Comparative study on WHO Western Pacific Region and World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies international standard terminologies on traditional medicine: Diseases in Internal Medicine (Part 3)

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梅核气, plum-pit qi: a disease characterized by a sensation of a foreign body present in the throat which can be neither swallowed nor ejected, also known as globushystericus

The so-called 梅核气 is caused by phlegm congealing bound with qi in the throat due to stagnation of liver qi, often accompanied by chest and epigastric oppression, inhibited flow of qi due to stagnation, hiccupping and nausea, usually seen in cases of hysteria and chronic pharyngitis, which can be treated by soothing the liver, releasing stagnation and dispersing binding. In some Chinese-English dictionaries of TCM, it is also translated as "plum-stone syndrome"[1]. In the WFCMS Standard, it is rendered as “plum-stone qi”[2].

悸悸 fright palpitations: palpitation ascribed to being frightened

The so-called 惊悸 refers to palpitation caused by fright or susceptibility to fright due to palpitation, thus to translate it as "fright palpitation" sounds reasonable. In some Chinese-English dictionaries of TCM, it is translated as "palpitation due to fright"[3], sounding a little bit wordy. If accompanied by heart deficiency, it can be treated by nourishing the heart to tranquilize the spirit and stopping fright to relieve palpitation; if accompanied by heart heat, it can be treated by clearing the heart to reduce fire; if complicated by phlegm heat, it

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can be treated by resolving phlegm and clearing heat.

怔忡 fearful throbbing: a severe case of palpitation.

The so-called 忳忡 refers to the severe case of palpitation in which the chest and abdomen around the navel are often involved, indicating the further progress of palpitation, usually caused by depletion of yin blood that fails to nourish the heart, or upward counterflow of water and fluid due to insufficiency of heart yang, or fright. Sometimes怔忡 also refers to the cases of palpitation with fear as described in the book entitled Black Pearl From Red River (《赤水玄珠》) written by Sun Yi-kui in the Ming Dynasty and published in 1584.

胸痹 chest impediment: a disease characterized by paroxysms of pectoral pain, sometimes accompanied by a feeling of oppression.

The so-called 胸痹 in TCM usually means two different pathological conditions, either referring to the disease caused by failure of yang in the chest to effuse, block of qi movement and obstruction of meridians due to congealing of phlegm, turbid substance and blood stasis with the symptoms of chest fullness, oppression and pain or even dyspnea and inability to lie down due to severe pain that affects the back, or referring to stomach impediment as described in the book entitled Differentiation of Symptoms Prior to Examination of Pulses (《症因脉治》) compiled by Qin Jing-ming in the Ming Dynasty and published in 1706 that “chest impediment also refers to stomach impediment characterized by chest fullness and oppression, stagnation and binding of qi, pain after taking food, inability to swallow food and occasional nausea.”

结胸 chest bind: a diseased state attributable to accumulation of pathogens (such as heat or cold in combination with retained fluid or phlegm or stagnant food) in the chest and abdomen, often manifested by local rigidity, fullness and tenderness, the same as chest constriction.

The so-called 结胸, also frequently translated as “chest stagnation”, is usually caused by early application of purgation in treating taiyang disease, consequently leading to interior penetration of exterior heat or interior transmission of taiyang into yang-ming in which yangming excess heat binds with fluid already retained in the abdomen. Clinically 结胸 is classified, according to the causes and clinical manifestations, into major chest bind (大结胸), minor chest bind (小结胸), heat excess chest bind (热实结胸), cold excess chest bind (寒实结胸), water chest bind (水结胸) and blood chest bind (血结胸), etc.[4].

心痛 heart pain: a general term for pain in the precordial and epigastric regions.

In TCM, heart pain also refers to epiastralgia as described in the book entitled Zhu’s Medical Theory (《丹溪心法》) written by Zhu Dan-xi (1281-1358) in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). Clinically heart pain is classified into 13 categories, namely, true heart pain (真心痛, also frequently translated as “angina pectoris”), reverse heart pain (厥心痛), cold heart pain (冷心痛), heat heart pain (热心痛), qi heart pain (气心痛), penetrating pain (注心痛, characterized by sudden severe heart pain with blurred vision, or unconsciousness and delirium, or sudden appearance of large or small pulses), blood heart pain (血心痛), dyspepsia heart pain (食心痛), fluid retention heart pain (饮心痛), worm heart pain (虫心痛).
palpitation heart pain (悸心痛), wind heart pain (风心痛), and fluctuating heart pain (来去心痛, characterized by sudden appearance and sudden disappearance of heart pain with normal intake of food and restlessness day and night)[1].

