

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following are questions regarding the clinical use of the Three Treasures from practitioners. They are reported below to help other practitioners in the choice of remedies and treatment principle.

Topics:

- Treating according to the four phases of the menstrual cycle
- Proctitis complicated by salmonella
- Kidney-Yin and Spleen-Qi Deficiency with Phlegm
- Spasm and tightness of the upper back
- Weak urination
- Female infertility
- Mouth ulcers from Yin Fire
- Longitudinal tongue cracks
- Treatment of male infertility
- Signs but no symptoms
- Contradictory signs and symptoms
- Chronic vaginitis and fatigue
- Migraine
- Urinary difficulty
- Impotence

1. Topic: TREATING ACCORDING TO THE FOUR PHASES OF THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

a. Menstrual Migraines

Q: I have a 45-year-old patient who has migraine headaches which only occur during menses and begin on day 2 or 3. She has heavy bleeding on the first two days of her period which temporarily stops when her headache begins and then resumes, although not as intense. The headache can last for up to three days and is located on the left, front aspect of her head. She also experiences extreme heat in her head and upper body along with the headache and her abdomen also becomes very distended, which she says feels as though she is 4-6 months pregnant. Her tongue is not red, nor does it have red spots or a yellow coating. She is being treated with acupuncture and a patent remedy for women's cycle. Please could you suggest another herbal formula that she could take for this condition?

A: It sounds as though her headaches could be due either to Liver-Yang rising or Liver-Fire. Since the tongue is not red and the pulse is choppy, indicating Liver-Blood Xu, Liver-Yang rising is the more likely pattern. The extreme distension is probably due to Liver-Qi stagnation. Therefore, she seems to have a common cluster of Liver patterns: Liver-Blood Xu, Liver-Qi stagnation and Liver-Yang rising. Since the headaches occur exclusively at the time of her period, you must regulate the menses by treating according to the four phases of the menstrual cycle:

Phase 1 - the period itself

Phase 2 - 1 week after the period

Phase 3 - Ovulation time (about 1 week beginning from the end of Phase 2)

Phase 4 - pre-menstrual phase (about 1 week)

I would suggest the following:

Phase 1 - Bend Bamboo (3 x 2 tablets daily)

Phase 2 - Precious Sea (2 x 2 tablets daily)

Phase 3 - Growing Jade (2 x 2 tablets daily)

Phase 4 - Freeing the Moon (3 tablets in the morning) plus Bend Bamboo (3 tablets in the evening)

She should stop taking any other patent remedy while she is following this treatment protocol.

Note: this practitioner wrote back three months later to report a dramatic improvement in this patient's condition.

b. Vaginal itching, depression and malar flush

Q: I am seeing a 38-year old female who is suffering from vaginal itching and a yellowish vaginal discharge, which occurs a few days before her period. She was diagnosed with a bacterial vaginal infection a month ago and was put on antibiotics. Since then the itching occurs only before her period.

Her periods are regular, although she does have some menstrual cramps, which go away with rest, and headaches which occur if she does too much during her period. She is also irritable, angry and depressed before and during her period and she took Welbutrin (an anti-depressant) for her depression for 7-8 months, up until 4 months ago. Her depression was associated with a complete lack of energy and she slept for up to 12 hours a day, had tiredness before her period and a mild, transient pain in her lower abdomen (an ultrasound ruled out polycystic ovaries).

Her skin is oily and peels if she does not use moisturiser. She has tinea on her chest and upper back. She also has whiteheads on her face before and during her period. She had very bad acne from the age of 22 and has been taking a herbal formula which cleared her skin and made her periods regular. She begins taking the herbs 3 days before her period and continues for 3 days after her period. The formula clears Heat in the Lung and Liver and moves Qi.

She also has a malar flush and butterfly redness and a feeling of heat in the face, even though she feels cold most of the time. She has a bowel movement everyday, but has difficulty passing stools. She urinates frequently, especially if she has cold drinks and food. Her feet tend to be numb and cold before her period.

She has a son, but a history of infertility and took Clomid to get help her get pregnant. She also has a history of fibrocystic breast disease.

Her tongue is swollen with some toothmarks and has a pale body, but is red on the sides and tip, with a sticky yellowish coating at the root. The tongue can be purplish just before her period. The pulse is deficient and slightly wiry/slippery.

My diagnosis is Liver-Qi stagnation and Kidney-Qi deficiency leading to Damp-Heat in the Lower Jiao. However, she has so many combinations of Cold and Heat symptoms which make me cautious. Can you please recommend formulae for different phases of her cycle?

A: This patient has many signs of Dampness e.g. vaginal itching, acne, tinea, fibrocystic disease of the breasts and a sticky-yellow tongue coating.

