

It does not cover yin deficiencies of the yin organs or yang organs as such, or complete disciplines such as ophthalmology; rather it is intended to indicate the clinical applications that observation of the external manifestations of the five fluids can provide.

Differentiation of pathological lacrimation

Tears or crying from emotional upset is normal, but tears can also be the result of pathological wind-heat or wind-cold invasion, or excess fire in the Liver and Gallbladder channels, or fire forcing water to move improperly, all of which are discussed below. The following differentiation does not cover lacrimation resulting from ophthalmological disease alone.

COMMON SYMPTOM PATTERNS

Liver channel wind-cold lacrimation. Cold tears appear on exposure to wind and is often seen in older patients who are blood deficient. The main manifestations will be watery eyes in the wind, emaciation, pallid face, pale lips and nails, pale tongue body and thin pulse. If the deficiency involves yang, they will have chills and cold limbs, a white moist tongue coat and a deep slow pulse.

Liver channel wind-heat lacrimation. Hot tears appear on exposure to wind and the main manifestations will be hot watery eyes in a draft but, despite the tears, the eyes will feel gritty and red, with a dry mouth and nose, dizziness and tinnitus. The tongue body will be red, the tongue coat thin white and the pulse wiry, or possibly thin and rapid.

Dual deficiency of Kidney and Liver lacrimation. Cold tears appear randomly. The main manifestations will be frequently watering eyes, worse in cold temperatures. At first the lacrimation will stop by itself without the appearance of any other symptoms, but gradually the condition will worsen with more frequent tears, accompanied by dizziness, faintness, blurry vision, tinnitus, loss of hearing, insomnia, spermatorrhea, lower backache and weak knees. The pulse will be thin and weak and the tongue coat white.

Yin deficiency with fire flaring lacrimation. Hot tears appearing randomly. The main manifestations will include frequent hot lacrimation during the daytime but dryness of the eyes at night, associated with blurry vision, a fainting feeling, red tongue body, tongue coat thin white or thin yellow, and a thin rapid pulse.

Differentiation and treatment

Liver channel deficiency cold lacrimation. This is usually a result of Liver blood deficiency so that it is unable to rise and nourish the eyes. The deficiency is coupled with an exogenous wind-cold pathogen taking advan-

tage of the weakened area and invading. The pathogenic cold lodges in the optical orifice and obstructs—as is its nature—but on further exposure to external wind (and the pathogenic wind's own yang-dispersing nature), the tears begin to flow. The *Comprehensive Records of Sagely Beneficence* (*Shèng jì zǒng lù*, 1117) in its chapter on lacrimation from wind, remarks: “The Liver opens into the eyes, and the Liver's fluid is tears. When the Liver qi [here, its function] is weak, pathogenic wind will take advantage of this and invade, so that the fluid of the Liver is uncontrolled and frequently flows out. Upon encountering wind, it becomes worse.”

This symptom is often found in older people with Liver deficiency, and soon a vicious circle can develop: the more tears are lost, the more the Liver fluids are damaged. In the end it becomes very difficult to treat. The approach to treatment is to begin to nourish blood and expel cold, using the formula Nourish the Blood and Drive Out Cold Decoction (*yǎng xuè qū hán yīn*).

Formula

Nourish the Blood and Drive Out Cold Decoction

(*yǎng xuè qū hán yīn*)

Lycii Fructus (*gǒu qǐ zǐ*)
 Chrysanthemi Flos (*jú huā*)
 Angelicae sinensis Radix (*dāng guī*)
 Paeoniae Radix alba (*bái sháo*)
 Chuanxiong Rhizoma (*chuān xiōng*)
 Atractylodis Rhizoma (*cāng zhú*)
 Atractylodis macrocephalae Rhizoma (*bái zhú*)
 Poria (*fú líng*)
 Angelicae pubescentis Radix (*dú huó*)
 Asari Radix et Rhizoma (*xì xīn*)
 Cinnamomi Cortex (*ròu guì*)
 Rubi Fructus (*fù pén zǐ*)

SOURCE TEXT: *Complete Mirror of Ophthalmology* (*Yǎn kè quán jìng*, 1642)

If the cold watery eyes are chronic, with loss of visual clarity, Lycium Berry Wine (枸杞子酒 *gǒu qǐ zǐ jiǔ*) can be used, which is simply rice wine in which Lycii Fructus (*gǒu qǐ zǐ*) have been soaked.

Liver channel wind-heat lacrimation. This is predominantly caused by Liver channel pent-up heat, with a further exposure to pathogenic wind, so that the two yang pathogens combine, struggle, and bring on an external manifestation: a rushing upward to the eyes, so that exposure to further wind elicits the shedding of hot tears.

If the struggle of wind and heat should lead to a build-up of fire, there will be red gritty eyes, dry parched mouth and nose, vertigo and tinnitus. All of these symptoms are markedly different from the Liver deficiency wind-cold discussed above.

Treatment in a mild case should be to cool the Liver and expel wind, with a prescription made up of herbs appropriate for the individual patient, selected from formulas such as Antelope Horn Powder (*líng yáng jiǎo sǎn*) and White Bombyx Powder (*bái jiàng cān sǎn*).

If the condition is more severe, the treatment must be to lift and disperse exogenous pathogenic yang while simultaneously nourishing yin and bringing down fire. In this case, the formula should be Lift Yang and Bring Down Fire Decoction (*shēng yáng jiàng hǔo tāng*) with appropriate adjustments. Gentian Decoction to Drain the Liver (*lóng dǎn xiè gān tāng*) plus Prunellae Spica (*xià kū cǎo*) and Celosiae Semen (*qīng xiāng zǐ*) can also be used.

