Pain in Huang Di Nei Jing

A Classical Study on Pain and Associated Diseases

Doctoral Capstone Project

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Acknowledgments

This Capstone project is the most difficult part of my DAOM program. I could not imagine finishing it without the help of many people. First, I would like to thank Dr. Guohui Liu, a TCM classic scholar and my mentor on this project. He gave me great valuable feedback and helped me complete the difficult work.

I would thank the DAOM program faculty and staff for their hard work and effort in making the program so successful. Special thanks to Dr. Beth Burch and Dr. Zhaoxue Lu for their outstanding leadership and management.

Thanks to Martin Kidwell, my classmate, and David Luo, my son for taking time out of their busy schedules to give comments and help me go through the details, including the spelling, grammar and format. Without their help, this project may have remained a draft forever.

I want to thank my little boy Danny, for compromising his playtime with his Dad while he was busy working on this project. Last, but not least, I would especially like to thank my wife, Emily Dai. Without her love and unconditional support, I would not have even started the program. I love you so much!

And for anyone I forgot mention who has helped me on this program, I thank you all!
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References
Pain is one of the most common complaints in acupuncture clinics. A survey by the National Center for Health Statistics (2006) revealed that 26% of adults experienced pain lasting more than 24 hours in the month prior to the survey and 10% experienced the same pain for a year or more. Chronic pain is the most common cause of long-term disability (NIH Jan, 2010). Although many clinical and literature studies have been done in the past years, pain management still remains a challenging problem for our clinical practice.

In biomedicine, pain medications are the mainstay of treatment although most of them have side effects, some of which are potentially quite severe. Acupuncture is well known for its effectiveness in treatment of pain and has been used for thousands of years. However, as an acupuncturist, I know that there are some difficult cases without a clear solution. Improving pain treatment is always a hot topic in acupuncture and TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) studies.
Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Medicine) is the earliest extant medical canon in China that records the achievements of medicine made by Chinese people in ancient times prior to Han Dynasty.

As the foundational medical text of TCM, the Huang Di Nei Jing contains a wealth of information regarding pain and its associated conditions. However, some of these conditions have been overlooked and ignored in our textbooks, as well in our clinical practices. This study is an attempt to look back at this seminal text and reexamine the useful passages relating to pain, with the hope that it may benefit future research and clinical practice in TCM.

Etiology and Pathology of the Pain in Huang Di Nei Jing

Ju Tong Lun 興痛論 (on the pathology of pain) - Suwen chapter 39

This chapter, which specifically focuses on pain, is essential if one wants to investigate pain theory in Huang Di Nei Jing. It discussed the etiology, diagnosis and differentiation of pain, especially acute internal pain of the organs. Most TCM theories about the pain are developed from this chapter, as are many of the major quotes referenced in this study.

In this chapter, different types of pain and their pathogenesis are discussed as follows. By reviewing this part, we may obtain an outline of the pain theory in Huang Di Nei Jing.

The pain that stops suddenly: “Invasion of cold Qi into the channels makes the channels cold and therefore causes contraction which, then, leads to spasm of the
channels. Spasm of the channels drags the fine collaterals exteriorly and causes sudden pain that can be stopped by warmth” (Li p. 475). From this statement, the spasm of the channels drags the fine collaterals and causes sudden pain that can be stopped by warmth. The pain can be relieved quickly and is usually seen in spastic pain with sudden cold invasion. An example of this is when stomach cramps caused by cold food or drinks it can be relieved quickly by applying a heat pad or moxibustion.

The pain that is persistent: “If the person is repeatedly subjected to a cold pathogen, the pain will return and linger and become chronic” (Ni p. 148). In clinics, chronic pain is not necessarily always caused by cold pathogens. However, if a patient is repeatedly attacked by cold, his pain will tend to become chronic and lingering. Bi syndromes or arthritis often manifest as this type of pain.

Pain that is aggravated by touch: “When cold attacks inside the channels and battles the Yang Qi of the body, it causes fullness (Qi stagnation) in the channels. This fullness is what indicates excess. This type of pain is severe and unrelenting. It is this full quality within the channels that makes the patient sensitive to touch.” (Ni p 148) This is a typical excess pain caused by fullness of the channel. In the clinic, the pain is also often accompanied by swelling and the patient usually does not like touching.

