

PRACTICAL TRADITIONAL CHINESE GYNECOLOGY

Compiled by Xia Guicheng, Guo Huihong,
Gu Yuehua, Shi Yanhua, Li Peigen

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实用中医妇科学



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Preface

Traditional Chinese gynecology involves the study of female physiology and pathology, along with the diagnosis and treatment of women's diseases under the guidance of the basic knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine. Traditional Chinese gynecology (hereafter abbreviated to TCM gynecology) has made great contributions to the health of Chinese women for thousands of years.

Recently, there has been a great surge of interest in Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture in the world. Students from various countries of the world, who received training in Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture at Nanjing College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, have asked us to edit a series of TCM books in English to meet the growing demands for TCM knowledge in the world. The present volume is our first attempt.

This book is intended for those who are already practising Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture and have some familiarity with the theory and practice of TCM. The book is compiled according to the theoretical system of TCM with the emphasis on practical use. The treatment of diseases discussed is determined on the basis of differentiation of syndromes. Apart from Chinese herbal medicine, acupuncture and moxibustion are introduced in the treatment. The book can not only be used as a text-book for students of TCM gynecology, but also as a guide for clinical application.

Acknowledgement is made to Professor Qiu Maoliang and Associate Professor Xiao Shaoqing, who both checked the Chinese text concerning acupuncture and moxibustion, Dr. Gene Gudmundson from the United States of America, who assisted in the editorial work of the English text, and Associate Professor Huang Kuiming, who made many good suggestions on the translation.

The Compilers and Translators

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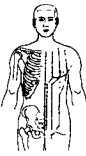
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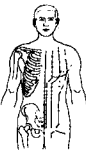
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PART ONE: THEORY

Chapter 1 Characteristics of Female Physiology

Since women anatomically have a uterus and its associated organs, and physiologically have menstruation, leukorrhea, pregnancy, labor and breast-feeding, there is an expected difference between women and men in terms of *zang-fu* organs, channels and collaterals, *yin* and *yang*, and *qi* and blood in their physiological activities of reproduction.

The human body takes the *zang-fu* organs, and the channels and collaterals, as the fundamentals, and performs its function through *qi* and blood. The five aspects of menstruation, leukorrhea, pregnancy, labor and breast-feeding are manifestations of the transforming function of *zang-fu* organs, channels and collaterals, and *qi* and blood.

The uterus is an organ responsible for menstruation and nourishment of the fetus; *qi* and blood are the material base of menses, leukorrhea, nourishment of the fetus and breast-feeding; *zang-fu* organs are the source of *qi* and blood; channels and collaterals are passages through which *qi* and blood circulate. The periodic change of *qi* and blood is the inevitable consequence of the consuming-supporting and transforming relationship of *yin* and *yang* of the kidney.

When studying characteristics of female physiology, one must understand the relationship between *zang-fu* organs, channels and collaterals, *yin* and *yang*, and *qi* and blood on the one hand, and menstruation, leukorrhea, pregnancy and labor on the other. It is also important to grasp the significance of the kidney, liver, spleen, stomach, and Chong and Ren Channels in female physiology.



I. Uterus

Situated in the central part of the pelvic cavity, the uterus is an organ responsible for production of menses and nourishment of the fetus. Owing to its unique shape and function, the uterus was referred to as an extraordinary *fu* organ by ancient physicians.

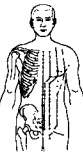
The uterus is directly related to the Chong, Ren and Du Channels, particularly the Chong and Ren. It is also connected with the *zang-fu* organs and the twelve regular channels. There are channels and collaterals directly linking the uterus with the heart and kidney. According to medical classics, the collateral of the uterus is related to the kidney, pertains to the heart, and connects with the uterus itself. Since the heart dominates blood, and the kidney stores essence, normal functioning of these two organs ensures that the uterus will be sufficiently supplied with blood and essence. As a result, normal menstruation and pregnancy will then be possible.