Formulas

Antelope Horn Powder (*líng yáng jiǎo sǎn*)

Saigae tataricae Cornu (<i>líng yáng jiǎo</i>)	15g
Chrysanthemi Flos (<i>jú huā</i>)	3g
dry-fried Gardeniae Fructus (<i>chǎo zhī zǐ</i>).....	15g
Scutellariae Radix (<i>huáng qín</i>)	15g
Picrorhizae Rhizoma (<i>hú huáng lián</i>)	9g
Scrophulariae Radix (<i>xuán shēn</i>).....	15g
Notopterygii Rhizoma seu Radix (<i>qiāng huó</i>)	15g
Asari Radix et Rhizoma (<i>xì xīn</i>).....	3g
Trichosanthis Semen (<i>guā lóu rén</i>)	15g
Plantaginis Semen (<i>chē qián zǐ</i>)	15g

The antelope horn is finely powdered by filing; the other ingredients are finely powdered in the normal way, then combined. Six grams are taken after meals, washed down with a decoction of Lophatheri Herba (*dàn zhú yè*).

SOURCE TEXT: *Scrutiny of the Precious Jade Case (Shěn shì yáo hán, 1642)*⁵

White Bombyx Powder (*bái jiàng cān sǎn*)

Bombyx batryticatus (<i>bái jiāng cán</i>)
Mori Folium (<i>sāng yè</i>)
Schizonepetae Herba (<i>jīng jiè</i>)
Equiseti hiemalis Herba (<i>mù zéi</i>)
Inulae Flos (<i>xuán fù huā</i>)
Asari Radix et Rhizoma (<i>xì xīn</i>)
Glycyrrhizae Radix (<i>gān cǎo</i>)

SOURCE TEXT: *Scrutiny of the Precious Jade Case (Shěn shì yáo hán, 1642)*

Lift Yang and Bring Down Fire Decoction (*shēng yáng jiàng hǒ tāng*)

Mori Fructus (*sāng shèn*)
 Chrysanthemi Flos (*jú huā*)
 Phellodendri Cortex (*huáng bǎi*)
 Anemarrhenae Rhizoma (*zhī mǔ*)
 Scrophulariae Radix (*xuán shēn*)
 Asparagi Radix (*tiān mén dōng*)
 Rehmanniae Radix (*shēng dì huáng*)
 Equiseti hiemalis Herba (*mù zéi*)
 Schizonepetae Herba (*jīng jiè*)
 Saposhnikoviae Radix (*fáng fēng*)
 Asari Radix et Rhizoma (*xì xīn*)

SOURCE TEXT: *Complete Mirror of Ophthalmology* (*Yǎn kè quán jìng*, 1642)

Gentian Decoction to Drain the Liver (*lóng dǎn xiè gān tāng*)

Gentianae Radix (*lóng dǎn cǎo*)
 Scutellariae Radix (*huáng qín*)
 Gardeniae Fructus (*zhī zǐ*)
 Akebiae Caulis (*mù tōng*)
 Plantaginis Semen (*chē qián zǐ*)
 Alismatis Rhizoma (*zé xiè*)
 Bupleuri Radix (*chái hú*)
 Rehmanniae Radix (*shēng dì huáng*)
 Angelicae sinensis Radix (*dāng guī*)
 Glycyrrhizae Radix (*gān cǎo*)

SOURCE TEXT: *Medical Formulas Collected and Analyzed* (*Yī fāng jí jiě*, 1682)

Dual deficiency of Kidney and Liver lacrimation. This is frequently a result of excessive sexual activity weakening the essence and blood, but can also occur from continual crying from intense emotions that can exhaust the yin fluids. Once Kidney and Liver yin is damaged, the yang can also be reduced, which is what happens in this case, and the lacrimal fluids become erratic, causing frequent watery eyes with cold tears. This will be worse in the cold. Other clinical manifestations include dry gritty eyes and blurry vision, and further Kidney yin and yang deficiency symptoms such as dizziness and vertigo, aching and weakness of the lower back and legs, insomnia, and spermatorrhea. This condition is similar to the Liver channel deficiency cold described above but is more severe, as there not only are two yin organs involved but also a combined deficiency of both yin and yang. So it is truly 'dual.' Treatment requires warming Liver and Kidneys, and nourishing essence and blood, with formulas such as Chrysanthemum Eye Pills (*jú jīng wǎn*) plus Schisandrae Fructus (*wǔ wèi zǐ*) and Astragali complanati Semen

Thin Mucus Patterns

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Introduction

THIN MUCUS¹ CONDITIONS are the earliest recorded instances of thickened fluid pathology in traditional Chinese medicine. Although they are mentioned in the *Inner Classic (Nèi jīng)*, for example in Chapter 74 and again in Chapter 69, their first complete description appears in Chapter 12 of *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet (Jīn guì yào lǔè)*, written by Zhang Zhong-Jing around 220 CE.

Despite their antiquity, the classical descriptions of thin mucus patterns remain highly useful frameworks for the diagnosis and treatment of certain symptom patterns in conditions such as asthma, cough, palpitations, epigastric discomfort, edema, borborygmus and diarrhea.

Pathology

There are two common features in all thin mucus pathology. The first is that all etiological mechanisms in thin mucus involve the slowing of fluid transformation and transportation. The second feature is that the focus of pathology in thin mucus patterns centers on three yin organs: Lungs, Spleen and Kidneys. Thus thin mucus can result from the inability of the Lungs to regulate the descent of body fluids, from the failure of the Spleen to distribute

and transform, or from the incapacity of the Kidneys to support the Bladder's assimilation of fluids. The primary mechanisms are weakness of Spleen and Kidney yang qi: Spleen yang must be able both to transform fluids taken into the body and also to distribute the resulting essential fluid qi; if it cannot, thin mucus can accumulate in the middle burner and even be carried up to the Lungs. This is summed up in *Basic Questions (Sù wèn)*, Chapter 21:

When fluids enter the Stomach, its warming, steaming action lifts the essential qi of these fluids up to the Spleen. The Spleen then transports this qi up to the Lungs, where regulation of the fluid pathways is initiated [through the Lungs' clearing and rhythmic descent]: fluids are transported downward to the Bladder, and the essential qi [of the fluids] is spread outward in the four directions, reaching the skin and pouring into the channels of the five yin organs. This is in accord with [the nature of] the four seasons and the yin-yang of the five organs, and is part of the normal activity of the channels and vessels.