Pain that is relieved by touch: “When the cold pathogen attacks between the intestines and stomach, causing Qi and blood to stagnate, the small collaterals will contract and pull and cause pain. In this case, applying pressure in the form of massage will disperse the stagnant Qi and blood and give relief” (Ni p. 148). Many current textbooks explain that pain which is relieved by applying touch and pressure results from
deficiency. Here we understand that excess type pain can also be relieved with pressing because it can disperse the stagnation.

**Pain that does not respond to touch:** “When a cold pathogen attacks deeply and penetrates into the channel of back, even massage and pressure will have no impact” (Ni p. 148). This seems easy to understand. Because of the deep location of the pathogen, topical compress and massage cannot reach the diseased area. For this type pain, both acupuncture and Chinese herbal treatment would be good choices because they can reach the diseased sites.

**Pain that is accompanied by jumping feeling:** “When the cold invades the Chong channel, as the Chong channel begins from the Guanyuan (CV 4) and traces up along the abdomen, the Chong channel will be obstructed. The Qi will be blocked and sometimes one could feel jumping while touching the abdomen” (Ni p. 148). According to the statement, this pain involves the Chong meridian. It seems to match the syndrome “Ben Tun” (piglet Qi) in T.C.M. There are two “Ben Tun” syndromes similar to this type of pain in other Chinese classics:

- In Chapter 56 of *Nanjing*, Ben Tun is mentioned: “Accumulations related to the kidneys are called “running piglets. They develop in the lower abdomen and extend upward to below the heart. Like a piglet, they move up or down unexpectedly.” (Unschuld p. 501)
- In Chapter 8 of the Jin Gui Yao Lue (Synopsis of Prescriptions of the Golden Chamber), Ben Tun Qi (running piglet Qi) is described as “Bentun syndrome originates in the lower abdomen and rushes upward to the throat. An attack of the syndrome causes the patient unbearable suffering, which gradually reduces and
subsides. The cause of the disease is fright and terror” (Luo p. 187). The main
symptom is the “reverse of Qi from lower abdomen up to chest and even throat,”
which can also be accompanied by abdominal pain. The treatment includes Ben Tun
Tang and Gui Zhi jia Gui Tang by Dr. Zhang Zhongjing.

Based on above information, the pathology of the pain seems to be primarily in
the Chong meridian, although it is also involved in the heart, liver and kidney.

Pain in chest that radiates to the back: “When the cold invades the channel of the
back Shu, the blood circulation will become unsmooth and cause insufficiency of blood
and bring about pain. Since the Shu point in the back is connected with heart, their
drawing each other will cause pain in both areas” (Wu & Wu p. 193). The pain described
here is similar to cardiac pain due to cardiac infarction. In the clinic, internal organs pain
actually often manifests as tenderness at corresponding back Shu points. It indicates that
back shu points are useful for treating internal organs pain. For example, I have
personally always used UB 21 to treat the stomach and have often had good results.

Hypochondriac pain that radiates to the lower abdomen: “When the cold invades
the Jueyin Channel, the channel also traverses genitals and liver, causing contracting pain
in the hypochondrium and low abdomen.”

Abdominal pain that radiates to pelvic and genital area: “When the cold invades
into the inner side of the thigh, the reverse Qi and stagnant blood will cause pain. In this
way, the pain of abdomen will affect the inner side of the thigh” (Wu &Wu p.193).

Both of the above types of pain obviously indicate the pain of the liver channel.
Liver and gallbladder diseases, hernia, and some gynecological diseases can be
differentiated with this pathology. Tian Tai Wu Yao San, Nuan Gan Jian are typical herbal formulas for this type of the pain.

