



CHINESE & ASIAN MEDICINE

Wisdom of Wellness in Chinese Medicine

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Wellness, health, longevity and happiness are endless and eternal topics in our life. They are the fundamental questions in human wellnessiology, too. In the modern world, human beings are paying more and more attention to material wealth and less and less to wellness and health, because some of them believe that the money they have made can buy health once they are sick. One of my patients, GL*, a cancer researcher, suffered from stress, fatigue, anxiety, back pain, dry eye and pre-hypertension for five years. The symptoms appeared in GL's 50s and got progressively worse. Conventional medicine did not work well, but GL kept going for many years, until we met. With changes in lifestyle and adjustments in thinking, in addition to the treatments of acupuncture, moxibustion and Chinese herbs, GL's health improved greatly. GL said, "I don't know I can be so good until I reach the current state. The "normal" symptoms I had are gone without noticing, but I do feel my body changed fundamentally. I am away from the cancer I am studying."

A saying in Chinese culture describes the scenario: "People who make money using their life before age 40, will have to exchange that money for their life after age 40." Do we want to repeat this story? I believe no one wants that.

It is not surprising for acupuncturists to see this kind of patient in the clinic, those who have no disease or defect in structure or function, as diagnosed by Western medicine, but who live in a "sick" or "sub-health" state. This state, between health and disease, is a challenge for Western medicine, because it is disease-centered in the current health care system. Even for the diseased patients, it is common for them to take medications for the rest of their lives. If the goal of life is to have no disease or symptom, then, hospitals become factories that fix disease, and health is merely the absence of disease. Where can we find wellness - true health, longevity and happiness?

Huge gratitude to the Yellow Emperor for his foreseeing the current living situation and health status of human beings. He started teaching us by asking the first question in the *Huangdi Neijing* (Yellow Emperor's Classics of Medicine), "I have heard that the ancient people lived for more than 100 years and their body motion did not look aging. Nowadays people who just cross 50 become weak in motion. Is this because the world has changed or people do not know how to nurture life?"

This same question can be asked of us, the modern people of the 21st century. The answer is the same, "The ancient people who practiced the *Dao* of nourishing life knew how to adapt to the laws of Yin/Yang and follow the ways of nurturing life. They ate moderately, slept regularly and avoided overworking and excessive sexual activity. Thus, they were flourishing in both body and spirit. They lived for the years given by the Heaven and died after 100 years."

Neither the *Dao* of Heaven nor the *Dao* of Earth has changed. There are still four seasons, sunrise and sunset, moon waxing and waning, and so on. But the *Dao* of Humans has changed. Our living habits and lifestyle have changed. Human desires in eating, sex, clothing, houses and cars are getting stronger and stronger, so that human *Dao* is going farther and farther away from the Heavenly *Dao*, which cause great stress on our body, mind and spirit. As a result, we live in disharmony and imbalance. Therefore, the Yellow Emperor teaches us a primary principle, "adapt to the laws of Yin/Yang and follow the ways of nurturing life." Based on this principle, the *Neijing* and later Chinese medical literature developed many new theories, methods and techniques in the field of human wellnessiology. Some famous doctors are *Zhang Zhongjing*, *Huan Tuo*, *Sun Simiao*, *Zhu Danxi* and *Li Shizheng*.

Reading the history of wellness in the last five decades in the West and 5,000 years in the East, I am surprised to see that the ancient wisdom is reawakening in the modern world. I graduated from a medical school of Western medicine in China and then practiced neurology in a hospital setting. Trained by my grandfather, who was a Chinese medicine physician and the 24th generation of *Zhu* family Chinese medicine (*Zhu Danxi's* School of Nourishing Yin), I devotedly applied Chinese medicine and philosophy to the treatment and research of Western medical diseases. My Eastern genes of philosophy, culture and medicine were expressed and met with Western wisdoms in the past decade, after I arrived in the United States. After 10 years of musing, studying and practicing, a concept I will call human wellnessiology came to my mind in 2008.

Human wellnessiology is the study of how human beings obtain wellness and health in body, mind and spirit through personal striving and integration of traditional Eastern medicine and modern science. It is a wellness-oriented branch of health science that re-constructs the concept of biomedicine and shifts to wellness in terms of oneness of body, mind and spirit. It builds a bridge between Eastern and Western medicine and integrates ancient wisdoms with modern scientific knowledge. It provokes medicine based on wellness not disease. As a result, it holds the potential to increase the quality of life and reduce the cost of health care.

Human wellnessiology has its roots in the *Huangdi Neijing* or *Neijing*. This ancient book, *The Yellow Emperor's Classics of Medicine*, was written down 2,500 year ago and based on an oral tradition shrouded in the mists of times. Although the development of therapeutic techniques were far earlier than the publication of the *Neijing*, the *Neijing* represented the formalization of Chinese medicine. Undoubtedly, the *Neijing* is the Bible of Chinese and Eastern medicine, because it first systematically described human physiology, pathology, diseases and the principles and techniques of treatment in the East. The more important aspect is that the *Neijing* addresses how to live well in the absence of drugs and to live as the ancients did, to over 100 years of age. The core concept is to prevent disease by living in accordance with the *Dao*. This "treating of pre-illness" is realized through *Yangsheng*.

