Essential Aspects of Women’s Physiology & Pathology
A Classical Understanding of Female Physiology & Fertility Disorders

Presented by
Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallee

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GYNAECOLOGY

SUWEN 1

The emperor asked: Men beyond a certain age have no children. Is it their power (cai 材) that has run dry? Or is it not rather the effect of law (shu 數) fixed by Heaven?

Qi Po said:
The woman of Seven years, the kidney qi (shen qi 腎氣) rise in power (sheng 盛), the teeth are renewed and the hair grows longer.

At 2 times Seven years, fertility (tian gui 天癸) arrives, Renmai (任脈) functions fully (tong 通) while the powerful Chongmai (衝脈) rises in power (sheng 盛): the menses flow downwards in their time (shi 時) and she has children (you zi 有子).

At 3 times Seven years, the kidney qi are even (ping jun 平均), then the wisdom teeth grow vigorously.

At 4 times Seven years, the muscles and bones (jin gu 筋骨) are very firm (jian 堅), the hair reaches its greatest length, the body becomes powerful and strong.

At 5 times Seven years, the circulations (mai 脈) of the yangming decline (shuai 衰), the face begins to wrinkle, the hair begins to fall.

At 6 times Seven years, the three yang circulations (mai 脈) begin their decline above, the whole face wrinkles, the hair begins to whiten.

At 7 times Seven years, the Renmai is empty (xu 虛) and the powerful Chongmai declines progressively; fertility dries up: nothing further passes through (tong 通) the way of Earth (di dao 地道), the body withers and she no longer has children. [........]

The kidneys master (zhu 主) the water (shui 水) and receive the essences (jing 精) of the Five zang and Six fu to treasure (store, cang 藏) them. As long as the Five zang sustain their rising in power (sheng 盛), one is able to produce emissions (xie 瀉). But when the Five zang are in decline (shuai 衰), muscles and bones become loose and give way. Fertility has come to its end. Thus the hair and sideburns whiten, the body grows heavy, walking is no longer secure, one no longer has children.
SUWEN 11

Brain (nao 腦), marrow (sui 髓), bones (gu 骨), vital circulations (mai 脈), Gallbladder (dan 檔), uterus (nǚ zǐ bāo 女之胞), these six are produced by the qi of Earth (dì qì 地氣). They treasure (store, cāng 藏) the yin and they reflect the image (xiàng 象) of the Earth (dì 地). Their name is: the extraordinary and permanent fu (qì hēng zhì fū 奇恆之府).

岐伯對曰．腦髓骨脈胞女子胞．此六者．地氣之所生也．皆藏於陰而象於地．故藏而不寫．名曰奇恆之府．

SUWEN 33

When the menses stop coming, the circulation of the uterus is closed (bāo mai 胞脈). The circulation of the uterus depends (shū 屬) on the heart and connects (luò 經) inside with the vital protection (bāo zhōng 胞中).

月事不來者．胞脈閉也．胞脈者．屬心而絡於胞中．今氣上迫肺．心氣不得下通．

SUWEN 40

The Emperor said: “What is this kind of disease where there is a pressure and a congestion (zhī màn 支滿) in the chest and rib area leading to an obstacle in swallowing the food? When the disease develops fully, there is first a rancid (腥) and raw meat (sào 燥) smell, and clear liquids (qīng yè 清液) are expelled from the mouth. There is spitting of blood (tuò xuè 嘔血). The four limbs are cold (sì zhī qīng 四支清) and there is dizziness (mù xuān 目眩), and sometimes there is bleeding from the two lower orifices. What is this kind of disease?”

Qi bo replied: “The name of this disease is dryness of the blood (xuè ku 血枯). One gets this disease by suffering a great loss of blood (dà tuò xuè 大脫血) in youth, or by having sexual relationships when drunk. The qi diminish and the liver is injured, causing the menses gradually to stop coming.”

病名血枯．此得之年少時．有所大脱血．若醉入房．中氣竭．肝傷．故月事衰少不來也
SUWEN 44

In case of intense sadness and affliction (bei ai 悲哀), the protection and connection (of the heart, bao luo 包絡) are interrupted (stop to work correctly, jue 绝). Hence the yang qi (陽氣) start to move in the interior (nei 内). When the illness is set off, the heart causes haemorrhages (metorrhagia, beng 崩) below and there is frequent blood in the urine (haematuria, sou xue 溲血).

悲哀太甚．則胞絡絶．胞絡絶則陽氣內動．發則心下崩．數溲血也．

SUWEN 60

Renmai (任脈) arises below the central pole (Zhongji 中極, Ren 3); it rises to the border of the (pubic) hair; it passes along the abdomen on the inside; it rises to Guanyuan (Ren 4); it reaches the throat (yan hou 咽喉), rises to the chin, passes through the face and penetrates the eyes.

