

# DIAGNOSIS BY FEELING (Palpation) Pt 2

DME class 8

# PULSE DIAGNOSIS

- When interpreting the pulse one should pay attention to the following elements and in this order:

- Feel the pulse as a whole
- Feel whether the pulse has spirit, Stomach Qi and root
- Feel the three levels and the three positions
- Feel the strength of the pulse
- Feel the quality of the pulse.

# Pulse Qualities

There are 28 pulse qualities, as follows.

# 1 Floating (or superficial) pulse

- (Pinyin: Fu Mai)
- Feeling
- This pulse can be felt with a light pressure of the fingers, just resting the fingers on the artery.

- Clinical significance
- This quality indicates the presence of an exterior pattern from invasion by an exterior pathogenic factor, such as Wind-Cold or Wind-Heat.
- If it is Floating and Tight it indicates Wind-Cold; if it is Floating and Rapid it indicates Wind-Heat.

- If the pulse is Floating at the superficial level but Empty at the deep level, it indicates deficiency of Yin.
- In rare cases, the pulse can be Floating in Interior conditions, such as anemia or cancer. In these cases, the pulse is Floating because Qi is very deficient and "floats" to the surface of the body.

# 2 Deep pulse

- (Pinyin: Chen Mai; a.k.a. Sinking)
- Feeling
- This pulse is the opposite to the preceding one: it can only be felt with a heavy pressure of the fingers and is felt near the bone.



- Clinical significance
- This quality indicates an Interior condition, which could assume many different forms. It also indicates that the problem is in the Yin organs.
- If it is Deep and Weak it indicates deficiency of Qi and Yang. If it is Deep and Full, it indicates stasis of Qi or Blood in the Interior, or interior Cold or Heat.

# 3 Slow pulse

- (Pinyin: Chi Mai)
- Feeling
- This pulse has three beats per respiration cycle (of the practitioner).
- In the old times the rate was referred to the practitioner's respiration cycle, but the pulse rate can also be counted using a watch.
- Normal rates vary but they are roughly:

- Age (year).....Rate (beat/min)
- 1-4.....90 or more
- 4-10.....84
- 10-16.....78/80
- 16-35.....76
- 35-50.....72/70
- 50+.....68

- Clinical significance
- A Slow pulse indicates a Cold pattern.
- If it is Slow and Empty it indicates Empty-Cold from deficiency of Yang. If it is Slow and Full, it indicates Full-Cold.

# 4 Rapid pulse

- (Pinyin: Shu Mai)
- Feeling
- This pulse has more than 5 beats per each respiration cycle, or has a higher rate than the ones indicated above.

- Clinical significance
- A Rapid pulse indicates a Heat pattern.
- If it is Empty and Rapid, it indicates Empty-Heat from Yin deficiency. If it is Full and Rapid, it indicates Full-Heat.

# 5 Empty pulse

- (Pinyin: Xu Mai; a.k.a. Deficiency-type, Vacuous)
- Feeling
- The Empty pulse feels rather big but soft.
- "Empty" may suggest that nothing can be felt, but this is not so: this pulse is actually rather big but it feels empty on a slightly stronger pressure and is soft.

- Clinical significance
- The Empty pulse indicates Qi (or Qi and Blood) deficiency.



# 6 Full pulse

- (Pinyin: Shi Mai; a.k.a. Excess-type, Replete)
- Feeling
- This pulse feels full, rather hard and long.
- "Full" is often used in two slightly different ways. On the one hand, it indicates a specific type of pulse as described above; on the other hand, this term is often used to indicate any pulse of the Full type.

- Clinical significance
- The Full pulse indicates a Full pattern.
- A Full and Rapid pulse indicates Full-Heat, and a Full and Slow pulse indicates Full-Cold.

# 7 Slippery pulse

- (Pinyin: Hua Mai; a.k.a. Rolling)
- Feeling
- A Slippery pulse feels smooth, rounded, slippery to the touch, as if it were oily. It slides under the fingers.
- “Rolling pearls in a porcelain bowl”

- Clinical significance
- The Slippery pulse indicates Phlegm, Dampness, retention of food or pregnancy.
- Generally speaking, the slippery pulse is Full by definition, but in some cases it can also be Weak, indicating Phlegm or Dampness with a background of Qi deficiency.

