

TCM Pathology: Full & Empty Conditions

DME class 10

- The relative strength of pathogenic factors and upright qi is probably the most important factor in treatment with Chinese medicine.
- It is absolutely essential to distinguish whether a condition is Full, Empty, or Full/Empty.
- It is wrong to tonify the Upright Qi in a Full condition or expel Pathogenic factors in an Empty condition.

- In a Full/Empty condition, diagnosing the relative importance and balance of pathogenic factors and upright qi is still very important.
- The treatment principle must be based on a careful assessment of the relative strength of the pathogenic factors and Upright Qi and of the pathology of each individual case.

- **Full condition**
- indicates presence of Pathogenic Factor while Upright Qi is still relatively intact.
- Relatively severe, intense symptoms
- May be acute or chronic

- **Empty condition**
- indicates deficiency of Upright Qi
- Milder symptoms
- Usually chronic, gradual development

- Full/Empty condition
- Indicates both presence of pathogenic factors and deficiency of upright qi
- Often deficiency creates the pathogenic factor (e.g.: Spleen Qi deficiency with Phlegm-Damp)

- Pathogenic Factor (Xie Qi) can mean either:
 - ✓ exterior pathogenic factors such as external wind or dampness, or
 - ✓ internal pathogenic factors such as phlegm or blood stasis.

External Pathogenic Factors

- Derive from the environment
- Can become internal
- Include Wind, Dampness, Summer-Heat and Cold (also Heat)

Internal Pathogenic Factors

- In only three cases can external pathogenic factors penetrate the body's interior without causing exterior symptoms:
- Invasion of Cold in the Stomach
- Invasion of Cold in the Intestines
- Invasion of Cold in the Uterus

- Internal Pathogenic Factors include:
- Qi Stagnation
- Blood stasis
- Internal Wind

- Internal Dampness
- Internal Cold
- Phlegm
- Heat
- Fire

QI STAGNATION

- Clinical manifestations
- Feeling of distension,
- distending pain that moves from place to place,
- abdominal masses that appear and disappear,

- Mental depression, irritability, frequent mood swings,
- frequent sighing,
- Wiry pulse,
- Tongue body either normal or slightly red (or slightly purple) on the sides.

- These are only the general but essential and distinctive symptoms of Qi stagnation.
- The feeling of distension, which can affect the hypochondrium, epigastrium, throat, abdomen and hypogastrium, is the most characteristic and important of the symptoms of Qi stagnation.

- Emotional symptoms are also very characteristic and frequent in stagnation of Qi, particularly of Liver-Qi.
- Often mild condition, by itself doesn't cause serious pathology from the viewpoint of Western medicine (these are more characteristic of Blood stasis or Phlegm, for example)

BLOOD STASIS

- Clinical manifestations
- Pain which is boring, fixed and stabbing in character,
- Dark complexion, purple lips, purple nails,

- bleeding with dark blood and dark clots,
- Purple tongue,
- Wiry, Firm or Choppy pulse.
- Rough skin, calluses, visibly distended vasculature, possibly severe emotional constraint

- Usually secondary to Qi stagnation, Cold or some other pathology (Qi or Blood deficiency, Phlegm, Heat) or trauma
- Often leads to other pathologies
- Affects Liver, Heart, Uterus primarily; can affect other organs as well

INTERNAL WIND

- Characterized by involuntary movement (spasms, tremors, tics, etc).
- The main clinical manifestations of interior Wind are: tremors, tics, severe dizziness, vertigo and numbness.

- In severe cases, they are: convulsions, unconsciousness, opisthotonos, hemiplegia and deviation of mouth.
- Interior Wind is always related to a Liver disharmony.
- It can arise from several different conditions:

- 1. Extreme Heat can give rise to Liver-Wind. This happens in the late stages of febrile diseases when the Heat enters the Blood portion and generates Wind.
- The clinical manifestations are a high fever, delirium, coma and opisthotonos.
- These signs are frequently seen in meningitis and are due to Wind in the Liver and Heat in the Pericardium.

- 2. Liver-Yang can give rise to Liver-Wind in prolonged cases.
- The clinical manifestations are severe dizziness, vertigo, headache and irritability.
- Liver Yang is usually related to Yin deficiency and is a Ful/Empty Pattern -- we'll cover this in detail later

- 3. Deficiency of Liver-Blood or Liver-Yin can give rise to Liver-Wind.
- This is due to the deficiency of Blood creating an empty space within the blood vessels which is taken up by interior Wind.
- The clinical manifestations are numbness, dizziness, blurred vision, tics and slight tremors.

INTERNAL DAMPNESS

- Interior Dampness is extremely common, and derives from either a Spleen deficiency or transformation of exterior dampness
- Causes many disorders: skin, digestive, urinary, sinus, gynecological, fatigue, etc.

