Traditional Chinese Medicine



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- ✓TCM is a major stream of Complementary and Alternative Medicines (CAM).
- ✓ Emerged as a healthcare paradigm as early as 10000 BC.
- ✓ It comprises **three** main modalities: CHM, acupuncture and physical therapies (qigong, tu-nai and tai-chi).
- ✓**CHM** refers to the systems of cure with prescriptions of herbs and related substances.
- ✓**Acupuncture** treats diseases by inserting sharpened objects into specific points (called acupoints) along specific routes (called meridians) in the body.
- ✓**Physical therapy** includes all branches of manipulative treatment where parts of the patient's body are moved either passively (Tui-na) or actively (qi-gong and tai-chi) in a systematic way to elicit therapeutic effects.

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- ✓TCM is built upon philosophical concepts drawn from the human body and the external environment.
- ✓In contrast to **Western medicine**, TCM is more of a philosophy than science.
- ✓Inside the human body, TCM will tell you that there are internal organs (Zhongs–Fus) but they are not synonymous with the human organs.
- ✓The definitions of **acupoints** and **meridians** are equally conceptual and they do not correlate with known anatomical landmarks or conduits, such as the lymphatic systems as understood by Western medicine.
- ✓The meaning of health in TCM is synonymous with the functional interactions between entities inside the body in response to the natural forces of the environment.

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- ✓It is the overall dynamic equilibrium between the Yin–Yang, Qi–Xue and Zhongs–Fus that a TCM practitioner wants to achieve in order to re-establish health, not a treatment of any entity in isolation.

❑Yin –Yang

- ✓Yin and Yang are probably the two key principles that underlie TCM.
- ✓Two opposing entities that coexist in a dynamic equilibrium within the universe.
- ✓**Yang** represents light, uprising, heat, mobility, the sun and the male gender.
- ✓**Yin** represents the opposite: darkness, down-going, cold, rest, the moon and the female gender.
- ✓Due to their opposing nature, Yin and Yang cancel each other out in any system.

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- ✓In extremis, they can interconvert, i.e.
- ✓Yin becomes Yang and Yang becomes Yin.
- ✓Yang cannot exit on its own and has to be rooted with Yin and vice versa.
- ✓Inside a living body, any functioning organ or tissue, there is, by definition, a coexistence of Yin and Yang in dynamic equilibrium.
- ✓Their dynamic interactions define life and their degree of interplay reflects the state of health.
- ✓When there is imbalance, health deteriorates; when Yin–Yang decouples, death ensues.

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Qi –Xue:

- ✓Both are conceptual materials circulating inside the meridians and the main internal organs (Zhongs and Fus).
- ✓**Qi** refers to the intangible energy inside the human body and constitutes the essence of life.
- ✓It is contained inside the 12 meridians, compartmentalized in each organ for its normal functions and cycles through our body 50 times a day.
- ✓Qi is categorized as a Yang entity and best kept in incessant flow.
- ✓ When Qi is deficient, the meridian or organ will be weakened and malfunction or increase susceptibility of the body to attacks by the six pathogen.
- ✓Symptomatically, Qi deficiency is recognized by fatigue, malaise, shortness of breath, low voice, pale complexion, pale tongue and a thread-like pulse.

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- ✓When the level of Qi is normal but its flow is sluggish, it results in a stagnation syndrome where internal organs maybe bloated or pain will develop at sites where Qi cannot flow through the meridians.
- ✓In these situations, acupuncture achieves its therapeutic effect by activating the flow of Qi in the affected meridians and unblocking the acupuncture points.
- ✓Xue is a Yin entity that coexists with Qi and is driven through the meridians by Qi.
- ✓Xue provides the building blocks that form the organs or bodily parts.
- ✓Xue is translated as ‘blood’ but is not synonymous with the anatomical entity as in Western medicine.
- ✓Deficiency syndrome of Xue leads to multiple diffuse aches, pale complexion, irregular or scanty periods in females, pale tongue and a narrow pulse.

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- ✓when flow of Xue is blocked or sluggish, it results in a stagnation syndrome, which is recognized by sharp nocturnal pain at fixed areas of the body, a dark-purple tongue and an irregular pulse.

