

Treating Modern Nutritional Deficiencies

Marlene Merritt, DOM, LAc, ACN

One of the great things about traditional Chinese medicine is that it has been developed, over a long period of time, to address a prodigious number of health problems, many of which still exist today. Unfortunately, one of its shortcomings is that it is not well versed in the challenges of dealing with modern diseases and complaints. What could be that much different, you ask? Let's take a look.

The average person, during the early development of traditional Chinese medicine, existed almost primarily in an agricultural society, which meant that they spent a lot of time outdoors, doing physical labor. They woke up when the sun came up, and stopped working when it went down. They ate according to the seasons, and they ate meat (including organ meats), more vegetables and unrefined grains. The general population had to contend with starvation if the crops didn't grow or there was civil unrest.

The average modern American, on the other hand, does none of those things. Additionally, even if the average person ate only organic vegetables, never mind conventional vegetables, the topsoil in which the vegetables are grown is enormously depleted. So much so that conventional farm crops are completely dependent on the chemical fertilizers they are fed in order to grow. A Rutgers University study showed that it now takes **19 ears of corn** to equal the nutritional value of one ear of corn grown in 1940, just as one example. Add in the easy access to processed foods, specialized foods year-round, along with sedentary jobs and the lack of exercise, and we have a population that is malnourished but overfed, lives longer but has more health concerns, and has made great strides in defeating some diseases but is losing the battle with many others, ranging from cavities to cancer.

As you've probably noticed, there are some modern diseases that weren't in our textbooks - problems like hypoglycemia, insulin resistance and metabolic syndrome, hormones in foods causing hormone imbalances, thyroid disorders and different forms of cancers. It's not enough to treat patients as if they are metabolically the same as a Chinese person from generations ago. We have nutritional problems now that are dwarfing our abilities to impact our patients' health.

Have you heard of the severe deficiency of vitamin D? It is so severe that rickets is starting to appear again in children. Vitamin D doesn't just build bone health, but is also **completely vital for immune function** to prevent autoimmune disorders, infectious diseases and cancer.¹ Best found within sunshine and cod liver oil, there are direct links between the latitude in which people live (and therefore, how much sun to which they are exposed) and the autoimmune conditions of multiple sclerosis, autoimmune diabetes and Crohn's. In our office, we routinely run a vitamin D blood test (25-hydroxycalciferol), and only one person has ever had sufficient amounts present in their blood. All the rest of our patients and staff failed. Between 10 and 20 minutes in the sun is enough to make adequate amounts of vitamin D, but we are either slathered in sunscreen or indoors all day. Furthermore, if it's the middle of winter, it's even worse.

Or what about vitamin B? Its highest concentrations are found in liver and in whole, unrefined

grains, and is routinely deficient in anyone who eats any refined grains, which is basically everyone we see. It is required in all steps for converting energy in the cell, so when it is deficient, we're tired, have less brain function and suffer from more depression and anxiety. It is responsible for nerve regeneration. Deficiencies cause "frayed nerves" or poor resistance to stress. It breaks down homocysteine, which helps prevent heart inflammation and heart attacks. And yet, so many people are deficient. Chinese herbs alone will not provide enough nutrition to restore their health.

Today's food is irradiated, pasteurized, homogenized, bleached, colored, flavored, preserved with chemicals and processed to remove nutrients that would cause it to spoil quickly. Our water has aluminum, chlorine and fluoride added intentionally, in addition to petrochemical and pharmaceutical (antibiotic and hormone) contamination. Our meats are treated with hormones, growth factors and antibiotics. Livestock are fed unnatural foods like corn on feedlots until they have chronic diseases like fatty livers and stomach ulcers. Then, unlike traditional ways of eating, we ingest only the muscle meat and leave the rest behind. The two groups of food that are the [most nutritionally dense](#) are organ meats and vegetables. How many of either of these are you or your patients eating?

So how do we treat modern nutritional deficiencies? In two ways. One is to teach patients how to choose and prepare nutritious foods. This includes educating them in the difference between organic and conventional produce. For example, organic tomatoes are 12 times higher in magnesium, 68 times higher in manganese and almost 2,000 times higher in iron than traditional tomatoes. Organic lettuce is five times higher in calcium, 50 times higher in iron and 170 times higher in manganese. Patients also need to be educated as to why it's important to eat meat that is natural, free-range and free from hormones. It may be more expensive, but your patients are otherwise paying the difference with their health, in the form of antibiotic resistance, nutritional deficiencies and hormone imbalances.

The other way is to support patients with nutritional concentrates that allow them to "catch up." If their bodies are severely deficient in many nutrients, they can't digest the huge quantities of nutritious foods they would need to restore their health. It's not enough to give isolated, synthetic vitamins because then we are essentially doing the same type of treatments as in Western medicine by treating the symptoms and not the root cause. Instead, by using nutritional concentrates made from whole foods, we're utilizing all the known and unknown elements of foods, along with the synthesis that occurs with those ingredients. Just like with herbal medicine.

The state of malnutrition in your patients is preventing you from being as effective a practitioner as you could be. You might be giving them the best treatments, and prescribing perfect herbal formulas, but if your patient is depleted in vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids or any number of other compounds, you will never achieve your goal of restoring your patient to optimal health. Instead, by adding natural nutrition to their diet, using whole foods and food concentrates, your patients will not just feel better, but will appreciate your attention to their whole health.

Reference

Tavera-Mendoza L, White J. [Cell defenses and the sunshine vitamin](#). *Scientific American*, November 2007.

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