



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 3

REGINA: Some people with Lyme are diagnosed quickly, have a bulls-eye, take their antibiotics for 3 weeks, say “I’m fine” and never have a problem again. Then there are so many people who took antibiotics and that treatment didn’t work for them. It’s hard for me to assess if those people who say they are better really are, because a lot of them say, “Well, I still have some weird symptoms, or I can’t exercise like I used to.”

HEINER: There are two thoughts that come to mind with regard to why some people take antibiotics at the appearance of bulls-eye rashes and get better, and why others don’t. For one, the immune status of the patients was most likely different at the time of infection. And, there is also the possibility that patients think at the time that they are all better, but what they have really done from the Chinese perspective of the six layers is that they’ve driven the pathogen deeper into the system by taking antibiotics. In the beginning, the flu-like symptoms, the fever, and the rash may indeed disappear, but the

pathogen is now situated at a deeper level, where it eventually will affect the fascia, the nervous system or other internal places. I encounter that situation a lot! A patient may say, “I once had Lyme 20 years ago,” and I ask, “Why are you here now?” and the answer is “I have a lot of brain fog and chronic joint pain.” I most likely will tell the person, “You’ve probably have carried Lyme for all these years; your present problems are still Lyme related.”

In these cases, the Lyme pathogens were simply pushed deeper into the body, where they either caused a host of chronically progressing symptoms immediately, or waited their turn until the immune system became weak enough for them to wreak havoc—because of reduced immunity at old age, or a car accident, or emotional trauma caused by divorce or similar shock to the system. Then it roars back with a vengeance, often decades after the initial infection. I see this often with Lyme, but also with people who used to live in exotic locations; Peace Corps volunteers, for instance, who once contracted malaria or amoebic dysentery, and then took the

standard antibiotic Flagyl. They felt initially “all better,” but since that time their health was never the same. Ten years down the road, they get diagnosed with Crohn’s disease or another serious autoimmune problem, without anybody relating their “new” condition to the previous history of infection. The truth is that the pathogen has been in the background causing low-level mischief all the time, but has now reached critical mass and the body can’t fend it off anymore. Overreaction and complex autoimmune problems follow.



REGINA: *If someone walks into your clinic with a recent tick bite and a bulls-eye, how would you treat them?*

HEINER: I hear this question a lot, both from my patients and my students. I agree with many of my fellow health care practitioners that there may be a time for antibiotics in the treatment of Lyme, but only at the beginning. According to my observation, they should not be used for a long time, or later than six months after the initial infection. Since I am a Chinese medicine practitioner, I prescribe Chinese herbs for patients who do not wish to take antibiotics; generally a high amount of the combined remedies Lightning Pearls and Dragon Pearls for about 3 weeks. These were designed to drive out “wind” and “heat toxins.” In other words, they are as close to the effect of an antibiotic as an herbal remedy can be, but without the potential side effects.



REGINA: *Does that treatment actually expel the Lyme pathogen?*

HEINER: That is the intention. For this to happen, however, the quality of the herbs needs to be pure and potent, and the amount taken needs to be fairly high in order to kill off all of the pathogens before they’ve multiplied too much and penetrated into deeper layers of the body. Lyme is a bit like the AIDS virus—for the first few days the pathogen is very vulnerable, but then it becomes entrenched, systemic

and extremely hard to get rid of. If someone is afraid of not taking antibiotics at this stage, I recommend that they take a lower dose of the herbs alongside the antibiotics. The herbs will attack the pathogen on another level, and prevent it from going deeper and establish a systemic foothold.

The best thing after experiencing a fresh tick bite is to save the tick and send it off within 24 hours, that way one can obtain objective results as to whether borrelia is present in the tick. This way is especially useful considering the fact that presently there is no single blood test that is able to diagnose Lyme definitively. Many people who have it test in the “non-conclusive” titer range. That’s why in my lectures and articles on Lyme, I focus on the traditional Chinese method of observing subjective symptoms, and typically advise: “If you have body pain accompanied by mysterious neurological symptoms, plus wildly fluctuating mental-emotional symptoms, plus one or more digestive symptoms, plus indications of autoimmune activity, you’ve got Lyme—don’t wait for some test to confirm that.”