Chongmai arises from Qijie (氣街, St.30); doubling the meridian of Shaoyin, it surrounds the navel and rises; it reaches the middle of the chest (xiong zhong 胸中) and diffuses (san 散) there.

When Renmai causes illnesses, in men there are internal knots (neijie 内結) and the seven kind of shan symptoms (痧); in women, there is vagianl discharge (daixia 帶下) and concrétions and accumulations (jiaju 聚積).

任脈為病．男子內結七痧．女子帶下瘕聚．

When (the Dumai) generates illnesses, [...] in women, there is infertility (bu yun 不孕), dysuria (long 病), hemorrhoids (zhi 病), urinary incontinence (yi niao 遺溺), dry throat (yi gan 嘴乾).

此生病．從少腹上．衝心而痛．不得前後．為衝病．其女子不孕．癤痔遺溺嗌乾．
Chongmai and Renmai both arise in the middle of the vital protection (bao zhong 拾中); they rise running up the back on the inside and make the sea of the meridians and connective circulations (jing luo 經絡). Their pathway, emerged and external, runs along the abdomen by the right and rise. They meet together at the pharynx; a detachment (bie 別) takes a connecting (luo 經) relation with the lips and the mouth.

When blood and qi (xue qi 血氣) rise in power, the skin is plenified and the flesh warmed. When only the blood rises in power, a drop by drop infiltration of the layers of the skin gives what is necessary to the growth of the hair.

Now women, in their physiology, have an excess of qi and an insufficiency of blood, following the frequent loss of blood; Chongmai and Renmai do not make her mouth and lips flourish (rong 榮), and because of this she does not have a beard growing there.

Nanjing 36

The zang organs (藏) are all single; except for the kidneys which are a pair (liang 兩). Why is this?

The two kidneys (liang shen 兩腎) are not both kidneys. The one on the left is the kidneys; the one on the right is Mingmen (命門). Mingmen, it is the residence of the spirits/essences (shen jing 神精); it is where the original qi (yuan qi 原氣) are attached (connected, hold). The man treasures (store, cang 藏) the essences (jing 精, sperm) and the woman attaches the uterus (bao 胞).

Nanjing 39

They say that the kidneys are a double zang (hold a double storage, liang zang 兩藏); the one on the left is the kidneys, the one on the right is Mingmen (命門). Mingmen, it is the residence of the essences/spirits (vital spirit, jing shen 精神) In the man, it treasures (store, cang 藏) the essences (jing 精, sperm) In the woman, it attaches (connects, holds) the uterus (bao 胞).

五藏亦有六藏者，謂腎有兩藏也，其左為腎，右為命門。命門者，精之所致也，其左者為腎，右者為命門，於其藏亦有六也。府有五者，何也？然：五藏各一府，三焦亦是一府，然不屬於五藏，故言府有五焉。
In the sixth or seventh month of a woman’s pregnancy, if wiry pulses, heat effusion, ever-increasing distention of the fetus, abdominal pain, and aversion to cold occur, and if the lesser abdomen feels as if being fanned, this is a result of openness of the uterus. Fu Zi Tang (Aconite Decoction) should be applied to warm the uterus.

The master said: “Among women, there could be spotting, late miscarriage followed by incessant blood descent, or blood descent in pregnancy. If abdominal pain occurs during pregnancy, this is uterine obstruction. Jiao Ai Tang (Donkey-Hide Gelatin and Mugwort Decoction) is indicated.

For incessant abdominal pain among pregnant women, Dang Gui Shao Yao San (Chinese Angelica and Peony Powder) is indicated.

For incessant postpartum abdominal pain, Dang Gui Sheng Jiang Yang Rou Tang (Chinese Angelica, Rhizoma Zingiberis Recens and Musculus Caprae Decoction) is indicated. This formula is also indicated for abdominal cold mounting, deficiency taxation, and insufficiency patterns.
XXI - §5  For postpartum abdominal pain, vexation, fullness, and sleeplessness, Zhi Shi Shao Yao San (Unripe Bitter Orange and Peony Powder) is indicated.

産後腹痛．煩滿不得臥．枳實芍藥散主之．

XXI - §6  The master said, “As a rule, postpartum abdominal pain is treated with Zhi Shi Shao Yao San (Unripe Bitter Orange and Peony Powder). If the condition is not relieved, the indicates dry blood fixed below the umbilicus. Xia Yu Xue Tang (Stasis–Purging Decoction) is then recommended. This formula is also indicated for inhibited menstruation.”