❑Zhong–Fu

- ✓Zhong and Fu are conceptual correlates of the major internal organs inside the body.
- ✓There are five Zhongs (heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys).
- ✓Six Fus (bladder, gall bladder, stomach, small intestine, large intestine and pericardium).
- ✓ The Zhongs are considered solid entities and hence correlate with the Yin.
- ✓The Fus are considered hollow entities and correlated with the Yang.

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- ✓For a Zhong to be in its optimal state, it has to be filled with Qi or Xue, failure to do so results in a Deficiency Syndrome.
- ✓Fu needs to be emptied and drained constantly to maintain its hollow state, failure to do so will lead to a blockage or stagnation syndrome.
- ✓The best example is constipation where the larger intestine, a Fu, is not emptied properly and hence the blockage presents with pain and bloatedness.
- ✓ Zhong or Fu is associated with a meridian ramifying a different part of the body.
- ✓A Zhong and a Fu pair up as a functional dual.
- ✓The five Zhongs correlate with the five elements of nature and promote/suppress each other to achieve equilibrium.

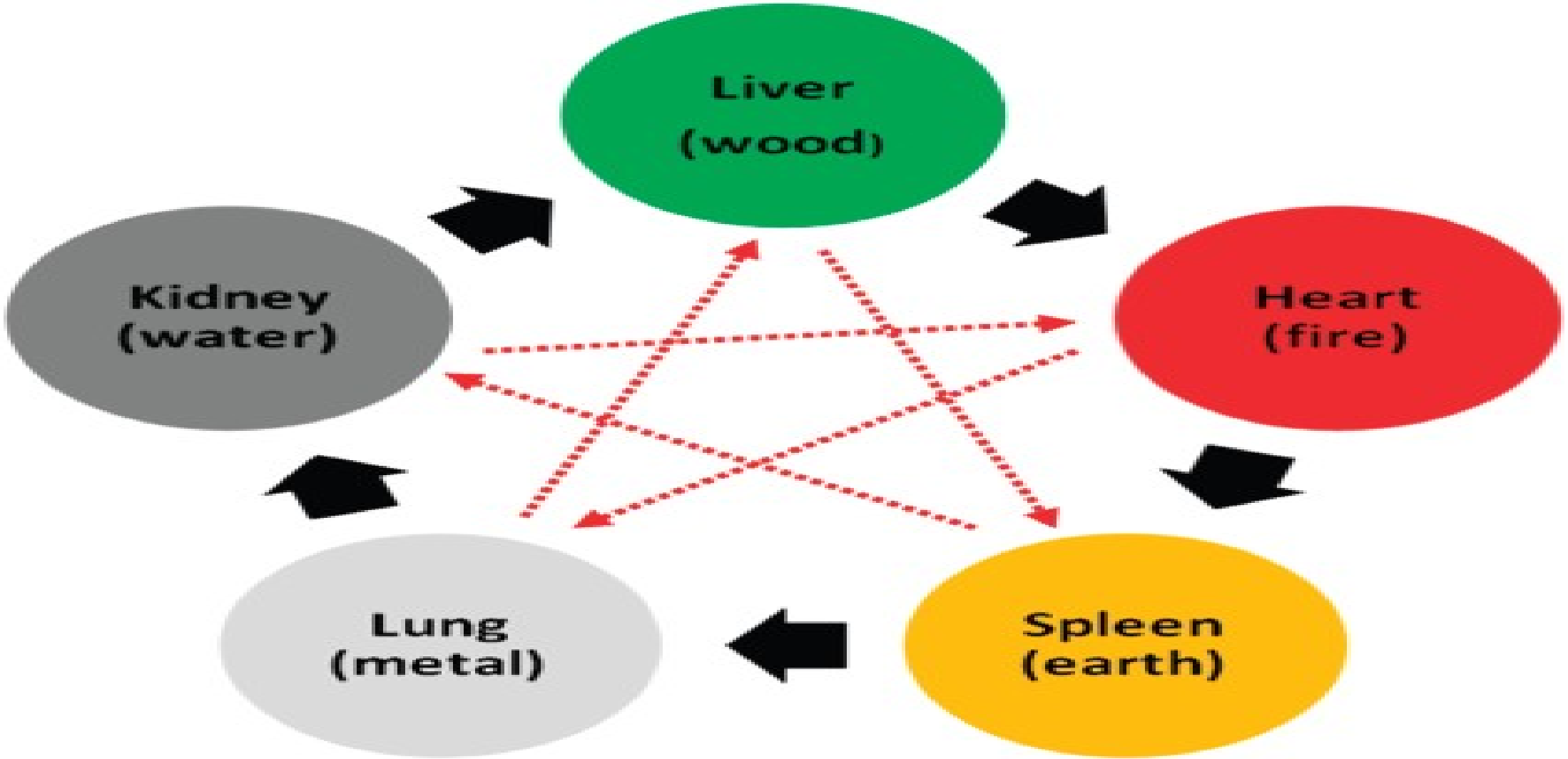
The Five Elements

- ✓Five main elements that interact and constitute everything as we know it: Earth, Wood, Water Fire and Metal.
- ✓ Between them there exists a mutual promotion–suppression relationship that keeps them in equilibrium.
- ✓The five elements promote each other in the following way: Earth → Metal → Water → Wood → Fire → Earth.
- ✓Conversely, they suppress each other also in this particular manner: Earth → Water → Fire → Metal → Wood → Earth.
- ✓There exist an intricate pull–push dynamics among all five elements that form the basis of clinical diagnosis and therapy in TCM.
- ✓Human beings are part of nature and in the theory of TCM.

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- ✓Internal organs are believed to correlate with the Five Elements according to their behaviours and functions in the body.
- ✓**Earth–spleen** (spleen digest all crops harvested from earth)
- ✓**Wood–liver** (liver likes to spread and extend the Qi like branches of the tree)