REGINA: *I was curious about aconite – is there a certain point at which you start to use it with a Lyme patient?*

HEINER: In general, I see three phases in the treatment of people with chronic Lyme. The first phase focuses primarily on getting rid of the “wind,” let’s call it reduction of the pathogenic load or latent inflammation. Lightning Pearls, Thunder Pearls, and Dragon Pearls are major remedies addressing this phase. The second phase represents a gradual shift toward tonification of the deficiency that allowed the Lyme to become systemic in the first place. This process of recharging the immune batteries is most effectively done with aconite, but the extremely hot and dry nature of this herb requires expert skills in classical Chinese differential diagnosis to determine if and when and how much and for how long aconite may be needed. The third phase, finally, is when there is very little or none of the original inflammation left, and the therapeutic focus has shifted to recharging the life batteries exclusively;

with Vitality Pearls, for instance, or other aconite based classical remedies such as Fuzi Lizhong Tang (Regulate the Center Decoction With Aconite) or Qianyang Dan (Submerge the Yang Pellet).

The older a Lyme patient is, the longer s/he has had Lyme, and the more deficient s/he was to begin with, the more likely it is that the pulse may reveal signs of Kidney yang deficiency—indicated by a flooding quality in the Kidney position, particularly on the left hand side. This is generally a clear indication that the so-called Fire of the Vital Gate (mingmen) is not rooted anymore, and has become like a leaky battery. The patient typically feels exhausted, yet at the same time anxious and unable to sleep, possibly suffering from palpitations. Together with the Kidney deficiency pulse, these symptoms are indicators that the primarily excess oriented treatments need to be accompanied by an immediate grounding of the ultimate source of immune fire. This is best accomplished by adding aconite to the formula mix. I start out treatment with phase two in at least a third, if not half, of my Lyme patients.

It is very important to point out to lay people, however, that I am talking about traditionally grown and diligently processed aconite from a very specific location in China. The classical insistence on using the right kind of aconite was so important to me that I founded my own herb company, just to be sure that the aconite I use for my patients is the right one. In unprocessed or underprocessed form, aconite can be extremely toxic.



REGINA: Getting through Lyme can be a long haul. Do you have any emotional or spiritual advice for people going through that experience? In homeopathy, Lyme is part of the so-called syphilitic miasm—with symptoms of despair and feeling unclean, like “something is wrong with me.” What heals that?

HEINER: I think that all people who suffer from Lyme or a similar type of disease are like canaries in a coalmine, manifesting in their body what ails our planet at this time, ahead of everyone else. I

remember one of my dear Buddhist colleagues from China, Dr. Liu Lihong, who teaches his students to deeply surrender and endure the hardships of life. He himself, however, tends to be a rather squeamish person. One time he had a hangnail in his toe, and asked his wife to remove it. During the span of an entire hour, every time she brought the pliers close to his toe, he would pull back and scream, “No, no, no—please: I can’t do it, I can’t do it!” Finally, he imagined that his pain was somehow of benefit for the world, and all of a sudden he was able to allow his wife to execute the procedure, and then he didn’t feel any pain.

Part of the “syphilitic” quality of Lyme is that it mires patients in a severely limiting net of self-involved and inherently selfish emotions. This particular miasm is therefore not only about feeling unclean and hopeless (“it’s never going to get better”), but there is also this dramatic narrowing of the patients’ worldview: “It’s all about me—my pain, my suffering!” This is, in essence, an exaggerated version of the emotional state of modern man; thus the canary in the coalmine metaphor.