Kidney yang must be able to support the Spleen in the middle burner and also sustain lower burner qi transformation of fluids in the Bladder. If it is unable to do so, the Spleen yang will become further weakened in the middle, while in the lower body, edema can result from fluids that are untransformed and unable to be either reclaimed or excreted. Because of the crucial role of the yang qi in both fluid metabolism and thin mucus pathology, the general treatment method is outlined in *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet (Jīn guì yào lǚè)* for these conditions: “Those with phlegm and thin mucus should be harmonized with warming herbs.”

The Triple Burner is another important component in thin mucus pathology. In *Comprehensive Records of Sagely Beneficence (Shèng jì zǒng lù, 1117)*, the functions of the Triple Burner are well described:

The Triple Burner is the pathway of the fluids and food, and the beginning and end for all qi. If the Triple Burner is regulated in its course, then the vessels of the qi will be calm and even, and able to smoothly move the water and fluids into the channels so that they can be transformed into blood and irrigate the whole body. If the Triple Burner qi is obstructed, the pathways of the vessels will be blocked, and then the water and fluids will stop, gather and be unable to move. They will then accumulate into phlegm and thin mucus.²

If we look at the functions of the yin organs in the context of the Triple Burner, the organization of fluid metabolism, and thus the formation of thin mucus, becomes clearer. The Lungs reside in the upper burner and through the inspiration of qi can move and ensure the openness and regularity of the fluid propulsion, and so are called ‘the uppermost source of water.’ The Spleen rules the middle burner, transforming and then transporting the qi

essence of fluids, and acting as the axis, with the Stomach, for the ascent and descent of yin and yang. The Kidneys occupy the lower burner, steaming and transforming fluids that have arrived in the lower body in order to separate the clear, re-useable fluids from the turbid, unredeemable fluids, which then are excreted. The interconnection of these organs lies in the Triple Burner: the lifting of fluid essence from the Spleen, the descending activity of the Lungs, and the redeployment of recovered fluids from the Kidneys all occur along the fluid pathway of the Triple Burner. Likewise, obstruction at any point can lead to thin mucus.

Categories of thin mucus patterns

History

In *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet* (*Jīn guì yào lǚ*, c. 220) four types of thin mucus patterns are described: phlegm and thin mucus (痰飲 *tán yǐn*),³ suspended thin mucus (懸飲 *xuán yǐn*), overflowing thin mucus (溢飲 *yì yǐn*), and prodding thin mucus (支飲 *zhī yǐn*). This categorization is based on the locations of the focus of the pathology within the body, each causing different symptoms.

There are also two other types of thin mucus that are included in the discussion of thin mucus in *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet* (*Jīn guì yào lǚ*). These are really descriptions of the above four types which have become chronic and aggravated, sinking deep within the body. These are lingering thin mucus (留飲 *liú yǐn*) and lurking thin mucus (伏飲 *fú yǐn*). The two are not separate categories but rather examples of thin mucus pathologies that have progressed to a later stage.

In the Tang dynasty *Supplement to Priceless and Important Formulas for Emergencies* (*Qiān jīn yì fāng*, 682, Chapter 19), Sun Si-Miao presents five classes of thin mucus: lingering thin mucus (留飲 *liú yǐn*), drifting thin mucus (澀飲 *pì yǐn*), bland thin mucus (淡飲 *dàn yǐn*), flowing thin mucus (流飲 *liú yǐn*) and overflowing thin mucus (溢飲 *yì yǐn*). He does not include prodding thin mucus (支飲 *zhī yǐn*) or suspended thin mucus (懸飲 *xuán yǐn*). In Sun Si-Miao's scheme, the locations are: lingering thin mucus is under the heart, bland thin mucus is pathogenic thin mucus in the Stomach, overflowing thin mucus is "above the diaphragm and amongst the five yin organs," flowing thin mucus is located in the Intestines, and drifting thin mucus is the pathogen in the subcostal area, which is the same as the suspended thin mucus (懸飲 *xuán yǐn*) in *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet* (*Jīn guì yào lǚ*). Sun Si-Miao states that the origin of all thin mucus patterns is drinking too much cold water following a cold damage attack.

Tracing the Symptoms of the Illnesses to their Origins (*Zhū bìng yuán hòu lùn*), written by Chao Yuan-Fang in the sixth century, contains the original

four types of thin mucus listed in *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet* (*Jīn guì yào lūè*), plus three more. The first two are lingering thin mucus (留飲 *liú yǐn*), which is pathogenic thin mucus lodged in the chest and diaphragm, and flowing thin mucus (流飲 *liú yǐn*), which is pathogenic thin mucus in the Stomach and Intestines. He put phlegm thin mucus in the chest. He also has a category called pocketed thin mucus (癖飲 *pǐ yǐn*), which is thin mucus that has accumulated bilaterally in the ribs and formed nodes.

From the Tang dynasty to the present, almost all medical writers have categorized thin mucus patterns according to the original descriptions in *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet* (*Jīn guì yào lūè*). In modern textbooks of Chinese medicine, the descriptions are slightly different: thin mucus patterns are described according to their locations rather than by name. For example, phlegm-fluids in the Stomach and Intestines (equivalent to phlegm and thin mucus); phlegm-fluids in the hypochondrium (equivalent to suspended thin mucus); phlegm-fluids in the limbs (equivalent to overflowing thin mucus); and phlegm-fluids above the diaphragm (equivalent to prodigious thin mucus). This is clear and easy to understand and is still based on Zhang Zhong-Jing's original layout, so this will be the method used in the discussion below.

Types of thin mucus patterns and treatment⁴

Thin mucus in the Stomach and Intestines

This is called 'phlegm and thin mucus' (痰飲 *tán yǐn*). The cause is weakness of Spleen and Kidney yang unable to transform fluids, such that they remain in the Stomach and Intestines. However, treatments differ according to the relative degree of weakness of the physiological functioning and the strength of the pathogen.