失心痛 sudden heart pain: sudden attack of heart pain due to contraction of pathogenic heat

真心痛 true heart pain: a disease characterized by sudden occurrence of severe heart pain accompanied by sweating, pale complexion, cyanotic lips, cold limbs with the hands and feet turning blue up to the joints, and hardly perceptible pulse

The so-called真心痛 in TCM is quite similar to angina pectoris in Western medicine. That is why “angina pectoris” is frequently used to translate真心痛 in the current translation field. With the trend of using common words to translate TCM terminologies,真心痛 is now also translated as “true heart pain”, which is adopted by the WPRO Standard[1], or “real heart pain”, which is adopted by the WFCMS Standard[2]. In TCM, this disease is often treated by salvaging yang to rescue collapse, resuscitating the brain with aromatic herbs and activating the blood to resolve stasis.

眩晕; 头晕; 嘈眩 dizziness: a diseased state characterized by a whirling sensation in the head with visual distortion

In the current translation field, the word “vertigo” is also frequently used to translate眩晕. This problem is usually caused by external contraction of the six excesses and internal damage of visceral qi and blood, especially by pathogenic wind heat, dampness phlegm and healthy qi deficiency. Dizziness due to external contraction can be categorized into wind dizziness, wind heat dizziness, wind cold dizziness, etc. Dizziness caused by internal damage can be classified into qi deficiency dizziness, kidney deficiency dizziness, blood deficiency dizziness, hemorrhage dizziness, yang deficiency dizziness, liver yang dizziness, liver fire dizziness, dampness-phlegm dizziness, phlegm fire dizziness, fluid retention dizziness and wind phlegm dizziness.

神昏 loss of consciousness: any diseased state characterized by loss of consciousness with no response to stimulation

The so-called神昏, also frequently translated as “unconsciousness” which is adopted in the WFCMS Standard[2], is usually caused by block of the upper orifices and clouding of the brain, a quite critical condition usually seen in miscellaneous diseases due to external contraction or internal damage.

类中风 apoplectic wind stroke: cerebral stroke caused by endogenous pathogenic wind

The so-called类中风 in TCM, similar to wasting thirst disease (消渴病), is often caused by deficiency cold of middle qi and upward progress of floating fire, characterized by thirst without much desire for drinking water, reddened complexion and restlessness, and mainly treated by warming the middle and astringing yang.

中风前兆症 prodrome of wind stroke: symptoms indicating the onset of wind stroke, such as headache and dizziness, numbness and weakness of the limbs

中风后遗症 sequela of wind stroke: functional disturbances following an attack of wind stroke, such as hemiplegia, dysphasia and dementia

The so-called中风前兆症 and 中风后遗症 are actually modern expressions, not traditional ones.

中络 collateral stroke: mildest form of wind stroke with slight distortion of the face and numbness of limbs

The so-called中络 refers to the mild case of wind stroke characterized by distorted face and numbness of skin due to invasion of pathogenic factors into the skin as described in the book entitledSynopsis of Gold Cabinet (《金匮要略》) written by Zhang Zhong-jing in the East Han Dynasty (25-220 AD). In the WFCMS Standard[2], 中络 is translated as “apoplexy involving collaterals”, sounding a little bit wordy.

中经 meridian stroke: mild form of wind stroke with hemiplegia, paralysis of the face and limbs, dysphasia, but no impairment of consciousness

The so-called中经 refers to the case of wind stroke that is severer than中络, indicating that the pathogenic factors have invaded the meridians. In the book entitledAuthentic Discussion of Medicine (《医学正传》) compiled by Yu Tuan and published in 1515, it said that “the case with flaccidity of hands and feet and difficulty to speak but without the manifestations of six meridians and difficulty in urination indicates that the meridians are attacked by pathogenic factors” In the WFCMS Standard[2],中经 is translated as “apoplexy involving channels”, not so concise as that done in the WPRO Standard[1].

中腑 bowel stroke: serious form of wind stroke with onset of fainting, hemiplegia, distortion of the face and dysphasia

The so-called中腑 refers to invasion of pathogenic factors into the fu-organs, the case caused by which is milder than that caused by invasion of pathogenic factors into the zang-organs. In the book entitledGolden Mirror of Medicine (《医宗金鉴》) written by Wu Qian in the Qing Dynasty
(1644-1911), it said that “the case characterized by unconsciousness with block of urine indicates that pathogenic factors have invaded the fu-organs”. As mentioned before, to translate 腹 into “bowel” is obviously improper, because the concept of 腹 not only includes bowels, but also covers a number of the internal organs, including gallbladder, stomach, large intestine, small intestine, bladder and sanjiao (三焦) which is rendered as triple energizer in the WPRO Standard[1] on acupuncture and moxibustion nomenclature. In the WFCMS Standard[2], 中脇 is translated as “apoplexy involving fu-organs”, semantically equivalent to the original term.

中脇 visceral stroke: very serious form of wind stroke with sudden loss of consciousness, aphasia, and paralysis of lips with salivation

The so-called 中脇 refers to the most severe case in wind stroke. In the book entitled Golden Mirror of Medicine, it said that “the case characterized by unconsciousness with drooling indicates that pathogenic factors have invaded the zang-organs”. In the WFCMS Standard[2], 中脇 is translated as “apoplexy involving zang-organs”, semantically equivalent to the original term.