Judging from the tongue and pulse it sounds as though she also has Liver-Qi stagnation. I would not worry too much about the contradictory hot-cold signs, as these are very common in women and could simply be due to Kidney-Yang Xu (pale tongue) and Heat deriving from Liver-Qi stagnation (red sides of the tongue).

I would give her the following:

Phase 1 - Stir Field of Elixir

Phase 2 - Unicorn Pearl
Phase 3 - Clear the Palace
Phase 4 - Freeing the Moon or Freeing Constraint (perhaps the latter).

Acupuncture can be used to tonify the Spleen.

c. Menstrual irregularities

Q: I would like your suggestions on the appropriate Women's Treasure formulae for one of my patients.

She is 32 years old and has a history of irregular menses. Two years ago she had a miscarriage at 10 weeks and required a D&C. She has never had a normal menstrual cycle and her menses have always been irregular. Her symptoms include: cold hands and feet; a tendency to feel cold; low back pain with the onset of the menses, PMS symptoms, such as breast and abdominal distension, irritability and outbursts of anger. She also has a small uterine fibroid which her physician has determined does not affect implantation. She is currently on Follitism (follicle stimulating hormone) and she has a history of occasional ovarian cysts. Her menstrual bleeding is normal on day 1, but scanty by day 2 and the bleeding only lasts 3 days. Her face is pale and she is slightly underweight. She exercises 4-5 times a week. Her tongue is pale and slightly swollen with a wet, thin white coating. Her pulses are thready and weak.

My diagnosis is Kidney-Yang deficiency, Liver-Qi stagnation and Blood stasis in the Uterus (possibly also cold in the Uterus due to the D&C and Kidney-Yang deficiency). I also assume there is Spleen-Qi deficiency due to the Liver-Qi stagnation. I am not sure that I see enough evidence on the pulse and tongue to support a diagnosis of Phlegm.

I believe I need to tonify Kidney-Yang and stimulate the free flow of Liver-Qi and invigorate and Move the Blood. The formulas I am considering are:

Phase 1 - Stir Field of Elixir
Phase 2 - possibly Unicorn Pearl, but I am unsure for how long
Phase 3 - possibly Freeing the Moon

A: I agree with your diagnosis. I would only add that the Blood Stasis in the Uterus probably derives from Cold. Does she feel noticeably colder during the period? This is important. Also, there is some Dampness, probably just Dampness rather than Damp-Phlegm. You also say that the periods are irregular, but do not say how.

I would do the following:

Phase 1 - Stir Field of Elixir
Phase 2 - Unicorn Pearl
Phase 3 - Unicorn Pearl
Phase 4 - Warm the Menses

I would not do anything for the Liver-Qi stagnation, as you can attend to that with acupuncture. Otherwise, if you want to treat it, change as follows:

Phase 3: Warm the Menses
Phase 4: Freeing the Moon.

However, there is no point in using the above while she is on hormonal treatment.

With acupuncture use: LU-7 on the right and KI-6 on the left to open the Ren Mai, Ren-4, ST-28, KI-3, BL-23, BL-20 and Ren-12. Tonify the Spleen with acupuncture.

d. Treatment of Uterine Fibroids

Q: My patient is 51 years old and has uterine fibroids which have grown from 69 mm to 200 mm in 2 years. There is retro-pressure of the uterus on the bladder and ureter which causes leakage of urine, frequent urination and discomfort during sexual intercourse. She constantly feels distended, as though she is pregnant.

She normally has a 26-day menstrual cycle, with an occasional 35-day cycle. Her period is heavy and flooding on the first day with clots and low back pain. After a week there is staining for a further week, after which her vagina feels sore.

She rigorously avoids dairy and usually voids her bowels 2 or 3 times a day. Her stools have a soft consistency and she is occasionally constipated.

She sweats during the daytime and gets up at night to urinate, but resumes sleep easily. Her libido is low and she is generally exhausted. She has a prolapse of the third lumbar disc, which causes intermittent sciatica down both legs and she describes her joints as creaky.

Her pulses are generally slippery, and slightly superficial and very deficient in the third position. Her tongue has a thick yellow coating with raised red dots in the front third. Sub-lingually there is slight purple distension.

I diagnosed Kidney-Yin and Yang deficiency, Damp-Heat in the Liver and Gall-Bladder, Blood stasis in the Lower Jiao and Liver-Blood deficiency.

The first herb prescription was: Huang Bea 9 , San Leng 9, E Zhu 9, Hai Zao 9, Du Zhong 9, Xiang Fu 9, Mu Dan Pi 9, Shan Yao 9, Qian Cao Gen 9, Chi Shao Yao 9, Sheng Di Huang 9, Fu Ling 9 (given in concentrated powder form).

