

# Diagnostic Methods

AMCollege

- TCM treatment is based on Bian Zheng, or Pattern Differentiation
- When a patient comes to see you, you need to make an assessment in terms of TCM physiology and pathology in order to render a treatment.

- Basically, the road map looks like this:
- Exam=> Pattern=> Treatment Principle(s)=> Treatment

- In order to arrive at a pattern, one needs to examine the patient using traditional methods and analyze all of the data gathered in terms of the various aspects of TCM theory we learned in Essentials
- These theories include:

- Yin-Yang (Eight Principles)
- Five Elements
- Qi-Blood-Jing-Fluids
- Pathogenic Factors
- Zang-Fu
- Meridians

- This class represents the first step in the process: examining the patient and analyzing the data in terms of TCM theory
- Pathology is physiology gone wrong; the better you understand the material in Essentials, the easier you will be able to understand the material in this class

- In analyzing symptoms and signs, some memorization is inevitable -- however, it is better to try and understand why a certain symptom or sign indicates a particular pathological condition

- Before discussing GM's book, let's briefly introduce some material which we will examine in more detail later in the course.
- The application of Yin-Yang theory in diagnosis is usually referred to as the Eight Principles.



# 8 Principles

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| • YANG     | YIN        |
| • EXCESS   | DEFICIENCY |
| • HEAT     | COLD       |
| • EXTERIOR | INTERIOR   |

- YANG & YIN refer to the general characteristics of the 8 Principles, as well as specific functions in the body.
- YANG indicates all the Yang functions in the body, but most particularly the phenomenon of fire
- Fire in the body is responsible for all activities of transformation, and the ability of the body to stay warm and to control water (fluid metabolism)

- YIN indicates all the Yin functions in the body, but most particularly the phenomenon of water
- Water in the body is responsible for all moistening, and the ability of the body to stay cool and to control fire
- It is also associated with the functions of rest and nourishment

- HEAT is related to Yang and associated with the fire function
- COLD is related to Yin and associated with the water function
- They also refer to two of the Pathogens (Evils) that we saw in Essentials of CM

- EXCESS and DEFICIENCY may refer to:
- a preponderance or weakness of Yang or Yin
- or the presence of a Pathogen (Excess)
- or lack of a Vital Substance (Deficiency)
- GM alternately translates the characters SHI and XU as “FULL” and “EMPTY”

- EXCESS often refers to a Pathogenic Factor (6 Evils) but may also refer to an accumulation of a Vital Substance (such as Qi or Blood) such that it functions as a pathogen; so Qi stagnation and Blood stasis are considered to be Excess phenomena
- DEFICIENCY is always a lack of either a Vital Substance or the Yin or Yang Principles

- EXTERIOR and INTERIOR refer primarily to the location of the disease process, though they may indicate the origin of the pathogenic factor as well
- EXTERIOR: usually indicates invasion of a Pathogen (Exterior cause of disease) into the skin or muscles (Exterior location)

- INTERIOR: usually indicates deeper penetration of an Exterior Pathogen (Exterior cause) or more commonly a disease process originating from and remaining in the internal organs (Interior cause and location).



- The 8 Principles are typically expressed as a combination: for example, Exterior Excess (Full) Cold or Interior Deficiency (Empty) Heat
- Sometimes different 8 Principle designations may describe the same pathology: for example, Interior Deficiency Heat = Yin Deficiency or Interior Deficiency Cold = Yang Deficiency

- As mentioned before, we will cover these in greater detail as we go along.

# Introduction to TCM

## Diagnosis

- Chinese diagnosis is intimately related to Pattern Identification as it provides the diagnostic tools necessary to identify the patterns.
- Chinese diagnosis is based on the fundamental principle that signs and symptoms reflect the condition of the Internal Organs.

- The concept of signs and symptoms in Chinese Medicine is broader than in Western Medicine.
- Western Medicine mostly takes into account symptoms and signs as objective or subjective manifestations of a disease.
- Chinese Medicine takes into account many different manifestations, many of them not related to an actual disease process.

- It uses not only "symptoms and signs" but many other manifestations to form a picture of the disharmony present in a particular person.
- Many of the so-called symptoms and signs of Chinese Medicine would not be considered as such in Western Medicine.

