When Immunity Backfires
By Adam Cappuccino

Of all the physiological phenomena of the human body, none is more fascinating than our immune system. A complex process, continuously monitoring the entire body for the presence of bacterial, viral, fungal, and even genetic disasters, it keeps us safe from the innumerable potential pathogens that surround us at all times. It is charged with the monumental duty of patrolling against all pathogenic dangers, so it can use some help! We eat well, and take herbal supplements, exercise, and get acupuncture treatments because we know this fosters inner strength and a healthy relationship with the outside world. And for the most part it works, otherwise every cut would be gangrenous, and every cold would be the end of us!

Autoimmune disease occurs when the immune system overreacts and attacks the very thing it was designed to protect. Researchers are still not sure why the body forgets what its own cells look like and targets them for destruction. Western medicine can help, but usually just to reduce the symptoms, rarely to really correct the disease. Often, immunosuppressant therapy is used, but this opens up the possibility for any number of opportunistic diseases to take hold.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) may be of very great use in the fight to understand and effectively treat autoimmune diseases. Most medical professionals now agree that environmental factors, physical and mental health, and stress play an enormous role in the development of autoimmune diseases. In fact, studies involving identical twins show that the emotional state of the patient had more impact on the development of an autoimmune disease than genetic predisposition. The more high-strung siblings tended to suffer.
more (Clark, p.122). TCM considers emotions to be a form of energy, which should always be moving smoothly to avoid disease. Accordingly, someone who holds on to a particular emotion without being able to return to a balanced, peaceful state of mind is a perfect candidate for acupuncture. It follows that this person may be at a higher risk of developing a particular pathological imbalance. By returning the body, mind, and soul to a harmonious state, TCM practitioners can treat, and theoretically eliminate the symptoms of an autoimmune disease by correcting the problem at its root.

One way in which some TCM practitioners approach the issue of autoimmunity is through a system developed over 2000 years ago called the Shang Han Lun, which identifies Cold as the primary pathogen that damages the body, and gives treatment methods for each stage of attack. First, disease must encounter the body’s defensive energies. When this level interacts with disease, the patient feels chills and fever, stiffness of the neck and body aches, runny nose, cough and general malaise; symptoms of the common cold. This shows that the pathogen is fighting with the immune system on the superficial layers of the body. If the pathogen travels deeper into the body and presents a more serious threat, the body reacts with a greater physiological response. The patient experiences a high fever and rapid surging pulse, showing increased inner activity as the body works to eliminate the infection.

However, if the body’s defenses are weakened from a prolonged illness, or from a constitutional weakness, or in the face of a particularly strong pathogen, the disease may move into a different area of the body. Such is the theory of modern Shao Yang patterns explained by Dr. Yitian Ni in her article Modern Disorders and Shao Yang Channels. The Shao Yang level, which represents a level of disease where the pathogen lies somewhere below full expression but not completely cleared, is where we can understand autoimmune disorders to lie in the body. The potential or predisposition for a particular autoimmune disorder can be understood as the pathogen. The environmental influences of stress, toxins, or viral attacks can be the trigger that causes the full expression of a disease.

This theory can be applied to the treatment of common autoimmune conditions like Crohn’s disease, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and multiple sclerosis, to name a few. The goal in treating Shao Yang disorders is to harmonize the deeper levels of the body’s defenses with the more superficial levels in order to bring about balance and inner strength while removing the pathogenic influence.

The goal is always to bring the system into balance. Two patients with the same disease may present differently. Therefore, each person is assessed on an individualized basis and treatments are personalized. The future for treating autoimmune disorders lies in integrating both Eastern and Western treatment methods. Modern science allows for
unprecedented insight into the inner workings of the body’s chemistry and physiology. I believe it is through the lens of Traditional Chinese Medicine that we will be able to apply the knowledge of the body’s innate sense of self-preservation in order to effectively unravel the mysteries of autoimmune disorders.


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**Eating Back to Health**

Eating Back to Health
Donna Vega

“You are what you eat.” This is a saying repeated in various forms by European nutritionists over the last century but the sentiment is present in the TCM view of food and health. Improper diet can cause disease and food is an important tool to restore health.

The flavor (sweet, bland, sour, salty, pungent or bitter) and the warming or cooling nature of foods are used to treat illnesses. For example a cold with fever and a sour throat would require foods or herbs that are pungent and cool (mint, dandelion and chrysanthemum tea). In this case these are common sense choices but the healing nature of some foods is less apparent.

When a patient has been diagnosed and a treatment plan formulated frequently a diet that will either enhance what is weak in the patient or diminish what is excessive will be recommended. An illness, like chronic bronchitis (which affects the lungs), might require foods to help disperse congestion but also strengthen the immune system. Sweet potatoes, black dates, apricot kernels, seaweed or papaya would be possibilities.