- ✓**Fire–heart** (heart governs the blood which is red like fire)
- ✓**Water–kidneys** (kidneys governs the waterworks)
- ✓**Metal–lungs** (lungs maintains the cleanliness like pure metal).
- ✓Translating to Zhongs (the solid organs in TCM),
- ✓The same promoting relationships exists: spleen → lungs → kidneys → liver → heart → spleen.
- ✓Suppressive relationships are seen: spleen → kidneys → heart → lungs → liver → spleen.

Figure 1. The promotion (black solid arrows) versus suppression (red broken arrows) relationships of the five Zhongs and Five



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- ✓These inter relationships help to understand the aetiology of disease and the formulation of treatment.
- ✓ For example, in Excess Syndrome of the liver, the spleen will be weakened as Earth is suppressed by Wood under the Five-Elements rule.
- ✓The treatment strategy is to abate the Wood (liver) and support the Earth (spleen), possibly via strengthening of the Fire (heart) as Fire promotes Earth.
    - ❑**In Western medicine**
- ✓Have the concept of homeostasis within organ systems but we often emphasize the ‘single disease–single organ–single treatment’.
- ✓Not need to consider cross-systems homeostasis unless in dire situations of multi-organ systems failure.

Causes of diseases: the six external agents and seven internal emotions

- ✓**Six agents** are identified: Wind, Cold, Heat, Dampness, Dryness and Fire, which are predominant in different seasons of the year.
- ✓Natural stages of the four seasons that all humans are subject to, and they only cause diseases when they appear too soon, last too long or come in far excess.
- ✓Equally, if there is already an imbalance (of the Yin–Yang, Qi–Xue or Zhong–Fus) inside the body, there is increased susceptibility to these external agents.
- ✓These six agents can affect the human body in isolation or in combination as the seasons go round.
- ✓Abrupt changes in seasons leading to spread of air-borne pathogens

Six agents and their properties

Agent	Predominant season of the year	
Wind	Spring, autumn, winter	Yang
Cold	winter	Yin
Heat	Summer	Yang
Dampness	Spring, summer	Yin
Dryness	autumn	Yang
Fire	Mid-summer	Yang

