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 4)

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KEYWORDS: linguistics; terminology; translation; English; terms, traditional Chinese medicine; internal diseases (TCM)

胃脘痛 stomach duct pain: a diseased state characterized by pain in the epigastric region, the same as epigastric pain.

The so-called 胃脘痛 in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) usually refers to the cavity of the stomach. In the book Lingshu (Spiritual Pivot), for example, it says that “difficulty in taking food and obstruction of the diaphragm indicate that the pathogenic factors are retained in the stomach cavity”. In TCM the stomach cavity is divided into three parts, namely, the upper part (上脘), the middle part (中脘) and the lower part (下脘). Traditionally in the clinical practice, 胃脘痛 refers to the stomach itself. Thus 胃脘痛 just means stomachache. To translate 胃脘痛 as “stomach duct pain” seems semantically ambiguous.

脘痛; 心下痛 gastric stuffiness: a diseased state characterized by discomfort in the epigastric region with feelings of fullness and pressure but without local rigidity and tenderness.

The so-called 心下痛, first used in Shanghanlun (Treatise of Cold Damage), refers to the disorder characterized by fullness and oppression in the stomach without pain under pressure. It is usually caused by binding of pathogenic factors, phlegm and dampness as well as cold and heat complex due to wrongly application of purgation before superficial pathogenic factors are released. In

DOI: 10.3736/jcim20120817
http://www.jcimjournal.com

Li ZG. 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 4). J Chin Integr Med. 2012; 10 (8); 948-952.

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Received June 26, 2012; accepted June 29, 2012; published online August 15, 2012.

基金项目：国家社会科学基金资助项目(No. 12BYY024); 国家中医药管理局资助项目(No. ZYS20090010-2); 国家质量监督检验检疫总局资助项目(No. 200910263)

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Journal of Chinese Integrative Medicine (JCIM) or Zhong Xi Yi Jie He Xue Bao is an international, peer-reviewed, open-access journal for the study of complementary and alternative medicine or integrative medicine from all regions of the world. JCIM is indexed in PubMed and Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). JCIM is a member journal of CrossRef. Articles published in JCIM have maximum exposure to the international scholarly community.

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ISSN 1672-1977. Published by JCIM Press, Shanghai, China.
TCM, 心下 usually refers to the stomach.

瘀滞 stiffness of excess type: sensation of stiffness caused by accumulation of pathogenic factors.

虚痞 stiffness of deficiency type: sensation of stiffness occurring in deficiency.

In TCM, 痞, also known as 瘤气, one of the five types of accumulation or retention, refers to accumulation or retention in the spleen as indicated in Chapter 56 in Nanjing (Canon of Difficulty Issues), usually caused by spleen deficiency with qi stagnation, often characterized by mass in the gastric region, emaciation and lassitude. In the current translation practice, 痞 is usually translated as “mass” or “fullness” or “stiffness”. In the Chinese-English Dictionary of Traditional Chinese Medicine, 痞块 is translated as “abdominal mass”, 瘤满 is translated as “feeling of fullness and oppression”. In the International Standard Chinese-English Basic Nomenclature of Chinese Medicine issued by the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies (abbreviated as the WFCM Standard), 痞 is rendered as “fullness”. Thus 痞 is rendered as “fullness syndrome of deficiency type”, 实痞 is rendered as “fullness syndrome of excess type”, 气痞 is rendered as “qi fullness” and 瘰痞 is rendered as “heat fullness”. Besides, 瘰 or 瘰气 also refers to thoracic discomfort due to wrongly use of purification in treating cold damage.

呕吐 vomiting: a diseased state characterized by forcible expulsion of the stomach contents through the mouth.

According to TCM, vomiting is caused by failure of stomach qi to descend due to weakness of the spleen and stomach, retention of food, fumigation of dampness heat, internal retention of phlegm and fluid as well as accumulation and stagnation of food. Clinically vomiting can be classified into different categories, such as cold vomiting, heat vomiting, qi vomiting, vomiting of phlegm, vomiting of worms, vomiting of bitter fluid, vomiting of clear water and vomiting of food.

呕吐 acid vomiting: expulsion through the mouth of sour fluid that flows up from the stomach.