- For example, absence of thirst (which confirms a Cold condition), incapacity of making decisions (which confirms a weakness of the Gall Bladder), a dislike of speaking (which confirms a weakness of the Spleen), a dull appearance of the eyes (which confirms a disturbed Mind), and so on.
- Whenever we refer to "symptoms and signs" it will be in the above context.

- Over the centuries, Chinese diagnosis has developed an extremely sophisticated system of correspondences between outward signs and the Internal Organs.
- The correlation between outward signs and internal organs is summarized in the expression: "Inspect the exterior to examine the interior".

- According to this basic idea underlying Chinese diagnosis, practically everything, such as skin, complexion, bones, channels, smells, sounds, mental state, preferences, emotions, tongue, pulse, demeanour, body build, reflects the state of the internal organs and can be used in diagnosis.



- The second fundamental principle of Chinese diagnosis is that "a part reflects the whole".
- On the basis of this idea, and on the strength of centuries of accumulated clinical experience, a practitioner of Chinese Medicine can derive detailed information about the state of the whole organism, from examination of a small part of it.

- Chinese pulse diagnosis is, of course, a striking example of this, as so much information about the whole organism can be gleaned from palpation of a small section of the radial artery.
- Facial diagnosis, from which so much information about the whole body and mind is obtained from observation of the face, is another example.

- In a way, discussing the clinical significance of isolated symptoms and signs contradicts the whole spirit of Chinese diagnosis. This, in fact, involves a synthesis of all symptoms and signs into a meaningful pattern of disharmony.
- The essence of the process of diagnosing and identifying the pattern is that all symptoms and signs must be considered in relation to the others.

- No symptom or sign can be considered in isolation.
- For example, thirst associated with a tongue with yellow coating and a Full-Overflowing pulse indicates Full- Heat, whereas thirst associated with a tongue without coating and a Floating-Empty pulse indicates Empty-Heat.

- For the purpose of learning, however, one normally has to consider the clinical significance of each symptom or sign one by one, keeping in mind that in practice the interrelationship of all the clinical manifestations is all-important.

- Chinese diagnosis includes four methods traditionally described with four words:
- Looking
- Hearing (and smelling)
- Asking
- Feeling.

- These four methods are very old indeed as they were first mentioned in the “Annals” (Si Ji) of Si Ma Qian, the famous historian of the early Han dynasty, in the chapter "Various Transmissions from Bian Que".
- In it he says: "Feeling the pulse, observing the colours, listening to the sounds and observing the body, can reveal where the disease is".

**DIAGNOSIS BY LOOKING**



- Spirit
- Body
- Demeanour
- Head and face

- Eyes
- Nose
- Ears
- Mouth
- Teeth-gums
- Throat

- Limbs
- Skin
- Tongue
- Channels

# SPIRIT

- "Spirit" here means several different things.
- Firstly, it indicates the spirit of a person, his or her vitality and the state of his or her mental, emotional and spiritual being.
- It also indicates a general state of vitality; if this is thriving, the person "has spirit".

- The opposite, "not having spirit" indicates a state of lack of vitality. The "Simple Questions" says: "If there is spirit the person thrives, if there is no spirit the person dies".
- The presence or absence of spirit can be observed in the complexion, the eyes, the state of mind and the breathing.

- If the person has spirit, the complexion is healthy, the muscles are firm, the face colour is clear, the eyes have glitter and reveal inner vitality, the mind is clear, the breathing even.
- If the person has no spirit, the complexion is unhealthy, the muscles are withered, the face colour is dark, the eyes move uncontrollably, show no inner vitality and are not clear, the mind is unclear and the breathing is stertorous (heavy snoring or gasping sound).

# BODY

- There are three aspects to consider when examining the physical appearance of a patient. Firstly, the constitutional types, secondly long-term changes in physical appearance, and thirdly short-term changes.
- Every individual is born with a certain constitution and consequently a certain body shape.

- There is a tremendous variety of body shapes even within the same race, not to mention that between races.
- It is therefore important not to consider as a diagnostic sign, a certain physical trait which is normal for that person.



- Traditionally, five different constitutional body shapes are described, one for each element.
- The Wood type has a tall and slender body.
- The Fire type has a small pointed head and small hands.

