



# Voice From A Mountaintop

HEINER FRUEHAUF ON TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE AND LYME DISEASE

A 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 2

*REGINA: How did the ancient Chinese look at the immune system? Did they have an image or way of describing or visualizing it?*

HEINER: During the Middle Ages in the West there was a dramatic image called the Ouroboros, the dragon that bites itself in the tail. Both the dragon and the snake once used to be celebrated as symbols of nature's vigorous life force, not just in the East. Outside of the negative portrayal of snakes and dragons in the Christian tradition, they stood for the positive forces of nature, a visualization of what is called qi in Chinese medicine. Qi means breath and steam and energy and function, and is also called yang qi—the self-renewing and all-creative solar force. The dragon is drawn like a reptile and mythologically submerges itself in the water—a symbolic image of the life forces in a state of rest during nighttime or winter. It can also soar in the sky, portraying the life force in a state of expansion and outward activity during daytime and summer. The

dragon, therefore, stands for the rising light forces of nature that form the foundation of our immune system and all processes of healing. The proper Chinese medical term would be yang qi, a solar type of energy that circulates everywhere, enervates all tissues and brings with it nutritive fluids—this, in a nutshell, is the ancient Chinese vision of how the microcosm of our body functions and defends itself.

On a more detailed level, the cosmographers of ancient China divided the various states and functions of this same life force into twelve different stations. In nature, these would be the twelve months of the year, during which the sun appears to pass through the twelve stellar constellations of the zodiac. Parallel to this annual journey of the sun, they devised a medical system that describes twelve basic functions of our vital force. These are the so-called twelve meridian systems of Chinese medicine, and if we believe in the efficacy of this system, it includes the totality of all bioelectromagnetic, biochemical, mental, emotional and spiritual processes of human existence.

The human body features an incredible degree of complexity and sophistication, which we are beginning to glimpse only now. As a Nobel prize winning biochemist once calculated, if we wrote down every chemical reaction that happens in a single liver cell in only one second, it would take us a hundred years of reading twenty-four hours a day to finish it all—our body is that complex. The methodology of ancient people was to simplify this level of complexity, and categorize all of the body's processes in groups of similar functions. This is, in essence, the “science of symbols” that we find in Sumer, Egypt, India, China and all other high civilizations of antiquity. The Chinese, specifically, conceived of a way to describe both the spheres of macrocosm and microcosm in terms of different numerological systems: two (yin-yang), three (Heaven, Earth, Humanity), five (Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, Water), six (taiyang, yangming, shaoyang, taiyin, shaoyin, jueyin), all the way up to sixty-four (the 64 hexagrams of the *Yijing*).

When it came to the body, the Chinese described this flux of natural energy primarily in terms of twelve. The original system first shows up in written form in documents created around 350 BC, describing in detail the movement of the sun through the course of the twelve months of the year. Several hundred years thereafter, we find descriptions of twelve meridian networks in the human body that are deliberately based on the earlier macrocosmic circulation model. It is therefore important to recognize that the organ models presented in most ancient medical systems, Chinese medicine included, are not based on anatomical observation of the body—cataloguing how many tissue lumps there are inside of our body cavities—but that they represent a process oriented, functional system of medicine.

“As above so below” is the alchemical statement that sums up all holistic medical traditions in East and West. In the body, we have twelve functional systems; the Spleen, for instance, functions within the body like the forces that unfolded themselves during the fourth month of the year in central China, and the Heart functions like the forces that were at work during the summer solstice in the fifth month. The sum total of these forces—or really just one

circulating solar force that assumes twelve different postures along the way—covers the totality of bodily functions, including what we nowadays call the immune system. Half of these functional networks are in charge of moving the energy out, into the skin and muscles, into the head, into the extremities, while the other six are in charge of returning the life forces to a state of storage deep inside the body's invisible batteries.

When we get sick, whether it is the common cold or Lyme disease, the proper circulation of yang qi in and around the body's various parts gets compromised. This disturbance registers in the form of brain fog, poor appetite, gas and bloating, surface sensitivity, aversion to wind and cold, or alternating hot and cold sensations, or other signs of stagnation of the body's life force.



REGINA: *I understand that with traditional Chinese medicine you can send a very targeted signal to the body?*

HEINER: Classical Chinese medicine is truly a science in its own right. You don't need to have a Western medical diagnosis first in order to come up with an assessment and devise a treatment plan. As I outlined earlier, Chinese medicine features twelve functional systems that all work together, by supporting each other, controlling each other, and balancing each other at different levels. No ancient Chinese medicine doctor would have said “Oh, you are inflamed, it must be this bacteria or that virus, and within those it must either be malaria or borrelia or babesia or bartonella or rickettsia or ehrlichiosis. This level of specificity is the business of Western medicine.