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- The seven emotion

- ✓There are seven emotions recognized in the humans and when in excess can cause diseases and illness.
- ✓They are Joy, Anger, Worry, Contemplation, Sorrow, Fear and Shock.
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Seven emotion and their effect on QI and Xue	
Emotion	Effect on Qi & Xue
Joy	Slows
Anger	Upsurges
Worry	Blockade
Comtemplation	Interruption
Sorrow	Stagnation
Fear	Sinking
Shock	Disarray

Four pillars of TCM diagnosis

❑Observation

- ✓TCM diagnosis starts with general observation of the patient.
- ✓Spirit' of the patient that is exhibited by the general demeanour, physical agility, facial complexion, skin hues, speech clarity and rate of breathing.
- ✓Good spirit means a robust flow of Qi and Xue with dynamic equilibria among their Zhongs and Fus as seen in good health.
- ✓Disease of any Zhong or Fu often manifest as a particular facial skin hue of the corresponding member of the Five Elements.
- ✓For example
  - ✓Heart problem often shows up with a red hue (Heart → Fire = Red),
  - ✓Lung problem with a white pale hue (Lung → Metal = White),
  - ✓kidney problem with a dark hue (Kidney → Water = Black),
  - ✓spleen problem with a sallow hue (Spleen → Earth = Yellow) and
  - ✓liver problem with a green hue (Liver → Wood = Green).

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- ✓The other main observation is of the tongue.
- ✓A few examples of tongue diagnoses are given as below

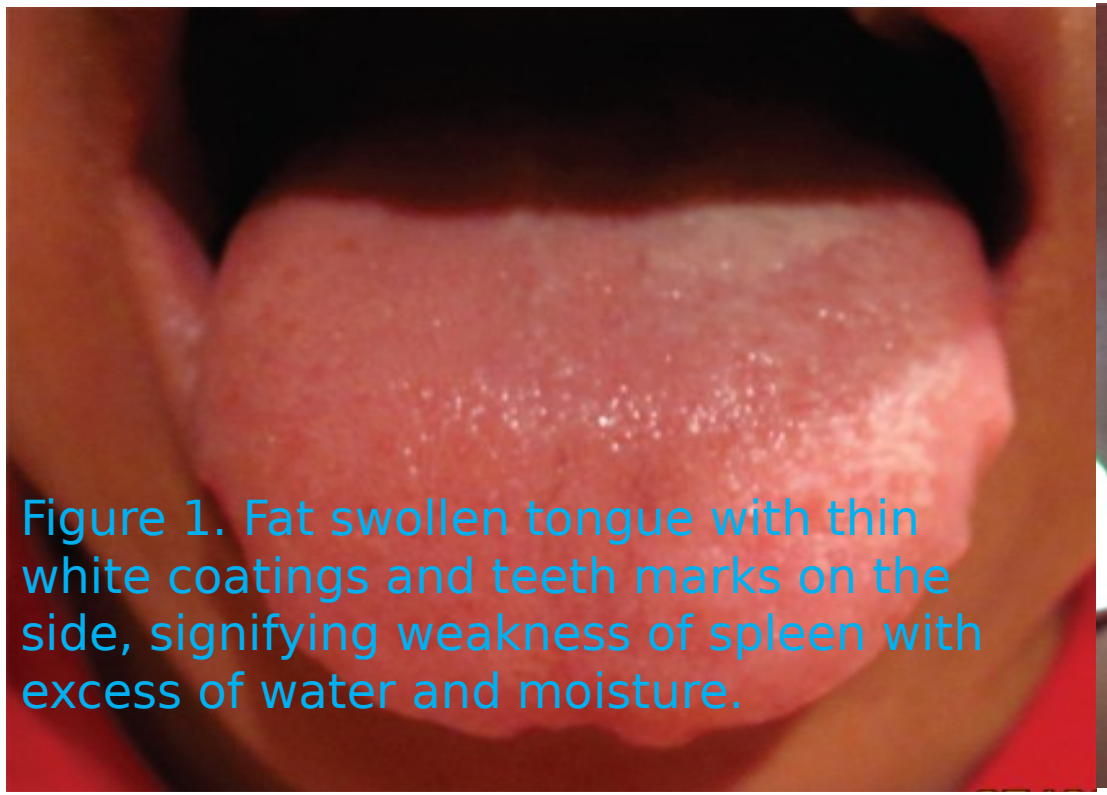


Figure 1. Fat swollen tongue with thin white coatings and teeth marks on the side, signifying weakness of spleen with excess of water and moisture.