The so-called 停食 is usually caused by retention of food, phlegm fire in the stomach or liver fire attacking the stomach. If caused by retention of food, usually characterized by acid vomiting and hiccup with foul smell, it can be treated by harmonizing the middle and promoting digestion; if caused by phlegm fire in the stomach, usually characterized by qi oppression with profuse phlegm and vexation with acid vomiting, it can be treated by resolving phlegm and clearing away fire; if caused by liver fire attacking the stomach, usually characterized by stabbing pain in the hypochondriac regions, vexation with acid vomiting, bitter taste in the mouth, dryness of the throat and taut and rapid pulse, it can be treated by draining the liver and clearing away fire.

呕恶 gastric upset: a diseased state characterized by a disturbed feeling in the stomach, often accompanied by acid regurgitation.

The term 呕恶, first used in the third volume of Zhu Dan-xi’s Comprehension of Medicine (丹溪心法), is usually characterized by a hot and feverish sensation in the stomach that appears like hungry but actually not hungry, like painful but actually not painful, like empty but actually not empty. 呕恶 is also frequently translated as “epigastric upset” which is adopted in the WFCM Standard. In TCM, 呕恶 is divided into different categories, including fire gastric upset (火鬱), characterized by feeling hungry right after taking food, which usually can be treated by reducing fire; phlegm gastric upset (痰鬱), characterized by qi oppression with profuse phlegm with anorexia and the feeling
like hungry but not hungry, which usually can be treated by harmonizing the stomach and resolving phlegm; gastric upset due to acid fluid flowing into the heart (酸水浸心作嘔), characterized by acid regurgitation due to indigestion of food and water caused by deficiency cold in the spleen and stomach, which can be treated by warming the middle and harmonizing the stomach; gastric upset due to qi stagnation in the chest and diaphragm (氣郁胸膈作嘔), characterized by stuffiness and oppression in the chest and diaphragm, deep and inhibited pulse, which can be treated by regulating qi and soothing the chest; and ascarid gastric upset (蛔虫作嘔), which can be treated by eliminating ascarid.

呃逆:呃 hiccup: upward reversion of stomach qi with an involuntary movement of the diaphragm, causing a characteristic sound.

This disorder was called呃 before the Song Dynasty (960 AD to 1279 AD) and呃逆 after the Yuan Dynasty (1271 AD to 1368 AD) and Ming Dynasty (1368 AD to 1644 AD). Hiccup, usually caused by deficiency cold in the spleen and stomach, is divided into different categories according to its causes, including cold hiccup, heat hiccup, qi hiccup, phlegm hiccup, stagnation hiccup and deficiency hiccup.

噎隔 dysphagia-obclusion: difficulty in swallowing caused by narrowing or obstruction of the esophagus.

噎隔, usually simply translated as “dysphagia” as adopted in the WFCMS Standard, may either refer to the disorder marked by hunger with the desire to take food but retention of food between the throat and stomach or vomiting of food mixed with phlegm before it has entered the stomach, or refer to the disorder marked by difficulty in taking food and constipation, or refer to regurgitation. If caused by obstruction of the chest and diaphragm with phlegm and qi complex due to excessive anxiety and qi binding that lead to the production of phlegm, it can be treated by releasing stagnation and resolving phlegm; if caused by depletion and damage of kidney yin due to excessive sexual activity or drinking of alcohol, it can be treated by enriching and tonifying kidney yin; if caused by obstruction of stagnant heat due to yin deficiency with fire effulgence, it can be treated by nourishing yin and clearing fire and activating blood to resolving stasis; if caused by depletion and detriment of spleen qi, it can be treated by replenishing qi and fortifying the spleen.

反胃:胃反 stomach reflux: flowing back of the stomach contents into the esophagus and mouth a long time after eating, also known as gastro-esophageal reflux.

反胃, usually simply translated as “regurgitation”, actually means two things in TCM, regurgitation and hiccup. According to the theory of TCM, regurgitation is usually caused by deficiency cold in the spleen and decline of fire in the life gate that fails to transform food and water. If caused by deficiency cold in the spleen and stomach, it can be treated by warming the middle and fortifying the spleen as well as descending qi and harmonizing the stomach; if caused by decline of fire in the life gate, it can be treated by warming and tonifying fire in the life gate; if caused by damage of both qi and yin due to long term vomiting with the manifestations of dry lips and mouth, constipation, red tongue with scanty moisture and thin and rapid pulse, it can be treated by replenishing qi and nourishing yin as well as preventing counterflow of qi to stop vomiting.