Chinese medicine, in contrast, is big picture medicine. A Chinese herbal remedy is quite literally called a fang, which means “ballpark remedy.” So as a doctor, you don't need to conduct scores of expensive diagnostic tests fishing for specific infectious agents. But what you do need to do is to be in the diagnostic ballpark and go into the right direction with your treatment. A typical Chinese medicine practitioner

will ask, “Is the main issue in the Spleen? Is it in the Lung? Or is it in the Triple Warmer or the Kidney?” And then, in addition to zeroing in on the right “ballpark” with acupuncture or massage, you can choose from a plethora of herbal formulas to support the specific constitutional needs of the patient every day. At last count, the most voluminous dictionary of Chinese herbal formulas contained 98,000 different remedies that were recorded in the Chinese medical literature some time during the last 2,000 years. That gives you an idea of the depth and complexity of this science, as well as its capability to devise a highly specific and individualized treatment protocol. From a Chinese perspective, all herbs target specific meridians like a missile, or affect several meridian systems at the same time. The practitioner can therefore create a remedy that is targeted toward a specific organ network—more toward the Spleen, or more toward the Liver, etc.



REGINA: *One system within Chinese medicine is the Five Elements and the organ pairings, but is there another way of looking at things that has to do with the level of penetration of the pathogen?*

HEINER: For completeness sake, I should indeed mention that the full system of Chinese medical diagnostics includes the so-called Five Phase Element system that I referred to earlier. In addition, there are the systems of the so-called Six Conformations, which is often referred to in English as the Six Layer way of diagnosing. Within this system, most Lyme patients with degenerative neurological processes belong to one of the yin (cold and yang deficient) layers of disease penetration, taiyin or shaoyin or jueyin or a combination thereof. But in the end, these are just different ways of characterizing the nature of the twelve major functional relay systems that we have been speaking about all this time. The Liver, for example, is one of the twelve systems, but on the level of the Five Elements it is classified as a Wood system, while on the level of the Six Conformations it is labeled as jueyin, the deepest and most complex of the layers.



REGINA: *So it actually gives you more of a three-dimensional picture of what is going on?*

HEINER: Yes it does: when you refer to the Liver as the organ network associated with the phase element Wood, thus evoking the image of sprouting vegetation, Liver function is compared to the upwardly mobile yang powers of the spring season. When the Liver is referred to by the epithet jueyin, its deeper and more substance related yin aspects are underscored; the Liver “stores the Blood” according to Chinese medicine. Jueyin, moreover, means “counterflow yin.” Big trees are typical representations of the Wood element in nature. Sequoias, for instance, can move enormous amounts of water skyward against the force of gravity. The so-called Jueyin Wood organ system in humans, therefore, is portrayed as a functional network capable of circulating Blood and other essences against the flow of gravity to the head and other places located high up.

From a Chinese medicine perspective, Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s and other degenerative disorders of the brain are often associated with severe circulation issues in the head, caused by weakened jueyin—circulating blood against the pull of gravity—function. If somebody is diagnosed with a jueyin disease—which can also relate to the Pericardium, but most often involves the Liver—it means that the disease has advanced all the way into the Liver, compromising the specific function of bringing Blood circulation to the eyes, the hair and the brain. Jueyin represents the deepest of the six layers of disease. When people experience a heart attack or stroke, for instance, their condition is most likely preceded by a chronic problem that started 20 years ago, which finally evolved into a deep and serious circulation problem causing life-threatening damage.



REGINA: *People with Lyme can experience inflammation of the epithelium (the blood vessel lining), which can be a scary thing for people who are dealing*

*with that. Western medicine doesn't seem to have any answers for that other than procedures where people are having their neck vein opened up and balloons put in the vein. Does Chinese medicine have a different take on that particular manifestation of Lyme?*

HEINER: Yes, I believe it does. I most often diagnose patients with this particular complication of Lyme as suffering from a jueyin disorder, leading me to an herbal prescription called Danggui Sini Tang (Four Cold Extremities Decoction With Angelica Sinensis). This is the representative remedy for jueyin disorder in the 1800 year-old herbal classic *Shanghan lun*—the Treatise on Disorders Caused By Cold; or, if teasing out a bit more of the esoteric depth in the translation, Treatise on Disorders Caused by Compromised Storage of Solar Yang Qi. There it is again, the importance of yang qi. The *Shanghan lun* is a book that recommends a lot of ginger and cinnamon and processed aconite.