- The Metal type has broad and square shoulders, a strongly-built body and a triangular face.
- The Earth type has a slightly fat body, a large head, a large belly and thighs and wide jaws.
- The Water type has a round face and body and a long spine.

- Besides these constitutional body shapes, there can be long-term changes in the body which can be important diagnostic signs.
- For example, a very large, barrel-like chest and epigastrium indicate an Excess condition of the Stomach.
- Very large upper thighs, out of proportion with the rest of the body which might even be thin, indicate Spleen deficiency.

- A thin and emaciated body usually indicates a long-standing deficiency of Blood or Yin.
- A fat body usually indicates deficiency of Spleen-Yang with tendency to retention of Dampness or Phlegm.
- All these body changes would only take place over a long period of time.

- Finally, there can be short-term changes of diagnostic significance.
- Generally speaking, one can refer to the Five-Element correspondences between tissues and organs:
- for example, any change in the sinews (such as weakness or stiffness) would reflect a disharmony of the Liver

- a change in the blood vessels (such as hardening of the vessels, which can be felt as a very hard and Wiry pulse) indicate a problem of the Heart
- a change in the muscles (such as weak and flaccid muscles) would reflect a deficiency of the Spleen

- a change in the skin (such as flaccid skin) would indicate a deficiency of Lung-Qi
- a change in the bones (such as brittle bones) would indicate a Kidney deficiency.

# DEMEANOUR

- This includes the way the person moves, and also movement of individual parts of the body, such as eyes, face, mouth, limbs, fingers.
- The general principle is that an excess of movement, or rapid and jerky movements indicate Yang, Full or Hot patterns, while lack of movement, or slow movements indicate Yin, Empty or Cold patterns.



- The way a person moves has to be considered also in relation to the 5-Element body type.
- For example, the Fire type should move quickly, if he or she moves slowly, then it indicates some problem.
- The Metal type should move slowly and deliberately, if she or he moves quickly, then it indicates some problem.

- If a person moves very quickly and when in bed throws off the bedclothes, it may indicate an Excess pattern of Heat, often of the Liver or Heart.
- If a person moves very slowly and likes to lie down, it may indicate a Deficient pattern of Cold, usually of the Spleen.

- Small movements and continuous fidgeting, especially of the legs, indicate a Deficient-Heat pattern of the Kidneys.
- Movements such as tremors or convulsions always indicate the presence of interior Wind of the Liver.
- These could be convulsions of the whole body, or just tremors of an eyelid or cheek.

# HEAD AND FACE

- **Hair**
- The state of the hair is related to the condition of Blood or Kidney-Essence.
- Falling hair may indicate a condition of Blood Deficiency, while prematurely greying hair indicates a decline of Kidney-Essence.
- GM mentions luster of the hair (should be body hair) being related to Lungs, but many sources dispute this and thin, dry hair is usually related to Blood or Essence

- **Face colour**
- Observation of the face colour is an extremely important part of visual diagnosis.
- The face colour reflects the state of Qi and Blood and is closely related to the condition of the Mind.

- Various pathological colours are usually described, but before analyzing the particular colour itself, one has to distinguish between a clear, shining type of colour, and a dull, dry type of colour.

- If the colour is clear and has a rather moist appearance it indicates that Stomach-Qi is still intact: this is a positive indication, even if the colour itself is pathological.
- If the colour has a rather dry and lifeless look, it indicates that Stomach-Qi is exhausted: this is always a negative indication and points to poor prognosis.

- **White**
- White indicates Deficiency, Cold, Blood Deficiency or Yang Deficiency.
- A dull-pale-white complexion indicates Blood deficiency, while bright-white complexion indicates Yang deficiency.



- **Yellow**
- Yellow indicates Spleen deficiency or Dampness, or both.
- A bright orange-yellow colour indicates Damp-Heat, with the prevalence of Heat rather than Dampness.

- A hazy, smoky yellow indicates Damp-Heat, with the prevalence of Dampness.
- A withered, dried-up yellow indicates Heat in Stomach and Spleen.
- A sallow yellow colour indicates Stomach and Spleen deficiency.
- A dull-pale yellow colour indicates Cold-Damp in Stomach and Spleen.

- A pale yellow colour surrounded by red spots indicates Spleen deficiency and stasis of Liver-Blood.
- A clear and moist yellow colour in between the eyebrows indicates that Stomach-Qi is recovering after an illness affecting Stomach and Spleen.
- A dried-up and withered-looking yellow colour in the same area is a poor prognostic sign.