**Pain that is continuous and forms a mass:** “When the cold lingers between the peritoneum and the small intestine, it causes blood stagnation within the collaterals, leaving the blood unable to move into the large channels; it thus accumulates and eventually forms a mass” (Ni p. 148). This seems to indicate a variety of the abdominal masses and tumors. Cold and blood stagnation are the main reasons for these tumors. In Chapter 57 of Lingshu, Changxun (intestinal mass) gives an example of this type of the mass. In fact, most abdominal tumors have the similar pathology with different locations.

**Severe pain that causes unconsciousness:** “When cold pathogen invades into the five Zang organs, it causes a stagnation of the Qi flow within the five Zang organs. Communication among them is blocked or even severed. The Yin Qi becomes exhausted and the Yang Qi cannot penetrate into the organs. Thus, Yin and Yang separate. When this occurs, the resulting pain engenders unconsciousness” (Ni p.148).

Stagnation of Qi can cause pain and extreme pain can also shut down the Qi Ji (Qi mechanism) and lead to Yin and Yang separation, resulting in unconsciousness. Patient will be revived if the Qi Ji is recovered.

**Pain that causes vomiting:** “When cold attacks the stomach, it causes the stomach Qi to rebel upward. Vomiting ensues with the pain.” (Ni .p 149) Stomach cold is not the only thing that could cause vomiting. Other afflictions such as migraines are often accompanied by nausea and even vomiting.

**Pain that causes diarrhea** “When cold attacks the small intestine, its Qi cannot properly constrict; the subsequent release causes diarrhea” (Ni p. 149). Besides the
Pain that causes constipation: “If the pathogenic heat is allowed to accumulate in
the small intestine because of stagnation, pain results. Additionally, fever, thirst, a
ferocious appetite, and constipation will occur” (Ni p. 149). An interesting thing here is
that the constipation results from the small intestine instead of large intestine. This is
different from current T.C.M. theory. Ironically, some pain drugs often cause
constipation in modern clinical practices.

**Cold and Pain**

There are different pathological factors discussed in Huang Di Nei Jing. Among
all of them, cold is no doubt the most important factor in causing pain, as mentioned
previously.

Chapter 39 of Suwen states: “When the Qi and blood flowing continuously through
the body within the channels are attacked by a *cold pathogen*, they stagnate. If the cold
pathogen attacks outside the channel in the periphery, it will simply decrease the blood
flow. When it attacks within the channels, it actually blocks the Qi flow and creates pain”
(Ni p. 147). This statement has been cited as a general pathogenesis of the pain in T.C.M.,
though Qi and blood stagnation is still considered a main pathological change in pain.

It is not hard to understand why cold is the primary pathogen in causing the pain.
Cold is characterized by contraction and stagnation and results in Qi and blood stagnation
and pain. Cold not only causes pain, but also aggravates it. For example, most Bi
syndrome patients suffer from pain more in cold and damp weather. Heat therapies such as moxibustion are often applied to treat the pain.

**Qi and Pain**

In this chapter (chapter 39 of Suwen), there is a famous statement in TCM: “I understand that hundreds of diseases come from disharmony of the Qi.” As a common clinical symptom, pain can also result from Qi disorders. Cold Qi, Heat Qi, reversal of the Qi, even deficiency of the Qi all can create stagnation and lead to pain.

Chapter 5 of Suwen states “cold damages the body, heat impairs Qi. The impairment of Qi causes pain and the damage of the body causes swelling. Swelling following pain indicates that Qi has damaged the body. Pain following swelling shows that body has impaired Qi” (Li p. 61).

This interesting statement describes the relationship between the swelling and pain. My understanding is that pain is a feeling with invisible Qi stagnation and swelling is visible physical change. This also indicates the pathological change in the sequence between the pain and swelling. Swelling following pain means that Qi stagnation causes the body swelling and pain following swelling means that body swelling blocks the Qi. This implies that moving Qi is very important in treating the pain.

**Blood and Pain**
As mentioned above, the blockage and contraction of blood vessel can cause the pain. Blood stagnation and blood deficiency are the main changes in this regard:

a. **Blood stagnation**: Blood stagnation is a state of pathological consequence, cold invasion, Qi stagnation, and traumatic injury can all result in blood stagnation and lead to pain,

b. **Blood deficiency**: Although Qi and blood stagnation is the main pathology in leading to the pain, blood deficiency can also result in pain. “Retention of cold Qi into the back-shu channel makes channel unsmooth. Unsmooth of the channel causes blood deficiency and blood deficiency causes pain” (Li, p. 477).