When a person’s nervous system is inflamed, the sense of suffering can be immense. At the same time, there is a sense that the suffering has to be endured alone. It’s like “I am the only person who is truly suffering, the only person who has a miserable life.” It is this sensation that makes the process most unbearable. Just like its flip side—the narcissistic way in which we live inside our “healthy” modern existence—Lyme typically brings out a uniquely self-involved way of suffering. It must be pointed out in the strongest possible terms that this particular mental-emotional state represents the modus operandi of the pathogen, which should never be confused with our true self. One of the possible diagnoses for Lyme disease in Chinese medicine is Gu syndrome, which literally means “possession syndrome.” It is of vital importance to recognize the self-involved drama nature of the disease as a typical part of the “possession.” Those of us who have the misfortune to be afflicted by Lyme, this group of pathogens will most likely bring us to exhibit an exaggerated degree of the highly self-involved nature of postmodern consciousness.

Similar to Dr. Liu's example, a potential antidote to this miasmatic expression of selfishness is to surrender into a greater sense of cosmic awareness, in which we know: "No matter what, everything is connected, and everything has a purpose, even this seemingly purposeless, torturous disease. There is a meaningful kernel in it that helps me to evolve, perhaps even plays a part in the evolution of the planet as a whole." Quite a few of my spiritual teachers have said that the greatest teacher of all is disease. Even Lyme, therefore, perhaps the loneliest and most torturous of all diseases out there, represents an opportunity for transformation, no matter how strong the sense of pain and suffering and hopelessness may be at times.



REGINA: *There's a Sufi saying, "Die before you die." Are there perspectives from the Sufi tradition that inform your work with Lyme?*

HEINER: I believe that every spiritual path is aimed at the same goal of human evolution. The Sufi path, as I understand it, is a distinctly gnostic path; that means a focus on cultivation toward a higher degree of consciousness in this lifetime, rather than liberation after death. Many people actually find their way to one of the time-honored traditions of gnostic practice when their back is against the wall, pushed by disease to participate in a more active form of walking on our human path. Recognizing disease as a stepping-stone in this universal process can be a first glimpse of light.

Each path has its own flavor. The Sufi path, in particular, is about falling in love with the divine and purposeful nature of existence. Lyme has a tendency to suck out any sense of hope and purpose—back to the Dementor image from Harry Potter. Looking at life and the role of disease through the lens of the syphilitic miasm, there is no purpose, only meaningless suffering without any light behind it. The messages in Rumi's poetry are good examples of the Sufi approach to life. They evoke a state of being drunk with love for this world, celebrating every moment as a manifestation of divine purpose. Sufi

wisdom is therefore a direct way to help return the light that has been taken by the Dementor-like Lyme pathogens. In the bigger picture, of course, these are nothing but manifestations of a more universal form of darkness and possession, which we ought to recognize as a common human ailment of the 21st century.



REGINA: *I'm the child of two doctors and so grew up in the mindset of non-holistic medicine. I've had to really work on the mental transformation of not thinking about the pathogen. It's a deep task, to change one's mind on that.*

HEINER: Yes, indeed! As children of the scientific revolution, all of us have been conditioned to think in a very linear, black-and-white kind of way. It thus takes a while to integrate our modern propensity for clearly defined details with the system-based approach of the ancient wisdom traditions. A general piece of advice that your comment brings up is the following: whenever we walk on the path of fear and confusion as Lyme patients, it helps to remember that we are experiencing part of the disease's shadow side—it is part of the possession, rather than a feeling that accurately reflects what is really happening. And once again, this principle does not just apply to Lyme; Lyme is but an extreme form of this universal phenomenon. I work with a wide array of people from different countries and strata of society in my multiple roles as university professor, international lecturer, businessman and health care practitioner. Every day I face the reality that modern people, myself included, will naturally tend toward a fear-based approach when stressed. For most of us, to simply trust and surrender is very difficult to do.

I am privileged to be surrounded by people who have a deep interest in holistic living, and who aspire to be different. When I take groups of students and colleagues to Tibet, however, all of us tend to be geared up to the hilt, with state of the art Gortex clothing, Power Bars, high tech water filters, rescue blankets, sunglasses, and medications that cover all kind of potential emergencies. Our Tibetan

guides, in contrast, wear canvas army shoes when crossing snow covered passes at 17,000 feet, and dry themselves in front of a fire when it rains. With just a bit of yak butter and barley flour in their saddlebags, they take the journey one day at a time. And they look at us with eyes that say, “What is going on with these poor people, what are they so afraid of?” Life is so exciting! It’s a blessing that we don’t know what tomorrow will bring—a joy rather than something to be afraid of. This fear that grips all of us “healthy people” early on becomes amplified in the Lyme patient, who tends to be afraid and paranoid of just about everything. This is because the nervous system is inflamed, inducing a constant fight or flight response even if nothing is happening.