- **Red**
- Red indicates Heat, either Full or Empty Heat.
- In Full-Heat, the whole face is red,
- in Empty-Heat only the cheekbones are red.

- **Green**

- A green color of the face indicates any of the following conditions: a Liver pattern, interior Cold, pain or interior Wind.
- The general indication is for a Liver Excess pattern; since the Liver's function is to ensure smooth Qi flow, this means stagnation of Qi and/or Blood.

- **Blue**
- Dark-bluish under eyes: Cold in Liver channel
- White-bluish: Cold, chronic pain
- Dull-bluish: Heart-Yang deficiency w/Blood stasis or chronic pain
- In children: Liver Wind

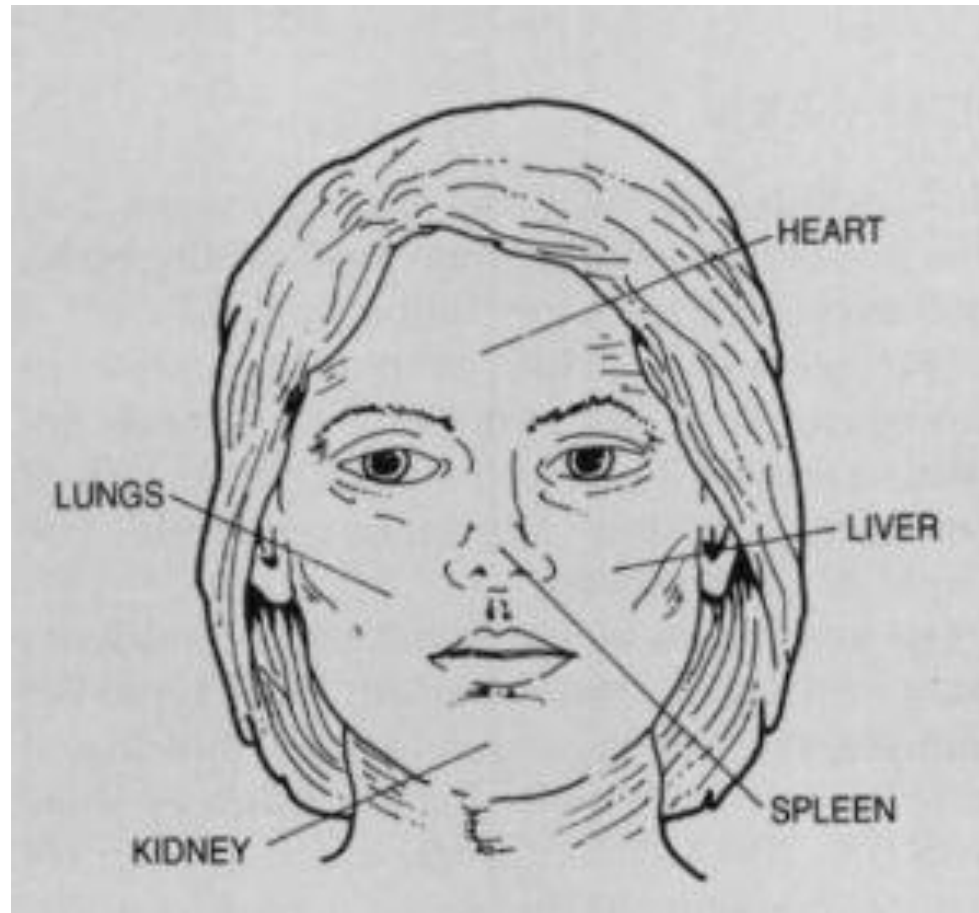
- **Black**
- Black complexion indicates Cold, pain, or Kidney disease, usually from Kidney-Yin deficiency.
- A black and moist-looking colour indicates Cold
- Dried-up and burned-looking colour indicates Heat, usually Empty-Heat from Kidney-Yin deficiency.

- Finally, irrespective of the actual shade, the colour can be described as being deep or floating, clear or dull, thin or thick, scattered or concentrated and moist or dry.
- A deep colour indicates an interior condition, while a floating colour indicates an exterior one.
- A clear colour indicates a Yang condition, while a dull one indicates a Yin condition.

