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 5)

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肝着 liver fixity: a diseased condition arising when qi and blood of the liver meridian become depressed and stagnant

The so-called 肝着, used first in Synopsis of Golden Chamber (《金匮要略》), describes a pathological condition caused by stagnation of qi and blood in the liver and characterized by thoracic and hypochondriac oppression or distending pain. In the current translation practice, it is either translated as “liver stagnation syndrome”, or as “liver stagnancy”[1]. To translate it as “liver fixity” appears unique but ambiguous. Besides, such a translation is seldom used in the current translation practice. In the WFCMS Standard[2], “liver stagnancy” is adopted.

胆胀 gallbladder distention: a diseased condition arising when the gallbladder qi is stagnant, and manifested by recurrent right upper abdominal pain with stuffiness and distension

The so-called 胆胀, used first in the “Chapter of Distension Discussion” in the Spiritual Pivot (《灵枢》), is used to describe a pathological condition characterized by hypochondriac pain and distension with bitter taste in the mouth and frequent

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sighing. To translate it as “gallbladder distension” looks lexically equivalent to the original term, but sounds a little bit misleading. That is why in the current translation practice it is frequently translated as “distension due to gallbladder disorder”, appearing lexically copious but semantically clear.

鼓胀 tympanites: a disease characterized by the severely distended abdomen like a drum accompanied by a somber yellow discoloration of the skin and prominent veins on the abdominal wall.

The so-called 鼓胀, apart from referring the pathological condition described above, is also used to refer to qi flatulence (气胀). This pathological condition is caused by abnormal emotional changes, or improper diet, or excessive drinking of alcohol, or accumulation of worms, which eventually leads to impairment of the liver, stagnation of qi and blood and retention of water and dampness. The treatment of such a problem mainly focuses on fortifying the spleen and improving the function of the stomach, promoting qi flow and activating the blood, and eliminating dampness and worms.

According to the analysis made above, 鼓胀 in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is not quite the same as “tympanites” in modern medicine. Maybe that is why in the current translation practice, it is frequently translated as “abdominal distension” or “distension of abdomen”. In the classics of TCM, 鼓胀 is divided into different categories according to the involvement of the internal organs, including liver distension, heart distension, spleen distension, stomach distension, lung distension, kidney distension, gallbladder distension, small intestine distension, large intestinal distension, bladder distension and triple energizer distension, or according to the condition of pathogenic factors, nature of disease and pathological progress, including deficiency distension, excess distension, cold distension, heat distension, food distension, worm distension, blood distension, qi distension, qi flatulence, water distension and unilateral abdominal distension

肤胀 cutaneous distension: a type of distension disease due to contraction of cold pathogen, arising when the pathogen stays in the skin together with the defense qi.

The so-called 肤胀, also translated as “skin distension”, used first in the “Chapter of Skin Distension” in Spiritual Pivot (《灵枢》), is caused by retention of cold qi in the skin due to insufficiency of yang qi, eventually leading to dropsy of the whole body, usually characterized by abdominal distension, body edema that engulfs the finger when pressed, thick skin without any changes of color.

胀满 distention and fullness: distension without and fullness within, a diseased condition in which damage to the spleen and stomach results in qi stagnation.

The term 胀满 was used first by Wang Bing in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.). In explaining the sentence “excess of the stomach pulse indicates distension” (胃脉实则胀) in the “Chapter of Discussion on the Essentials of Pulse States” in Simple Conversation (《素问》), he said: “excess of the pulse indicates excess of qi which leads to distension and fullness (脉实者，气有余，故胀满).” Later on this expression was gradually used as a technical term in TCM. For instance, in discussing Zhishi (Fructus Aurantii Immaturus, 枝实) in the book entitled A Supplement to Dreams.
and Essay (《梦溪补笔谈》), Shen Kuo (沈括), a great scholar in the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), said that it could clear away distension and fullness (胀满); in the book entitled Compendium of Materia Medica (《本草纲目》), Li Shizhen (李时珍), a great doctor in the Ming Dynasty (1588-1644 A.D.), used this term as the name of a special chapter.[4]

水肿: water distention: edema due to insufficiency of yang qi that leads to accumulation of water-dampness, marked initially by abdominal distension, and then swelling of the extremities.

The so-called水肿 (water distention) is the same as水肿 (edema). In Spiritual Pivot, it said that “water overflow will cause edema (水肿则为水肿)”. In the book entitled Syndrome Differentiation in Medicine written by Wang Bichang in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.), it said that “water distension is characterized by internal distension of the abdomen first, then followed by external distension of the abdomen and gradual involvement of the four limbs (水肿之状, 先腹后身, 而后外亦大, 渐至四肢亦肿)”.水肿:水肿 (病) edema: any diseased retention characterized by subcutaneous fluid.