关格 block and repulsion (disease): a diseased state characterized by urinary stoppage and vomiting.

The so-called关格 in TCM refers to three different disorders. The first disorder is characterized by constipation and vomiting in which关 means constipation while 格 means vomiting, usually caused by deficiency of the spleen and kidney that leads to retention of pathogenic dampness and turbidity, eventually transforming into heat that attacks the upper part of the body. The second disorder is characterized by vomiting with difficulty in urination and defecation with the clinical manifestations of throat obstruction, vomiting right after taking food, difficulty in urination and discharge of feces like sheep dung. And the third disorder is characterized by constipation and anuria. Besides,关格 is also used to describe a special pulse condition, which is characterized by very rapid beating of pulse in the wrist and side of the neck, and a special pathological condition, which is characterized by dual exuberance of yin and yang that fails to coordinate with each other.

便秘 constipation: infrequent or difficult evacuation of the feces.

Constipation, according to the theory of TCM, is either caused by deficiency of healthy qi or by excess of pathogenic factors. If caused by deficiency of healthy qi, it is called yin constipation due to qi deficiency and yang weakness or yin deficiency and blood deficiency; if caused by excess of pathogenic factors, it is called yang constipation due to accumulation and binding of phlegm and dampness or qi stagnation. Clinically constipation still can be further divided into different categories, including excess constipation, deficiency constipation, qi constipation, wind constipation, phlegm constipation, cold constipation, heat constipation and spleenic
constipation, etc.

泄泻: 下利; 泄泻病 diarrhea: a diseased condition characterized by frequency and liquidity of fecal discharge

In TCM, 泄泻 means diarrhea, while 下利 refers to both diarrhea and dysentery. Diarrhea is caused by dysfunction of the spleen and stomach in transformation and transportation as well as disorder of the intestines due to external contraction of six excesses, food retention, phlegm block, weakness and deficiency of the spleen and kidney and abnormal changes of emotions. Etiologically diarrhea is classified into different categories, including wind diarrhea, cold diarrhea, summer-heat diarrhea, heat diarrhea, dampness diarrhea, soggy diarrhea, indigestion diarrhea, phlegm diarrhea, qi diarrhea and renal diarrhea, etc.

久泄 chronic diarrhea: diarrhea lasting for a long time or continually recurring
脾约 splenic constipation: infrequent passage of dry hardened feces as consequence of dysfunction of the spleen

The term 脾约 was first used in Shanghanlun, referring to the disorder characterized by difficulty in defecation due to intestinal dryness caused by spleen deficiency and fluid insufficiency. If the spleen is weak, it will be unable to transport fluid to other parts of the body, just leading it to the bladder, consequently resulting in frequent urination and difficult defecation.

藏结: 脏结 visceral bind: a diseased state arising when excess cold bound in the internal organs and manifested by epigastric distension, fullness and pain or tender mass accumulated in the hypochondriac region

The term 脏结 or 藏结 refers to three different disorders. The first disorder is characterized by epigastric stuffiness and hardness which are painful under pressure, occasional diarrhea with normal intake of food, white slimy or white slippery tongue coating and deep tense or thin small pulse, usually caused by deficiency and debilitation of yang qi as well as congealing and binding of yin turbidity, often treated by warming the viscera and dissipating binding. The second disorder is characterized by frequent appearance of mass beside the navel with pain involving the lateral sides of the lower abdomen and the external genitals, often treated by warming the middle and regulating qi. The third disorder is characterized by disharmony of visceral qi and mutual repulsion of yin and yang, eventually leading to constipation.

伤食 food damage: any disease of damage to the spleen and stomach by food

The term 伤食 in TCM is quite equivalent to indigestion or dyspepsia in English. It is usually caused by damage of the spleen and stomach due to improper food or deficiency of the spleen, usually characterized by stuffiness and oppression in the chest, eructation with foul smell, anorexia, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and slimy tongue coating, often treated by fortifying the spleen and promoting digestion.

