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 8)

Zhao-guo Li1,2, Jian-ming Tan1,2
1. College of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai 200234, China
2. Secretariat of Translation Specialty Committee, World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies, Shanghai 200234, China

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痹病 impedance disease: a group of diseases caused by the invasion of wind, cold, dampness or heat pathogens on the meridian/channel involving muscles, sinews, bones and joints, manifested by local pain, soreness, heaviness, or hotness, and even articular swelling, stiffness and deformities, also referring to arthralgia.

The so-called 髹, a term used to describe various diseases caused by pathogenic factors that block the limbs, meridians and viscera, used to be translated as “arthralgia”, which sounds too modern and westernized. Later on it is translated as “obstructive syndrome” or transliterated as “bi syndrome”. To render it as “impediment” seems to have revealed certain implication of this term. In the WHO/ICTM discussion, such a way of translation was still questioned by experts from different countries, indicating that any way of translation seems difficult to fully reveal the exact implication of this term. In this case, transliteration might be the only choice.

行痹; 风痹 moving impediment: an impediment disease characterized by migratory joint pains, also called wind impediment.

The so-called 行痹, also known as 风痹 and 风注, is caused by invasion of wind, cold and dampness into the limbs and meridians, especially wind. That is why it is usually known as 风痹 in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). Such a problem is mainly
treated by expelling wind, cold and dampness, also supplemented by tonifying the blood. The Chinese character 行 in this term is also frequently translated as “migratory”. In the Chinese-English Dictionary of Traditional Chinese Medicine compiled by Professor Ou Ming and published in 1986, for instance, 行痹 was translated as “migratory arthralgia”[1].

痛痹: painful impediment: an impediment disease with severe joint pain exaggerated by cold, also called cold impediment.

The so-called 痛痹 or 病痹 is caused by invasion of pathogenic cold and dampness into the limbs and meridians, usually characterized by severe pain of the limbs that will be aggravated when attacked by cold and alleviated with warmth, often accompanied by spasm of hands and feet. This problem, the manifestations of which are similar to that of rheumatic arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and gout, can be treated by warming the meridians to dissipate cold and dispersing wind to expel dampness.

着痹; 湿痹: fixed impediment: an impediment disease with fixed joint pain, also called dampness impediment.

The so-called 着痹 or 湿痹 is caused by invasion of pathogenic wind, cold and dampness into the limbs and meridians, in which dampness plays a dominant role in causing the disease. The common clinical manifestations of this disease include heaviness of limbs, numbness of muscles, fixed joint pain and frequent attack in rainy days. This disease is treated mainly by expelling dampness, dissipating wind and eliminating cold. For supplementary purpose, the method for tonifying the spleen and promoting qi is also advisable.

热痹; heat impediment: an impediment disease with an acute onset of joint pain accompanied by local redness, swelling and hotness.

The so-called 热痹 refers to two different pathological conditions. One is caused by interaction of wind and cold with virulent heat that has invaded the joints or accumulated inside the body, usually characterized by swelling, pain and redness of the joints, fever and thirst, frequently seen in the cases of rheumatic arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and gout, which can be treated by clearing away heat and expelling dampness as well as dissipating impediment and relieving pain. The other is 脉痹 (meridian impediment) as described in the book entitled Zhang’s Medical Studies (《张氏医通》) compiled by Zhang Lu in 1695 that “meridian impediment, also known as heat impediment, is characterized by extreme feverishness of the muscles, tremor of skin, chapped lips and changes of skin”[12].

厉节风, joint-running wind: a disease characterized by redness and swelling of multiple joints, with acute pain and difficulty in bending and stretching, and finally developing into articular deformity.

The so-called 厉节风, also known as 厉节, 白虎风, 白虎厉节 and 痛风, first analyzed in Synopsis of Golden Chamber (《金匮要略》), is a disease caused by invasion of pathogenic wind, cold and dampness into the meridians and joints. The clinical manifestations of this disease include swelling, severe migratory pain and inflexibility of joints that appear alleviated in the daytime but aggravated in the night. If the pathogenic factors accumulate and change into heat, it will cause redness, swelling, feverishness and pain of the joints. This disease is usually treated by expelling wind and dissipating cold. The Chinese character 厉 in this term means to flow, indicating that the pain of joints in this

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disease is caused by flow of wind, cold and dampness into the joints.