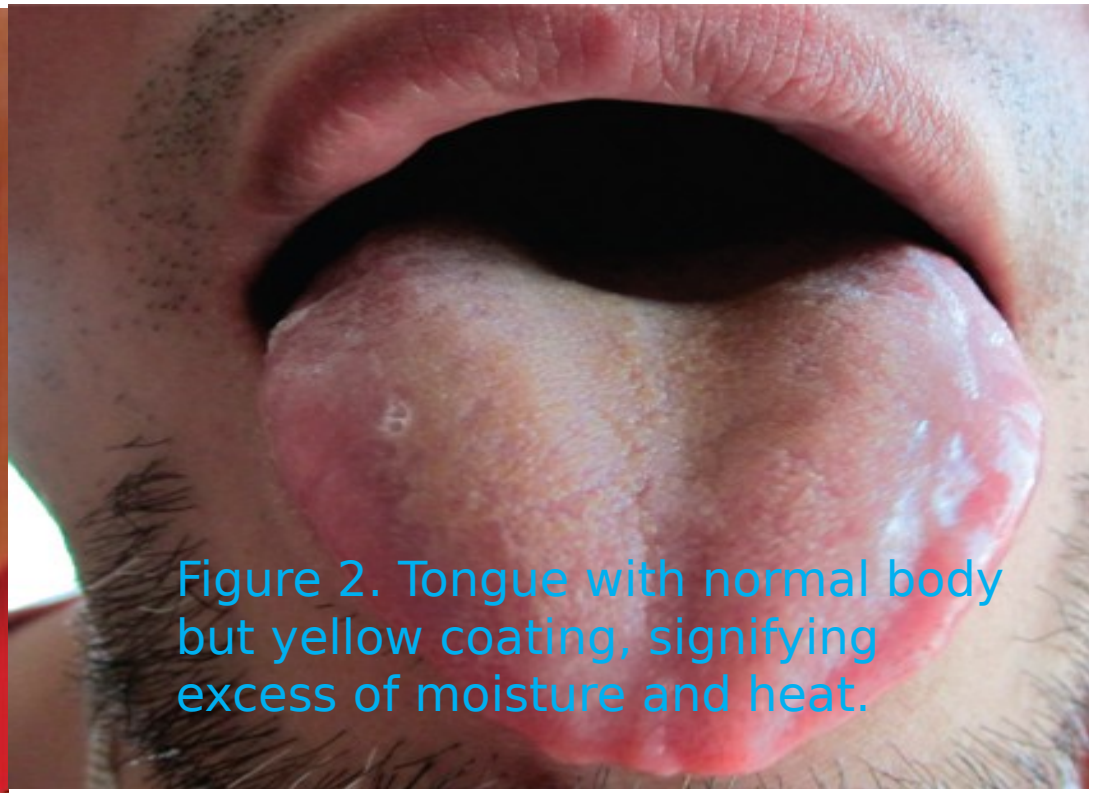


Figure 2. Tongue with normal body but yellow coating, signifying excess of moisture and heat.