Essentials from the Golden Cabinet (*Jīn guì yào lūè*) gives this definition: "The patient was hefty but is now thin, with the sound of water sloshing in the Intestines; this is called phlegm and thin mucus." Beyond these few symptoms, however, one will often find sensations of fullness in the chest and flanks, palpitations and shortness of breath, nausea and vomiting of frothy fluid, light-headedness and vertigo, dry mouth without a desire to drink, scanty urine, white tongue coating, and a wiry pulse.

The patient becomes thin owing to the lack of normal nourishment from the essence of food and fluids, which have not been properly transformed and transported throughout the body. The borborygmus results from untransformed fluids moving in the Intestines. Water and fluids rushing upwards in an uncontrolled manner lead to palpitations and shortness of breath, and the white tongue coating and wiry pulse are signs of internal

cold, resulting from the yang deficiency.

The treatment of phlegm and thin mucus will either be warming of the transporting functions or purging of Intestinal water. *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet (Jīn guì yào lǚè)* says: “When the epigastric region has phlegm and thin mucus, with a sensation of fullness in the chest and flanks, and vertigo, the main formula will be Poria, Cinnamon Twig, Atractylodes, and Licorice Decoction (*líng guì zhú gān tāng*).” This formula stimulates the middle burner yang qi to transform and transport water and fluids, promote urination, and give the now transformed thin mucus a route out of the body. If the Kidney qi is weak and unable to steam and transform fluids, the treatment should be Kidney Qi Pill from *Formulas that Aid the Living (jì shēng shèn qì wán)* to warm the Kidneys and promote fluid movement.

FORMULAS

Poria, Cinnamon Twig, Atractylodes, and Licorice Decoction

(*líng guì zhú gān tāng*)

Poria (*fú líng*)

Cinnamomi Ramulus (*guì zhī*)

Atractylodis macrocephalae Rhizoma (*bái zhú*)

Glycyrrhizae Radix (*gān cǎo*)

SOURCE TEXT: *Discussion of Cold Damage (Shāng hán lùn, c. 220)*

Kidney Qi Pill from *Formulas that Aid the Living*

(*jì shēng shèn qì wán*)

Rehmanniae Radix praeparata (*shú dì huáng*)

Dioscoreae Rhizoma (*shān yào*)

Corni Fructus (*shān zhū yú*)

Moutan Cortex (*mǔ dān pí*)

Poria (*fú líng*)

Alismatis Rhizoma (*zé xiè*)

Aconiti Radix lateralis praeparata (*zhì fù zǐ*)

Cinnamomi Cortex (*ròu guì*)

Plantaginis Semen (*chē qián zǐ*)

Cyathulae Radix (*chuān niú xī*)

SOURCE TEXT: *Formulas to Aid the Living (Jì shēng fāng, 1253)*

In excess conditions, where the strength of the pathogenic water exceeds the weakness of the yin organ functioning, the treatment will be expulsion of pathogenic water. *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet (Jīn guì yào lǚè)* states:

“If the patient’s pulse is hidden (伏 *fú*, meaning extremely deep), with an urge to move the bowels, after which movement they feel better but still have a feeling of hard fullness in the epigastric region, this is lingering thin mucus (留飲 *liú yǐn*) wanting expulsion. The main formula should be Kansui and Pinellia Decoction (*gān suì bàn xià tāng*).”

FORMULA

Kansui and Pinellia Decoction (*gān suì bàn xià tāng*)

Kansui Radix (*gān suì*)
 Pinelliae Rhizoma praeparatum (*zhì bàn xià*)
 Paeoniae Radix alba (*bái sháo*)
 Glycyrrhizae Radix praeparata (*zhì gān cǎo*)

SOURCE TEXT: *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet (Jīn guì yào lǜè, c. 220)*

These lines are an example of the use of fluid expulsion in the treatment of the thin mucus pattern. The ‘hidden pulse’ (伏脈 *fú mài*) shows that the thin mucus has accumulated deep within the body such that the yang qi is unable to circulate. The ‘hard fullness in the epigastric region’ results from the gathering of the pathogen into an excess knot. In this situation, the usual warming and promoting movement approach will not be sufficient and thus the pathogenic water must be expelled. Kansui and Pinellia Decoction (*gān suì bàn xià tāng*) can both expel the pathogenic water and also nourish the normal fluids, to eliminate the pathogen while protecting the body.

If the thin mucus has obstructed the Intestines and caused constipation, Stephania, Zanthoxylum, Tingli Seed, and Rhubarb Pill (*jǐ jiāo lì huáng wán*) plus Natrii Sulfas (*máng xiāo*) can be used to soften the accumulated hardness in the Intestines and flush out the pathogenic water. This is another example of a purging expulsion.

FORMULA

Stephania, Zanthoxylum, Tingli Seed, and Rhubarb Pill (*jǐ jiāo lì huáng wán*)

Stephaniae tetrandrae Radix (*hàn fáng jǐ*)
 Zanthoxyli Pericarpium (*huā jiāo*)
 Lepidii/ Descurainiae Semen (*tíng lì zǐ*)
 Rhei Radix et Rhizoma (*dà huáng*)

SOURCE TEXT: *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet (Jīn guì yào lǜè, c. 220)*

Treatment for associated symptoms of thin mucus in the Stomach and Intestines. When phlegm and thin mucus leads to vertigo, palpitations, nausea and

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■ Symptoms may worsen with weather or seasonal changes

Many illnesses are affected by the weather but phlegm diseases are the most obvious. This is due to the nature of phlegm, which follows the flow of qi anywhere in the body and therefore reacts as much to meteorological conditions as does the qi itself.

For example, if cold-phlegm has accumulated internally and the weather changes to an overcast or damp state, this increase in yin influence can cause worsening of the heaviness in the head, stuffy chest, nausea, excess salivation, insomnia and heavy limbs, to the extent that the patient may have to stop whatever they are doing and rest.

