

中医人生:一个老中医的经方奇缘

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Life In TCM: Lou's Adventure in Jingfang Medicine

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## Chapter 19 (Selected for “constitution”)

### Kismet Comes When Least Expected

Contrary to the common belief, the so-called syndrome-formula correspondence is far from lofty or unattainable. All it requires is our patience to match syndromes and physical constitutions with formulas.

Following that thought process, he remarked on my failed cases, “The weak hepatitis-B patient might have ‘scrofulous’ constitution. The shabby diabetic patient with oily face might have ‘nutritive’ constitution. The tall, strong patient with dark complexion and gallstone might have “tendon-osteal” constitution. The medium-height, middle-aged hypertensive patient with good appetite, lethargy, sweatiness, frailty, a puffy body and pale skin might have ‘muscular’ constitution. And lastly, the short, sturdy patient who suffered from chronic cervical spondylosis and right sciatica with ashen skin and an aversion to cold and wind might have ‘cold-stagnant’ constitution.”

I couldn't help but shout out upon hearing new terminologies like “muscular”, “tendon-osteal”, “scrofulous”, “nutritive” and “cold-stagnant”. Seeing my response, he grinned, “Sorry I didn't make it clear. I hope you are not bothered by that. These are common terms from Kampo physical constitution theory which belongs to physical science or physiology. They differ from Shang Han categories such as ‘asthmatic’, ‘diarrhea’, ‘water-stagnant’, ‘sweaty’, ‘bleeding’, ‘windy’, ‘coma’ and ‘frail’ patients. They also differ from the ‘toxic in visceral organ’ constitution to be treated by Fangfeng Tongsheng San as proposed by Yakazu Kaku in his *Kampo Ikkando Medicine*, the “owl’ constitution to be treated by Linggui Zhugan Tang, or the ‘skylark’ constitution as proposed by Yamamoto Gan in his *Study on Linggui Zhugan Tang*.”

These strange terms flew naturally out of his mouth, with no intention at all of being ostentatious. I was struck by them; I felt a strong desire to learn more about these sophisticated constitutions, which I later realized, would serve a crucial coordinate in locating a diagnosis against the grid of syndrome-formula correspondence.

“Zhang, what kind of prescriptions should ‘muscular’ type of patients use?” Extremely curious, I couldn't wait to ask.

“To identify a patient's constitution is an indispensable part of clinical diagnosis, but not all of it. For instance, if the ‘muscular’ type contracted cold and fever, we should stick with diagnosing based on Pattern of Six Stages. If conditions seem to always linger, use Yu Pingfeng San (Jade Wind-Barrier Powder). If suffered from nephritis edema, consider using Fangji Huangqi Tang (Stephania Root and Astragalus Decoction). If having

hypertension, high glucose and cholesterol, consider Huangqi Guizhi Wuwu Tang. If having peptic ulcers, consider Huangqi Jianzhong Tang (Astragalus Centre-Fortifying Decoction).” Zhang Feng explained in great detail.

I blurted out the next question, “Zhang, how about ‘scrofulous’ type? How do you treat that?”

He held nothing back, “Kampo doctor Ayukawa Shizuka believed Guizhi Tang formulas are especially for people of scrofulous constitution. These include the original Guizhi Tang, Guizhi variations, Xiao Jianzhong Tang, Wenjing Tang (Channel-Warming Decoction), Zhi Gancao Tang (Honey-Processed Licorice Decoction) and so forth. ‘Scrofulous’ people are thinner and have weaker immune system. According to Otsuka Keisetsu and Yakazu Domei, these people are prone to swollen tonsils in their childhood, hyperactive sebaceous glands and acne in their adolescence, and thyroid problems in their prime. In females, problems in the breasts are common, and when they pass middle-age, gallbladder, pancreas and ovaries would be at risk. They believed Xiao Chaihu Tang could improve conditions for scrofulous constitution. My personal experience is the following: when treating acute cases, diagnose patients conventionally based on exact syndromes; when treating chronic cases, modify based on Guizhi Tang or Xiao Chaihu Tang.”

His words began to resolve the question I had for a long time. I wouldn’t have thought that constitution differentiation has such significant role in aiding clinical diagnosis. Nevertheless, unsure of its direct correlation with syndrome-formula correspondence, I interjected, “Zhang, can you talk more about the Kampo physical constitution theory?”

“Okay.” He answered without hesitation, “Japanese doctor Mori Dohaku proposed an invaluable concept of ‘Three Syndromes, Five Prescriptions’ that included Fangfeng Tongsheng San treating ‘toxic in visceral organ’ constitution. It made a great introduction for constitution theory to evolve from physiology and pathology. Along the way, Mori-sensei raised a number of talented students such as Yakazu Kaku, Yakazu Domei, Yakazu Yudo and Takeyama Shinichiro who later took their teacher’s study to another level. What we have discussed about Guizhi Tang and Xiao Chaihu Tang in treating scrofulous constitution is a direct application of such physical constitution theory.”

My face flushed, for I was still unable to grasp the concept of physical constitution theory despite flooding him with questions. But Zhang Feng did not take offense. He kept on explaining to us details of practical application, and when necessary, cited from the classics to put me in possession of the truth.