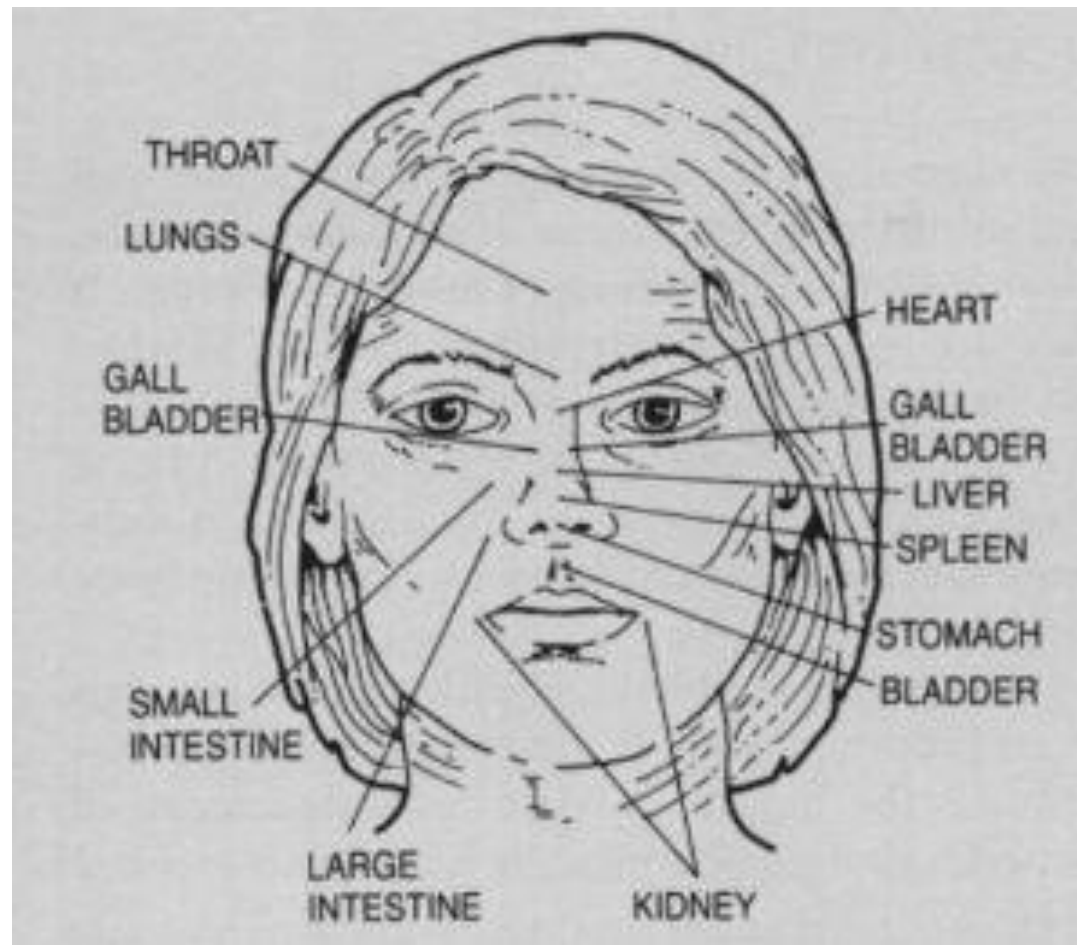


- A thin colour indicates Qi deficiency and a thick one a Full condition.
- A scattered colour indicates a new disease, while a concentrated one indicates an old disease.
- A moist colour is a sign of good prognosis, while a dry colour is a sign of poor prognosis.

- **Face areas**
- Besides the colour, various areas of the face indicate the state of certain organs.
- There are two different arrangements of areas, one according to the "Simple Questions" chapter 32 and the other according to the "Spiritual Axis" chapter 49.



- From Simple Questions



- From Spiritual Axis

- Observation of the face colour should be integrated with the face areas.
- For example, a bluish colour in the centre of the forehead (which corresponds to the Heart according to the "Simple Questions") indicates that the Heart has suffered from a shock.

- Greenish nose: Liver Qi or Blood stasis
- A red tip of the nose denotes Spleen deficiency.
- A very short chin indicates the possibility of Kidney deficiency.