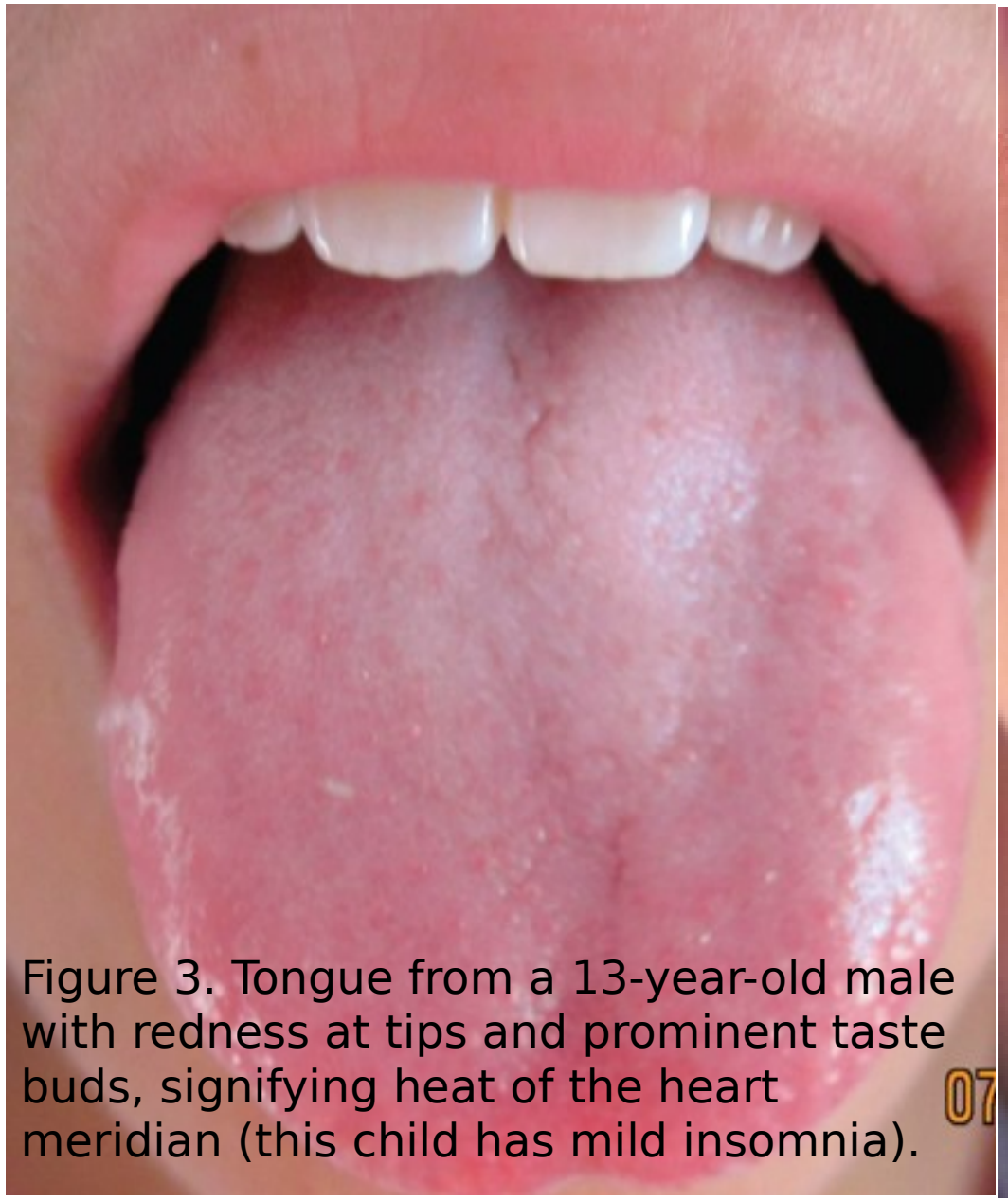


Figure 3. Tongue from a 13-year-old male with redness at tips and prominent taste buds, signifying heat of the heart meridian (this child has mild insomnia).