The term水肿, first used in Simple Conversation (《素问》), also known as水肿 (water qi) and水肿 (water disease), refers to a disease characterized by dropsy of the eyes, limbs, chest and abdomen, or even the whole body due to accumulation and retention of water and dampness inside the body. In the Synopsis of Golden Chamber (《金匮要略》), it classifies edema into different categories, including wind edema, skin edema, routine edema and stone edema. In the book entitled Zhu Danxi’s Clinical Experience (《丹溪心法》), it divided edema into two major categories, namely, yang edema and yin edema.

阳水 yang edema: edema due to attack of wind or immersion of water-dampness involving the lung and the spleen respectively, usually with an acute onset and a short course, accompanied by exterior, heat and excess symptoms.

Yang edema is often caused by failure of the water passage to transfer water to the bladder due to failure of lung qi to diffuse and stagnation of the triple energizer, usually characterized by aversion to cold, fever, cough with sore-throat, dropsy starting from the face first, inhibited discharge of reddish urine, constipation, abdominal distension and fullness, slimy tongue coating and rapid pulse. It is called yang edema because it is of heat and excess in nature. The treatment of this disease usually concentrates on dispersing wind, diffusing the lung, clearing away heat and draining water[5].

阴水 yin edema: edema due to deficiency of the spleen and the kidney with inhibited qi movement, usually with a gradual onset and a long course, accompanied by interior, cold and deficiency symptoms.

Yin edema is often caused by failure to transform and transport water and dampness due to inactivation of spleen yang and deficiency of kidney yang, usually characterized by dropsy of the face and feet, or dropsy of the lower limbs first that engulfs the finger when pressed, chest oppression, poor appetite, chilly limbs, spiritual lassitude, sloppy stool, scanty urine, heaviness of the body, sore waist, bulgy tongue with white coating, and deep, slow and weak pulse. It is called yin edema because it is of deficiency and cold in nature. The treatment of this disease usually concentrates on fortifying the spleen, warming the kidney, strengthening yang and resolving dampness.

风水 wind edema: a type of edema especially of the face and head, ascribed to attacking on the lung by pathogenic wind, manifested by sudden onset of edema accompanied by fever with aversion to wind, aching joints, and oliguria.

Wind edema, one commonly encountered type of edema, used first in the “Chapter of Acupoints Used to Treat Edema and Heat Disease” in Simple Conversation. It is usually caused by invasion of pathogenic wind that causes retention of water and dampness inside the body due to failure of lung qi to diffuse and regulate the water passage. Clinical manifestations also include dysuria and floating pulse. This disease is usually treated by dispersing wind, diffusing the lung and draining water.

皮水: 皮肤 skin edema: pitting edema accompanied by abdominal distension and floating pulse.

Skin edema, one type of edema, is usually caused by retention of water in the skin due to spleen deficiency with heavy dampness, often characterized by slow onset, general edema that engulfs the finger when pressed, abdominal distension like a drum, no sweating, no thirst and floating pulse. The treatment of this disease mainly focuses on invigorating yang, fortifying the spleen and draining water.

正水: regular edema: a type of edema accompanied by abdominal fullness and dyspnea.

The so-called regular edema is usually caused by retention of water inside that presses the lung due to deficiency of spleen and kidney yang. Clinical
manifestations also include general edema and deep and slow pulse. The treatment of this disease mainly concentrates on fortifying the spleen, warming the kidney and promoting qi reception. In the WFCMS Standard, 水 is translated as “typical edema”. However, in the current translation practice, “regular edema” is used much more frequently than “typical edema”.

\*\*\* stingy edema: a type of edema marked by stony hardness of the lower abdomen.

The so-called stony edema is usually caused by accumulation and retention of water qi in the lower energizer due to coldness in the liver and kidney. Often characterized by lower abdominal swelling and distension as hard as stone with hypochondriac distending pain, abdominal distension without panting and deep pulse. In TCM, stony edema also refers to unilateral abdominal distension and abdominal mass.

\*\*\* yellow sweat: a disease mainly caused by the interior accumulation of dampness-heat, and characterized by edema, fever and yellow-colored sweat.

