

Comparative study on WHO Western Pacific Region and World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies international standard terminologies on traditional medicine: Syndrome Differentiation of Kidney and Bladder Diseases

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The kidneys, located beside the spine and in the waist, are one of the five zang-organs in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). According to the theory of TCM, the kidneys are the innate foundation of life because they store the innate essence inherited from parents and pertain to water in the five elements.

The main physiological functions of the kidneys include storing essence, controlling growth, reproduction and water metabolism, and governing the bones and the production of marrow. Physiologically they open into the ears, genitals and anus. In terms of emotions, they are related to

terror and fright; in terms of humors, they are related to saliva. Kidney diseases are usually characterized by deficiency, including kidney yang deficiency, kidney yin deficiency, insecurity of kidney qi and failure of the kidneys to receive qi.

The bladder, located in the center of the lower abdomen, is one of the six fu-organs. The main physiological functions of the bladder include storage and discharge of urine. In the *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*^[1], the bladder is described as an organ similar to an official in charge of reservoir that discharges urine after transformation of qi. If the bladder is weak in discharging urine, it will

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cause retention of urine; if the bladder fails to restrain urine, it will cause enuresis. Bladder diseases are usually characterized by frequent urination, urgency of urination, urodynia, dysuria, dripping urination, or even anuria, enuresis and incontinence of urine.

Since the kidney channel of foot-shaoyin and the bladder channel of foot-taiyang are connected with each other, it is believed that the kidneys and bladder are internally and externally related to each other.

The following is a brief discussion on the English translation of the names of kidney and bladder diseases included in the *WHO International Standard Terminologies on Traditional Medicine in the Western Pacific Region*^[2] (abbreviated as the WPRO Standard) and the *International Standard Chinese-English Basic Nomenclature of Chinese Medicine* compiled by World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies^[3] (abbreviated as the WFCMS Standard), according to the studies made in the book entitled *International Standardization of English Translation of Traditional Chinese Medicine: Study of Theory, Summarization of Practice and Exploration of Methods*^[4].

肾膀胱病辨证 kidney-bladder diseases pattern identification/syndrome differentiation: visceral pattern identification/syndrome differentiation dealing with diseases of the kidneys and bladder

To translate 肾膀胱病辨证 as “kidney-bladder diseases pattern identification/syndrome differentiation” is certainly understandable. However, the structure seems in need of further improvement. If changed into “pattern identification/syndrome differentiation of kidney-bladder diseases”, it may sound more natural.

肾虚证 kidney deficiency pattern/syndrome: any deficiency pattern/syndrome of the kidneys, including deficiency of kidney qi, yin and yang

肾精不足证 kidney essence insufficiency pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome marked by retarded development in children, premature senility, decreased reproductive function, tinnitus, loosening of teeth, loss of hair and forgetfulness in adults

To translate 肾精不足证 as “kidney essence insufficiency pattern/syndrome” is almost the same as the original Chinese term in structure. However, if it can be changed into “pattern/syndrome of kidney essence insufficiency”, it may sound structurally natural. By the way, kidney essence insufficiency is a description of the pathological change characterized by retard growth,

weakened reproductive function and depletion and deficiency of the blood and kidney essence that lead to failure of the kidneys in storing essence.

肾气虚证; 肾气亏虚证 kidney qi deficiency pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome marked by dizziness, forgetfulness, tinnitus, backache, lack of libido and weak pulse

In TCM, 肾气虚证 and 肾气亏虚证 are two separate terms, though they are quite similar to each other in structure and meaning. Thus in translation it is quite necessary to translate them separately in order to maintain a regular system of TCM terminologies in English translation. If 肾气虚证 is translated as “kidney qi deficiency pattern/syndrome”, then 肾气亏虚证 can be rendered as “kidney qi depletion and deficiency pattern/syndrome” or “pattern/syndrome of kidney qi depletion and deficiency”. The Chinese conception 亏虚 is composed of two characters, namely, 亏 and 虚. In the WPRO Standard^[2], the Chinese concept 亏 is translated as “depletion” while 虚 is rendered as “deficiency”. In order to maintain the lexicological and semantic features of the original Chinese terms or concepts, it is quite advisable to translate 亏虚 as “depletion and deficiency” or “depletion-deficiency”.

肾气不固证 kidney qi insecurity pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome marked by frequent urination, dribbling of urine after voiding, incontinence of urine or feces, nocturnal emission or premature ejaculation in men, continuous dribbling of menstrual discharge or recurrent spontaneous abortion in women, aching back and knees, and weak pulse

The Chinese phrase 不固 in 肾气不固证 implies weakness of kidney qi. In fact “weakness” is frequently used as the equivalence of 不固. However, “weakness” also implies something like “deficiency”. In the current translation of TCM, “weakness” is also quite often used to translate the Chinese concept 虚 if it mainly refers to physical debilitation. For instance, the Chinese sentence 久病必虚 can be translated as “prolonged illness will inevitably cause deficiency” if it refers to internal deficiency, or “prolonged illness will inevitably cause weakness” if it refers to physical debilitation. In some English-Chinese dictionaries of TCM, 不固 is also translated as “unconsolidation”, sounding like something coined. In the West, some translators like to use “insecurity” to translate 不固. At the first sight it sounds quite awkward and does not appear equivalent to 不固

in Chinese language. In English language “insecurity” means “not safe, not providing good support, cannot be relied on”. In Chinese language, 不固 emphasizes the fact that kidney qi is weak in function. To use “insecurity” to translate 不固 is certainly not an ideal choice. However, it has at least made a distinction between the Chinese concepts 不固 and 虚.