In general sweet foods nourish us and help rebuild our bodies. Yams, corn and rice are some choices, not candy or soft drinks. After a febrile disease sweet foods would help with recovery. On the other hand foods that are too sweet or overeating sweet foods can cause us to feel heavy and even gain weight, creating a new problem.

Sour foods, like lemons or vinegar, have an astringing nature. They would be used if someone were perspiring too much among other things.

Bitte foods disperse and clear heat and can be used for edema. Kale, chard and rhubarb are examples.

Pungent as mentioned before can help disperse a cold and promote sweating to promote recovery. Mint and ginger are frequently employed.

Salty foods, like seaweed, can soften nodules like goiters.

Bland foods like pearl barley can help with edema by promoting urination.
Sometimes a certain kind of food has a general quality; seeds have a lubricating nature that helps with constipation, but each seed has its own specific character. Pumpkin seeds are the correct choice for prostate problems or intestinal parasites.

Fruits in general are cool and sweet but there are exceptions. Blueberries are sour and warm, good for anemia and poor memory among other things. For constipation eating an apple (cool, sweet and slightly sour) on an empty stomach will help (the pectin in apples is a good source of fiber).

The temperature of foods can help warm when someone's system is too cold or has slowed done. Sometimes herbs are prepared with wine because enhances their warming nature. Cooling foods can help when a system becomes overheated, as in menopausal hot flashes or summer heat.

Food can help rebuild, harmonize or reduce depending on the patient's needs. It is an essential tool along side acupuncture and herbal formula treatments to promote recovery.

**Summer Salad with Grapefruit and Crab**

_A cooling dish that aids and strengthens digestion_

- 2 pink grapefruit (cold, sweet, sour)
- 8 ounces crab meat (cool, sweet)
- 1 fresh red chilies (hot, pungent) deseeded and finely chopped
- 1 bunch fresh basil (warm, pungent) leaves chopped
- Extra virgin olive oil (neutral, sweet)
- Sea salt and black pepper
- 4-6 lettuce leaves (neutral, bland) for presentation

Cut the ends off the grapefruit. Peel the skin off. Separate the segments and remove. Squeeze the juice from the remains onto the segments. Put the crab in a bowl with the chilies. Add most of the basil. Add 2 tablespoons of grapefruit juice and 4 teaspoons of olive oil. Mix.

Coat the lettuce leaves with juice from the segments. Add olive oil to the lettuce with pinch of sea salt and black pepper. Place the leaves on 4 plates. Place grapefruit segments on top of lettuce. Add crab to each plate. Sprinkle remaining basil leaves on top.

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**Meet our interns:**

Yo San Clinic has an exceptional and diverse intern team. With various professional and educational backgrounds, our Traditional Chinese Medicine students bring a variety of experience, knowledge and care. In our monthly newsletter, we will introduce you to our new interns and tell you a little bit about what makes them exceptional healers.

Joe Bermudez
How does a former juvenile delinquent and high school dropout wind up, in his late forties, a clinical intern at a school for Traditional Chinese Medicine? He takes the long way. Born in East Los Angeles and raised in the San Fernando Valley in one of the many less than pleasant housing project communities, Jose found life anything but boring. The eldest of seven children, his immigrant parents worked tirelessly to put them all through Catholic school.

His mother worked as a seamstress and his father worked at the General Motors plant, while also working a construction job on his time off. Eventually, his father started his own construction business, where Jose got his first taste of hard work and business ethics at the tender age of five.

Sometime in high school, for reasons unknown even to him, Jose got the bright idea that work was more important than school. Against everyone’s better judgment, he decided to forego his continuing education…admittedly a big mistake. Before he knew it, his teenage years were over and he had his own family.

Fortunately, Jose saw the benefit of returning to finish his education and earned his high school diploma. He later went on to earn his degrees in Liberal Arts and Psychology from Los Angeles Mission College. Drawing on his experiences from working with his father, Jose started his own construction company that lasted for the next twenty-five years until his decision to enroll at Yo San University. In addition to his studies at Yo San, he is a Certified Clinical Hypnotherapist, Massage Therapist, Master Level Reiki practitioner, Aromatherapy Practitioner, and overall nice guy. But his favorite title is his most recent one of Grandpa; ask him- he loves that one the best!

Ashley L. Wren

Ashley spent most of her twenties traveling the world, but has always considered Los Angeles to be her home base. When her great-grandmother approached an age where she needed more assistance, Ashley decided to put traveling aside to help with her day-to-day care.