師曰．產婦腹痛．法當以枳實芍藥散．假令不愈者．此為腹中有乾血著臍下．宜下瘀血湯主之．亦主經水不利．

XXII - §6  For women with visceral agitation who display frequent sorrow with a desire to weep, appear as though possessed by a spirit, and frequently yawn and stretch, Gan Mai Da Zao Tang (Licorice, Wheat, and Jujube Decoction) is indicated.

婦人藏躁．喜悲傷欲哭．象如神靈所作．數欠伸．甘麥大棗湯主之．

XXII - §8  Women’s diseases result from deficiency, accumulated coldness, and qi bind, and they manifest with menstrual block. Over the years, blood and cold accumulate and then bind together. The uterus is damaged by coldness where the channels and collaterals congeal and harden.

With pathogens in the upper, there will be vomiting of drool and spittle; over a period of time welling–abscess in the lung results. The person’s body becomes damaged and unrecognizable.

With pathogens binding in the middle, there will be cold mounting around the umbilicus or bilateral rib–side pain connected to the viscera, or heat bind with pain affecting guan yuan (RN 4). The pulses will be rapid with an absence of sores, and the flesh will resemble fish scales. This can also affect men, not only women.

With pathogens in the lower, there will be menstrual irregularities as well as pulling pain in the genital region with aversion to cold in the lesser abdomen, or pain pulling the lumbus and spine with its root at qi jie (ST 30), qi upsursing with acute pain, pain and vexation of the knees and lower legs, sudden dizziness and veiling resembling that of reversal or mania; or anxiety, sorrow, and frequent anger. All of these manifestations are attributed to women’s diseases, they are not the work of demons or spirits.
Over a long period of time there will appear marked emaciation, deficient pulses, and profuse cold; the thirty-six diseases may have hundreds of transmutations and thousands of manifestations. Examine the pulses, yin, yang, deficiency, excess, tightness and wiriness. Apply needles and medicinals to treat the critical and bring relief. Although conditions may be identical, the pulses may have different sources respectively. One should distinguish and remember; do not think that this is unimportant.

Over a long period of time there will appear marked emaciation, deficient pulses, and profuse cold; the thirty-six diseases may have hundreds of transmutations and thousands of manifestations. Examine the pulses, yin, yang, deficiency, excess, tightness and wiriness. Apply needles and medicinals to treat the critical and bring relief. Although conditions may be identical, the pulses may have different sources respectively. One should distinguish and remember; do not think that this is unimportant.

XXII - §10  For women's diseases with inhibited menstrual flow, fullness and pain in the lower abdomen, and menses that appear twice a month, Tu Gua Gen San (Thladiantha Powder) is indicated.

XXII - §16  For sixty-two kinds of wind, and blood-qi stabbing pain in the abdomen among women, Hong Lan Hua Jiu (Carthamus Wine) is indicated.

XXII - §17  For various diseases and pain in the abdomen among women, Dang Gui Shao Yao San (Chinese Angelica and Peony Powder) is indicated.
XXII - §18  For women with abdominal pain, Xiao Jian Zhong Tang (Minor Center-Fortifying Decoction) is indicated. 婦人腹中痛，小建中湯主之。

SHANGHANLUN


§ 144 The woman has an injury by the wind (zhong feng 中風) and after 7 or 8 days, she has periodic cold chills and fever (in alternation), when the menstruations stop: this means that the heat has entered the blood chamber; it will be nods in the blood and it is the reason why it is like intermittent fevers, with periodic fit of fever. Minor Bupleurum Decoction (xiao chai hu tang 小柴胡湯) governs.

§ 145 The woman has an injury by the wind (zhong feng 中風) with fever when the menstruations arrive; she is clear-headed during the day and speaks deliriously in the evening, as if hallucinating ghosts: this means that the heat has entered the blood chamber; if there is no assault on the stomach qi or on the 2 burners, upper and middle, she will recover spontaneously.

§ 143 The woman has an injury by the wind (zhong feng 中風) and she has cold chills and fever (in alternation) and the menstruations arrive; if, after 7 or 8 days, the fever has ceased and the pulse is slow, her whole body is cold, she is congested in the chest and under the ribs – like in chest’s nod – and she speaks deliriously: this means that the heat has entered the blood chamber. One should needle Qimen (Liv.14), in order to treat the fullness.

§ 216 Yangming disease with descending of blood and delirious speech: this means that the heat has entered the blood chamber. If the sweat comes out only from the head, one should needle Qimen (Liv.14), in order to disperse the fullness. When the sweat is all around the body, it is a sign of recovering.
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