However, in summer, or a very dry autumn, these symptoms will lessen or even disappear altogether.

On the other hand, hot-phlegm that has accumulated inside the body will react to weather that is hot or warm and muggy, or to a work environment that is at a high temperature, or to a noisy disturbing or dirty environment. Symptoms such as distention in the head, palpitations, anxiety, distention of the hands, feet and neck, greasy skin, and bitter taste or sticky feeling in the mouth will all worsen. When the temperature is cool, the symptoms can lessen or be relieved, or even in some cases disappear.

Typical phlegm symptoms

1. Vertigo, headache and a heavy head.
2. Nausea, vomiting, borborygmus; sticky, greasy feeling in the mouth; or dry mouth with no desire to drink.
3. Intermittent plum-pit qi.
4. Difficulty swallowing; vomiting of thin sputum.
5. Chronic chest tightness and stuffiness (this may be described as 'shortness of breath' by the patient); possible sudden heart pain like pressure, heaviness or compression.
6. Palpitations, anxiety, easily startled; insomnia; even fainting and convulsions, or mental disturbance. However, the neurological exam is normal and there are no signs of yin deficiency with yang rising.
7. Heavy body, low-grade fever; or subjective fever only.
8. Local heat sensations (e.g., in the limbs or trunk); or local chills (e.g., a hand-sized cold feeling on the back); or numbness without pain or itching; or a local swelling on the limbs that feels different from the surrounding areas. Western diagnosis is inconclusive.

9. Sores and ulcers, or tissue necrosis with weeping or exudation of a sticky, phlegm-like material. Long-term failure of such sores to heal over. Also local thickening of the skin with flaking but no weeping.
10. Stuffy chest, distended or cool feeling in the back, which improves with massage or percussion; and frequent sighing. These symptoms become more obvious on muggy, overcast or rainy days, or during periods of rapid weather changes.
11. Masses or nodes (e.g., subcutaneous nodules or abdominal masses) with little change to the overlying skin except perhaps a slight feeling of coolness or darkening of the skin.
12. Raw pain in the mouth.
13. Subcostal swelling and fullness, possibly with slight pain.
14. Variable pulse manifestations.

Explanation of the special characteristics of typical phlegm symptoms

■ Vertigo, headache and a heavy head

In Chinese medicine, the head is considered the ‘mansion of clear expanse’ (清虛之府 *qīng xū zhī fǔ*), the ‘residence of primal spirit’ (元神 *yuán shén*)²³ which requires the nourishment of qi, blood, essence and marrow, and which cannot endure interference from unclean turbid pathogens.

For example, if phlegm or dampness rise up and disturb the ‘clear expanse,’ then the result may be vertigo, headache and a stuffy, full feeling in the head. The pathogens phlegm and dampness are heavy, turbid and substantial, and as the Chinese medicine dictum states: “It is the nature of phlegm, when causing disease, to follow qi in its ascent and descent, reaching every place without exception.” Thus phlegm-dampness can rise, impede clear yang, and also enter and choke the circulation both inside and outside the blood vessels. In biomedical terms, the resulting condition is similar to that of hypertension with loss of vascular elasticity and eventually sclerosis. It is noteworthy, too, that hypertensive patients with symptoms of phlegm rising and clouding the clear yang usually respond well to treatment based upon transforming and clearing phlegm-dampness.

There is a fundamental difference between the mechanisms involved in phlegm-induced vertigo, headache and heavy head, and the similar condition resulting from deficiency of qi and blood. They both may be constant and chronic, or intermittent, but in the case of phlegm, the use of qi lifting and tonifying will worsen the condition.

■ **Nausea, vomiting, borborygmus; sticky, greasy feeling in the mouth; or dry mouth with no desire to drink**

Phlegm and dampness hindering the normal descent of Stomach and Intestinal qi will lead to nausea, vomiting and the sound of fluids sloshing about the abdomen.

Phlegm and thin mucus being carried upward will lead to a sticky feeling in the mouth and a greasy taste.

Phlegm and thin mucus are originally derived from physiological fluids (body fluids): when normal fluid transformation fails, the body fluids condense and the end result is a pathological production of phlegm. As this pathogen begins to build up, however, its very accumulation further retards normal fluid transformation and transportation. The inability of the Spleen to transport fluids upward, because of phlegm-dampness oppression, leads to dryness of the mouth. Moreover, the ever-growing impediment to Spleen transport means that less and less normal fluids are being produced, which further exacerbates the situation. The most effective treatment approach is to warm and assist Spleen transformation of phlegm and dampness with a formula such as Calm the Stomach Powder (*píng wèi sǎn*), or moxa on CV-12 (*zhōng wǎn*) with draining of ST-40 (*fēng lóng*). In some cases it may be necessary to open the Liver qi flow to assist Spleen transport.

The differentiating point in this symptom is the lack of desire to drink. If questioned closely, the patient will often report that, even though they have a dry mouth, drinking water does not help, and that they even feel epigastric discomfort or nausea afterwards. This is because adding water to an excess of dampness will additionally hamper Spleen and Stomach function.

■ **Intermittent plum-pit qi**

Usually this is a consequence of Liver qi knotting up due to emotional imbalance. As it gets worse, the Spleen is affected, normal transport and digestion is diminished, and body fluids coalesce into phlegm. This phlegm follows the qi up to the throat and jams there, bringing on a feeling of something physically stuck in the throat, which cannot be swallowed or brought up.

One of the characteristics of phlegm, as noted previously, is its cyclical accumulation and dispersal. In this case the cycle depends on the emotional state and the effect of that emotional state on the qi. When the qi flows openly without restraint, the throat is clear; but with stress or pressure, the feeling in the throat returns. If this process continues for an extended period of time, deficiency of yin may occur, because Spleen production of normal yin fluids is reduced, while pathological fluids such as phlegm and dampness increase. As yin decreases, deficiency fire builds up, which further damages the yin. This results in a combined yin-deficiency and phlegm-ex-

cess condition. At this stage, simply attempting to remove phlegm would be disastrous. Normal fluids would be severely injured and the dry, obstructed throat symptoms would become worse. Yin-moistening herbs must be added to support fluids, and dispersal becomes secondary.