II. Menstruation

The first onset of menstruation usually starts at the age of about 14. Menstruation then continues with a frequency of once a month until the age of about 50. As it normally maintains this pattern unchanged, it is also known as the monthly tide. The production of menses is related to the flourishing of kidney *qi*, arrival of the *tiankui* *, and normal functioning of the Chong and Ren Channels. Ancient physicians thought that at the age of 7 in women, kidney *qi* starts to flourish, which promotes the growth and development of the body; at the age of 14, kidney *qi* flourishes, the *tiankui* starts functioning, and the Chong and Ren Channels are vigorous and free of obstruction. This will result in the onset of menses.

As the sea of blood, the Chong Channel is where the *qi* and blood of the twelve regular channels are converged. The Chong Channel originates in the

* The *tiankui*, similar to kidney *yin*, is an important material responsible for the formation and arrival of menses.



uterus, and emerges in the perineum. Then it ascends to the throat where it meets with the Ren Channel, and then curves around the lips.

The Ren Channel is referred to as the sea of all the *yin* channels, functioning to preside over the uterus and fetus. It originates from the uterus, and emerges in the perineum. Then it runs along the anterior midline and meets with the three *yin* channels of foot (the Liver, Spleen and Kidney Channels) at the points Qugu (Ren 2), Zhongji (Ren 3) and Guanyuan (Ren 4).

When there is ample *qi* and blood in the Chong Channel, and the Ren Channel is free of obstruction, onset of menstruation occurs. The sea of blood becomes empty after menstruation, presenting a condition of *qi* excess and blood deficiency.

Menstruation is also related to the Du Channel. The Du Channel originates from the uterus, and emerges in the perineum. Then it ascends along the posterior midline and meets with all the *yang* channels at the point Dazhui (Du 14). It further ascends to the vertex, then descends along the anterior midline to the lips and mouth. It meets with the Ren Channel at the point Mouth-Yinjiao (Du 28).

The Ren and Du Channels circulate in endless cycles along the anterior and posterior midlines, maintaining a relative *yin-yang* balance of the body, and thus providing for periodic occurrence of menstruation.

During the year or two after the first menstrual cycle, menstrual flow may not arrive regularly or may cease for a period of time. This is because kidney *qi* is not yet sufficient and the *tian kui* is not yet stable. When the body fully develops, menstruation will become normal.

At the age of 45 – 50, the menstrual cycle becomes irregular with possibly either profuse or scanty flow; gradually menopause occurs. If vaginal bleeding occurs after menopause, careful examination should be done as early as possible, in order to determine any abnormal condition.

In addition, there are some healthy women who may have an onset of menstruation every two months, every three months, or even every year. As menstruation is still periodic, these conditions are all normal. Some women may get pregnant without any visible menstrual flow in all their lives. This condition is referred to as invisible menstruation.



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During each menstrual period, a certain amount of blood is lost, approximately 100 milliliters. However, the amount of flow may vary according to such conditions as body constitution, age, weather and geographic change, life style and mental state. Each menstrual period usually covers 3 – 5 days, in some women 7 days. Menstrual flow is normally dark-red in color, light at the beginning, deep in the middle, and pinkish at the end of the period. A normal flow does not coagulate, nor is it mixed with clots. It is neither dilute nor thick, and it does not produce any offensive smell.

III. Leukorrhea

Leukorrhea is a liquid secretion in the vagina, and functions to moisten the vagina.

Leukorrhea has an internal relation with menstruation. During the period between menarche at the age of 14 and menopause at the age of 50, women normally secrete a small amount of white, thin, slightly sticky and odorless leukorrhea. Leukorrhea increases in amount and becomes thick, sticky and transparent during the mid-cycle period, when ovulation takes place. Ovulation implies that the *yin* essence of the body has developed to the extreme stage. Extreme *yin* transforms into *yang* inevitably, and thus leukorrhea decreases in amount, when ovulation is completed. Therefore, the periodic change in amount of leukorrhea represents the consuming and growing of the *yin* essence of the body, and synchronizes with the menstrual cycle. As *yin* blood accumulates downwards to nourish the fetus in the early stage of pregnancy, the amount of leukorrhea increases accordingly.

Leukorrhea has a very close relation with kidney *yin* and *tiankui*, because the kidney stores essence and takes charge of fluids, and the *tiankui* is largely composed of the *yin* essence.