REGINA: *That's so fascinating because the Western world sees epithelium issues as a sign of inflammation, but really it's the contrary, it's a deficiency.*

HEINER: Yes, the nature of this problem is indeed deficiency based. The English word inflammation is obviously related to the term “flammable” and the idea that fires need to be controlled and extinguished. If somebody injures a leg and the tissue becomes swollen, we generally follow the knee-jerk impulse to get the swelling under control by putting an ice pack on it to cool down the body's over-reaction. Figuratively speaking, that's also what antibiotics, steroids and painkillers do. Their desired effect is like an ice pack that reigns in the body's reactions. When the real reason why the foot is swollen—because the body is trying too hard to get its own healing energy there—is ignored and remains unaddressed. The less healing energy is available, the more our body tends to become desperate, overreact, and become uncoordinated in its natural response. If we help to support its natural momentum, on the other hand, i.e. with Chinese trauma remedies that often include cinnamon and are intended to increase

local circulation, the swelling subsides because we are working with the body's natural intelligence rather than against it. In the system of Chinese medicine, external injury trauma is generally regarded as a cold influence on the body, rather than as something that's hot and needs to be calmed down. Similar reasoning can be applied to the blood vessel inflammation in the chronic stages of Lyme disease. As part of my approach to Lyme and other disorders that involve degenerative changes in the nervous system, I devised a remedy called Evergreen Pearls. It is based on the classical jueyin remedy Danggui Sini Tang I mentioned, and intended to increase microcirculation in the neck and head region, i.e. in cases of Alzheimers, Parkinsons, MS and the epithelial issues you mentioned. In addition, it can increase circulation all around. In modern China, Danggui Sini Tang is therefore often used as a frostbite remedy, because it is recognized for its ability to bring warmth to and restore circulation in the extremities.

The biggest thing Chinese medicine has to offer in regard to your question, of course, is its system based diagnostic and treatment approach. In the context of modern Western medicine, a blood vessel issue requires that we see a doctor who specializes in circulatory disorders. A nervous system problem—oh, you need to see the neurologist. An inflammatory problem—you've got to see the infectious disease specialist. Overspecialization is a serious problem in modern medicine, because it leads to a way of looking at the body that does not consider the complex ways in which the body's functions are intricately intertwined. Chinese medicine, and all true forms of holistic medicine along with it, are expressions of what we now call systems science. Portland State University, for instance, features a Systems Science Program that trains graduate students how to see connections between seemingly unrelated fields and systems and functional entities. That is, in a nutshell, the ancient way of looking at things: the recognition and celebration of how the functioning of nature's varied systems are mirroring each other holographically. That is precisely what yin-yang theory and the symbolism of the Five Phase Elements are, linking the way the planets circulate the sun to the way electrons orbit the nucleus of an

atom, or to the way in which energy circulates in the human body—exactly the same principals apply! In the domain of Western science, however, one of them would be examined by an astronomer, the other by a quantum physicist, and their work and interests most likely have little or nothing in common.

The observational disciplines of ancient China, however, have only one scientific language: the language of symbol science that keeps coming up in this conversation. Chinese medicine is the perfect example of a very complex and evolved systems science. It describes how different things and functions are related, rather than dividing them into different academic fields and terminology boxes. Chinese medicine, in essence, wants to take into consideration how nervous system inflammation does affect the blood vessels, and how the blood vessel issues, in turn, can potentially affect the bones, or how either of them can bring about pathological changes in a person's connective tissue.



REGINA: *Listening to you speak about multiple specialists not seeing the relationship between things, that is the complete reality of Lyme patients right now, because of all the different manifestations of symptoms.*

HEINER: That is exactly what I see in people who come to my clinic. They bring documents from different specialists and say, “I have Hashimoto’s,” or “I have lichen sclerosis,” or “I have interstitial cystitis,” or most typically “I have a host of autoimmune problems, and then also this other digestive issue called SIBO (small intestinal bacterial overgrowth syndrome), plus my gum and cognitive problems.”

Most often I say fairly soon, “It looks to me that you have only one disease—Lyme, or a type of Lyme-like infection.” From a Chinese medicine perspective, this means that I will focus on the underlying problem of yang qi deficiency, plus the “wind” and “damp” etc. pathogenic influences that opportunistically entered the system. Rather than focusing on seven different diseases, I will treat just one.

Being given the diagnostic runaround is one of the tragedies associated with Lyme. That is why it is such an expensive disorder, because not only do most insurance companies not pay for treatments associated with a Lyme diagnosis, but patients often find themselves hiring multiple specialists in order to find out what in the world is going on with them; often without obtaining conclusive answers in the end. The Chinese medicine approach, other than making it difficult for the borrelia pathogens and/or co-infections to stay in the body long-term, is to treat the underlying deficiency that allowed the Lyme to take a foothold in the first place. The result is that the multitude of symptoms will slowly—and this is important to understand—SLOWLY fade into the background. If the patient is too focused on immediate symptom relief in specific areas, this journey has the potential to become a frustrating experience.



Continued in Part 3