■ **Difficulty swallowing; vomiting of thin sputum**

Here, again, emotions precipitate the symptoms. The qi flow is impaired, body fluids dries, phlegm forms, and it may even reach the stage where blood stagnates and fuses with the phlegm.

This is the difference between the former symptom of plum-pit throat and the present dysphagia: in the previous condition, despite a feeling of obstruction, there was no actual difficulty swallowing. In the present state, the barrier is substantial.

If, however, the mass is not located in the throat but in or around the stomach, the result can be an inhibition of downward movement from the Stomach, with a consequent vomiting upward of thin sputum.

■ **Chronic chest tightness and stuffiness, possible sudden pressure-like pain in the chest, heaviness or compression**

In this case phlegm is impeding the Heart yang, yang qi is failing to circulate properly, and the patient will feel, first, a tightness in the chest (which may be described as ‘shortness of breath’) and then, as the yang qi becomes more obstructed, pain.

Alternatively, it may initially be the Heart yang itself that is deficient, so that a yin ‘mist’ arises and clouds the Heart yang, finally ending in phlegm oppressing the chest.

These symptoms are similar to the biomedical disorder of coronary heart disease, but for patients whose Chinese medical etiology involves phlegm, the use of blood stasis removers²⁴ of any description will not be enough. They must be accompanied by herbs that warm the yang and transform phlegm in order to achieve effect.

■ **Palpitations, anxiety, easily startled; insomnia; even fainting and convulsions, or mental disturbance.**

These patients do not have any abnormal neurological signs or symptoms as well as no signs of yin deficiency with yang rising. Regarding severe palpitations, Zhu Dan-Xi says: “This is generally blood deficiency. If it is worse with worry or anxiety, it is from deficiency, and usually lack of blood. If it comes and goes, this is phlegm being moved by fire. In thin people, lack of blood will usually be the cause; in fat people it is almost always from phlegm.”²⁵

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warmth and transformation, and thus prevent phlegm formation, but can also nourish the Stomach qi and thus transform and disperse phlegm that has become obstructed within the channels and collaterals. Because of this mildness, there is no harm in long-term administration. There are instances in the classical literature where Coicis Semen (*yì yǐ rén*) is described as contraindicated during pregnancy, possibly because of its ability to open the collaterals that have become obstructed by dampness, and because of its downward movement and diuresis. But these are exactly the qualities sought in this case. Fritillariae thunbergii Bulbus (*zhè bèi mǔ*) and Citri reticulatae Exocarpium rubrum (*jú hóng*) are able both to cut phlegm and also to move qi to remove blockage, in the spirit of the classical statement, “One who is good at treating phlegm does not treat the phlegm, but moves the qi; when the qi circulates smoothly, then all of the fluids in the body will follow smoothly.” Hordei Fructus germinatus (*mài yá*) has quite a lifting nature, and the effect of smoothing the Liver, as well as unbinding the Stomach and strengthening the Spleen, and is able to accomplish all of this without too much dispersing. When the Liver is relaxed and the Spleen strengthened, the fluids will circulate normally, and there should be no reason for phlegm-dampness to build up.

Frequent miscarriages will necessarily injure Kidney qi, and this is taken into consideration with the additions of Polygoni multiflori Radix (*hé shǒu wū*), Cuscutae Semen (*tù sī zǐ*), Angelicae sinensis Radix (*dāng guī*) and Glycyrrhizae Radix praeparata (*zhì gān cǎo*), which will warm and nourish Kidney qi. Eucommiae Cortex (*dù zhòng*) tonifies the Kidneys, strengthens the sinews, and is also fetal-calming; with the addition of a small amount of Scutellariae Radix (*huáng qín*), the calming effect on future fetal movement is more complete.

The primary approach in this prescription is to transform phlegm, assisted by nourishing the Kidneys, and supplemented with some qi-moving and Liver-relaxing herbs.

After taking the herbs for about three months, Dr. Fang became pregnant and after an uneventful pregnancy delivered a healthy baby boy. In the spring of 1980, she and her husband visited to express their gratitude, and the opportunity was taken to check up on her previous symptoms. Her eyes were now lively, the face rosy and the fingers slender: the phlegm had dissipated without a trace.²²

CASE HISTORY

Phlegm-dampness sinking downward causing ulceration of the legs

The patient, named Cai, female, 24 years of age, was unmarried. She lived in Hubei, and Hubei is hot in August. With the blazing sun beating down in the steaming summer, everyone sheds their clothes in a vain attempt to escape the heat.

Ms. Cai, however, was different: she arrived at the clinic still dressed in her long army trousers. When asked her situation, she looked slightly embarrassed, blushing and drew up her trouser legs, and then we could see: ulcers as large as a hand covered the outside of both calves, in identical shapes.

Examination

On further questioning, Ms. Cai related that vaginal discharge was usually profuse and her appetite was reduced, especially for greasy or rich, meaty foods. Two years previously, the skin on the lateral aspects of her calves, for some unknown reason, had begun to thicken and had become unbearably itchy and painful. No matter what time of year, the surface of the ulcerations ceaselessly exuded a thick, sticky yellow fluid, even in the hottest summer weather. Everyone, when young, likes to look attractive and so, despite the suffering, she was unable to wear shorts: the distress this caused her showed on her face.

The tongue body was red, the root of the tongue had a firm, full, white and greasy coating; the pulse was slippery and strong, the urine scanty and yellow. She presented on 5 August 1981.

Comments

This case is one of phlegm-dampness turning toxic, pouring down into the lower limbs, and producing ulcers.