Blood deficiency usually causes dull pain or is seen with numbness, but can also cause severe sharp pain in certain conditions. From the above statement, blood deficiency includes two types: insufficient amount of blood or stagnation that causes shortage of the supply in affected area.

### Ying Qi, Wei Qi and Pain

This will be discussed in Bi syndrome.

### Jue (蓏) and Pain

There are three meanings of Jue in Huang Di Nei Jing:

1. Syncope, loss of consciousness.
2. Cold extremities or hot extremities.
3. Reversal Qi and blood.

The third meaning of Jue syndrome, reversal Qi and blood, usually corresponds to pain in Nei Jing, which matches the pathological mechanism in pain. Later we will discuss the Jue headaches and Jue syndromes of six meridians. These are examples showing the relationship between the pain and Jue. From here we can see, it is very useful to know the direction of the meridian flow, as it will help to treat Jue syndrome by redirecting the energy flow. For example, when rising up of liver Yang causes headaches, subduing the liver Yang would be the treatment principle.

**Constitution and Pain**

Chapter 53 of Lingshu states: “In the human body, there are the differences in the toughness and fragility in the tendon and bones, there are the differences of firmness and crispness in the muscle, there are the differences of thickness and thinness in the skin and there are differences in the looseness and denseness in the striae (筋理). What are the conditions of the pain when they receive the treatments of acupuncture, stone needle and moxibustion?”

“When a man has a strong bone, tough tendon, soft muscle and thick skin, he is capable of enduring pain, and he can also endure the pain from the treatment of acupuncture, stone needle and moxibustion” (Wu & Wu p.715).

It is common knowledge that pain tolerance varies from person to person. Here, Nei Jing gives a statement to recognize this from physical features. However, there is still
no clear measurement for a strong bone and tough tendon in TCM. Interestingly, blood vessel is the only tissue missing in this regard among the primary five (skin, vessel, muscle, tendon and bone).

In Chapter 50 of Lingshu, (On braveness), Huangdi asked: “some of the brave men cannot endure pain, they stride bravely forward before difficulty, but stop when they encounter pain; some timid people can endure pain, they are afraid of difficulty, but they can remain unmoved perseveringly when encountering pain.” Shaoyu said “concerning the ability of enduring pain, it is due to whether the skin is thick or thin and whether the muscle is firm or crisp, loose or tight in different people, it cannot be explained by bravery and timidity” (Wu & Wu p. 709).

From here we can conclude that enduring pain is not necessarily associated with bravery and timidity. If we look at gender in acupuncture clinics, females seem to have better pain endurance than the males.

Some modern studies have suggested that acupuncture can increase pain tolerance in the human body. Lang PM reports this recent study:

Twenty-four healthy volunteers (12 men and 12 women, mean age 33.1 years) received 3 different forms of acupuncture in a single-blinded crossover design; these included manual acupuncture, acupuncture with low-frequency electrical stimulation, and acupuncture with high-frequency electrical stimulation. We evaluated the immediate effects of different types of acupuncture on thermal, mechanical, and vibratory sensory thresholds. The effects of acupuncture were evaluated by systematic quantitative sensory
testing (QST) immediately after each intervention. The result suggested that all of three acupuncture stimulation methods may increase the pain threshold.

**Heart and Pain:**

In Chapter 74 of Shuwen, it states, “All syndromes characterized by pain, itching and sores are associated with the heart” (Li p.1219). Wangbing noted: “calmness of the heart relieves the pain and restless of heart worsens the pain.”

According to Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, pain is “a state of physical, emotional, or mental lack of well-being or physical, emotional, or mental uneasiness that ranges from mild discomfort or dull distress to acute often unbearable agony” (Merriam-Webster).

In 1994, the International association for the study of pain (IASP) defined pain as an “unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential damage, or described in terms of such damage.”