In this classic, the word *Yangsheng* is officially used and the systems of theory and practice of *Yangsheng* are elaborated. This word has been used widely in China for thousands years and become an extremely popular word in everyday life in the modern society. Yang is to nurture, cultivate, nourish and take care. *Sheng* is life, survival and growing. So *Yangsheng* means "Nurturing Life."

It is the knowledge and approach that allows humans to keep healthy and live longer through cultivation of the mind-spirit, moderate consumption, physical exercise, temperate sexual activity, and avoidance of temperature extremes; in addition to practicing *qi gong* and, using acupuncture, moxibustion and herbs. Therefore, the illness in the core concept of "treating pre-illness" is not necessarily the disease but anything, including unhealthy lifestyle and imbalanced constitution, that compromises health and wellness.

When the Western wellness movement meets the *Neijing's* core concepts and theoretical and practical systems, one can see the wisdom appearing in the big picture. A new medicine is called for: human wellnessiology. As one of the greatest wellness educators, Robert Duggan said, "It is our task - and privilege - to bring them together, under an umbrella large enough to hold them all - a concept of medicine not centered on techniques, but around an outcome already experienced by many patients: recovery of the ability to heal oneself and nurture one's own well-being."¹ "Our time is calling for it. Nurturing Life of Chinese medicine is being translated into wellness in the Western world."²

The two characteristics of Chinese medicine determine that it is wellnessiology first, that primarily promotes well-being and secondarily is a medicine that treats diseases. Together, these characteristics are the guiding thought in Chinese medicine. However, this is also the part that has been lost for a long time in the modern Chinese medicine practiced in China and the Western world.

The first characteristic is wholeness (*Zheng Ti Guan* or *Tian Ren He Yi*). There are two layers of wholeness. First, the human body is a realm in which all parts of the body, internal organs, tissues and orifices connect in structure, interact in function and pathology. Second, that humans living in oneness with Nature and society must be influenced by the environments and survive by adapting to the outside conditions. Therefore, Chinese medicine is also known as Holistic medicine - the foundation of natural wellness.

The second characteristic is Pattern Differentiation (*Bian Zhen*). This is the process in which the disease patterns and the unique body constitution are recognized by differentiating the information of the person as a whole through the four inspections: seeing, hearing/smelling, asking and feeling. Based on this differentiation, the treatment plan and/or wellness plan can be made.

Wellnessiology believes that health is a state of harmony in body, mind and spirit that allows you to meet the demands of life and live well. Wellness should be good health or an excellent state of health to ensure you live well. Illness is regarded as disharmony in wellnessiology. Restoring harmony from disharmony is the healing process. So harmony is the ultimate goal in wellnessiology. To get true health and wellness, wellnessiology should cover, but is not limited to, the following ten aspects of life: wellness of constitution, wellness of emotion, wellness of age, wellness of seasons, wellness of *Zangfu*, wellness of Meridians, wellness of life style, wellness of diet, wellness of living environment, wellness of *Yijing* (Classics of Changes). Each aspect is a large enough topic to be presented individually.

The School of Nourishing Yin in Chinese medicine, founded by great Chinese medicine doctor, *Zhu Danxi*, 1281-1358 AD, is a brilliant example of human wellnessiology. Two ideas, the Theory of Ministry Fire and the Theory of Excessive Yang over Deficient Yin, represent his main scholarship and laid a solid foundation for the Nourishing Yin School which tremendously promoted the development of human wellnessiology in the later dynasties. *Zhu Danxi* believed that generally Yang is excessive and Yin is deficient in the human body. Yin deficiency results in Yang excess, which is Empty Fire. So he created the treatment principle of nourishing Yin and reducing Fire. In

his book, "*Additional Discussion of Research Leading to Knowledge (Ge Zhi Yu Lun)*," he also teaches future generations to have moderate eating and temperate sex, cultivate Heart and Spirit, control human desires, preserve health when aging, and nurture the children. Danxi's medical theories were uniquely created and derived from the *Neijing*, which have played an important role in maintaining health in the East. I can foresee Danxi's wisdom will contribute more in the modern world because of excessive Empty Fire in the culture.

Living in the highly modern world of the 21st century and growing up with science and technology, many people believe that the methods to keep us in good shape have been mastered, and in turn, use their body as much as possible in pursuing material wealth and enjoying the life. They think that with the best programs of health insurance, they can just go see doctors when they are sick. This is the difficulty we have as wellness practitioners. Bashir Qureshi, who is Chairman, Royal Society for Promotion of Health in the U.K., stated about the challenge of promoting health: "Many ambitious people spend the first half of their life running their health to earn money and the second half spending that money to regain their health."³

I believe that modern medicine should not become an obstruction to life health instead it should integrate with the accumulated wisdom of human wellnessiology. Although the mission is difficult and the way is long, we will have a bright future. Upon that moment, we will see a body of human beings living in health and wellness between heaven and Earth.

References

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