The tongue is now much clearer and less red and she feels less engorged, less pressure on her bladder and the clots have almost disappeared from her period, which is itself shorter and lighter. She is less exhausted and less sweaty.

I have substituted Huang Bai with Lu Lu Tong and Shi Chang Pu as there was less Heat, but slipperiness on the pulse. I have added Tu Si Zi for the Kidneys. I will tonify and invigorate the Blood as soon as a more balanced picture emerges.

Would you change or add anything to the herbs and how long do you think that the process will take? Her doctor wanted to give her an injection to bring on the menopause and shrink the fibroids, but she wants to avoid this.

A: (after meeting the patient): The patient's tongue is slightly reddish-purple on the sides (which reflect either the Liver or the Uterus) with slightly dark sub-lingual veins. Her pulse was slippery and weak on both Chi positions and the Heart pulse was relatively Overflowing compared to the other positions. This is a very reliable indicator of emotional problems and should be addressed. It may be related to relationships and I wonder whether her lack of libido relates to problems in her relationship with her husband, rather than a Kidney-Qi deficiency. Also the failure of Heart-Qi to descend (due to emotional problems) could play a role in the lack of libido, i.e. Heart-Qi and Heart-Blood not going down to the Kidneys, Uterus and genitals.

With a myoma there must be Blood stasis, which is supported by her tongue and large menstrual clots. However, in her case I think there is also Damp-Phlegm in the Uterus, which contributes to the pathology of the myoma. The signs are slippery pulse, ovarian cysts in the past, lipomas on the legs and abdominal pain mid-cycle. The prolonged menstrual bleeding is due to Spleen and Kidney-Qi Xu.

In her case I think it would be advisable to treat according to the phases of the menstrual cycle and I would recommend:

Phase 2 - tonify the Kidneys (7-8 days)

Phase 3 - resolve Damp-Phlegm from the Uterus and invigorate Blood (something similar to your formula, but with resolving-Phlegm herbs, look at the ingredients of Clear the Palace).

Phase 4 - move Qi and invigorate Blood (a variation of Freeing Constraint modified to invigorate Blood).

I do not see Damp-Heat in the Liver and Gall-Bladder or Liver-Blood Xu.

Prognosis: the tennis-ball sized myoma cannot be dissolved and can only be reduced at the very best. If the other two are small they could be dissolved, but it will take a long time, at least a year or more. However, irrespective of whether the myomas disappear, I think that the combination of acupuncture and herbs can make her feel much more comfortable, or at worst stop the myomas growing and stop the excessively long menstrual bleeding. The sub-serous myomas are the most difficult to treat.

Acupuncture: I would concentrate on lifting Qi in the Ren Mai, which should help to straighten the uterus and relieve the pressure on the bladder. I would use LU-7 on the right and KI-6 on the left, Du-20 and Ren-6.

e. Timing of treatment according to the 4 phases when the periods are irregular

Q: I have a 25 year old patient with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) and infertility. She has highly irregular periods (anywhere from 2 to 8 weeks) ever since menarche and she was diagnosed with PCOS 5 years ago. She suffers from intense fatigue, hirsutism, low iron and she had a ovarian cyst removed as a teenager. She has a very pale and pasty complexion and protruding eyeballs. She is not overweight and her pulse is slippery.

I want to use Clear the Palace, but your guidelines suggest only using it in the third phase of the menstrual cycle. The challenge is that with such irregular menstruation, how do you decide when each phase should start and stop? Can you advise me on how to decide when to give Clear the Palace and how long you would recommend using it? Are there any other Women's Treasure remedies you suggest for other phases of the cycle? She responded very well to her first acupuncture treatment; having been bleeding for a month, she stopped bleeding the day after treatment and felt more energised all week.

A: There are many obvious signs of Damp-Phlegm in the Uterus. I generally find that the Ben in PCOS is Kidney-Yang Xu and the Biao Damp-Phlegm in the Uterus. As the periods are so irregular, I would wait until her period comes and give her Unicorn Pearl as soon as the period ends, for about 10 days. Then give her Clear the Palace for about 2 weeks and see what happens. If the period comes, then it is very good. If it does not come, I would simply continue giving her Clear the Palace until it comes.

There are four rules of advice I would give if the periods are irregular and the four phases are

difficult to identify:

- Check for cervical secretion = When that appears, the woman is in phase 2 and then 3
- Wait for period = that is phase 1 and after the bleeding, phase 2
- Check BBT = when it rises, the woman is at the beginning of phase 3 and, after that, phase 4
- Check for pre-menstrual symptoms = phase 4

2. Topic: Proctitis complicated by salmonella

Q: I have a patient who has been suffering from proctitis for the past 5 years. He takes Mesalazine 400mg 4 per day (sometimes 6) and Colifoam.