半身不遂: 偏枯 hemiplegia: paralysis of one side of the body

The so-called 半身不遂 refers to the sequela of wind stroke, usually caused by deficiency of the meridians and vessels due to debilitation of the nutrient qi and defense qi, giving rise to invasion of pathogenic factors, such as wind, cold, dampness, phlegm and stasis, or by qi deficiency, or by insufficiency of essential qi due to kidney deficiency. The major clinical manifestation is inability to move one side of the body, often accompanied by distorted face and difficulty in speaking, which can be treated by nourishing blood and dispelling wind, warming meridians and unblocking collaterals, tonifying kidney and replenishing essence, or replenishing qi and activating blood.

麻木 numbness: reduced sensitivity to touch

To translate 麻木 into numbness certainly makes sense. However, 麻木 actually means something more than numbness. In this term, the character 麻 means neither painful nor itching, feeling just like worms creeping inside the muscles which cannot be relieved by pressing or scraping; the character 木 means insensible. This problem is usually caused by dual deficiency of qi and blood that fail to nourish the meridians and vessels, or by stagnation of qi and blood, or by retention of cold, dampness, phlegm or blood stasis in the meridians and vessels. The treatment of this pathological condition mainly concentrates on tonifying qi and blood[3].

不得卧; 失眠 insomnia: prolonged inability to obtain normal sleep

The Chinese term 不得卧 means two different things, difficulty in falling asleep or difficulty in lying on bed. If referring to difficulty in falling asleep, it is similar to 失眠 or 不寐 or 不得眠 which all mean sleeplessness or insomnia. If referring to inability to lie on bed, it is just a clinical manifestation of the disease caused by retention of water as analyzed in the Plain Conversation (《素问》) that “inability to lie on bed or dyspnea when lying on side is a sign of water retention”.

健忘 forgetfulness: poor memory; tendency to forget matters, the same as amnesia

The term 健忘, also frequently translated as “amnesia” as seen in the WFCMS Standard[2], is usually caused by excessive contemplation, hypofunction of the heart and kidney, or debilitation of the brain, which can be treated by enriching and nourishing the heart and kidney.

痴呆 dementia: diseases characterized by marked decline of cognitive and intellectual functions, usually progressive, without loss of perception or consciousness

The so-called 痴呆, also known as 呆病, is usually caused by stagnation of liver qi that restrains the spleen and stomach, or irregular life that damages the spleen and stomach, giving rise to internal production of phlegm and dampness that cloud the mind, which can be treated mainly by resolving and removing phlegm.

癲癇 yang epilepsy: epilepsy of yang nature, characterized by paroxysmal transient loss of consciousness, seizures, upward staring of the eyes often preceded by vocalizations

The so-called 癲癇 is often caused by retention of phlegm heat in the heart and stomach. The clinical manifestations still include fever, frequent protrusion of the tongue, tremor of the head and floating pulse. This disease is usually treated with herbs cold and cool in nature.

癲癇 yin epilepsy: epilepsy of yin nature characterized by transient clouding of consciousness without convulsions

The so-called 癲癇 is caused by damage of qi due to frequent attack of yang epilepsy or by excessive application of purgation. The clinical manifestations still include coldness of limbs, convolution of
hands and feet, silence and deep pulse. It is usually treated by tonifying and replenishing middle qi, warming dryness and resolving phlegm.

Depressive psychosis: a psychotic disorder characterized by severe depression

The so-called 'fetal disease' (胎病) in the Plain Conversation, is a kind of psychosis caused by stagnation and binding of phlegm and qi, usually characterized by depression, or murmuring, or mental derangement, inability to differentiate hygienic and unhygienic, anorexia, thin and slimy tongue coating, taut and slippery pulse. It can be treated by regulating qi to relieve depression and resolving phlegm to resuscitate the brain. In TCM, 病 also refers to epilepsy[1].

Manic psychosis: a psychotic disorder characterized by mental and physical hyperactivity, disorganization of behavior, and elevation of mood

In the current translation field, 病 is also simply translated as "mania" which is adopted in the WFMCMS Standard[2]. In fact in TCM, 病 refers to two different but also closely related pathological conditions, in which 病, literally meaning epileptic, is yin and deficiency in nature and that is why the patient usually keeps silent; while 病, literally meaning manic, is yang and excess in nature and that is why the patient frequently appears restless and agitated. However, long duration of 病 will eventually lead to mania due to fire transformed from phlegm stagnation, while long duration of 病 will consequently result in epilepsy due to insufficiency of healthy qi. That is why 病 and 病 are often used together as one single term.

Lily disease: ancient term for neuritis characterized by mental strain, listlessness, sleeplessness, anorexia, pseudo heat and pseudo cold, bitterness in the mouth, yellow urine and rapid pulse.

The Chinese term 病 literally means lily disease and that is why it is also translated as such. Lily is the major herb used to treat this disease and that is why it is so named. This disease is caused by emotional depression or internal heat due to heart and lung yin deficiency after severe illness, usually treated by enriching yin and clearing heat.

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