



Voice From A Mountaintop

HEINER FRUEHAUF ON TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE AND LYME DISEASE

An Three Part Interview By Regina Weichert

This interview grew out of conversations from August through December 2015 between Heiner Fruehauf, PhD, LAc, and Regina Weichert, founder of Lyme Nation. With thanks to Dr. Fruehauf for so generously sharing his time and thoughts.

PART 1

REGINA: *I understand your approach has been called “Slow Medicine,” can you say more about that?*

HEINER: I don’t know whether that’s the only thing I would call my approach, but I definitely like the concept. It obviously comes from the term “slow food” vs. fast food. We live in a day and age when people are expecting immediate results. For instance, I just had a group of college kids at my home over the weekend. While they were all very nice and respectful, a lot of them turned out to be addicted to drugs that had been prescribed by their college doctors for a variety of anxiety and depression disorders. At first, these types of medications may have helped them to focus better in class, but eventually they discovered that the drugs were creating serious problems for them in the long term. This situation is sort of a metaphor for our present way of life. There is a relentless focus on short-term satisfaction, which will invariably create long-term issues down the road, whether it’s in the realm of

credit card use, financial planning, healthcare, home construction, agriculture, or our relationship with the environment in general—all of it is focused on the “right now.” In German there’s a saying, “Nach mir die Sintflut“ (may the floods come after me), or in other words, “I’m going to go ahead in this way now, no matter what impact my actions have on the planet and future generations.”

But to answer your question more directly, Chinese medicine is based on Daoist principles, and Daoism used to be a way of nature-based thinking rather than a religion. To the ancient Chinese, the Dao represented the laws of nature, “The Way” that makes the world go round. Resonating with this age-old philosophy, all forms of holistic medicine are based on the fundamental belief that nature creates and nature heals, and that the forces inherent in natural processes are the only thing that does the actual healing. Nature, however, has its own laws and its own time. All patients want to be better tomorrow, and yes, I too want their suffering to stop right away. But if we truly want our own bodies to

take charge of the healing, we must first recognize and acknowledge that the body has its own intelligence and ways of achieving a cure; any serious interference will only create deeper problems. If you plant a small seedling, you can't expect that it will grow into a massive oak tree overnight—it takes a predetermined amount of time for that to happen. By the same reasoning, if a patient comes in with osteoporosis, or cancer, or complex autoimmune disease caused by a combination of factors such as environmental toxicity, emotional trauma and nutritional deficiencies, making therapeutic inroads will take time. In contrast to modern medicine, many of my colleagues and I do believe that it is possible to restore emunctory detox function and reverse cellular degeneration all the way down to the bone layer. Most holistic medical traditions are therefore quite optimistic about the body's ability to bounce back. Rather than thinking “Oh, your liver is cirrhotic, it will only get harder and more enlarged as you age,” or “you are osteoporotic, it will only be downhill from here,” or, “you are schizophrenic, you will only get crazier and more dysfunctional with time,” we believe that in theory anything can be healed. It is part of this nature based thinking that every winter is followed by summer, every planetary mass is balanced by a counterweight in this universe, and every disease, no matter how serious, has its cure. However, this process will take time, the body's and nature's own time.

When a patient comes to me, I always take the following stance: “Your own body does the healing, so I personally can't guarantee you anything, but I will commit to being in the trenches with you along the way, and support you throughout all the ups and downs that you will experience.” At some point five years into the journey, a cancer patient may typically say, “My oncologist just declared me cancer free—just when I was beginning to forget what it feels like to be regarded as a healthy person.” Yes, there are of course stories of people fasting and detoxing for a mere week, purging a bunch of worms in the process, and being relieved of all their chronic health issues in a short period of time. But in my experience, healing is most often not that swift and mono-causal and heroically glorious of a process. In most cases, healing tends to be a very unceremonious and anticlimactic

type of affair, and it requires an understanding of the “slow” laws of nature.