REGINA: *Thank you so much for all of these thoughts. I think this information is helpful to share with people, because people don't know that there's another option.*

HEINER: Thank you for all your work in this arena! I just returned from a lecture tour on the East Coast, where I was teaching different groups of Chinese medicine practitioners. Wherever I went, I saw a tremendous need to address this silent epidemic. “We need a Lyme certificate training,” many participants said, “because almost everybody I see in my clinic has Lyme, and there doesn’t seem to be a viable alternative to antibiotics. We really want to work with them on a constitutional level, but need an in-depth training to be able to address all of the phases and complex symptom contingencies of this disorder.” I am, therefore, in the process of developing a one-year Lyme certificate training for alternative health care practitioners. My hope is that this will lead to a substantial referral list of trained practitioners in every area of the country.



REGINA: *Once that is set up, it will be a year before you are referring people?*

HEINER: Right now, ClassicalPearls.org already features a list of Chinese medicine practitioners who

work with our herbal formulas, many of which were specifically developed for the treatment of Lyme. That’s a good place to start. Classes associated with the certificate program will start in early 2016, but it will take a year for the first class of graduates to emerge from that and become formally listed.



REGINA: *Will that program be online or at the school in Portland?*

HEINER: It will be a combination of two weekend seminars conducted at my house in Portland and/or a suitable retreat center at the East Coast. In addition, there will monthly 4-hour webinars that can be accessed at ProD Seminars; those can also be viewed by the general public. So, most of it will be accessible online. If anyone is interested, it would be best to sign up for the monthly newsletter at www.ClassicalChineseMedicine.org to stay tuned for directions on how to participate in this program.



REGINA: *I understand you are interested in building a healing center for treating complex illness?*

HEINER: Yes, I have been working on this plan for years now. So far, I have secured 350 acres of land in Eastern Oregon. It includes a sacred spring where local tribes used to bring their sick for therapeutic bathing until the settlers arrived in 1860. The land is remote and features some of the best air and water quality in the country. I am interested in this project because the alternative medicine professions are ready to take the next step. From a purely quantitative perspective, Chinese medicine has developed rather rapidly in recent years. 47 states feature acupuncture licensing, and there are more than 60 accredited degree programs now. Unfortunately, the desire for official recognition has caused the profession to limit itself severely, i.e. by pigeonholing itself as a modality for the treatment of shoulder stiffness, low back pain, sports injuries, allergies and the likes. But ancient medical systems, Chinese medicine included, have demonstrated for millennia that they are capable

of healing serious ailments. Yes, if somebody has a serious car accident or life-threatening asthma attack Western emergency medicine is probably your best bet. But for so many of the chronic diseases of our time that remain without real answers or solutions, Chinese Medicine has significant options to offer. This step, however, requires the development of inpatient treatment centers where people can stay overnight and where results can be documented. It is important for the preservation of our human dignity to have a place to go to when sick, and where doctors and caretakers understand what's going on. Chinese medicine has the potential of providing care on this level, but presently lacks the capacity to do that—not because people are not well meaning, or because practitioners are not good enough, but because no such facilities exist in the USA to date.

We may be the richest nation in the world, but we are also the most impoverished. I have lots of wealthy clients who don't know what to buy when they are in the grocery aisle of the supermarket. We don't know how to cook and celebrate our food anymore. And most of us don't know about basic health threats in our immediate environment, and how to protect ourselves from them. The profession needs a center, therefore, where not only herbs are prescribed and acupuncture treatments are administered, but where patients are taught how to change their lives in fundamental and meaningful ways once they return back home.