He only loses blood occasionally, but sometimes there is mucus in his stools. His stools are urgent, thin, ribbon-like and soft, but not too loose. There is very little odour. He has to urinate frequently, as much as eight times per day.

He has just been in hospital with salmonella and he was on intravenous cortisone for one week. When he came out of hospital his knees and ankles were very swollen and painful and he also had rashes on his legs which have now gone. He is urinating more frequently and the urine is often yellow-brown.

He also has long-term severe acne on his face (around the Large Intestine channel), lips and back. The spots are red, with yellow pustules. His skin does not feel hot or itch, but after eating his face often goes red.

His pulses are generally empty, although a bit slippery and rapid. His tongue is swollen, short, pale and wet with a thin yellow coating, teethmarks and quivering. He is also thin, as he lost a lot of weight recently. Please could you advise on a suitable remedy?

A: Your patient shows very clear signs of Damp-Heat. I would use either Clear the Root or Drain the Jade Valley, maybe the former. You could also tonify the Spleen using acupuncture and I would use the Du Mai channel with S.I.-3 on the left and BL-62 on the right, Du-20 and Ren-3. Retain the needles for 20 minutes and then needle Du-1.

3. Topic: Kidney-Yin and Spleen-Qi Deficiency with Phlegm

Q: I am seeing a number of patients in their mid-50s with a common pattern of long standing Spleen-Qi deficiency, Phlegm obstructing the ears, nose and Lungs and Kidney-/Liver-Yin deficiency, in proportions that vary according to the individual case.

Could you suggest a patent remedy (or a combination of remedies) that nourish the Yin without overburdening the Spleen and tonify the Spleen and transform Phlegm without drying and further depleting the Yin?

A: There is not a single remedy that would do that. The three remedies that come to mind are:

- Nourish the Root - to nourish Liver- and Kidney-Yin
- Clear Yang - to resolve Phlegm if there is also Liver-Yang rising, otherwise Limpid Sea
- Prosperous Earth - to tonify Spleen-Qi

In such a scenario, I would give Prosperous Earth in the morning, Limpid Sea (or Clear Yang) in the afternoon and Nourish the Root in the evening (3-4 tablets of each).

4. Topic: Spasm and tightness of the upper back

Q: My 53-year old female patient suffers from constant spasm and tightness of the muscles in her upper back. She describes the pain as moving around and it feels like tight cords, particularly around the scapula and trapezius region. She also describes the pain as sizzling, particularly when she leans against anything. She has a history of vertigo that lasted 4 months after going on a cruise. She also experiences occasional hot flushes and night sweats. She also has a history of TMJ which was corrected with surgery. Her blood pressure is sometimes high e.g. 140/90.

The tongue has no coating, except for the right side which has an unrooted yellow coating, which is not thick. The tongue is red, cracked and swollen and slightly small and the sublingual veins are distended. The pulses are wiry overall, slippery and slightly fast. The right side guan pulse is floating.

Diagnosis: Liver-Yin Xu with Liver-Yang rising, Liver-Qi stagnation and Blood stasis. There is also an element of Wind trapped in the channels, given how the pain moves around and "sizzles". As for the yellow coat on the right side of the tongue, I am not certain. Is it showing Damp-Heat affecting the Gall-Bladder or that the illness is at the Shao Yang level? Would you recommend any of your formulae for this case?

A: I agree with your diagnosis entirely. I think that the spasm and tension in the back is due to a combination of Liver-Yang rising and Liver-Qi stagnation. I also agree that there is some Wind. It is not unusual for the Liver to have 3-4 different patterns simultaneously. The tongue as you describe it is very bad and it indicates a potentially serious situation. There are two crucial things that you need to find out. How long has she had this upper back tension and spasm? Secondly, how long has she had the yellow coating on the right?

The most benign interpretation of it is that it indicates Damp-Heat in the Gall-Bladder. If the coating has been there a short time and appeared very suddenly, it may indicate a serious problem in the Liver, such as Liver cancer. If the spasm and tension has only been there a short time, it may confirm this possibility. Obviously, if the spasm and tension have been there a long time, that is better.

The most important thing to do is to nourish Liver-Yin, subdue Liver-Yang and extinguish Liver-Wind. I do not have a remedy that would do all those things and treat the spasm and tension. However, given her age the menopausal remedy Female Treasure has those actions and could be used and you could use acupuncture to treat the muscular problems.

(It was later confirmed that the coating had appeared within the last 2-3 weeks, but the shoulder pain had been present for 4 years).

The fact that her pain has been there for 4 years means that the coating and the pain are not related. However, the sudden appearance of the coating confirms my fears of a serious pathology. The only other explanation is an invasion of external Damp-Heat in the Gall-Bladder, which is unlikely.