When it comes to the treatment of Lyme disease this principle is especially important for both patient and practitioner. Lyme involves many organ systems and tends to be deep and systemic. An inflammation-prone acidic body milieu, for instance, needs to be changed to a more alkaline environment; year-long or even decade long trauma that habitually causes the body to be hyper-alert and overreact all the time—manifesting in the form of anxiety, insomnia, tinnitus, and autoimmune reactions—needs to be soothed and thoroughly reconditioned. This all takes time, and one can't just stop treatment at the first sign of trouble. Our world is becoming increasingly complex, and there are more and more elements in the environment that can potentially affect us. For instance, we can't just wake up in the morning and say, “Oh, I don't feel so good, I should stop taking my remedy because it probably caused an uncomfortable (Herxheimer) reaction.” When in fact, this may have been caused by environmental fluctuations, such as electromagnetic changes associated with a solar flare. When we are sick, it means that our ability to adapt to both natural and unnatural stress factors in our environment is compromised. We then become the proverbial canaries in the coalmine, and to change that status simply takes time.

To use another example, I can't just set off into the open ocean and head toward France, I need to have a plan and know the proper direction at all times. If I don't see land after two days, I can't just turn around or drastically change course—otherwise I might end up circling the open water for years. This is why a practitioner working with Lyme needs to have certainty of direction and experience at the outset of the journey, so s/he can say to the patient: “Please trust me, we will keep going in this direction; I know it may be scary and feel uncertain for a while longer, but we will eventually get there. Along the way, we won't be able to control the wind, and therefore the journey may take one month, but it could possibly take as long as three months. But it won't work to just say, ‘I so don't like this, I need to try something else.’” Especially considering the fact that most patients who come to my clinic have already tried so

many different modalities before. What we should do, therefore, is to contain people in their suffering as best as we can, and educate them about the laws of nature as they unfold in their bodies. And, most importantly, repeat the message that healing takes time.



REGINA: *There seems to be such massive confusion about Lyme and related infections, all the different symptoms Lyme causes in the body. From your perspective, is there some kind of unifying concept that explains these symptoms that Lyme causes? What is Lyme doing to us that this happens?*

HEINER: Once again, I would like to answer this question from the perspective of a system-based view of the world. Holism, in essence, is the way in which ancient people viewed nature and all of the myriad phenomena within it. Another time honored term is “alchemy,” meaning that everybody and everything and every situation represents a synthesis of different elements: everything is complex and the result of fusion. The ancient Chinese described this multi-tiered structure of reality through the interactive trinity of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. Our bodies and what goes on inside them cannot be considered to exist in a vacuum. There are biochemical processes on the cellular level; there are our thoughts and emotions; there are obvious environmental influences such as those from our immediate surroundings, as well as more subtle ones like cosmic radiation and constant bioelectromagnetic fluctuations in the atmosphere; there is the effect of social and community interactions; etc. All of these influences fuse together and determine how we are and how whole and healthy we feel at a given moment.

This way of looking at the world and our health is fundamentally different from how we have come to perceive reality, and our bodies and disease within it, through the conditioning of modern science. Science deems itself “scientific” precisely because it deliberately filters out the complexity of nature and the real world. All experiments are conducted in a controlled space and thus appear to reinforce the

mechanistic belief that every phenomenon can be reduced to a singular factor. In the case of Lyme, for instance, all suffering is pinned on the presence of *Borrelia spirochetes* and/or related parasites such as *Babesia* or *Bartonella*. This world view leads to the blaming of the outside world—if there is infection, it’s because of this bacteria or virus or mould etc. This attitude extends to everything else in our lives. If we feel awful emotionally, it must be because of our abusive parents, or our uncaring spouse, or an ignorant government, or an unjust god—most of us feel that we have been handed a raw deal. In contrast, ancient nature-based wisdom, along with virtually every spiritual tradition that exists on this earth, asserts that the only way out of this cycle of suffering is to acknowledge how our system reacts to outside influences, and to always ask “what is my role in all of this?”

All traditions of holistic medicine are founded on the observation that our bodymind’s interaction with external influences, viruses and spirochetes included, is more important than the presence and exact identification of the pathogens themselves. In Chinese medicine, for instance, bacterial or viral afflictions are called “external evils,” which depending on their accompanying symptom picture are further classified as “wind,” “damp,” “heat” etc. At the same time it is acknowledged that these external factors will not only always be there, but that they constitute a necessary part of every healthy ecosystem. Without movement, moisture, and warmth no life can exist. When we venture into a forest, we see that moss and lichen and insects and mushrooms grow everywhere. There is not a single tree that does not have something growing on it. The more advanced eco-sciences have shown that all such species play a positive role in the forest system; each can take over and consume a tree only if it is already rotted from within. The less we know about the complexity of the environment, however, the more we are driven by the urge to “purge” it and to “clean it up.” Our post-war generations have grown up surrounded by plastic and nylon and glass and cement, all of which look clean and antiseptic, whereas nature exhibits warts and bumps everywhere and appears wild and scary. As modern humans, we want to hose down the trees with pesticides and get rid of the lichen. As