Then he retrieved a book, Yakazu Kaku’s *Kampo Ikkando Medicine*, 1964 Japanese edition. He opened it and took out a stack of old, folded manuscripts. He said to me while organizing the papers, “A primary pupil of Mori Dohaku, Kaku in this book, summarized the unique diagnosis method Mori-sensei invented in his old age. Kaku attached much importance to the interaction of constitution and disease. Dividing patients’ physical constitution into three categories, namely, the ‘blood-stagnant’, ‘toxic in visceral organs’ and ‘detoxifying’, he stipulated the use of five formulas, including Tongdao San (Unblock Powder), Fangfeng Tongsheng San, Chaihu Qinggan San (Bupleurum Liver-Cleansing Powder), Jingjie Lianqiao Tang (Schizonepeta and Forsythia Decoction), Longdan Xiegan Tang (Gentian Liver-Draining Decoction) to improve predisposition and treat diseases according to the three types of constitution.”

Handing me the manuscript, he said, “I’ve translated the keys points, take a look.”

I read it carefully. The sections and outlines were done in a very systematic way, but there were simply too many points that I wasn’t able to grasp in such short time. How nice it would be to bring it home and digest slowly. As if he had read my mind, he said, “You can take back with you to study.”

Then he updated me on Kampo's recent studies of formula and disease spectrum, "*Highlights of Traditional Diagnosis*, authored by Otsuka Keisetsu, Yakazu Domei and Shimizu Toutarou collectively is a Kampo masterpiece on formula (fangzheng) and disease spectrum. It is worth careful reading. They believed that for every disease, there were a few to a dozen effective formulas, each of which targeted a unique part of the disease spectrum. This accomplishment was a result of centuries of Kampo's clinical trial and error."

Worried that he might have confused me, Zhang turned to the bookshelf, fetched his glasses and adeptly retrieved the *Clinical Kampo* magazine. Turning its pages, he pointed to a paragraph and asked me to read it. There he underlined two sentences written in Japanese. I read it over, and could only understand half of its meaning. Knowing my bafflement, he recited it in Japanese, then in his Shandong-accent, made the following cordial translation, "Yakazu Kaku combined formula and disease spectrum, the warp and woof of the fabric of a patient, to form a new coordinate system for diagnosing diseases. This I believe was unprecedented, to pin-point a diagnosis by x-and-y axis; this is a giant leap in Kampo medicine, so is in Jingfang's development. It serves the departure point to systemize clinical practice, by standardizing and simplifying the process to analyze myriad combinations of symptoms, predispositions, pulse, tongue and stomach images. Through strengthening the foundation of connecting the 'thousands of threads above' to the 'single needle below', doctors can avoid acting on intuition. This is how traditional medicine can break free of its old hindrance and become a subject that everybody can pursue."

Then he returned to the topic, "Using 'formula-constitution' correspondence, I would use Chaihu Guizhi Ganjiang Tang to treat the hepatitis-B patient of scrofulous constitution, Da Chaihu Tang for the gallstone patients of tendon-osteal constitution, Gegen Huangqin Huanglian Tang plus Banxia for the diabetic patient of nutritive constitution, Huangqi Guizhi Wuwu Tang combined Gancao Xiexin Tang for the hypertensive patient of muscular constitution, and Mahuang Tang combining Gegen Huangqin Huanglian Tang plus Banxia and Ganjiang for the cervical and sciatica patient of cold-stagnant constitution."

Paused for a bit, he continued, "Children's constitution is not defined; it changes as they turn adults. Another common constitution found in pediatrics in addition to the scrofulous type is called the 'excretive'. Children with this constitution are frail despite being plump; since babies they have diarrhea, and scabs or scaly skins of earthen color and various sizes coming off their scalps, accompanied with eczema. Kampo doctor Suzuki Yoshitami believed that these children often show up positive in OT (old tuberculin) test, exhibiting conditions for pulmonary tuberculosis. Whiteness between the conjunctiva and cornea of the eye, as well as the overall pale skin suggest the presence of lung disease in such children, in line with the five elements theory<sup>2</sup> and the 'visceral organ-correspondent optometric theory'<sup>3</sup>. As a result, on no account should we overlook Neijing study, best if we could purify and prune its dregs to serve modern Jingfang."

Heart pounding, I was engrossed in his description of physical constitution theory, the inconspicuous and subtle trace of a person's predisposition that leads to correct syndrome differentiation. The influence of this conversation on me was profound; I can feel the intellectual ripple propagating as Zhang Feng tossed this little piece of rock in my heart pond.

"I love your comments. Indeed, my biggest problem is the inconsistency in treatment efficacy."

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<sup>1</sup> "categorizing and connecting the dots".

<sup>2</sup> In the five element theory, liver corresponds to green (wood), heart to red (fire), stomach to yellow (earth), lung to white (metal) and kidney to black (water).

<sup>3</sup> Wulun Bakuo theory, the study of the eye from the perspective of the five element theory, with a particular component of the eye corresponding to a visceral organ (wu zang).

He consoled me, “syndrome differentiation is the best way to diagnose, but before we could master its essence, lack of efficacy is understandable. Remember it is important to stick with it and not return to the confusing conventional diagnosis. Yakazu Domei sharply remarked that, ‘Different schools have different techniques, theories and diagnostic methods. One’s judgement would be incongruent if he tries to cater to everything.’ Knowing two diagnostic methodologies doesn’t make you well-rounded, and to know what to keep and discard is crucial to prevent yourself from being torn apart by opposing perspectives. In my opinion, most people are vulnerable to such volatility in judgement; only a few are able to cross unharmed between two equally competitive models. So my approach is to “stick with one principle,” syndrome differentiation. You can complement it with acupuncture, work on internal and external aspects together to perfect clinical practices. If lost in the complexity of symptoms, signs, tongues, pulses, disease tendencies, and failing to see the solid existence of a patient’s constitution, treatment history and formula-constitution correspondence, a Jingfang doctor is shirking his important duty.”