骨痹 bone impediment: a type of impediment disease mainly involving the bones and joints

The so-called bone impediment is caused by invasion of wind, cold and dampness into the bones, characterized by severe pain, spasm of limbs and dropy of joints. In the Plain Conversation (《素问》), a fascicle of Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Medicine (《黄帝内经》), it says that “the disease located in the bones marked by heaviness, aching pain and chillness of bones is called 骨痹”. This disease is either deficiency or excess in nature. Clinically this disease can be treated either by herbal medicine, or by acupuncture and moxibustion, or by tuina.

肌痹 flesh impediment: a type of impediment disease mainly involving the flesh

The so-called 肌痹 is also known as 肉痹. In Chinese, 肌 and 肉 are similar to each other in meaning. In the Plain Conversation, it says that “the disease located in the muscles with severe pain of the muscles is called 肌痹”. This problem is mainly caused by attack of cold and dampness. Apart from extensive pain of muscles, it is also characterized by sweating, weakness of limbs, numbness of skin and dispiritedness.

血痹 blood impediment: a type of impediment disease marked by local numbness of extremities

The so-called 血痹, first used in the Spiritual Pivot (《灵枢》), a fascicle of Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Medicine, is caused by wind attack during sleep or after sweating that leads to block of qi and blood, usually characterized by numbness of the body, pain of the limbs and joints, slightly tenseness of pulse. It can be treated by replenishing qi and harmonizing the nutrient aspect as well as unblocking yang and removing impediment. In TCM, 血痹 sometimes refers to migratory wind impediment.

脉痹 vessel impediment: a type of impediment disease mainly involving the vessels

In TCM, 脉痹 is similar to 热痹 (heat impediment). In the book entitled Zhang’s Medical Studies, it says that “脉痹 (vessel impediment) is also known as 热痹 caused by transmission of heat into the viscera and complicated by invasion and retention of pathogenic factors into the vessels and meridians, characterized by extreme feverishness of the muscles, tremor skin, chapped lips and changes of skin”.

心痹 heart impediment: a type of impediment disease mainly involving the heart

The so-called 心痹 is caused by lingering of 脉痹 (vessel impediment) complicated by invasion of external pathogenic factors, or by excessive contemplation that damages the heart, complicated by deficiency of qi and blood and invasion of external pathogenic factors into the heart, leading to block of heart qi and vessels and meridians. This disease, usually characterized by chest oppression, palpitation, heartache, sudden panting, dryness of the throat, retching, and deep and taut pulse, can be treated by nourishing the heart and expelling pathogenic factors as well as activating the blood and unblocking the vessels.

肠痹 intestinal impediment: a type of impediment disease mainly involving the intestines

The so-called 肠痹 is often caused by block of qi movement in the small and large intestines, leading to dysuria, difficult defecation, paining or diarrhea with undigested food in it. This disease can be treated by promoting urination and fortifying the spleen.

痉症 convulsive disease: any diseased state marked by neck rigidity, convulsion of the limbs, and even clenched jaw and opisthotonos

In TCM, 痉, usually translated as “convulsion” or “stiffness” is a disease mainly characterized by convulsion and rigidity, either deficiency or excess in nature. Deficiency cases are usually caused by excessive sweating, hemorrhage, congenital weakness, deficiency of qi and blood, insufficiency of body fluid, sinews and musculature that lack necessary moisture and nourishment, and internal disturbance of wind, which can be treated by replenishing qi, nourishing blood and stopping wind. Excess cases are usually caused by stagnation and accumulation of wind, cold, dampness, phlegm and fire in the meridians, which can be treated by expelling wind and strengthening the body. Clinically 痉 is classified into different categories, including rigid convulsion, soft convulsion, yang convulsion, yin convulsion, wind convulsion, wind-phlegm convulsion and phlegm-fire convulsion.

柔痉 febrile convulsion without chills: a type of pyretic convulsion associated with sweating but no chills

The so-called 柔痉, also frequently translated as “soft convulsion” or “tender stiffness” because the Chinese character 柔 literally means soft, is usually caused by attack of wind and dampness, characterized by fever, sweating, rigidity of nape and neck, tremor of head, lockjaw, convulsion of hands and feet, opisthotonos, and deep and slow pulse.

刚痉 febrile convulsion with chills: a type of
pyretic convulsion associated with chills but no sweating.