Pain is a feeling which involved both of mental and physical discomfort. To understand the relationship between the two, we could look it from two aspects:

1. Heart houses Shen. The “Shen” will affect the pain, which we know could get worse with stress and mental pressure.
2. Heart dominates the blood vessel and promotes Qi and blood circulation. Qi Blood stagnation is a basic pathology of pain. Disorders of the heart causes poor circulation and results in pain. The lack of nutrition to the tissues is another pathological change which could cause the pain. Acupuncture points, PC 6, LI 4, and LR3 are often used for pain as well to calm Shen. Among the Chinese herbs, Hu Po and Dan Shen are examples for both of calming Shen and pain.

In my clinical practice, I have found that treatments that calm Shen could help most types of pain conditions.

*Fluid and Pain*

In Huang Di Nei Jing, several chapters mention that fluid retention inside of body could lead to pain. This can happen in the cavities or between the tissues. Chapter 49 of Suwen states: “The condition of chest pain and shortness of breath is due to the retaining of water in the viscera, as the fluid belongs to the Yin energy when it retains in the body, the syndrome of chest pain and short of breath will occur” (Wu & Wu p. 232).

The symptoms described here are similar to pleuritis (pleurisy), which is inflammation of the pleura that usually produces an exudative pleural effusion and stabbing chest pain worsened by respiration and cough (Merck Manual p. 642). Ascites also has the same pathology.
The retention of dampness and fluid between the flesh can cause pain, as seen in this explanation: “The wind, which is cold and humid energy when it is a guest in the exterior and among divisions of the flesh, oppresses and binds to make the body foam. When this foam gets cold, it results in accumulation. Accumulation causes the arrangement in the divisions of flesh to separate and to crack. These separations and cracks cause pain” (Wu JN p. 117).

In Chapter 36 of Lingshu, it states, “when cold is detained between the divisions of the flesh, there is an accumulation of foam which results in pain” (Wu JN p. 139). Like in biomedicine, this statement points to inflammation as a cause of pain. “When inflammation occurs, chemicals from the body’s white blood cells are released into the blood or affected tissues in an attempt to rid the body of foreign substances. This release of chemicals increases the blood flow to the area and may result in redness and warmth. Some of the chemicals cause leakage of fluid into the tissues, resulting in swelling. The inflammatory process may stimulate nerves and cause pain” (Cleveland clinic)

**Pain Syndromes and Diseases in Huang Di Nei Jing**

*Bi Syndrome*

Bi syndromes were initially discussed in Huang Di Nei Jing and are considered common syndromes in clinic. However, the current definition for Bi syndrome is far less
than its original description. Most modern practitioners are only using “Bi” to diagnose arthritis or joint pain. Chapter 43 of Suwen entitled “On Bi syndromes,” contains most of the important information on Nei Jing Bi syndromes. According to this chapter, the pain is main symptom in Bi syndromes, but is not the only symptom. It states, “some of the Bi diseases are painful and some are not, some of the patients have numbness and some of them are accompanied with different conditions of chilliness, fever, and wetness...if there is pain, cold is dominant.” Therefore, the cold is still the main pathogen causing pain in Bi syndrome.

Another statement by Qibo also confirmed this theory. He says, “A combination of three pathogens—wind, cold and damp—invades the body, leading to obstruction and causing Bi. When wind predominates, we call it Xing Bi, or moving Bi; when cold predominates, we call it Tong Bi, or painful Bi; when dampness predominates we call it Zuo Bi, or tenacious Bi” (Ni p.160).

This statement has been considered a fundamental theory of the Bi syndromes since then, and it still guides the clinical diagnosis and treatment:

Xing Bi 行痹 = moving Bi—wind predominates: migrating pain

Tong Bi 痛痹 = painful Bi—cold dominates: severe pain

Zhuo Bi 著痹 = tenacious Bi – dampness dominate: pain with heaviness and soreness.

In this chapter, five tissues Bi and five Zang Bi are also discussed. Five tissues Bi (skin, muscle, tendon, vessel, and bone) are classified based on the onset of the season. Bi
syndromes of Zang Fu organs are developed from five tissues Bi when they linger inside of the body for a long time.