5. Topic: Weak urination

Q: My patient lacks force for urination for a couple of days, beginning on the fifth day of her period. Her symptoms are: pasty stools once every 2 days, a swollen tongue with a thick white coating and red macules, a deep thready pulse, menstrual clotting and cramps.

I have given her Bu Zhong Yi Qi Tang immediately at the end of the bleeding (day 5) for 2 weeks and Xiao Yao San a few days prior to, and during, her period in conjunction with acupuncture. Points used are: BL-20, BL-18, BL-28, L.I.-4, LIV-3, BL-10, Ren-4, ST-36, ST-37, Ren-3.

A: It sounds as though the weak urination at the end of the period is due to deficiency of Qi and Blood, which manifests at that particular time because Blood is naturally relatively more deficient after the period. There is insufficient information at the moment, but I would say that the weak urination must be related to Kidney deficiency, probably Kidney-Yang deficiency. I know that this is the opposite of what Kidney-Yang Xu normally does (as it would cause profuse urination), but it can work the other way too. Bu Zhong Yi Qi Tang makes Qi rise, and so may not help the urine to descend. Also why Xiao Yan San before the periods? Does she have manifestations of Liver-Qi stagnation? The periods indicate slight Blood stasis.

I would suggest Stir Field of Elixir (only 3 a day) during the period and Unicorn Pearl for 2 weeks from the fourth day of the period.

6. Topic: Female infertility

Q: I am seeing a 35-year-old woman for infertility. Her menses waiver at the start date of the cycle, but always last for 4 days. She gets cramps, but no clotting. She also has breast tenderness at some point in her menses, sometimes before the flow and sometimes after. Her flow starts off bright red and turns darker red. She has 2 days of heavier flow and then a slight taper. She gets acne after her menses and suffers from severe night sweats, which prevent her from sleeping. As a result, she is constantly tired. She is unsure if she ovulates, and has no vaginal discharge to detect. Digestion is normal, and her bowels are sluggish. She gets ringing in her ears periodically, and sees 'floaters' a couple of times each week. She is a social worker who works with dying children and, needless to say, her job is very stressful. Her tongue is red with a very heavy, greasy yellow coating. Her pulse is soggy on the right, and very thin and weak on the left.

A: The first thing you have to establish in infertility is whether it is due primarily to a deficiency or fullness. In her case, I do not detect many signs of deficiency and the tongue is quite significant, i.e. it indicates Dampness and maybe Phlegm. The night sweating could be from Damp-Heat rather than Yin Xu. Secondly, you say 'infertility' but how long has she been trying to get pregnant? Thirdly, in infertility it is essential to have a Western diagnosis primarily to exclude blockage of the Fallopian tubes, endometriosis or polycystic ovary. Has she had any diagnosis? Fourthly, in infertility, it is important to take the Basal Body Temperature (BBT) and also check carefully for a stringy, clear, egg-white-like cervical secretion, which should be present for at least 3 days immediately before ovulation. If it is not there, it indicates Kidney deficiency. To sum up, I would be inclined to say that her main problem is Damp-Phlegm in the Uterus (confirmed also by the acne) and would try using Clear the Palace. If this diagnosis is right, I would use the Ren Mai (LU-7 on the right and KI-6 on the left) plus ST-28 (important), Ren-5, KI-14 and ST-40.

7. Topic: Mouth ulcers from Yin Fire

Q: I am seeing a 46-year-old female patient who has had recurrent and sometimes severe mouth ulcers for the past 9 years. They started after her first husband's death. She is now remarried and has a supportive husband, although she is still grieving for her first husband and worries about her children. She has regular menses and the flow is heavy for the first 3 days and then lighter for a further 4 days. The ulcers usually emerge before her period and are concentrated on the lips and gums (not the tongue) and she gets swelling of the area

around the mouth as well. The ulcers last from a few days to weeks at a time. She is generally cold and suffers from fatigue and poor sleep, especially when her mouth is sore. Her pulses are thin deep and deficient, especially the Spleen. Her tongue is pale with a thin white coating. Even when she has a few ulcers I do not see a yellow coating or rapid pulse. I have been treating her for 8 months mostly the 5-Element way by supporting the Earth element after clearing blocks. I dispersed ST-44 when she had an acute flare-up and I also treated the Chong Mai and Ren Mai during acute episodes. She responded for a while but I am not seeing a sustained benefit. What herbs could she take? Do you have any suggestions about how to plan acupuncture treatments to get sustained results?