肾阴虚证; 肾阴亏虚证 kidney yin deficiency pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome marked by lumbago, lassitude, dizziness, tinnitus, nocturnal emission in men and oligomenorrhea in women, emaciation, dry throat, thirst, flushed cheeks, hot sensation in the palms and soles, afternoon fever, night sweating, reddened tongue with little or no coating, and rapid fine pulse

In TCM, 肾阴虚证 and 肾阴亏虚证 are two separate terms, though they are quite similar to each other in meaning and structure just as those of 肾气虚证 and 肾气亏虚证. However, in order to make a distinction between them and maintain a rich terminology of TCM in English translation, it is better to translate them separately. If 肾阴虚证 is rendered as “kidney yin deficiency pattern/syndrome”, then 肾阴亏虚证 may be reasonably translated as “kidney yin depletion and deficiency pattern/syndrome” or “pattern/syndrome of kidney yin depletion and deficiency”, as analyzed above in the discuss of 肾气虚证 and 肾气亏虚证. Kidney yin deficiency, or kidney yin depletion and deficiency, similar to kidney yin insufficiency, refers to the pathological change caused by depletion and detriment of yin humor that fails to nourish and moisten the kidney and consequently leads to internal stirring of deficiency-heat or even yin deficiency with effulgent fire.

肾阴虚火旺证 pattern/syndrome of kidney yin deficiency with fire effulgence: a pattern/syndrome marked by tidal fever, night sweating, flushed cheeks, vexing heat in the chest, palms and soles, nocturnal emission, premature jaculation, hypersexuality, lumbar pain, tinnitus, reddened tongue with yellow coating lacking moisture and rapid fine pulse

The Chinese character 旺 in the term 肾阴虚火旺证 is often liberally translated as “hyperactivity” or “exuberance” or “predominance”, all of which tend to be confused with other similar Chinese concepts, such as 亢 (hyperactivity or hyperfunction), 盛 (exuberance or flourishing) and 胜 (predominance or overwhelming). In the WPRO

Standard^[2], it is rendered as “effulgence”, which, though sounding too literal, at least has made a distinction between 旺 and other Chinese concepts like 亢, 盛 and 胜. As a pattern or syndrome, 肾阴虚火旺证 is usually caused by deficiency of kidney yin that leads to interior disturbance of deficiency fire. The common clinical manifestations also include night sweating, excessive sexual desire, lumbago and brown urine.

肾阳虚证; 肾阳亏虚证 kidney yang deficiency pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome arising when declined kidney yang fails to warm the body, marked by aversion to cold, cold limbs, listlessness, weakness and soreness of the loins and knees, premature ejaculation or impotence in men and frigidity or infertility in women, nocturia, whitish tongue coating and weak pulse at cubit (chi) section

Just as analyzed in the discussion about the translations of 肾气虚证, 肾气亏虚证 and 肾阴虚证, 肾阴亏虚证, in TCM, 肾阳虚证 and 肾阳亏虚证 are two separate terms, which, though similar to each other in meaning and structure, still bear certain subtle difference if careful analysis is made. For the sake of systematic and comprehensive transference of information in translating TCM literature, it is better to translate these terms separately rather than identically. If 肾阳虚证 is rendered as “kidney yang deficiency pattern/syndrome”, then 肾阳亏虚证 may be reasonably translated as “kidney yang depletion and deficiency pattern/syndrome” or “pattern/syndrome of kidney yin depletion and deficiency”, as analyzed above in discussing the translation of other TCM paired terms.

肾不纳气证 pattern/syndrome of kidney failing to receive qi: a pattern/syndrome marked by dyspnea with prolonged exhalation, asthenic cough and feeble voice

The so-called 纳气 is one of the basic physiological functions of the kidney. According to the theory of TCM, the kidneys govern qi reception (肾主纳气), which means that the kidneys receive the fresh air inhaled by the lung to maintain normal respiratory function of the body. The lung is the dominator of qi while the kidneys are the root of qi. The lung is responsible for exhaling qi while the kidneys are in charge of receiving qi. Such an interaction between the lung and the kidneys ensures normal and smooth respiration. This shows that the depth of respiration depends on the function of the kidneys. If the kidneys func-

tion normally, respiration will be conducted normally. If the kidneys do not function well, it may cause shallow breath. Such a disorder of breath is known as “failure of the kidney to receive qi”, which is a pathological change characterized by ascendant counterflow of lung qi due to hypofunction of lung qi in reception caused by deficiency and detriment of kidney qi, usually caused by qi deficiency in the lung and kidneys that leads to the failure of the kidneys to receive qi. The common clinical manifestations of such a disorder include more expiration and less inspiration, weak cough, aggravation with exertion, clear thin sputum, low voice, spontaneous sweating, urination with cough, light-colored purplish tongue, weak pulse.

