



GENERAL ACUPUNCTURE

## Balancing Spring Challenges

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As the winter months come to a close and warmer spring weather appears, patients may begin to present with new challenging pattern presentations. Spring is a time of reawakening and new growth, however this season can also be a time of allergies, colds, and respiratory issues.

Unresolved imbalances in the winter months can lead to chronic spring imbalances if not properly addressed. Therefore, clinicians should be aware of the unique impact the spring environment has upon the expression of patterns of imbalance.

The concept of "Spring-Warmth" or "Chun wen" issues were first mentioned in the twelfth-century text *Supplement to What Has Been Lost from Discussion of Cold Damage (Shang Han Lun Bu Wang Lun)* by Guo Yong. Let's explore how to treat spring imbalances more effectively.

### Spring-Warmth

The etiology and pathology of "Spring-Warmth" issues occur due to the unique combination of two disharmonies. During the winter months, cold invasion can occur and lurks hidden within the body.



Over time, this hidden pathogen eventually transforms into heat. If the patient also suffers from an underlying condition of Kidney Yin vacuity, this will transform into the presentation of Spring-Warmth.

#### Wind Invasion

This concept underscores the importance of proper treatment of wind invasion. It is not uncommon for patients to self-medicate in the prodromal phase of a cold-flu. Treatments are typically self-prescribed, trendy over-the-counter natural remedies, which at best address one to two generic exterior issues.

Therefore, a patient can inadvertently set the stage for future "Spring-Warmth" issues by mistreatment of standard wind-cold invasions during the winter months.

Clinicians can also make such mistakes by blindly handing out generic patent medicines to all patients suffering from colds or the flu. This is extremely common now as herbal companies market medicines not based on TCM patterns, but on the idea of the respective product being "antiviral."

Therefore, it is not uncommon for me to see patients presenting with complications of wind invasion arrive at my office with two to three bottles of generic patent medicines. Most likely administered based upon Western medical viewpoints rather than TCM pattern differentiation. This myopic use of herbal medicine sets the stage for future issues of "Spring-Warmth" hidden heat.

#### Treat Appropriately

Besides the incorrect treatment of the initial exposure to wind-cold/wind-heat, the majority of patients I see in the modern clinic suffer from significant levels of Kidney Yin vacuity. This must be taken into account when treating a wind invasion and concomitant complications of the cold-flu.

If a patient incorrectly self-medicates or a clinician improperly treats wind patterns by not considering underlying patient vacuities, the stage is set for lurking heat and future "Spring-Warmth" issues.

This explains why so many patients suffer from a wide array of issues in the spring season as hidden heat can significantly worsen an already existing case of Kidney Yin vacuity leading to chronic recalcitrant issues.

The issue of "Spring-Warmth" can also be created by an imbalanced lifestyle, coupled with stress. This combination perfectly describes the holiday season.

### Diet Matters

During the winter months patients typically eat high sugar foods and suffer significant social stress both of which aggravate an underlying Kidney Yin vacuity and set the stage for wind invasion.

The following quote by Wu You-Xing from the *Discussion of Warm Epidemics (Wen Yi Lun)* echoes these ideas:

"If an external pathogen is not strong enough to fight against antipathogenic Qi, it just lurks and not make trouble for the body. However, it will make trouble for the body when the antipathogenic Qi is weakened by irregular food intake, overwork, anxiety, anger and pensiveness."

This succinctly describes the typical patient during the busy winter holiday, high dosing Echinacea because they "don't have time to get sick." The stress and poor diet during the winter holidays taxes the ability of the body to defend against external factors.

It is very important for clinicians to counsel patients on the importance of a healthy Spleen friendly/Yin nourishing diet during the winter season in order to prevent future health issues during the spring season.

Foods such as bone broths, ghee, small amounts of game meat, and hearty vegetable stews with liberal spices are key for protecting and balancing the body during the cold winter months.

Clinicians should not just rely upon herbal medicine during the winter and should emphasize the key role of diet in preventing wind invasion/ Yin vacuity during the winter season. This factor alone will make a huge difference in preventing potential issues, such as "Spring-Warmth" appearing in the spring season.

If a patient does present with issues during the spring season, clinicians should always evaluate for interior heat with underlying Yin vacuity pattern presentations. The clinician must always ask about past issues, lifestyle and diet during the previous winter months. All of this provides key clues for pattern progression and can help the clinician avoid myopic treatment protocols.

### Dig a Little Deeper

Spring allergies/colds are rarely just simple exterior issues, particularly chronic recalcitrant spring allergies. If a patient presents with heat issues during the spring season and underlying Yin vacuity patterns are not addressed, the overall potential for true foundational healing will not occur.

In such pattern presentations of heat combined with Yin vacuity, both patterns must be addressed for integral healing to occur.

### Favorite Formulas

This is one of the major reasons why I favor the use of "Zhi Bai Di Huang Wan" in combination with the appropriate heat-clearing formula in such cases of "Spring-Warmth." This particular formula or patent medicine clears many types of heat as well as gently nourishes the Yin without being cloying or damaging the Spleen Qi.

The Liver organ often plays a major role in the spring season and formulas which course the Liver and clear depressive heat in the Liver can easily be combined with "Zhi Bai Di Huang Wan" in cases of "Spring-Warmth." Patients with chronic allergies which are aggravated during the spring season almost always suffer from an underlying Yin vacuity. Over-the-counter anti-histamines only further dry up the interior fluids, which continue to damage the Yin.

Formulas which resolve Yin vacuity must always be considered in cases which present with overlapping patterns of interior heat with underlying Yin vacuity. Clinicians should also always consider the Liver organ during the spring season and use formulas/patents /medicinals, which course the Qi and soften-nourish the Liver viscus.

Keep in mind all of these ideas which are behind the presentation of "Spring-Warmth" can greatly assist clinicians in resolving so-called "unexpected" health issues during the spring season. These issues are in reality no mystery but are the branches of a deeper fundamental imbalance. Search for the root for deeper integral healing.

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