A: Mouth ulcers are always due to some form of Heat which may be: 1) Full Heat 2) Empty Heat from Yin Xu 3) Yin Fire. The organs involved are usually, Stomach, Heart and Liver. Judging from your patient's tongue (pale), I would say that it is very likely that her ulcers are due to Yin Fire flaring upwards (which usually happens from a combination of overwork and emotional problems). You can read about Yin Fire in my books "The Practice of Chinese Medicine" and "Diagnosis in Chinese Medicine". Very briefly, when Yuan Qi is weak from overwork, the Minister Fire in the Lower Dan Tian becomes pathological and flares upwards causing some Heat above. However, the deficiency of Yuan Qi means that there is often a deficiency of Qi, Blood and Yang of the Spleen and Kidneys. This Yin Fire is neither Full nor Empty Heat, it is just different. It is treated by tonifying the Yuan Qi and very lightly clearing Heat upwards. I would be tempted to try the formula Bu Zhong Yi Qi Tang. I have two variations of it: one is called "Tonify Qi and Ease the Muscles", the other "Breaking Clouds". I would suggest trying Breaking Clouds first. With acupuncture, you are right to treat the Ren Mai, firstly because the ulcers are more before the periods and secondly because the Ren Mai goes through the mouth. Use LU-7 on the right, KI-6 on the left, Ren-4, KI-13, L.I.-4 on the left, ST-44 on the right. Treat more frequently in the pre-menstrual phase. You must also attend to the emotional aspect of the condition by treating the Heart and Lungs.

8. Topic: Longitudinal tongue cracks

Q: I see a lot of patients with longitudinal tongue cracks that do not reach the tip, often combined with lateral cracks emanating from the main longitudinal one. Although these patients all have different conditions and different signs and symptoms, I should be grateful if you would provide some general guidance on using your product line when Stomach-Yin deficiency is a significant presenting pattern. Are there any general formulae that are particularly useful, or any that demand particular caution? Is it possible to see the tongue signs reverse with ongoing treatment or does that depend more on a significant reversal of lifestyle factors? I apologise for the general nature of the question but it is a dominant theme in my tongue observations these days.

A: With longitudinal cracks you must first establish whether it is a Heart or Stomach crack. Judging by what you say, you are talking about Stomach cracks. The crack you describe (longitudinal with deep transversal cracks emanating from it) actually indicates not only severe Stomach-Yin Xu but also Kidney-Yin Xu.

The main remedies for Stomach-Yin Xu are: 1) Central Mansion 2) Harmonize the Centre 3) Jade Spring. With the cracks you describe, I would say they need Jade Spring. However, if Kidney-Yin Xu is pronounced, then Nourish the Root would be better as Jade Spring does not nourish Kidney-Yin. Of course the remedies may also be combined taking 3 tablets of Jade Spring in the afternoon and 3 of Nourish the Root in the evening.

9. Topic: Treatment of male infertility

Q: I attended a recent seminar you gave, where you talked about sperm and menstrual fluid being related. I have subsequently been wondering whether the treatment of four phases for female infertility would also apply to the treatment of male infertility due to low sperm count? Would you use herbal formulae in phases as well and would you use the same acupuncture points as for females? I have been treating a husband (age 39) and wife (age 37) for infertility, the wife for seven months and the husband regularly for three months. Both present primarily with Kidney-Yang and Spleen-Qi Xu symptoms, along with tongue and pulse indications.

A: Sperm is indeed equivalent to menstrual blood and eggs in women (both Tian Gui deriving from Kidney-Jing). However, one does not treat according to phases in men. In a case of male infertility from Kidney-Yang and Spleen-Qi Xu, the treatment should naturally concentrate on tonifying Kidney-Yang and Kidney-Jing with points such as Ren-4 (probably most important point) and BL-23 (as well as ST-36, KI-3, etc.). Also use the Du Mai every now and then, i.e. S.I.-3 on the left and BL-62 on the right. In terms of herbal remedies, if there is a deficiency of Kidney-Yang you can select Strengthen the Root or perhaps, even better, Unicorn Pearl (even though that is in the Women's Treasure). I hope this helps.

Finally, I would like to remind you to check the clinical manifestations carefully to exclude the presence of Dampness in the Lower Burner as that can impair fertility in men. In addition, the role of the Heart is very important. Just as Heart-Qi descends to the uterus in women to regulate the menstrual function, in men, it descends to the prostate and genital system so it has an influence on fertility as well.