The *Ci Yuan* dictionary contains the following definition of 'toxic': "The basic meanings of toxic are three: one, harmful or malignant; two, painful or causing suffering; and three, describing substances which can injure people; all are termed toxic." Anything that brings about injury to the organism, and continues to do so without relief, can be termed 'toxic.'

Toxins can be exogenous: heat, fire, wind, dampness and phlegm can all build up and become toxic. In this instance we can assert that it is toxic-heat that has transformed into phlegm. The grounds for this assertion can be found in Chinese medicine theory, but the proof is in the symptoms. The theory can be found in *Inner Classic (Nèi jīng)*, Chapter 74: "All painful itchy ulcerations belong to the Heart."

The reason that ulcerations are the responsibility of the Heart is that the Heart controls fire and heat as well as the blood vessels; if the nutritive qi—part of the blood—does not flow well, and builds up inside the flesh, heat accumulates, blood becomes corrupt (敗 *bài*), the flesh rots, and ulcers form.²³

All oozing fluids belong to dampness, which is in the same class as phlegm, both being derived from pathogenic water. This case of ulcerations with continual secretion of thick, sticky fluid is phlegm-dampness in the extreme. The long-term leukorrhea, the coating of the tongue being consistently firm, white and greasy at the root, the deep and slippery pulse, the dislike for greasy, rich, meaty foods: symptom after symptom points to the crux of the matter: preponderance of phlegm-dampness.

Because the phlegm and dampness were not eradicated in time, it spread rapidly, finally amassing in the lower body and forming ulcers. This is in line with Zhu Dan-Xi's dictum that "Phlegm, in causing disease, follows the qi in its ascent and descent, and can reach everywhere in the body without exception."

If this is not dealt with promptly, its influence can reach the degree mentioned in *Complete Compendium of Patterns and Treatments in External Medicine* (*Wài kē zhèng zhì quán shēng jí*, 1740): "Alternately itchy and painful; when broken, it secretes yellow fluid; when soaked to the limit it becomes a patch." The general experience which traditional Chinese medicine has gathered in regard to the treatment of stubborn skin diseases can be summed up in the following way: hot burning pain with itching tends to be heat; itching that is particularly intense tends to be wind; if after scratching the area has a burning pain, this tends to be yin deficiency; and secretions of sticky, greasy fluid tend to be phlegm. This has been shown over and over again to be accurate in practice, because treatments based on these postulates work. Turbid phlegm with a sticky, obstructive nature belongs to yin, but the red tongue body, the secretion of sticky, yellow fluid and the scanty, dark urine give us the clue that the phlegm has transformed into heat, and thus the elimination of dampness, the transformation of phlegm and the cooling of heat should all be combined in the treatment.

Because the patient was anxious to seek a cure, external as well as internal treatments were combined for faster results.

Formulas

INTERNAL PRESCRIPTION

Coicis Semen (<i>yì yǐ rén</i>)	20g
Plantaginis Semen (<i>chē qián zǐ</i>)	30g
Curcumae Radix (<i>yù jīn</i>)	10g
Armeniacae Semen (<i>xìng rén</i>)	10g
Chaenomelis Fructus (<i>mù guā</i>)	15g
Clematidis Radix (<i>wēi líng xiān</i>)	10g
Taraxaci Herba (<i>pú gōng yīng</i>)	20g
Scrophulariae Radix (<i>xuán shēn</i>)	15g
Scolopendra (<i>wú gōng</i>)	1
Glycyrrhizae Radix (<i>gān cǎo</i>)	10g

Method: Five bags, to be taken as a decoction.

EXTERNAL PRESCRIPTION

Sophorae flavescens Radix (<i>kǔ shēn</i>)	30g
Kochiae Fructus (<i>dì fū zǐ</i>)	30g
Bolbostemmae Paniculati, Rhizoma (<i>tǔ bèi mǔ</i>) ²⁴	20g

Method: Soak in 200ml 95% alcohol for five days, then dilute with distilled water to a 75% concentration; apply externally.

The aim of this prescription is to cool heat, remove dampness, transform phlegm and open the collaterals. The Coicis Semen (*yì yǐ rén*) and Plantaginis Semen (*chē qián zǐ*) remove dampness and so prevent the formation of phlegm. The Clematidis Radix (*wēi líng xiān*) and Chaenomelis Fructus (*mù guā*) open the collaterals, disperse knots and transform phlegm. Curcumae Radix (*yù jīn*) and Armeniacae Semen (*xìng rén*) restore qi flow and thus reduce qi blockage; both are acrid, and by dispersing can transform turbidity. Scrophulariae Radix (*xuán shēn*), Glycyrrhizae Radix (*gān cǎo*), and Taraxaci Herba (*pú gōng yīng*) cool heat and relieve toxicity, so that the phlegm and dampness dispersal action of the formula is contained within the primary goal of reducing the heat and the toxicity.

The Clematidis Radix (*wēi líng xiān*) is chosen here to make use of its “mobilizing without conserving ... [nature] to open the channels and collaterals, and there is no blood or phlegm obstruction which is not immediately eradicated.” *Transforming the Significance of Medicinal Substances (Yào pīn huà yì)*. *Rectification of the Meaning of Materia Medica (Běn cǎo zhèng yì)* also notes: “Clematidis Radix (*wēi líng xiān*) scatters and disperses: this is its ability; for accumulated dampness, immobile phlegm, blood stasis, blocked qi, or any excess, it is appropriate.”

Scolopendra (*wú gōng*), although light in weight, has an effect that is equal to its task: it not only stops shock and opens the collaterals but is also good at transforming phlegm. Zhang Xi-Chun (1860–1933) remarked that its “ability to mobilize and disperse is unsurpassed in speed; whether within the organs, or outside in the channels and collaterals, it is able to open any accumulated obstruction of qi and blood. Its nature is slightly toxic, but in turn is excellent at reducing toxicity, so any and all toxins from ulcerations can be dispelled through its use”—hence its use in this prescription. The beauty of it is that, with one substance, three effects are achieved: dampness, phlegm and obstruction are all removed.