肾虚水泛证 pattern/syndrome of kidney deficiency with water flood: a pattern/syndrome arising when insufficient kidney qi fails in qi transformation and leads to water flooding, marked by edema, particularly of the lower extremities, accompanied by oliguria, tinnitus, aching of the back and knees, pale tongue with whitish slippery coating and weak pulse

The Chinese term 肾虚水泛证 refers to the pathological change characterized by failure of qi transformation and overflow of water dampness due to deficiency and debilitation of kidney yang. In the current translation practice, the Chinese phrase 水泛 in this term is translated quite differently. For instance, in the WPRO Standard^[2], 肾虚水泛 is rendered as “kidney deficiency with water flood”, in which the Chinese phrase 水泛 is translated as “water flood”, sounding quite literal. In the WFCMS Standard^[3], 肾虚水泛 is rendered as “syndrome/pattern of kidney deficiency and water diffusion”, in which the Chinese phrase 水泛 is translated as “water diffusion”, obviously a liberal translation. In some English-Chinese dictionaries of TCM, 水泛 is also translated as “edema”. Comparatively speaking, to render 水泛 as “water flood”, though sounding somewhat alienate, is a temporarily practical trial.

肾经寒湿证 kidney meridian cold-dampness pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome attributed to deficiency of kidney yang with infusion of cold-dampness, and marked by feeling of heaviness, cold and pain in the lumbus and knees with limitation of movement, aversion to cold and cold limbs, white slimy tongue coating and soggy relaxed pulse

The Chinese concept 经 in 肾经寒湿证 is usually translated as meridian or channel, both of which

are used quite frequently in the current translation practice. In the *Standard Acupuncture Nomenclature*^[5] issued by WHO Western Pacific Region in 1991, the English word “meridian” is adopted as the equivalence of 经. However, in English language, “meridian” refers to an imaged line used in geographical studies. In TCM, 经 is not an imaged line, it refers to the channel in the human body in which qi and blood are flowing all through the body. Obviously it is improper to translate 经 as “meridian”. That is why in the WHO Meeting on International Classification of Traditional Medicine held in Tokyo in 2010, the proposal to adopt the English word “channel” to translate the Chinese concept 经 was accepted.

膀胱虚寒证 bladder deficiency cold pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome arising when kidney yang deficiency causes impaired bladder qi transformation, marked by frequent urination, incontinence of urine or dribbling of urine, cold feeling in the lower abdomen, whitish moist tongue coating and weak pulse

The so-called 虚寒 in 膀胱虚寒证 refers to the cold caused by deficiency of yang that fails to warm the body. So in the term 虚寒, the Chinese character 虚 describes the “deficiency” of yang, not the “deficiency” of cold. In order to clearly differentiate the logical relationship between 虚 and 寒, it is better to translate 虚寒 into “cold due to yang deficiency”. However, such a translation will inevitably make the translation of the whole term too long to be practical. To make the translation accurate and concise, the ideal solution might be to use a hyphen to connect deficiency and cold. That is to say, 虚寒 can be rendered as “deficiency-cold” rather than “deficiency cold”. The common clinical manifestations of this disorder still include aversion to cold, cold limbs, cold pain of lower abdomen, difficulty in urination, or nocturia, clear and profuse urine

膀胱湿热证 bladder dampness-heat pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome attributed to dampness-heat attacking on and accumulating in the bladder, marked by frequency and urgency of urination, strangury, turbid urine or hematuria, reddened tongue with yellow slimy coating and rapid pulse

This disorder is usually caused by invasion of dampness-heat into the bladder and accumulates in the bladder. Apart from the symptoms mentioned in the definition, the common clinical manifestations still include frequent urgent urination with burning pain and difficulty, or with bloody pus or

stones, fever, thirst and slippery pulse, etc. In this definition, the English word “slimy” may be the translation of the Chinese concept 膩 which is also frequently translated as “greasy”. Comparatively speaking, “slimy” seems better than “greasy” in revealing the implied meaning of 膩 in Chinese language.

热积膀胱证 pattern/syndrome of heat accumulating in the bladder: a pattern/syndrome marked by distension and fullness of the lower abdomen, strangury, frequent urination and fever without chills

The Chinese character 积 in 热积膀胱证 is usually translated as “accumulation” which is also adopted in the WPRO Standard. If “pattern/ syndrome of heat accumulation in the bladder” is changed into “pattern/syndrome of bladder heat accumulation”, it may look more concise. This disorder is caused by accumulation of pathogenic heat in the bladder. The common clinical manifestations include burning sensation and pain in urination, fever, thirst, reddened tongue with yellow coating, strong and rapid pulse, etc.

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WHO 西太区与世界中医药学会联合会中医名词术语 国际标准比较研究: 肾膀胱病辨证

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