Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and the Treatment of Mental Health Disorders

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A History of TCM:
a question of perspective
Trends

- 42.1% of the population have used a form of alternative therapy (not offered by traditional allopathic health care)
- 62% did not disclose their use of CAM to their physicians.
- 629 million visits to CAM providers exceeding total visits to all US primary care physicians.
- 15 million taking prescription medications concurrently with herbal remedies (18.4% of all prescription users).
- exceeding out-of-pocket expenditures for all US hospitalizations by $21.2 billion
- 1. Patients are choosing to use CAM therapies despite the cost or referral or non-referral from their primary care providers
- 2. Patients feels CAM therapies are effective and are rejecting medical advise for what they assume are more natural and less harmful methods of treatment.
Early Foundations of TCM

- Shang dynasty (1523-1027 BCE)
- Medical treatment by Wu Shamans to exorcise and propitiate demons through sympathetic magic

- Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE)
- Medicine is founded in a naturalistic philosophy

Chinese treatment of psycho-emotional diseases

- Three main – Han dynasty classics
  - Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic)
  - Nan Jing (Classic of difficulties)
  - Zhang Zhong-jings Shang Han Za Bing Lun (Treatise on Damage (due to) Cold & Miscellaneous Diseases)
Nei Jing

• Huang Di: I have observed people who become delirious, and run around naked, talking loudly while performing great feats. Why is this?
• Qi Bo: the four extremities contain an abundance of yang qi. And when this occurs great stamina results.
• Huang Di: why run naked
• Qi Bo: because they are feverish and hot and are aggravated by heat
• Huang Di: why the behavior: talking loud and cursing
• Qi Bo: when yang qi is excess it harasses the spirit and muddles the senses. Therefore people appear crazy and unreasonable.

Early classification of psycho-emotional diseases

• Mania (Kuang) and Withdrawal (Dian)
• Kuang – predominantly a disorder of yang excess
• Dian – predominantly a disorder of yin excess

• Kuang – covers all excited, agitated and hyperactive states
• Dian – covers everything from depression to syncope and epilepsy.
Brief return to religion

- Jin dynasty (265-420 CE)
- Daoism and Buddhism begin to influence the naturalist view of diseases.
- Tang dynasty (618-907 CE)
- Sun Si-miao – creates an acupuncture protocol for the treatment of mental-emotional problems called the 13 Ghost Points.
- Song dynasty (960-1280 CE) influenced by Neoconfucian philosophy – professional Chinese medicine returns to a more naturalist approach.

Three classes of diseases - expansion of yin/yin theory

- Reign of Yuan Feng (1078-1085 CE) Chen Yan introduces three causes of diseases:
  - Internal (seven affects or emotions)
  - External (six environmental excesses)
  - Non-internal nor external (diet, poisoning, external trauma, sex, lifestyle).

Established the pathology of psycho-emotional diseases to be organic (no different from other diseases)
- treatment – physical (acupuncture) medicinal (herbs)
- restricted the notion of a mental disorder
Cultural influence

• Chinese social stigma regarding psychological disturbances.
• 1766 – Qing Code
• Psycho-emotional diseases classified under rubric “internal medicine (nei Ke) further reinforcing the process of somatization.
• Mid-20th century – most psycho emotional disorders classified under “neurasthenia” –weak nerves
• Delays the adoption and development of cognitive or behavioral therapies.

Integration and adaptations of TCM into the West

• Western trend to seek out Asian philosophy (Buddhism, Taoism, Vedanta, Yoga)
• Change in expression of psycho-emotional diseases
• Dependency on pharmaceutical controls to correct the “chemical imbalances”
• Growing openness to cognitive and behavioral therapies.
Diagnosing Psycho-emotional disorders in TCM

- There is no dualism between the body and mind
- Therefore there is no hierarchy in TCM of psychological over somatic functions or symptoms.
- Treat the body you treat the mind – treat the mind you treat the body.
- One does not exist without the other.

Terms to consider

- Mind (Shen)— housed in the heart – heart condition dependent upon blood and essence.
- Jing - essence
- Spirit -Jing Shen (essence/mind) – Spirit has three meanings in TCM
  - Outward manifestation of the body's life activity's (prosperity)
  - Consciousness and function of thinking-feeling (cognitive abilities)
  - That which is responsible for all movement and change in the phenomenal world (creative/motivating force of nature)
A holistic interpretation of self

Psychiatric diseases

• Dysfunctions of Jing and Shen
  1) external factors
  2) internal factors
  3) environmental factors
External causes

- Wind
- Cold
- Heat
- Summer-heat
- Dampness
- Dryness

Internal causes: emotions

- Fire (joy)
- Wood (anger)
- Earth (worry thought)
- Metal (grief)
- Kidney (lament)
Environmental

- Diet
- Lack of regulation between activity and stillness (dong –stirring, jing – stillness)
- Sexual activity
- Iatrogenesis – psychological symptoms caused by medical treatments and medications
- Drug addiction (alcohol, smoking)
- Parasites (chong) –damp, qi stagnation, blood stasis

Treatment based on pattern recognition

- Pattern recognition is the single most important aspect of TCM
- Recognition of constant change
- Goal to restore balance based on the patients constitution.
  Helping patient become aware of the signs of balance and helping them incorporate ways or technique’s that sustain balance.
Discussion regarding the benefits of integrating TCM with Western Medicine to enhance treatment in Mental Health disorders

- Little potential for unwanted side effects
- Addresses the somatization of mental health disorders without the stigma.
- Engages the patient in self care
- Delays and enhances therapeutic outcomes
- Provides coherence in healing (belief in ability to self-heal)
- Holistic approach to healing
- Reduce the side effects of medications.

Using TCM in real life

- Anxiety
- Symptoms; fear, hyperactivity,
- TCM pattern; fear and fright, irritability and anger
- Internal cause of anger effecting wood (liver)
- Pathology of wood (liver)
  - Heat
  - Overacting on stomach
  - Controls movement of blood
  - Stores blood
  - Nourishes tendons
TCM treatment

- Acupuncture: LV3, P6, LI4, St 36, Yintang, Ren 12, SP9
- Herbs: Xiao Yao San
  - Chai Hu, Bai Shao, Dang Gui, Bai Zhu, Fu Ling, Gan Cao, Bo He,
- Reduce anger: meditation and Qi gong
- Exercise (Tai Chi)
- Counseling
- Follow-up

Response to therapy

- Calming effect
- Emotional response
- Self – awareness
- Change in behavior
- Sensitivity to change
- Improved sleep
- Motivation to do more
- Extension beyond self
Questions?

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