One of the special characteristics of the Chinese medicine treatment of open sores is that not only is local phlegm treated, but the functioning of the entire organism is regulated. At the same time, the local situation cannot be ignored, and thus externally-applied herbs are used to cool heat, resolve toxicity and expel phlegm. When the herbs and the symptoms are in step with each other, the results will naturally be good.

At the end of that year the patient, with joyful smiles to express her gratitude, brought to my home an expensive wall calendar, which I politely refused. To change the subject, I asked about her condition: after five packets of herbs (and the external lotion), the itching and pain of the ulcerations had ceased, and the exuded fluid was reduced in both amount and viscosity. However, because of the demands of work she could not spare time for more consultations, and so continued to use the original prescription. After ten or so more packets, the ulcerating had ceased, and the discharge and other symptoms also cleared up.²⁵

nents of external therapy, using not only herbs but hydrotherapy, moxibustion and breathing therapy, pointing out that it was not only very effective but also highly affordable for those who could not otherwise pay for expensive decoctions. In his book, *Rhymed Prose on [Medical] Principles and Applications* (*Lǐ yuè pián wén*, 1870), he describes the use of such herbs as Olibanum (*rǔ xiāng*), Myrrha (*mò yào*), Carthami Flos (*hóng huā*), Persicae Semen (*táo rén*) and Curcumae longae Rhizoma (*jiāng huáng*) to move blood, combining them into a plaster with phlegm-cutting herbs such as Sinapis Semen (*bái jiè zǐ*) and Arisaema cum Bile (*dǎn nán xīng*) to treat combined phlegm and blood stasis.

Discussion of Blood Patterns (*Xuè zhèng lùn*, 1884) by Tang Zong-Hai (1851–1908) has become a modern classic in the treatment of issues related to blood. It is not a book of just symptoms and matched formulas, however. Tang explains in great detail the mechanisms of pathology involved, and does not shrink from amplifying an aspect almost to the point of caricature if he feels that it has been hitherto under-emphasized; for example, he states assertively in the first lines of his book: “The whole body is nothing more than yin and yang; these two characters ‘yin’ and ‘yang’ are just water and fire; ‘water’ and ‘fire’ are just qi and blood. Water transforms into qi; fire transforms into blood.”

Accustomed to thinking of the identity of fire and qi, and the similarity of water and blood, these lines can appear rather shocking at first glance, but Tang goes on to explain his reasoning.

The ‘water’ refers principally to the water of the Kidneys and the Bladder. Because both are located below the navel, in the cinnabar field (丹田 *dān tián*), they constitute the home to which all of the water and essence of the body must return. But this water cannot of itself transform into qi: it relies upon the ‘yang of heaven’ inhaled through the Lungs to lead the Heart fire downwards, linking to the cinnabar field and heating the Water yin and yang organs, before it is transformed into primal qi and protective qi. This is why he says “water transforms into qi,” and also “the qi of the whole body is produced from the midst of the cinnabar field/sea of qi below the navel.” If the qi is weak, water and fluids cannot rise upwards or be carried downwards to nourish the body. Furthermore, if water comes to a standstill and does not transform, qi itself can become impeded and fail to warm the body.

Tang summarizes this relationship as “qi is produced from water so it can transform into water; water is transformed through qi but it can also harm qi.”

His ‘fire’ refers mainly to Heart fire as the source of heat throughout the whole body. Tang points out that the warmth of the limbs and body, and the activity of the body’s functions, rely completely upon the effect of heat. It is only through the influence of this heat that the Spleen and Stomach are

able to separate, convert and absorb the essence of food and fluids, which then, by the action of Heart fire, can be changed into blood fluid. In this way, if fire is not extreme, it is intrinsically able to produce blood; if fire is intemperate, however, not only will blood not be produced, it will, conversely, be damaged. This connection is summarized as “fire is controlled by the Heart, it can transform and produce blood fluid, and can warm the whole body” and “excessive transformation by fire will conversely result in failure of transformation.”

Therefore, it is clear that qi is produced from Kidney water, and blood is formed through Heart fire. Only if Heart fire descends can Kidney water convert into qi; only if Kidney yang ascends can food and fluids ripen, and Heart fire produce blood. In this way, the Heart and the Kidneys, one yin and one yang, one rising the other sinking, in mutual assistance and benefit, ensure the continuous and unimpaired production of qi and blood for the body.

Tang Zong-Hai also notes that the pivot for this ascent and descent of Heart and Kidneys is the Spleen: “Blood is produced from Heart fire and is stored below in the Liver; qi is produced from Kidney water and is controlled above by the Lungs; in between, the activator of this rising and falling is the Spleen.” This is very similar to Li Dong-Yuan’s emphasis of the importance of the Spleen and Stomach, except that Li stressed the importance of lifting the Spleen yang, as he was addressing mainly internal deficiency conditions in his book, *Discussion of the Spleen and Stomach (Pí wèi lùn)*, whereas because Tang is writing about blood conditions, he emphasizes Spleen yin moistening and protection.

In terms of phlegm theory, Tang Zong-Hai described both the pathology and the treatment for the stubborn combination of stagnant blood and phlegm coalescing to form an immovable abdominal mass (癥 zhēng):

The definition of 癥 zhēng [as opposed to 瘕 jiǎ, movable abdominal mass] is its constancy and failure to disperse; blood is the major component of the stagnant mass, qi the lesser factor, and because the qi cannot overcome the blood it will not disperse. The mass may be made up completely of blood, or the mass of stagnant blood may within it hold water; again, the blood may accumulate for a period of time and itself become phlegm and water. ...With weak patients and chronic accumulation, it is not suitable to attack only, but rather a combined attack and support treatment must be implemented if the enemy is to be overcome. ...To attack phlegm and water accumulation, Ten-Jujube Decoction (*shí zǎo tāng*) should be used.⁴⁸

Summary

From the spare beginnings in the *Inner Classic (Nèi jīng)*, where the focus was on thin mucus in such sayings as ‘thin mucus develops in the middle’