- Manifests as Heaviness - Limbs, Head
- "Dirtiness" (Turbidity) - Discharges
- Sticky - Tongue coat, taste, Slippery pulse
- Abdominal fullness, heaviness, lethargy, turbid urine, excessive vaginal discharge, muscle ache, sinus congestion, sticky (greasy) tongue coating, soggy or slippery pulse

INTERNAL COLD

- Internal Cold arises from deficiency of Yang or internalization of External Cold.
- Manifests as cramping pain, alleviated by heat (hot packs, hot drinks, etc), feelings of cold, no thirst, thin clear discharges, cold limbs, bright-white complexion, white tongue coat, slow pulse.

- The clinical manifestations of Full and Empty Cold are very similar as they are the same in nature.
- The main difference is that Full-Cold is characterized by an acute onset, severe pain and a tongue and pulse of the Excess type, e.g. the tongue would have a thick-white coating and the pulse would be Full and Tight.

- Empty-Cold is characterized by a gradual onset, dull pain and a tongue and pulse of the Deficiency type, e.g. the tongue would have a thin-white coating and be Pale and the pulse would be Slow-Deep-Weak.

Phlegm

- Very important and common internal pathogenic factor.
- Main cause is Spleen Deficiency
- Spleen fails to transform & transport fluids which accumulate and transform into phlegm.
- Lung diffusion failure and Kidney fluid transformation may also be involved.

- Phlegm manifests with sticky-greasy tongue coat, swollen tongue and slippery or wiry pulse.
- Chest oppression,
- nausea / vomiting
- dizziness,

- heavy head,
- dark eye sockets,
- exudate from eyes,
- puffiness and obesity,
- greasy skin,

- sweaty genitalia, axillae, palms and soles
- mucus in stools
- phlegm in throat
- any visible phlegm or mucus (stringy spittle, foaming at the mouth, etc)

- Phlegm is a Yin pathogen and may injure Yang (may also manifest with fire)
- Phlegm is sticky and obstructs Qi mechanism and Blood
- Difficult to remove
- Can travel in the body
- Causes lumps

- “Stomach & Lungs - containers for Phlegm”
- “Phlegm harbors Blood stasis”
- “Strange diseases caused by Phlegm”
- “Complicated cases treat for Phlegm”
- “Phlegm is Fire with Form”

Heat

- The main manifestations are feelings of heat, thirst, red face, mental restlessness red tongue, Overflowing Rapid pulse.
- Further differentiation for Full or Empty Heat

- Emotional strain (Qi stagnation) and diet are etiological factors
- Frequently combines with Dampness and may even coexist with Cold.
- Sometimes distinguished as milder form of pathologic Fire.

Fire

- Fire is an extreme form of Heat which can derive from any of the other exterior pathogenic factors.
- Primary causes includes diet (alcohol, hot foods), smoking, stress.

- Extreme Heat and Fire are not exactly the same in nature, although very similar.
- Fire is more "solid" than Heat, it tends to move and dry-out more than Heat.

- Heat can cause pain as well as all the other symptoms of Heat, such as a Red tongue, thirst and a Rapid pulse, but Fire moves upwards (causing mouth ulcers with swelling for example) or damages the blood vessels (causing bleeding).
- Also, Fire tends to affect the mind more than Heat causing anxiety, mental agitation, insomnia or mental illness.

Relationship of Pathogenic Qi to Upright Qi

- 6 Different conditions:
- 1 No pathogenic factors - normal upright qi
= health
- 2 No pathogenic factors - deficient upright qi
= Empty condition
- 3 Strong pathogenic factors - Strong upright
qi = Full condition

- 4 Strong pathogenic factors - deficient upright qi = Full/Empty condition
- 5 Weak pathogenic factors - Strong upright qi = Full/Empty condition
- 6 Weak pathogenic factors - deficient upright qi = Full/Empty condition

- 1 No pathogenic factors - normal upright qi
= health

- 2 No pathogenic factors - deficient upright qi
= Empty condition
- Pure Empty condition
- Mild symptoms
- Protracted course, gradual development

- 3 Strong pathogenic factors - Strong upright qi = Full condition
- Pure Full condition
- May be internal or external
- Intense heightened symptoms
- If external, high fever

- 4 Strong pathogenic factors - deficient upright qi = Full/Empty condition
- Mixed Full/Empty condition
- May be internal or external
- If external, moderate fever
- Example: postviral fatigue

- 5 Weak pathogenic factors - Strong upright
qi = Full/Empty condition
- Mixed Full/Empty condition
- Mild symptoms
- If external, moderate fever
- Example: mild damp condition

- 6 Weak pathogenic factors - deficient upright qi = Full/Empty condition
- Mixed Full/Empty condition
- Very mild symptoms
- Protracted chronic disease
- If external, no fever
- Example: mild damp condition + deficient Qi