Five Tissues Bi

- Skin Bi- Lung—Fall--cold
- Muscle Bi- Spleen—Later summer-- numbness
- Tendon Bi- Liver—Spring-- stiff
- Vessel Bi- Heart—Summer-- blood stagnation
- Bone Bi—Kidney—Winter—heavy

We can understand that five tissues Bi also indicates the correlation between the seasons, Zangfu organs and five tissues. They are also present as other symptoms in Bi syndromes. Cold, stiffness and heaviness are common symptoms in arthritis patients besides pain.

Five Zang Bi and Six Fu Bi:

Zang Fu Organs Bi are developed from tissues Bi or pathogens penetrate into organs directly through channels. Their symptoms are disorders of the each organ but not necessarily pain. These will not discussed because they are not directly related to pain.

Ying and Wei and Bi syndrome

Ying Qi and Wei Qi play important roles in the occurrence of Bi syndrome. Chapter 43 of Shuwen clearly states that disharmony of Ying Qi and Wei Qi is the
internal factor of the formation of the Bi while the wind, cold and dampness are external factors.

Yin Qi is a “refined energy” and circulates inside of the vessels. It can nourish Zangfu organs and tissues. If the body lacks nourishment by Ying Qi, it will be vulnerable to external pathogens leading to Bi syndrome and pain.

Wei Qi is a “rough energy” and circulates outside of vessels but it is distributed to the entire body. As part of Yang Qi it can warm and protect the body from external pathogens.

Regulating Ying Qi and Wei Qi is very important in treating Bi syndromes, with both acupuncture or Chinese herbal medicine.

Zhou Bi 周痹 and Zhong Bi 中痹:

In Chapter 27 of Lingshu, there were two types of Bi syndromes with migrating pain. Here are the major differences between them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Zhong Bi</th>
<th>Zhou Bi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Between the muscle (Fen Rou)</td>
<td>Inside of vessels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symptoms</td>
<td>It scatters on the various parts of the body; at times it arises, at times it stops. It can change its dwelling or change its beginnings; if it appears on the right, there is a reflection on the left; if it appears on the left, there is a reflection on the right, but it not able to encircle.</td>
<td>It runs up and down along the channel, unable to run to the left and right. It causes pain on the site where the evil energy is located.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment:</td>
<td>Press and follow the</td>
<td>If the pain is from above,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press and</td>
<td>To avoid the coming back of the</td>
<td>prick below to stop the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>follow the</td>
<td>pain, it should Prick the site of the pain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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allocated locations of the six channels, exam the conditions of deficiency and excess and whether there is any stagnation of blood in the large collaterals. Topical application of heated pad can be used to dredge the energy and blood. (Wu & Wu p. 634)

<table>
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<th>Headache</th>
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| 1. True Headache  
“In headaches which connect the brain inside due to Jue syndrome, when the patient is painful all over the head, his limbs are cold and the cold reaches the elbows and knees, the patient can by no means be cured and dies” (Wu & Wu p. 625).  
The original text uses the term “Zhen” (真) headache. “Zhen” means “true” or “real.” It seems to indicate some severe diseases with unbearable headache. These might include a stroke or a brain tumor. Nei Jing considers these conditions to be untreatable. |
| 2. Migraine (Pian Tou Tong, “Pian” (偏) meaning one side)  
Pian Tou Tong describes a one-sided headache which is similar to a migraine. Acupuncture has proven to be effective for migraines in modern clinics. “In headaches, when the patient feels cold pain on one side, it can be treated by pricking the acupoints on the Hand Shaoyang Channel of Triple warmer and the Hand |
Yangming Channel of Large Intestine first, then, prick the acupoints on the Foot Shaoyang Channel of Gallbladder and the Foot Yangming Channel of Stomach” (Wu & Wu p. 625). From this chapter, points on Yangming and Shao Yang Meridians are selected for this condition. In my clinical practice, I have found that flowing points like ST 8, LI 4, ST 44, GB 8, GB 41, GB 20, SJ 2 etc. are very effective.