a species, we don't really know how to respect the intelligence of nature and the complexity of living systems anymore. If we would look with an electron microscope at our skin, we would literally see billions of bacteria crawling around on it. In our gut, there is even more activity, and that's actually what keeps us alive. We are not robots made from steel or plywood or plastic, but we are alive because we consist of the microbes inside of us. If we are operating from a place of fear, however, and hose down this fragile system with antibiotics and steroids or other substances that severely interfere with the self-regulating forces of the body, we end up suppressing and killing the life forces inside us.

Ancient doctors, therefore, never worried much about the external aspects of a disease. More than 2,000 years ago, Chinese practitioners called an infection like Lyme *xuxie zheifeng*, meaning “deficiency-based opportunistic wind.” From this perspective, any infection is opportunistic—it looks for an opening (deficiency) in the body's defense system. In my state of Oregon, for instance, there are lots of hunters who test positive for Lyme, but they don't exhibit symptoms and thus don't have Lyme disease. They might begin to manifest symptoms when later on in life they experience crisis, such as a car accident or a divorce, leading the system to be in disarray and giving the Lyme a chance to erupt and take over. So from this perspective, it is the weakness of the immune system of the host that causes the disease, not the presence of the spirochete. In my approach to Lyme, therefore, I carefully avoid imitating the approach of modern medicine by hosing down the patient's system with a battery of herbs that mimic the effect of antibiotics.

Spirochete infections, especially, are similar to fungal infections in that they are totally systemic in nature. The Chinese medical literature thus describes their quality “as oil seeping into flour.” Spirochetes and other biofilm-secreting organisms are capable of developing a truly parasitic relationship with our immune and hormonal systems. The only way to get rid of them sustainably, therefore, is to rebuild our system's ability to defend itself and throw off or at least control these influences. The ultimate goal of the healing process is to repair the patient's immune

system, which most often has been damaged by antibiotic abuse during our childhood and teenager years—that's the disease, not the exposure to Lyme. This explains why some people who have been bitten by a Lyme-infected tick experience no symptoms whatsoever, while others have mild flu-like symptoms, and others yet become so violently ravaged by symptoms of body pain, mood swings and anxiety that they can't do anything but lay in a dark room for decades.

From an even deeper perspective, I personally see the epidemic proportions of this disease in recent decades as a symbol of growing disrespect for both our external and internal environments. On one hand, industrial development and the associated side effect of global warming benefits certain pathogens that are moving northward. Malaria, syphilis and other Lyme-like pathogens have always existed in tropical regions. On my property in the Pacific Northwest, however, we've never seen mosquitoes and other insects with infectious capability until about three years ago. We are thus all bearing responsibility for changing the greater environment with our life-style choices. On the other hand, we have dramatically diminished our immune forces as compared to what they were less than a 100 years ago. Thanks to the detailed documentation left behind by the 20th century researcher Weston Price, we know that the average adult male today exhibits only 10% of healthy gut bacteria and 10% of sperm count when compared to similar measurements conducted in healthy people during the 1940s. In my experience, these shocking numbers are directly tied to modern dietary habits and the habitual intake of antibiotics.



REGINA: *In your work you talk about how a lot of the treatments for infections in the Western world are more bitter and cooling versus the more warming influences that people really need. Is there a way that Western people can understand that better or differently?*

HEINER: From a generalized perspective, it can be said that all ancient civilizations—the Chinese, the Sumerians, the Indians, the Mayans, the Egyptians,

the Greeks and possibly even the Romans—have worshipped the sun. The solar forces have always been regarded as the main source of life on our planet. Chinese medicine is built upon the principle that solar yang qi warms, invigorates and heals, and most likely all other classical systems of medicine take this principle as their foundation, as well. From a modern naturopathic perspective, treating disease always involves stimulation of the *vis medicatrix naturae*, the healing power of nature as it manifests within our own body. These are different terms for the solar forces that make everything thrive in nature, both outside the body and inside. From an energetic perspective, antibiotics, steroids, painkillers, surgery, chemotherapy and radiation all exert a cooling effect on the body. “Cooling” is like cranking up the forces of darkness and night and shutting down the solar forces. We need cooling, of course, because if the heat and light of the sun were always in our face, we would burn to a crisp and everything would become a desert, which would also mean certain death. From the perspective of Chinese cosmology, however, the cooling forces of darkness are relative rather than absolute—meaning that yang represents the main force of creation and healing, which then needs to be punctuated by cooling yin periods in between. This is similar to getting a massage, which will work best if there is a rest period afterwards so that the stimuli received can reverberate within the system.