10. Topic: Signs but no symptoms

Q: I am treating a 35-year-old woman with 4 young children. She is coming for acupuncture treatment for the sequelae of a car accident that took place a year ago (neck pain, mid-back pain, low back pain, foot pain, numbness in hands and dizziness). She has strong signs of Heat, for example, a very full pulse (which is also rapid and irregular), a bright red tongue body with a red tip. She has a very loud voice and a very extrovert personality and she dislikes heat a lot. However, she has no symptoms of Heat, i.e. there are no bleeding irregularities or menstrual problems at all, no headaches, no ear or eye symptoms, no burning urination, no phlegm and no cough. Her parents both smoked very heavily and she smoked a pack a day for 10 years and now smokes 6 a day. She does drink a lot of water but I find that so many people these days drink a lot of water because they believe it is healthy and it is not a reliable indication of Heat. I asked her specifically if she is very thirsty. She has a very physical job (building maintenance) so she said that when she works hard she gets thirsty. She says she likes to eat, but she does not get really ravenous. She does have a lot of bad facial acne. Her signs of Heat are so strong I thought a herbal formula might be advisable. Which of your formulae would you recommend for this scenario?

A: First of all, the fact that she has signs but no symptoms does not surprise me. I have seen that many times, that is why Chinese medicine is so great as it can be used for prevention! Because it takes all signs and symptoms into account to form a 'pattern'. Therefore her tongue and pulse are part of a 'pattern'. One possible reason for the absence of symptoms is simply her young age. The absence of thirst I think is simply due to the fact that she drinks so much that her body has not time to develop any thirst. Secondly, to choose a remedy, you must really try and identify (in spite of the lack of symptoms), the location of the Heat: Liver, Stomach, Heart, Lungs? These are the most likely. In order to do this, you must analyze the pulse more carefully. The red tip would indicate a location in the Heart, but there may be another location too. You do not say whether the tongue has a coating or not: this is very important to establish as a coating would indicate Full Heat, and an absence of coating would

indicate Empty Heat. I suspect it must be Full Heat. Possible remedies are:

- Ease the Muscles (Stomach Heat)
- Drain Fire (Liver Heat)
- Settling the Soul (Liver and Heart Heat).

11. Topic: Contradictory signs and symptoms

Q: I would like your advice on the following case. I have been treating a 36-year-old woman with chronic low back pain for the past six years. The pain radiates down the Gall-Bladder and Bladder channels. Pressure and warmth relieve the pain, but activity makes it worse. She feels cold all the time and is very exhausted, although she sleeps well. She has no digestive problems, but has had mouth and tongue ulcers (Yin Xu type as they have a white rim) for as long as she can remember. At times they are so bad that she can hardly speak. Her tongue is very swollen and red with a thick white slippery coating. Her pulse is slippery, weak and only palpable on a superficial level. Some of the signs and symptoms seem to contradict each other and I am having difficulty seeing how it all fits together. Any help with this case would be greatly appreciated.

A: The general rule is that when the signs and symptoms are confusing, pay attention to the tongue. As you describe it, the tongue shows Damp-Heat and generally a Full condition. I think the mouth ulcers could be due to Damp-Heat and not necessarily Yin Xu. The slipperiness of the pulse confirms the Dampness. If it really is absent at the deep level, then it indicates the beginning of Yin Xu of which she has no symptoms yet. This is not surprising as often the pulse indicates a condition before symptoms appear. With regard to the pain down the Gall-Bladder and Bladder channels, the alleviation with warmth and pressure and the generally cold feeling would suggest either external Cold invasion in the muscles (and therefore purely a channel problem) or an Empty-Cold condition from Kidney-Yang Xu. The emptiness of the pulse at the deep level, besides indicating potential Yin Xu, also reflects the Kidney in general and it is therefore related to a Kidney deficiency which may be Yin or Yang. Moreover, in women more often than not both Kidney-Yin and Kidney-Yang are deficient and this could explain some of the contradictions. In these cases, acupuncture is often better than herbal medicine because you can tonify the Kidney in general irrespective of whether it is Yin or Yang Xu. I would be tempted to use acupuncture to tonify the Kidney and treat the channel problem and a herbal remedy to resolve Damp-Heat, such as Ease the Muscles.

12. Topic: Chronic vaginitis and fatigue

Q: My patient has been suffering from vaginitis for the past 22 years on a monthly basis. Her symptoms began 22 years ago with a feeling like she was immersed in water. Hot damp weather aggravates her symptoms. However, she always feels cold, especially her hands and feet, but gets overheated easily and feels that moisture consumes her, especially in the vaginal area. Her vaginal discharge is clear to slightly yellowish, watery (except at ovulation) and has occasional odour. She has PMS and her periods contain clots. She never feels rested in the morning, even though she has slept soundly through the night. Her digestion is poor with a lot of bloating and gas after eating. Her bowels are now mostly formed but used to be loose. She drinks over a 100 oz. of water a day, bruises easily, has rosacea, occasional tinnitus and dizziness when she gets up, or moves, too quickly. She has low blood pressure and suffers from oedema of her hands and feet especially in hot humid weather. She also experiences low back pain.