The so-called yellow sweat is usually caused by diving into water right after sweating that causes stagnation of nutrient qi and defense qi or internal exuberance of dampness heat, or caused by fumigation due to interaction of wind, water, dampness and heat. Clinical manifestations also include edema of the four limbs, fever without aversion to wind, splitting pain of the waist and hipbone, chilliness of the legs, body pain and heaviness, dysuria and deep and slow pulse.

\*\*\* strangury disease: a variety of diseases characterized by frequent, painful land dripping urination.

In TCM, strangury usually refers to urgent, scanty, frequent, inhibited and painful urination. In the book entitled Gu Songyuan’s Medical Mirror (《顾松园医镜》) written by Gu Jingyuan in the Qing Dynasty, it said: “strangury refers to the pathological condition marked by pain and difficulty in urination, though with the urgency and desire to urinate.” It is often caused by accumulation and binding of dampness and heat that flow into the bladder. But if it lingers for a long period, or if it occurs among those who are old and weak, it may be caused by collapse of middle qi and kidney deficiency that causes failure in qi transformation.

\*\*\* heat strangury: strangury ascribed to dampness-heat, marked by urgency and frequency of painful urination with acute onset, and accompanied by chills and fever, lumbar pain and cramps, and distension in the lower abdomen.

Heat strangury is often caused by accumulation of dampness heat in the lower energizer. The treatment of this disease mainly concentrates on clearing away heat and draining dampness.

\*\*\* stone strangury: painful and difficult urination due to the passage of urinary calculi.

The so-called stone strangury, also known as 砂淋 (sand strangury) or 石淋 (sand and stony strangury) in TCM, is usually caused by accumulation of heat in the lower energizer that steams impurities in water. Clinical manifestations include difficulty in urination, pain of the genitals that involves the lower abdomen, yellow urine or bloody urine. If sand or stone is discharged from urination, pain will be alleviated. The treatment of this disease mainly focuses on clearing away heat and removing stones.

\*\*\* qi strangury: strangury due to bladder qi disorders, characterized by painful voiding of urine and lower abdominal distension and fullness.

Qi strangury is usually caused by bladder heat due to spleen and kidney deficiency. It can be classified into two types, deficiency and excess. Deficiency qi strangury is marked by insufficiency of middle qi, lower abdominal dragging distension and weakness in urination. Excess qi strangury is marked by qi stagnation, inhibited urination and distension, fullness and pain below the navel.

\*\*\* blood strangury: strangury characterized by painful discharge of bloody urine.

Blood strangury is further divided into four types, namely, strangury with blood deficiency, strangury with blood cold, strangury with blood heat and strangury with blood stasis. If caused by blood deficiency, it is marked by slight pain in urination, light reddish urine and weak and rapid pulse, which can be treated by enriching yin and nourishing the blood; if caused by blood cold, it is marked by darkish blood in the urine, dry and pale complexion and deep and slow pulse, which can be treated by warming the kidney; if caused by blood heat, it is marked by scorching and sharp pain in urination, fresh red blood in the urine and strong pulse, which can be treated by cooling the blood and clearing away heat; if caused by blood stasis, it is marked by stabbing pain in the penis in urination, purplish black clot in the blood, hardness and fullness in the lower abdomen, and deep and taut or rapid pulse, which can
be treated by activating the blood to remove stasis.

unctuous strangury: painful discharge of turbid, milky urine like rice-water

Unctuous strangury, also known as 内淋(internal strangury) in TCM, is of deficiency or excess in nature. Deficiency unctuous strangury is often caused by spleen and stomach deficiency and weakness that fail to control lipid liquid, characterized by light pain without scorching heat in urination, accompanied by sore waist and knees, dizziness and tinnitus, shortness of breath and lassitude. It can be treated by tonifying and replenishing the spleen and kidney as well as astringing lipid liquid. Excess unctuous strangury is usually caused by accumulation and retention of dampness heat in the lower energizer that leads to inhibited qi transformation, mixture of the turbid and the lucid and failure to control lipid liquid, characterized by scorching heat and pain in urination, accompanied by fever, lumbago and headache. It can be treated by clearing away and resolving dampness heat as well as separating the lucid and removing the turbid.

fatigue strangury: a type of strangury characterized by recurrent dripping of urine ascribed to taxing fatigue, usually seen in chronic cases.

The so-called fatigue strangury refers to strangury complicated by overstrain. It can be divided into two types, spleen overstrain and kidney overstrain. If complicated by overstrain of the spleen, it can be treated by fortifying the spleen and replenishing qi: if complicated by overstrain of the kidney, it can be treated by improving deficiency and tonifying the kidney.

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