# 8 Choppy pulse

- (Pinyin: Se Mai; a.k.a. Hesitant, Rough)
- Feeling
- This pulse feels rough under the finger: instead of a smooth pulse wave, it feels as if it had a jagged edge to it. “Knife scraping bamboo”
- Choppy also indicates a pulse that changes rapidly both in rate and quality.

- Clinical significance
- A Choppy pulse indicates deficiency of Blood.
- It may also indicate exhaustion of fluids and it may occur after profuse and prolonged sweating or vomiting.
- May also indicate Blood stasis

# 9 Long pulse

- (Pinyin: Chang Mai)
- Feeling
- This pulse is basically longer than normal: it extends slightly beyond the normal pulse position.

- Clinical significance
- It indicates a Heat pattern.
- May indicate no pathological condition



# 10 Short pulse

- (Pinyin: Duan Mai)
- Feeling
- This pulse is the opposite of the previous one: it occupies a shorter space than the normal position.

- Clinical significance
- The Short pulse indicates severe deficiency of Qi. It frequently appears on the Front positions of left or right.
- It also specifically denotes deficiency of Stomach-Qi.

# 11 Overflowing

- (Pinyin: Hong Mai; a.k.a. Surging, Flooding)
- Feeling
- This pulse feels big, it extends beyond the pulse position, it is superficial and generally feels as if it overflows the normal pulse channel, like a river overflows during a flood.

- Clinical significance
- The Overflowing pulse indicates extreme Heat.
- It frequently appears during a fever, but it is also felt in chronic diseases characterized by interior Heat.
- If it is Overflowing but Empty on pressure, it indicates Empty-Heat from Yin deficiency.

# 12 Fine (or thin) pulse

- (Pinyin: Xi Mai; a.k.a. Thready)
- Feeling
- This pulse is thinner than normal.

- Clinical significance
- A Fine pulse indicates deficiency of Blood.
- It may also indicate internal Dampness with severe deficiency of Qi.
- If rapid may denote Yin deficiency heat

# 13 Minute pulse

- (Pinyin: Wei Mai; a.k.a. Faint)
- Feeling
- This pulse is basically the same as the Fine one, just more so. It is extremely thin, small and difficult to feel.

- Clinical significance
- The Minute pulse indicates severe deficiency of Qi and Blood.



# 14 Tight pulse

- (Pinyin: Jin Mai; a.k.a. Tense)
- Feeling
- This pulse feels twisted like a thick rope.
- “Vibrates”

- Clinical significance
- A Tight pulse indicates Cold which may be interior or exterior, such as in invasion of exterior Wind-Cold.
- If it is Tight and Floating it indicates exterior Cold; if it is Tight and Deep it indicates interior Cold.

- This pulse is frequently felt in asthma from Cold in the Lungs, and in Stomach conditions from Cold.
- The Tight pulse may also indicate pain from an interior condition.

# 15 Wiry pulse

- (Pinyin: Xian Mai; a.k.a. String-taut, String-like, Bowstring)
- Feeling
- This pulse feels taut like a guitar string. It is thinner, more taut and harder than the Tight pulse. The Wiry pulse really hits the fingers.
- “No fluidity or wavelike qualities” - T.K.

- Clinical significance
- The Wiry pulse can indicate three different conditions:
  - Liver disharmony
  - Pain
  - Phlegm

# 16 Slowed-down pulse

- (Pinyin: Huan Mai; a.k.a. Moderate)
- Feeling
- This pulse has 4 beats for each respiration cycle.

- Clinical significance
- This is generally a healthy pulse and has no pathological significance.
- Indicates Dampness if other Damp signs present

# 17 Hollow pulse

- (Pinyin: Kong / Kou Mai; a.k.a. Scallion-stalk)
- Feeling
- This pulse can be felt at the superficial level, but if one presses slightly harder to find the middle level it is not there; it is then felt again at the deep level with a stronger pressure. In other words, it is empty in the middle.



- Clinical significance
- This pulse appears after a haemorrhage.
- If the pulse is rapid and slightly Hollow it may indicate a forthcoming loss of blood.

# 18 Leather pulse

- (Pinyin: Ge Mai; a.k.a. Drumskin)
- Feeling
- This pulse feels hard and tight at the superficial level and stretched like a drum, but it feels completely empty at the deep level. It is a large pulse, not thin.

- Clinical significance
- The Leather pulse indicates severe deficiency of the Kidney-Essence or Yin.