Her pulses are slightly wiry on the left and slippery and Kidney-Yang is very deficient. Her tongue is very pale, swollen with a moderately thick white coat.

I have diagnosed her with Spleen-Qi deficiency, Kidney-Yang deficiency, Damp-Heat and Liver-Qi stagnation. I would greatly appreciate your help on selecting the proper patent herbs. I was thinking of Tonify Qi and Ease the Muscles with Strengthen the Root and Drain the Jade Valley. How many of each should I give her or could you suggest something more appropriate?

A: I totally agree. Besides Qi Xu, there is Qi sinking in these cases. The remedies you have selected are right but perhaps you can tonify the Kidneys with acupuncture.

Tonify Qi and Ease the Muscles in the morning (3 tablets)
Drain the Jade Valley in the afternoon (3 tablets)

Acupuncture: LU-7 on the right, KI-6 on the left, Du-20, Ren-3, KI-11, LIV-5, BL-20-23.

13. Topic: Migraine

Q: My patient is a 49-year-old woman who presents with migraines which are always one-sided temporal headaches. The migraine can be on either side, although it is more often the right side than the left. She averages one headache per month, but can get as many as 3 migraines in a month.

Her migraines began in her 30's when she became peri-menopausal. She was completely through menopause at age 40. She was also diagnosed with osteoporosis of the hip and osteopenia of the spine. She has no other complaints and feels she is in good health. When she did have her periods they were uneventful with no clotting or PMS. Her pulses are deep and weak and her tongue looks slightly pale and slightly purplish. Her headaches also seem to appear most often in early morning, pre-dawn. Without having many symptoms to go on other than the temporal headaches which indicates some Liver-Qi stagnation, and Kidney-Qi deficiency evidenced by the early menopause and bone loss, I am not quite sure which patent herbs to prescribe.

A: Judging from what you say, I think the headaches are caused by Liver-Yang rising which, itself, occurs against a background of Kidney-Yang deficiency (no, it is not strange to have Liver-Yang rising from Kidney-Yang Xu). You need to tonify Kidney-Yang and subdue Liver-Yang. I would suggest Unicorn Pearl in the morning (3 tablets) plus Bend Bamboo (4 tablets in the afternoon). If you think that there is a confusing situation of both Kidney-Yin and Kidney-Yang Xu, use Ease the Journey-Yang instead of Unicorn Pearl.

14. Topic: Urinary difficulty

Q: What is the difference between Separate Clear and Turbid and Water Passages in the treatment of urinary difficulty?

A: The main difference between Separate Clear and Turbid and Water Passages in the treatment of urinary difficulty, is that Separate Clear and Turbid (a variation of Bi Xie Fen Qing Yin) treats primarily the Biao of the condition, i.e. it resolves Dampness from the urinary passages to treat the symptoms of urinary difficulty, frequent urination, slight burning on urination, turbid urine. By contrast, Water Passages (a variation of Zhi Bo Di Huang Wan) treats both the Biao, i.e. Dampness in the Bladder and the Ben, i.e. Kidney deficiency for urinary problems. As it treats the Ben, it is designed to treat chronic urinary problems from Dampness in the Bladder occurring against a background of Kidney deficiency. The tonification of the Kidneys achieved by this remedy is balanced in terms of Yin and Yang, i.e. it is suitable both for Kidney-Yang and Kidney-Yin deficiency. It is suitable to treat

chronic interstitial cystitis.

15. Topic: Impotence

Q: I am treating a 34-year-old man for impotence. His problem started 5 years ago. He does not show many symptoms of Kidney deficiency except for frequent urination. He also suffers from insomnia and palpitations and frequently complains of a feeling of tightness in the chest. All the Chinese remedies for impotence seem to have strong and hot Kidney-Yang tonics which do not seem suitable to his case. Can you recommend anything?

A: I think this is a typical example when impotence derives not from a Kidney deficiency but from a disharmony between Heart and Kidneys. Just as in women Heart-Qi and Heart-Blood descend to the Uterus to promote the period and ovulation, in men, Heart-Qi and Heart-Blood descend to the penis to promote a healthy sexual function and erection. Interestingly, erection is due to the filling of the corpus cavernosum with blood and the Heart governs Blood. Just as menstruation in women depends on the communication between Heart and Kidneys, in men, the sexual function also depends on the communication between these two organs.

I find that, more often than not, impotence in young men is caused not by a Kidney deficiency but by Heart-Qi and Heart-Blood not descending, a situation caused by emotional stress. The insomnia, palpitations and tightness of the chest in this patient would seem to confirm this.

I have formulated the remedy Arouse Power specifically for this situation, i.e. Heart and Kidneys not communicating and affecting the sexual function. I would recommend 4 tablets a day.