黄疸 jaundice: a diseased state characterized by withered-yellowish discoloration of the skin and swelling of the face and ankles

In TCM, 黄疸, also known as 黄劳症 (yellowish puffiness or sallow disease due to malnutrition resulting from improper food and overstrain), 黄肿 (yellowish swelling) and 黄力 (sallow disease due to overstrain), is characterized by general sallowness, facial dropy and edema of feet, mental fatigue and lassitude, usually accompanied by nausea and vomiting of yellow fluid, standing of body hair and preference to uncooked rice, tea, soil and coal, often seen in ancylostomiasis. In the WFCMS Standard, 黄疸 is translated as “yellowish puffiness”.

黄疸 jaundice: a diseased condition characterized by discoloration of the skin and sclera
Jaundice is usually caused by contraction of seasonal pathogenic factors, or intemperance of diet, or block of the middle energizer with dampness heat or cold dampness, which make it unable for bile to flow in its normal route. Clinically jaundice is classified into different categories, including yang jaundice, yin jaundice, pestilential jaundice, deficiency jaundice, bile jaundice, cereal jaundice, alcoholic jaundice, coital jaundice, black jaundice, dampness heat jaundice and blood accumulation jaundice, etc.

急黄 acute jaundice: a critical case of jaundice with sudden onset, rapid deterioration and poor prognosis, accompanied by high fever, dire thirst, impairment of consciousness and delirium, indicating inward invasion of dampness-heat with toxin into the blood and nutrient aspects

Acute jaundice is usually caused by virulent dampness heat that scorches the blood, and can be treated by clearing away heat to remove toxin and cooling the blood to open orifices. Clinical manifestations also include chest and abdominal distension, hemoptysis, nasal bleeding and ascites.

阳黄 jaundice: a type of jaundice characterized by bright yellow discoloration of the skin and sclera, accompanied by damp-heat symptoms such as fever, thirst and yellow slimy tongue coating

Yang jaundice is usually caused by intrusion of dampness heat into the liver and gallbladder due to contraction of external pathogenic factors.
Clinical manifestations also include brown urine like tea, anorexia, nausea, vomiting, constipation, abdominal and hypochondriac pain and taut and rapid pulse. It is usually treated by clearing and draining dampness heat from the liver and gallbladder.

阴黄 yin jaundice: a type of jaundice characterized by dim yellow discoloration of the skin and sclera, usually chronic and accompanied by cold-dampness symptoms such as listlessness, fear of cold, white slimy tongue coating and soggy relaxed pulse.

Yin jaundice is usually caused either by long-term duration of yang jaundice, or by internal retention of cold dampness due to weakness of spleen yang, or by excessive taking of food and herbs which are cold and cool in nature, or by heat toxin due to latency of yang qi and exuberance of yin qi. Clinically manifestations also include general sallowness, anorexia, abdominal distension, mental fatigue, lassitude, hypochondriac pain, scanty urine, and deep thin slow pulse. It is often treated by regulating the spleen and stomach, and by warming and resolving cold dampness.

谷疸 dietary jaundice: a type of jaundice characterized by dizziness immediately after meal, and painful fullness in the stomach due to indigestion.

The term 谷疸 was first used in Jinkui Yaolue (Synopsis of Golden Chamber). It is usually caused by intemperance of food and block of the middle energizer due to dampness heat and retained food. The clinical manifestations include fever and chills, anorexia, dizziness after taking food, chest and abdominal distension, yellowness of skin and eyes and inhibited urination. It is usually treated by clearing away heat, resolving mass and promoting digestion.

酒疸 alcoholic jaundice: a type of jaundice due to excessive consumption of liquor.

The term 酒疸 was first used in Jinkui Yaolue. It is usually caused by fumigation of dampness heat and gallbladder heat with bile discharge due to excessive drinking of alcohol. The clinical manifestations include yellowness of eyes and body, red spots over the face, dysphoria, heat pain, nasal dryness, abdominal fullness, anorexia, and occasional nausea. It can be treated by clearing away dampness heat and removing alcoholism.

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