The so-called 脾病，also frequently translated as “hard convulsion” or “hard stiffness” because the Chinese character 脾 means hard, is usually caused by attack of intense wind and heat, characterized by fever without sweating, aversion to cold, rigidity of nape and neck, tremor of head, lockjaw, convulsion of hands and feet, opisthotonus, and taut and tense pulse.

脾病; 脾病 vessel wilting: wilting attributed to heat in heart qi, characterized by articular relaxation of the lower limbs preventing the patient from standing, the same as heart atrophy.

In TCM, 脾病, also known as 心病 because the heart controls vessels in the whole body, is caused by upward flow of qi and blood due to heat in heart qi and flaming of fire, consequently leading to deficiency of vessels in the lower part of the body. This disease can be treated by clearing the heart and reducing fire or nourishing the blood and activating the blood.

肉痿; 肉痿 fleshy wilting: wilting attributed to heat in spleen qi, characterized by numbness of the flesh, and in severe cases, inability to move the limbs, the same as spleen atrophy.

In TCM, 肉痿, also known as 脾痿 because the spleen controls muscles, is caused by heat in spleen qi that leads to atrophy of the muscles or pathogenic dampness that damages the muscles. Clinically it is often treated by clearing away heat and draining dampness or fortifying the spleen and harmonizing the stomach.

筋痿; 肝痿 sinew wilting: wilting attributed to heat in liver qi, characterized by sinew contracture gradually giving way to wilting that prevents normal movements, the same as liver atrophy.

In TCM, 肝痿, also known as 肝痿 because the liver controls sinews and failure to cure 肝痿 will eventually cause 肝痿, is caused by invasion of wind, cold and dampness into the sinews. Clinically it is treated by clearing away heat, nourishing the liver and tonifying the blood.

筋痿; leg flaccidity: loss of muscle tone in the legs due to atrophy and difficulty in leg movement.

In TCM, 脾痿 is also known as 脾痿. This term is used to emphasize the difficulty in moving the limbs caused by weakness and flaccidity.

顫震; tremor: a diseased state characterized by involuntary trembling of the head or limbs.

In TCM, 顫震 is just taken as a clinical manifestation seen in different cases of diseases and can be treated according to the pathological condition involved.
腰痛 lumbago: pain in the lumbar region caused by disordered qi and blood flow in the related collateral vessels in exogenous afflictions, traumatic injuries or kidney deficiency.

Lumbago, according to TCM theory, is usually caused by overstraining, aging, deficiency of kidney qi, or by attack of external pathogenic factors, or traumatic injury that blocks the meridians running along the waist. In TCM, lumbago is either excess or deficiency in nature. Acute cases of lumbago are usually excess in nature caused by attack of external pathogenic factors and traumatic injury, which can be treated by activating the blood, promoting qi, soothing the sinews, unblocking the collaterals and expelling pathogenic factors. Chronic and recurrent cases are usually deficiency in nature caused by kidney deficiency, which can be treated by tonifying the waist and kidney, and strengthening the sinews and bones.

疝; 疝气, genital disease: a collective term for various diseases characterized by pain and/or swelling of the lower abdomen or scrotum.

In TCM, 疝 or 疝气 refers to a complicated group of pathological conditions. Clinically these pathological conditions can be classified into three categories. The first category includes the problems characterized by protrusion of organs or tissues from any cavity of the body, usually accompanied by pain. The second category includes the pathological conditions involving genitals, scrotum and testis. The third category includes the problems marked by sharp abdominal pain accompanied by difficulty in urination and defecation.

疝; 小肠气, hernia: protrusion of a part of an organ or tissue from a bodycavity through the tissues that normally contain it.

The so-called 小肠疝 (small intestinal hernia) is caused by invasion of cold and wind into the small intestine due to intestinal weakness, characterized by cold pain in the small intestine that involves the testis, back and waist. It can be treated by warming, resolving and qi-promoting therapies.

寒疝 cold abdominal colic: acute abdominal pain due to cold, also called cold-induced colic.

In TCM, 寒疝 (cold hernia) refers to two pathological conditions. The first is characterized by inguinal spasm, pain around the navel, cold sweating, aversion to cold, cold limbs, or even numbness of hands and feet, general pain, and deep and tense pulse, usually caused by stagnation of pathogenic cold in the abdomen, which can be treated by warming the internal and dispersing cold, promoting qi and expelling dampness. The second is characterized by cold pain and hardness of the scrotum due to invasion of cold and dampness into the liver meridian, which can be treated by warming the liver and dispersing cold.

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