Leukorrhea is also related to the Ren and Dai Channels. This is because the Ren Channel dominates *yin* of the entire body, including all the *yin* fluids such as essence, blood and body fluid; the Dai Channel runs transversely around the waist and has the function of controlling the Chong, Ren, Kidney, Liver and Spleen Channels. After menopause, the *tiankui* is exhausted, the Chong and Ren Channels become weak, and leukorrhea no



longer exists.

In addition, leukorrhea is related to the spleen and stomach. This is based upon the understanding that the spleen and stomach are the source of health, and that when congenital essence is well-nourished by food essence, *yin* essence is kept ample. Further, the spleen and stomach transport and transform body fluid, and dysfunction of these two organs may cause disturbance of water metabolism. Also, the Ren and Dai Channels depend upon the spleen and stomach for nourishment, so the normal functions of these two organs and those of the Ren and Dai Channels are inseparable.

IV. Pregnancy and Labor

1. Pregnancy

When kidney *qi* is ample, the *tiankui* arrives, and the Chong and Ren Channels are vigorous and free of obstruction, then the combination of two sorts of essence through sexual intercourse may lead to pregnancy. When a woman becomes pregnant, menstruation discontinues, and the *yin* blood accumulates in the Chong and Ren Channels to nourish the fetus in the uterus. Thus the blood of the whole body is relatively deficient, and *qi* is relatively excessive, presenting a condition of accumulation of *yin* in the lower part of the body, and excess of *yang* in the upper part. For this reason, *qi* of the Chong Channel is in excess in the early stage of pregnancy. The Chong Channel is related to the liver, and *qi* of both channels is likely to stir. Excessive *qi* of the Chong Channel causes upward disturbance, giving rise to signs of deficiency of liver *yin*, such as dizziness, nausea and preference for sour food. Such temporary changes in physiology will be relieved spontaneously in two to three months.

Three months into pregnancy, the lower abdomen begins to protrude, breasts increase in size, and the nipples and areola become deep in color. After four to five months, fetal movement can be felt. At six to seven months, the abdomen is enlarged, and fetal movement is more pronounced. In the latter stages of pregnancy, normal fetal growth may cause the head of the fetus to compress the urinary bladder and rectum of the mother, giving rise to such symptoms as frequent or hesitant urination, or constipation.



2. Labor

After forty weeks of pregnancy, or about two hundred and eighty days, the expectant mother goes into labor.

A woman of eight to nine months of pregnancy may note a dull pain in the abdomen, yet be free of other symptoms of impending birth. This dull pain will then spontaneously disappear. It is also possible for a woman of full term pregnancy to experience abdominal pain but absence of low back pain. These two conditions may be confused with normal labor.

Normal labor takes place after full term pregnancy. An intermittent pain will be present in both the abdomen and low back. This pain will then increase in frequency and severity, accompanied by a bearing-down sensation in the lower abdomen, and a heavy pressure in the anus. Then the amniotic fluid is released and bleeding occurs, which immediately precedes the birth of the baby. After the birth, the placenta is then discharged.

Bleeding during labor abruptly consumes *yin* blood and causes floating of *yang qi*. As a result, symptoms and signs of *yin* deficiency and *yang* excess, such as low grade fever, aversion to cold and spontaneous sweating, are often present on the first and second days after labor. These will disappear very soon, if there is no invasion of pathogenic factors.

For several days after labor, a mild intermittent pain usually is felt in the lower abdomen, where lumps are palpable. Also, a small amount of dark-red blood flows out from the vagina. This is referred to as lochia. Lochia continues for about twenty days with its color fading and amount decreasing gradually. These are all normal physiological phenomena. After resting for one to two months, the mother will recover fully.

Breast-feeding is a physiological function of women. During pregnancy, changes take place in the breasts, creating conditions suitable for breast-feeding. After childbirth, one part of essence produced by the spleen and stomach meets the needs of the mother, while another part ascends along with *qi* of the Chong Channel and Yangming Channel to the breasts, where it is transformed into milk for nursing the baby. Generally, there is no menstruation during the period of breast-feeding.