# 19 Firm pulse

- (Pinyin: Lao Mai; a.k.a. Confined, Prison)
- Feeling
- The Firm pulse is felt only at the deep level and it feels hard and rather wiry. It could be described as a Wiry pulse at the deep level.

- Clinical significance
- The Firm pulse indicates interior Cold (if it is also Slow) or interior stagnation and pain.

# 20 Soggy (or Weak-floating) pulse

- (Pinyin: Ru Mai; a.k.a. Soft)
- Feeling
- The Soggy pulse can be felt only on the superficial level. It feels very soft and is only slightly floating, i.e. not as much as the Floating pulse. It disappears when a stronger pressure is applied to feel the deep level. It is similar to the Floating-Empty pulse, but it is softer and not so Floating.

- Clinical significance
- The Soggy pulse indicates the presence of Dampness, when this pathogenic factor occurs against a background of Qi deficiency.
- It may also indicate deficiency of Yin and Essence.

# 21 Weak pulse

- (Pinyin: Ruo Mai; a.k.a. Frail)
- Feeling
- A Weak pulse cannot be felt on the superficial level, but only at the deep level. It is also soft.



- Clinical significance
- The Weak pulse indicates deficiency of Yang or of Blood.
- “...like an inverted Empty pulse but signifies a more extreme Deficient Qi condition...” -- T.K.

# 22 Scattered pulse

- (Pinyin: San Mai)
- Feeling
- This pulse feels very small and is relatively superficial. Instead of feeling like a wave, the pulse feels as if it were "broken" in small dots.
- T.K.: Similar to an Empty pulse but larger and less distinct; felt primarily as it recedes

- Clinical significance
- This pulse indicates very severe deficiency of Qi and Blood, and in particular of Kidney-Qi. It always indicates a serious condition.

# 23 Hidden pulse

- (Pinyin: Fu Mai)
- Feeling
- This pulse feels as if it were hidden beneath the bone. It is very deep and difficult to feel. It is basically an extreme case of a Deep pulse.

- Clinical significance
- The Hidden pulse indicates extreme deficiency of Yang.
- T.K.: If strong, indicates Cold obstruction

# 24 Moving pulse

- (Pinyin: Dong Mai; a.k.a. Spinning bean, Stirred)
- Feeling
- The Moving pulse has a round shape like a bean, it is short and it "trembles" under the finger. It has no definite shape, having no head or tail, just rising up in the centre. It feels as if it is shaking and is also somewhat slippery.

- T.K.: Combination of short, tight, slippery and rapid pulses
- Clinical significance
- This pulse indicates shock, anxiety, fright or extreme pain. It is frequently found in persons with deep emotional problems particularly from fear, or in those who have suffered an intense emotional shock, even if many years previously.

# 25 Hasty pulse

- (Pinyin: Cu Mai; a.k.a. Abrupt, Hurried, Skipping)
- Feeling
- This pulse is Rapid and it stops at irregular intervals.



- Clinical significance
- The Hasty pulse indicates extreme Heat and a deficiency of Heart-Qi. It is also felt with conditions of Heart-Fire.

# 26 Knotted pulse

- (Pinyin: Jie Mai; a.k.a. Bound)
- Feeling
- This pulse is Slow and it stops at irregular intervals.

- Clinical significance
- The Knotted pulse indicates Cold and deficiency of Heart-Qi or Heart-Yang.

# 27 Intermittent pulse

- (Pinyin: Dai Mai; a.k.a. Regularly intermittent, Regularly interrupted)
- Feeling
- This pulse stops at regular intervals.

- Clinical significance
- This pulse always indicates a serious internal problem of one or more Yin organs.
- If it stops every 4 beats or less, the condition is serious.
- It can also indicate a serious heart problem (in a Western medical sense).

# 28 Hurried pulse

- (Pinyin: Ji Mai; a.k.a. Racing)
- Feeling
- This pulse is very rapid, but it also feels very agitated and urgent.

- Clinical significance
- This pulse indicates an Excess of Yang, with Fire in the body exhausting the Yin.

- The 28 pulse qualities can be grouped into six groups of pulses with similar qualities:
- a. The Floating kind: Floating-Hollow-Leather
- b. The Deep kind: Deep-Firm-Hidden



- c. The Slow kind: Slow-Knotted
- d. The Rapid kind: Rapid-Hasty-Hurried-Moving
- e. The Empty kind: Empty-Weak-Fine-Minute- Weak/Floating-Short-Scattered
- f. The Full kind: Full-Overflowing-Wiry-Tight-Long.