In general, as people of the modern industrialized age we tend to distrust the powerful forces of nature. We therefore feel safer if we can control the wild things—shut down the various urges of life, shut down complexity, shut down all things we don’t understand. We are doing that in every aspect of our lives, not just in how we look at the body, but at the land and our planet in general. The practice of modern agriculture and the concurrent decimation of plant and animal species on earth are also tied to the fear of nature’s power and complexity. Industrial fertilizers and pesticides demineralize the soil, and have a similar “dark” and “cooling” effect on the land and what grows on it, as does the use of antibiotics—anti-life substances—in medicine. The same holds true for architecture, city planning and global economics—there is hardly a city on the planet where there’s not a McDonald’s and

Kentucky Fried Chicken anymore. Everything is becoming less and less diverse and more and more the same. The diminishing strength of the life forces on a global level, and along with them the wildness and diversity they spawn, parallels the “cooling” and “shutting down” processes we have initiated in our own bodies. As I mentioned earlier, we know that we now have only 10% of gut bacteria and sperm count in comparison to healthy people who lived a mere 70 years ago. From the Chinese perspective, those phenomena are all manifestations of yang qi deficiency—lack of the solar life forces inside of our bodies.

From a natural medicine perspective, the only way to rebuild these life forces inside of us is to teach the body to heal itself rather than to curb its self-regulating mechanisms further with life-denying modalities. In the realm of herbs, it is the bitter ones that are classified as energetically “cold” and that work similar to antibiotics. As children of the modern age, even natural medicine practitioners and herbalists have often become conditioned into thinking that for the control of inflammation, Lyme included, we must inundate the body with cooling herbs. Lyme self-help books routinely include long lists of substances that would be classified as cooling or extremely cold in the Chinese materia medica: Andrographis (Chuanxinlian), Wormwood (Qinghao), Japanese Knotweed (Huzhang), Goldenseal, Oregon Grape, etc.; when the real problem is that our patients don’t have enough solar immune forces (Chinese: *taiyang*) pulsing through their defensive layers, which is what enabled pathogens to establish a foothold in the first place. Now that full-blown disease has developed, degenerative processes ensue and further hollow out the body’s light. I therefore often compare Lyme pathogens to the Dementors in Harry Potter, which suck all light away, leaving only hopelessness and despair.

The herbal approach that I teach practitioners in my field is to base their formulas on warming herbs such as cinnamon, ginger and aconite; substances that invigorate the solar yang forces in patients who were seriously immune deficient at the point of infection. I may also recommend the addition of modifying substances that reduce localized heat and balance

the pungent and warming effect of the yang herbs. But overall, it is my experience that constitutional remedies should be weighted on the warming or at least temperature neutral side. Unless the patient is 6 years old, or exhibits an acutely blazing bulls-eye rash accompanied by high fever—a true case of excess wind heat from the perspective of Chinese medicine—most of our Lyme patients tend to be cold, deficient and locked in a degenerative process. This means that they need to be warmed, opened and recharged with light rather than cooled, darkened and shut down even more.

A famous Chinese medicine quote says “bu tong ze tong,” which means “if there is blockage somewhere, it will lead to pain.” From that perspective, all of the various pain symptoms that Lyme patients typically experience result from energetic stagnation. Cold

is the most congealing force in nature—when you cool something, you contract it and shut it down. Warming, in contrast, opens things up. Bamboo Pearls, for instance, is an herbal product I designed for patients suffering from joint and connective tissue pain (often diagnosed as fibromyalgia or rheumatoid arthritis, both potential sequelae of Lyme). The lead herbs in this remedy are cinnamon, ginger and aconite, all of which are warming and move the “solar” yang qi of the body. They are also recognized as major anti-inflammatory and anti-pain herbs from the perspective of modern laboratory research.



Continued in Part 2