

The Eight Extraordinary Meridians: Our Genetic Imprinting

Mary Elizabeth Wakefield, LAc, Dipl. Ac., MS, MM; MichelAngelo , MFA, CTM

The eight extraordinary meridians, pathways of energy (*qi*), run deep within our bodies, and supply the 12 regular meridians with *qi* and blood, supporting our DNA or genetic heritage. They have no direct connections to the organ systems and, with the exception of the pairing of *du mai* and *ren mai*, share points with the 12 regular meridians. By utilizing the points on the hands and feet associated with each meridian pairing contralaterally, the practitioner duplicates the flow of energy called the "microcosmic orbit" in Oriental medicine; this can be likened to a figure 8 or the infinity symbol.

The journey along this path recapitulates the origin of life as we understand it, from the formless, timeless state that precedes incarnation, to the emerging duality of yin and yang, and the further division of the human embryo via the process of cell division, or mitosis, that ultimately results in birth. In the same manner that life is spontaneously generated from the semblance of death, so life ultimately returns to the void, mirroring the great cycle of existence. Hence, these eight meridians are revered in Oriental medicine as precious, marvelous, extraordinary, curious, amazing - you name the superlative!

Qi Jing Ba Mai: The Extraordinary Conduits, or the Eight Marvelous Ones

The Chinese words for the eight extraordinary meridians describe their character most succinctly. *Qi* is an energy that is likened to an "a-ha" - a flash of enlightened understanding. *Jing* penetrates our ancestral roots, and makes up our DNA matrix; it is the precious essence of life. *Ba* means "eight." *Mai* symbolizes the movement in the meridians.

Ren: Conception Vessel

The master point for the *Ren* meridian is Lung 7, which is coupled with Kidney 6, on the yin *qiao mai* channel. The Conception Vessel relates to responsibility for, or fostering of, the process of birth, whether it be that of a child, a creative idea, or an endeavor.

The *Ren* receives and transports the *qi* of all the yin meridians, and therefore regulates the uterus, menstruation, menopause, pregnancy, etc. Since the master point is on the Lung channel, it is associated with respiratory syndromes, e.g., childhood asthma.

The pairing of *ren mai* and *yin qiao mai*, with its attendant Lung/Kidney relationship, energetically affects the lungs, chest and throat, and is very useful in a clinical situation, especially in addressing breathing imbalances.

Du: Governing Vessel

The master point of the *Du Mai* is Small Intestine 3; this meridian governs the *qi* of all the yang meridians. It is coupled with the yang *qiao mai*, whose master point is Bladder 62. This meridian pair is effective in treating stiffness in the shoulder, neck and back, and also regulates the inner canthus of the eye. When this coupling of meridians is utilized in treatment, the entire spine is addressed. It also nourishes the brain, and treats dizziness and tinnitus. On an energetic level, the *Du* relates to transformational cycles, survival issues, and groundedness in the world. Psychospiritually, issues of becoming "upright" and independent, as well as risk-taking, are relevant.

Chong Mai: Penetrating Vessel

The master point of the *Chong* is Spleen 4, which is combined with Pericardium 6 on the *yin wei mai* channel. This pair affects the heart, chest and stomach. This "vital passage" regulates the flow of *qi* and blood in the 12 regular meridians, and is significant in gynecological disorders, digestive issues, prolapses, and problems with the heart. Energetically, it relates to intergenerational patterns, issues arising from abuse, and cellular memory. Psychospiritually, an imbalance in the *Chong* meridian negatively impacts our self-acceptance and self-love.

Weis: Linking Vessels

The yin and yang *wei mai* function as connecting or networking vessels. They also help to maintain the balance of the body's yin and yang. Because of this, they relate to the transitions involved in the aging process, and the accompanying transformation of yin or yang energies.

Yin Wei Mai

The *yin wei mai* is paired with the *Chong Mai*, as previously stated. This combination permits energetic access to the *Neiguan*, the inner gate to the self. Psychospiritually, this vessel is concerned with the meaning that we derive from life, and helps us to respond to life with clarity and compassion.

Yang Wei Mai

The opening point of the yang *wei mai* is Triple Heater 5, which is coupled with Gall Bladder 41 on the *Dai Mai*. This combination dominates the exterior of the body, and is relevant in conditions of chills and fever. Energetically, it regulates our old habits and patterns, and the release of these pre-established modes of behavior that prevent us from evolving. Psychospiritually, since the yang *wei mai* represents the last stage of defense before the body is penetrated by an invading pathogen, this meridian can be used to treat issues of terminal illness, such as cancer or AIDS.

The *Qiaos*: Heel Vessels

The *qiao* vessels originate on the inside/outside of the heel, add agility to the body, and govern motion, especially that of the lower limbs.

Yin Qiao Mai

This channel is paired with the *Ren Mai*; with energetic imbalances in this meridian, manifestations include left/right imbalance, inversion of the foot, pain in the eyes, somnolence, etc. Psychospiritually, there are issues of self-trust, abandonment, depression, and feelings of unworthiness.

Yang Qiao Mai

The yang *qiao mai* is paired with the *Du Mai*; syndromes include a sensation of "walking on a slant," excessive thinking, and a generalized feeling of being overwhelmed and out-of-control. Conditions such as insomnia, epilepsy, facial paralysis and Bell's palsy (related to wind in the face) are relevant.

Dai Mai: Belt Meridian

The master point of the *Dai Mai* is Gall Bladder 41, paired with Triple Heater 5 on *yin wei mai*. This combination impacts the retroauricular area, the cheek, and the outer canthus of the eye.

Energetic issues involving the *Dai Mai*, or *zuling*, can manifest in a person "near to tears" from frustration, indecision or low self-esteem. Psychospiritually, this meridian is a repository for unexpressed emotions and psychological complexes that require transformation. The repression of these shadow aspects of the personality may give rise to dampness of body/mind/spirit.

Conclusion

In working with the eight extraordinary meridians in a treatment such as facial acupuncture, the practitioner engages the *jing*, or genetic level, of the patient. Inherited conditions such as asthma, heart dysfunction, or digestive distress can be addressed constitutionally at a "DNA" level. Often, we can ameliorate a genetic predisposition to aging, promoting quality of life, enhanced health and increased longevity.

Because such treatments tap into the very essence of an individual's humanity and destiny, it is important for the practitioner to respect and honor the unique power and transformative potential that can be unleashed in the process.

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