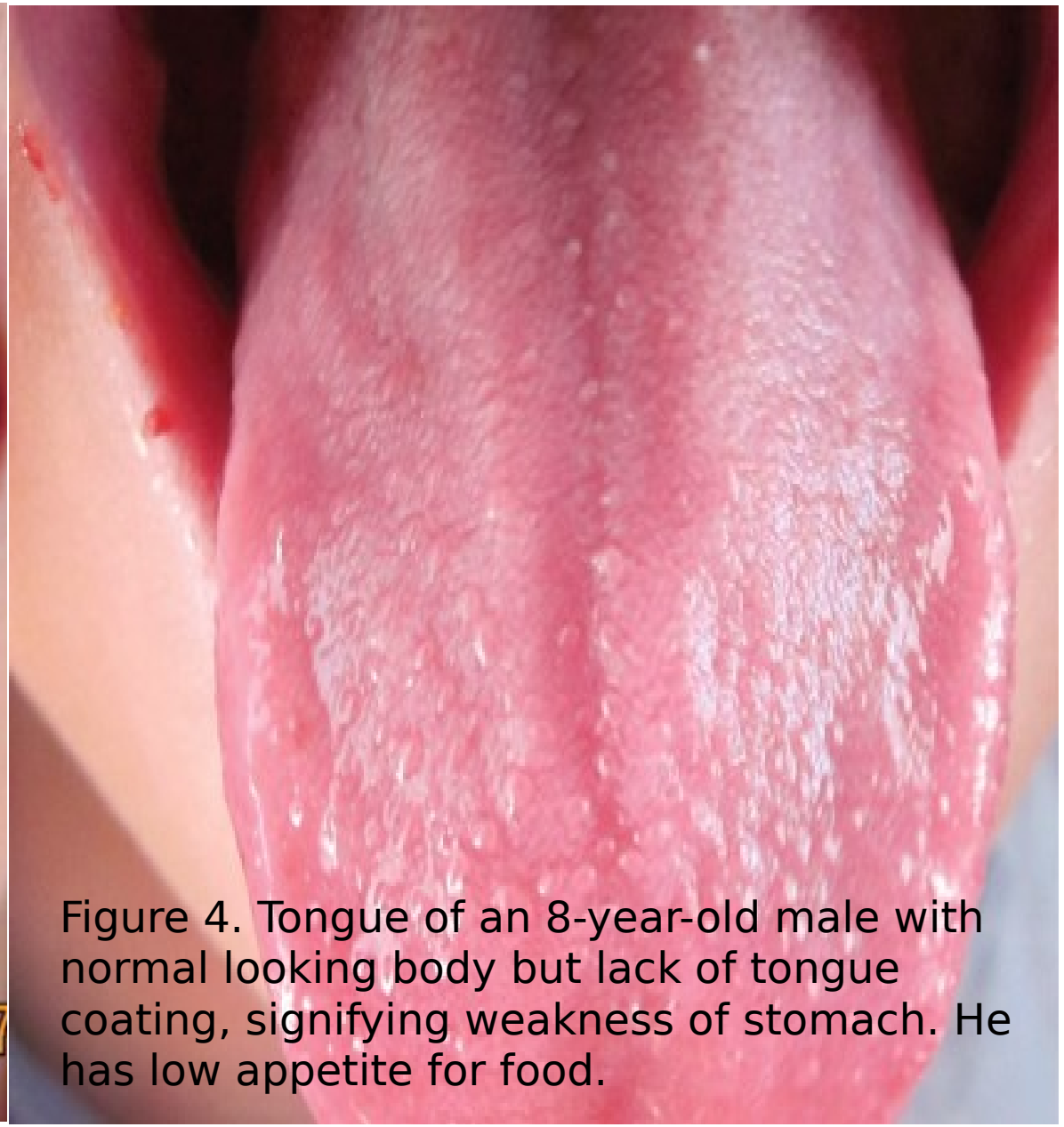


Figure 4. Tongue of an 8-year-old male with normal looking body but lack of tongue coating, signifying weakness of stomach. He has low appetite for food.