Ashley had always maintained that if she weren’t exploring the world, she would work on her education in the more traditional sense of the term. With a background in both martial arts and holistic care, she had been exposed to acupuncture as a teenager in a somewhat peculiar way. Her mother had been in a car accident and suffered injuries for which acupuncture was recommended to assist in pain management. Through the combination of acupuncture treatments and herbal therapy, the physical pain that her mother...
had been experiencing dramatically diminished, but something even more profound than that had happened.
To provide a little background information, Ashley’s mother has a history of addiction and bipolar disorder. When she started receiving regular acupuncture treatments, she found that her cravings for substances and her mood swings both became less severe. While her physical pain decreased, so did her emotional pain. The treatments were healing her on both the physical and spiritual levels.
This experience inspired Ashley and made her want to be able to help others in the same way. It opened up her eyes to the real power of this medicine. Because of her own battle with emotional imbalance, Ashley began receiving regular acupuncture treatments and looking into lifestyle modifications to help bring her “mood swings” into a more narrow range. She has been off of medications for over ten years now and hopes to share with her patients some of the things that have helped her find more balance in her life.

To book an appointment with Jose or Ashley, call us at (310) 577-3006.

Meet our Doctoral Candidate:

Myeongae Kang L.Ac.

Myeongae Kang received her first acupuncture license in Tokyo, Japan. She did her residency in Tianjin and Dalian in China specializing in treating stroke patients. After her residency in China, she continued to work at a hospital in Tianjin treating stroke patients for 3 years. She returned to the U.S. in 2009, and received her National and California acupuncture licenses. She enrolled in the DAOM fertility program at Yo San University in 2011.
She is passionate in treating women’s health issues and fertility. She strongly believes in the philosophies, techniques, and practices of preventive medicine. Not surprisingly, Chinese medicine practitioners who keep their patients healthy and disease free are considered to be the greatest doctors. When she treats patients, she likes to “push the reset button” on their health, their careers, and the rest of their lives, so that they can prevent burnout and lead a life of healthy balance and wellbeing.

Did you know?
Early in September 2012 Yo San University will initiate an externship service with the
Visions Adolescent Day School and Treatment Program in Brentwood. The Visions program provides a management and provision of Western and complementary treatment services for adolescents who have experienced a wide range of conditions. The plans for the externship include service by one extern from the Master’s and one extern form the Doctoral Program. In addition to the usual supervision activities, the externs will be invited to participate in staff meetings at the Visions site at which they will have the opportunity to learn a great deal more about the adolescent personality and the multiple healthcare referrals involved in managing the treatment of a wide range of physical, behavioral and psychological dysfunctions. The prospect is for a rich and stimulating learning experience for Yo San University students.

Learn more about Vision Adolescent Treatment Centers.

Yo San Clinic is Open 7 Days a Week!
Monday through Friday - 8 am to 9 pm
Saturday - 8:30 am to 5:30 pm
Sunday - 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Reproductive Health Clinic
Sunday - 8:30 am to 1:30 pm

Yo San’s Doctoral Students are Blazing Paths for Acupuncture Research:

In March of 2012 Yo San graduated its first Doctoral Cohort. Each student submitted a capstone project presenting initial research on a particular women’s health issue and the effects of acupuncture and Chinese Herbs. These capstone projects are available [here](#) and our newsletters will feature abstracts for you to enjoy.

**The Effect of Chinese Herbal Therapy on Pregnancy Rate When Added to In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) in Combination with Acupuncture**

By Jessica S. Chen L.Ac. Dipl.OM

*The goal of this retrospective chart review was to analyze if Chinese herbal therapy and acupuncture together with IVF will result in a higher pregnancy rate than acupuncture alone with IVF. Cases were reviewed from a reputable Chinese Medicine clinic that specializes in reproductive medicine. A convenience sampling was applied and patients were placed in separate groups according to the treatment they had received. Group A consisted of women who were*
treated with Chinese herbal therapy and acupuncture and Group B consisted of women who were treated with acupuncture only. A positive B-hCG was measured by a serum blood test to determine pregnancy. A total of more than 700 patient charts were reviewed, 34 of which qualified for this study. Out of the 34 patients, 23 were treated with acupuncture and Chinese herbal therapy, and 11 were treated with acupuncture only while going through IVF. The results showed a significantly higher pregnancy rate in the group that was treated with both acupuncture and Chinese herbs compared to the group that was treated with acupuncture only (82.6% vs. 40.0%, respectively; \( p = 0.023 \)). Exploratory analysis was done on the live birth rate and there was no significant difference between Group A (45.5%) versus Group B (20.0%) (\( p = 0.163 \)). Even though this study showed a significantly higher pregnancy rate with the incorporation of Chinese herbs during IVF, more extensive research is required to further support the integration between these two modalities. Investigating a broader range of outcome measures, such as side effects from IVF stimulation, ongoing pregnancy rates, and live birth rates, may support the results of this study and provide more scientific evidence for the public.