

Book Reviews

Shang Han Lun Explained

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Churchill Livingstone, 2008
ISSN 9780 7295 3881 7

Diagnosis Study Guide

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Eastland Press, 2008
ISBN 978 0 939616 64 0

Shang Han Lun Explained

The recent publication of *Shang Han Lun Explained* marks an important landmark for the development of Chinese herbal medicine in Australia. Written by two Australian TCM practitioners, Greta Young Jie De, a strong advocate for classical Chinese medicine and Robin Marchment, a specialist in Chinese language, the book offers an accurate translation and in-depth commentary on this important Chinese herbal canon. The book has two aims as pointed out in the preface, firstly to explain the theory of *Shang Han Lun* and secondly to explain how the ideas and principles of the text can be used to treat disease in modern times. The text that it has been based on is the Ming Dynasty's Zhao Kai Mei edition and while the 398 original clauses have been included in the text they have been rearranged by the authors in terms of clinical relevance. This allows the reader to have a continued focus on a concept or disease pattern without having to refer to other pages and clauses. The authors have also made extensive use of numerous summaries, tables and key points to assist understanding and clarify difficult phrases and concepts.

The 543-page book is divided into nine chapters and has sixteen appendices. Chapter one introduces the main concepts associated with the patterns of the six channels. A brief introduction to the historical development of the text and its methods of diagnosis and disease transmission are introduced. Sections on the ebb and flow of qi in the six channels, decoction and administration methods complete this chapter and make it an excellent introduction to the next six chapters.

Chapters two to seven concentrate on each channel pattern individually, commencing from *Tai Yang* and finishing with *Jue Yin*. Every chapter has numerous sections, each focussing on a specific formula conformation or disease pattern. For example, in the *Tai Yang* chapter there are sections on the channel patterns, the hollow organ patterns (*fu*), disease transmission and their treatment, transmuted (deterioration of the disease) patterns and their treatment, transmuted patterns following inappropriate therapy and specific symptoms such as glomus and chest bind associated with the *Tai Yang* pattern. Each concept area commences with the original clause (in modern Chinese characters) and

the English translation often followed by the formula, directions for its use and a lengthy discussion on the clause. Interspersed are case studies which demonstrate the clinical usage of a specific formula and modern applications of the ancient formula. These six chapters are extensive in detail and reflect a high level of scholarship and clinical relevance.

Chapter 8 introduces the disease concept of *Huo Luan*, often translated as 'sudden upheaval' or 'sudden turmoil' which refers to a range of acute digestive disorders such as food poisoning or gastritis. Several clauses from the text are used to identify the symptoms and treatment of the condition. Again, numerous case studies are used to highlight the flexibility of several herbal formulas such as *Li Zhong Wan* and *Si Ni Tang* used to treat the condition.

The final chapter focuses on the convalescent period after the disease and the potential for relapse called Yin Yang Exchange and Taxation Relapse. Further relevant clauses are introduced with their appropriate treatment and the rationales of why and how these patterns may have arisen are explained.

The sixteen appendices take up over 100 pages and introduce supplementary information that aids understanding of the text in general. The appendices are: App. 1. Additional Clauses not included in the Main Chapters; 2. The Sequence of Clauses in the Zhao edition of the Text; 3. Clause Index; 4. Summary of Formulas and Indications; 5. Formula Index; 6. *Fu Zi* Research; 7. Index to Symptoms and Ailments; 8. Glossary; 9. Weights and Measures – as used in the ancient text; 10. Han Dynasty Time – the ebb and flow of the six channels; 11. Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches; 12. Chinese Dynasties and their Historical Periods; 13. Notable Figures in Chinese Medicine; 14. References; 15. Herb Names – Cross Reference of Chinese and Pharmaceutical Names and 16. Bibliography.

This text offers a detailed analysis of one of the most important Chinese herbal clinical manuals. It is the basis for treatment for not only acute disease but also many chronic diseases currently seen in clinics across Australia. The authors have raised the benchmark and have made the learning of classical Chinese medicine attainable by anyone who studies this book.

Reviewed by Chris Zaslawski

Diagnosis Study Guide

Diagnosis is the bridge between theory and clinical practice. Having taught this subject for nearly twenty years, I am always on the look out for new texts. The recent book, *Diagnosis Study Guide* is a welcome addition to the growing number of specialised texts on Chinese medical diagnosis. What is especially useful in this new book is the extensive use of flow charts and the numerous tables that help the student or practitioner understand the pathomechanisms of many symptom/signs and diseases. Also unique to the text is the Questions and Answers for Deeper Insight sections which explain and clarify the theory behind difficult concepts. For example, 'How does blood stagnation cause thirst without a desire to drink' or 'Why does the body temperature increase between 3 and 5 pm in the *yang ming* organ pattern?'

The text is divided into four chapters each concentrating on one of the four methods of Chinese medicine (Inspection, Listening and Smelling, Inquiry and Palpation). Each sign/symptom is given a definition, with the pathomechanism

followed by the clinical significance of the sign/symptom. Often a table is used to differentiate between different TCM patterns associated with the symptom/sign. Both tongue inspection and pulse examination are given extensive coverage, as are the ten traditional questions. The text also has a 200-question multiple-choice self-examination with answers, which is a good way to check ones level of understanding. An interesting aspect is that the material has been peer reviewed prior to publication ensuring the accuracy and clarity of the content. While this book has been written for the student, it also has something to offer the experienced practitioner, especially some of the responses for the 'Questions and Answers for Deeper Insight'.

The layout is clear and the text is organised in a systematic and logical manner. The material is 'chunked' and has been written to distil the basic concepts and ideas associated with each diagnostic symptom/sign. This text is an excellent primer before progressing to more complex diagnostic perspectives such as *zangfu bian zheng* and students should consider this text when first beginning the study of Chinese medicine diagnostics.

Reviewed by Chris Zaslawski