Some common tongue signs and their diagnoses

Tongue sign	Diagnosis
Pale tongue	Xue deficiency
Red tongue	Normal variant; heat excess
Purple tongue	Blood stagnation
Purple tongue with dark spots on underside	Extreme blood stagnation with ‘clots’
Thin and narrow tongue body	Yin deficiency
Thick tongue body	Qi deficiency
Thick tongue body with teeth marks along border	Deficiency of spleen
Thin white tongue coating	Normal health
Thick white tongue coating	Excess of cold
Thick yellow tongue coating	Excess of moisture and heat
Thick black tongue coating (moist)	Excess of dampness and cold
Thick black tongue coating (dry)	Excess of heat

Listening and smell

- ✓TCM practitioners will listen to the intensity and the tone/pitch of a patient’s voice.
- ✓They also assess the patient’s way of breathing and cough as an assessment of Qi/Xue and the state of the Zhong/Fus.
- ✓Smell or odour, from the patient’s body or excrement, is a diagnostic indicator for syndromes relating to an imbalance of the Zhong/Fus.
- ✓For example, foul-smelling diarrhoea often indicates stagnation of the large bowel with excess of heat, whilst odourless diarrhoea means excess of dampness and cold in the stomach.

Taking a history

- TCM emphasizes a good history taken from the patient based on the ‘Song of Ten Questions’ ( ) regarding:

- ✓ head and body
- ✓ degree and timing of sweating
- ✓ feeling of hot or cold
- ✓ urination and bowel movement
- ✓ appetite and diet
- ✓ breathing cough and chest (breast)
- ✓ hearing
- ✓ thirst
- ✓ previous illness and their causes
- ✓ gynaecological, obstetrical and paediatric infections.

Taking the pulse

- ✓TCM practitioners place three fingers (index, middle and ring) along the radial artery of the patient to feel for the intensity, rate, rhythm, wave characteristic and resilience of the pulse.



Categorization into eight syndromes

- ✓language of TCM, health is based upon a dynamic balance between opposing (e.g. Yin–Yang) and interacting entities (Zhong–Fus and Qi–Xue) that coexist inside the human body.
- ✓Any disease state can be categorized by one or a combination of the Eight Syndromes, each of which carry specific signs and symptoms:
- ✓(i) Yang Syndrome—Yang symbolizes activity, motion, uplift and intensity.

  Patient presents with fever, excessive movements, nervousness, excessive speech/thoughts, rapid bouncy pulse, insatiable appetite, increased libido, red complexion, red tongue with dry and thick coating.

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(ii) Yin Syndrome—Yin symbolizes quiescence, inactivity, downturning and weakness. Patient looks pale, easily fatigued, hypothermic, feeble speech, paucity of thoughts, slow thread-like pulse, loss of appetite, decreased libido, pale narrow tongue with thin wet coating.

(iii) Superficial Syndrome—Usually refers to the early stage of diseases due to invasion from the six external agents when they are still contained at the superficial domains of the bodies (surface meridians and the skin).

Prognosis for superficial syndrome is good and full recovery is expected with or without treatment.

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IV. Deep Syndrome—Refers to diseases that affect the Zhong–Fus or deeper meridians of the body, either due to deterioration of the Zhong–Fus or progression of the superficial syndrome due to delayed or inappropriate treatment. Prognosis is generally worse compared to superficial syndrome and if the patient escapes death chronic ill health is expected.

(v) Cold Syndrome—Occurs when Yin is in excess or the body is afflicted by external agents like the Cold and the Dampness. Patient presents with hypothermia, fatigue, pallor, nocturnal pains, fear of cold, watery stool, clear urine, pale tongue with thick moist coating and a slow thread-like pulse.

VI. Heat Syndrome—Occurs when Yang is in excess or body is afflicted by external agents like Fire or Summer Heat.

Patient often has a fever, craving for cold drinks, red face, constipation, dark/yellow urine, red tongue with yellow/black greasy coating.

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(vii) Deficiency Syndrome—Often used to specify the deficiency of a particular category (e.g. Yin/Yang) or of a particular Zhong.

(Fu is never deficient as Fu is hollow in its natural state.) Symptoms and signs are analogous to those of Yin or Cold Syndrome where the patient looks pale, lethargic, shortness of breath with pale tongue and slow pulse.

(viii) Excess Syndrome—The reverse of Deficiency Syndrome and refers to excess of a particular category or of a particular Fu (when it is congested or with stagnation of Qi/Xue).

Symptoms and signs are similar to that described for Yang or Hot Syndrome: fever, thirst, hyperactivity, abdominal fullness, constipation, rapid bouncy pulse and a red coated tongue.

THANK YOU !