a poignant reflection on the things that make Chinese medicine valuable and precious.

A lurch towards the 'McDonaldisation' of Chinese medicine would mean the loss of diverse currents of practice. That this may have already happened is another debate. Paul Unschuld has already said that he thinks Chinese medicine is dead. He argues that we have cut off the cultural roots, which means we are as fossils fighting a losing battle. Scheid shows that there may be ways to avoid this fate.

This work is a very useful study for any practitioner who wants to know where it all came from. We can see where some of our professional antecedents lie. Scheid also grapples intensely with the question

of how such an antiquated discipline is still valuable in a different place and time. His analysis concludes that medical practice stretches backwards and forwards in place and time, that the practices of our forebears are as relevant today as forever, and that we are part of that tradition whether we may like it or not. Lack of space means I cannot do justice to his arguments in this review.

In his first book, *Chinese Medicine in Contemporary China*, Scheid argued that diversity and plurality are essential features of medical practice. He was able to show that modern-day TCM has its origins in complex machinations involving the very survival of Chinese medicine.

Scheid brings a new flavour to historical analysis as he is still a practitioner, seeing patients daily, fitting in his research around his clinical work. This added dimension obviates the shortcomings in the work of some medical historians who do not actually understand Chinese medicine in depth.

I found it such a fascinating read that I am on my fifth go and still finding things to chew over.

This is not a clinical handbook. Rather, it provides an intellectual framework to what it is that we are practising. It gives us context, gives us a place and argues how we can be potent practitioners and effective members of our profession and our communities. Medicine is more than just a tool. It is also a 'thread that allows people to establish connections, a tool for creating identities, and a strategy for accumulating capital and extending influence.' Nathan Sivin, in the foreword, points out that medical currents are not just bodies of theory and method, but networks of people diversely motivated.

The notion of the self, in relation to others and as an agency of transformation, generates potency as a practitioner and as a human being.

I believe this work is a beginning for more people in our field to do scholarly research that looks at what we are really doing. There are so many unanswered questions. Most of the history of Chinese medicine has not been analysed at the micro level – the level of human lives. This is a good start.

Reviewed by James Flowers

The Practice of Chinese Medicine

Second Edition
Giovanni Maciocia
Churchill Livingstone, 2007
ISBN 9780443074905

The new edition of Giovanni Maciocia's *The Practice of Chinese Medicine* arrived at the clinic the other day. On opening the package, the first thing I noticed was that this book is almost a third thicker than the first edition. For those who have not read the first edition, it covered aetiology, channels, diagnosis, differentiation and treatment, prognosis and prevention, western differential diagnosis with Chinese medicine treatment strategies using acupuncture and Chinese herbal therapy for various common acute and chronic conditions.

This second edition is quite a shift from the previous one, first published twelve years ago. Expanded and updated, some of the chapters have new sections on pathology, treatment strategies and principles of point selection, as well as modern Chinese literature, reports of clinical trials and patient statistics from the author's own clinic. These have all added depth to the chapters. At the end of each section are summaries clearly outlining the important messages. Additional pictures and diagrams, as well as boxes with updated clinical notes

and important information related to the subject, make this new edition more user friendly.

Also new are the fourteen additional chapters that include depression, anxiety, goitre, hypertension, nausea and vomiting, acid reflux, stomach ulcers, urinary retention, interstitial cystitis, benign prostatic hyperplasia, prostatitis, fibromyalgia and erectile dysfunction. The chapter on mental-emotional problems has been expanded, from one chapter in the first edition to eight chapters in this edition, adding depth to this important area of clinical practice.

Other changes include the removal of all patent Chinese herbal products because the author is concerned with quality assurance and the use of banned or toxic contents or western drugs in some of the herbal products. Original herbal formulae containing banned products in some countries are however included, as the author feels that listing them allows the practitioners to see the functions of these herbs and gives them sufficient information to find appropriate

substitutes. In addition, the names of some chapters have been changed to reflect improved understanding of some clinical conditions.

The new edition is in hard cover and printed on quality paper, which is the norm for this publisher and author. The book is printed in a two-tone colour, making it easy and quick to identify important areas.

This well laid-out book with excellent texts is easy to use, and suitable for Chinese medicine students and practitioners. To quote from another new book edited by Hugh MacPherson, *Acupuncture Research*, 'One of the key characteristics of a profession is the ownership of a unique body of knowledge that informs professional practice and is constantly reviewed, renewed and augmented by the profession itself.' This beautifully presented text by Maciocia has clearly achieved this outcome.

Reviewed by John Deare