3. Shou Feng (Head Wind (首風)): “When one contacts wind-evil immediately after the washing of hair (shower), head-wind syndrome will occur…the symptoms of the head wind syndrome are headache, hyperhidrosis on the face and an aversion to wind. On the previous day of the attack of disease, the patient feels painful in advance, has headache and is reluctant to go outside” (Wu & Wu p. 207). This statement shows that head wind syndrome mainly indicates headaches caused by wind. Wind is a Yang pathogen that tends to attack the upper portion of the body. Sweat pores open after shower, so one should avoid wind during this time.

4. Headache and Six Meridians

In Chapter 24 of Lingshu (Jue syndrome), six meridians headaches are discussed under “Jue” diseases. The chapter provides a treatment guideline for later TCM practitioners:

Taiyang headache
“In headaches due to Jue-syndrome, when the neck is painful first, then the waist and spine are painful accordingly, prick the Tianzhu point first, then, prick the acupoints of the Foot Taiyang Channel of Bladder” (Wu & Wu p. 624).

Current TCM theory defines Taiyang headache as occipital headaches. Tension headaches seem to resemble this syndrome. In this chapter, the pain is mostly involved in the pathway of the foot Taiyang meridian. Tian Zhu (UB 10) is still an important point in treating the Taiyang Headache. UB 60 is another major point for the condition.

Yangming headache

“In headaches due to Jue-syndrome, when the patient’s head and face are like swelling has oppressive feeling (restlessness) in the chest, prick the Foot Yangming Channel of Stomach and Foot Taiyin Channel of Spleen” (Wu & Wu p. 624).

Yangming headache symptoms relate to the meridian pathway. Sinus congestion, forehead headache are categorized as Yangming headaches. Due to the reversal of Qi and blood in Yangming channel, the patient could also feel the congestion of the head and chest.

Shaoyang Headache

“In headaches due to Jue-syndrome, when the patient has acute pain in the head, and the collaterals in the front and rear of the ear are hot, they should be pricked and let
out the blood first, then, prick the acupoints of the Foot Shaoyang Channel” (Wu & Wu p. 624).

Here the Shaoyang headache manifested as hot feeling with flushed vessels along the GB channel in the front and rear of the ears. Bloodletting therapy was addressed to reduce the excess of Qi and blood. Bloodletting on the extra point Taiyang is still used in acupuncture clinics.

Taiyin Headache

“In headaches due to Jue-syndrome, when the patient (often sighs and) is forgetful, and the site of pain can hardly be traced by the pressing of hand, prick the left and right arteries on the head and face first, and then, prick the Foot Taiyin Channel of Spleen for adjusting” (Wu & Wu p. 624).

Taiyin headaches are barely mentioned in current clinics. The spleen is the residence of Yi, so the patient will show forgetful, reversal of Qi. It has no fixed location on the head, so the pain is difficult to be traced by pressing. The treatment for the headache is still bloodletting and pricking the temple area.

Shaoyin Headache

“In headaches due to Jue-syndrome, when the patient’s head is heavy and has acute pain, select and prick the acupoints on the five channels on the top of head (the Du Channel is in the middle, on the lateral sides are the two Foot Taiyang Channel of Bladder and on the further lateral sides are the two Foot Shaoyang of gallbladder) to purge the heat of the various Yang channels, but the acupoints of the Hand Shaoyin
Channel of Heart should be pricked first, and then, prick the Foot Shaoyin Channel of Kidney” (Wu&Wu p. 624).

Here the symptoms of Shaoyin headaches seem to include heaviness, dizziness and a lot of reversal of Qi. The acupuncture treatment includes 25 points on 3 Yang channels and five lines (Du, bilateral foot Yhaoyang and foot Taiyang). The points are: Du channel: DU 19, DU 20, DU 21, DU 22, DU 23; GB channel: GB 15, GB 16, GB 17, GB 18, GB 19. Foot Tai Yang Channel: UB 5, UB 6, UB 7, UB 8, UB 9. Use the reducing method with above points. Then reduce the hand Shaoyin channel and reinforce the foot Shaoyin channel.

Jueyin Headache

“In headaches due to Jue-syndrome, when the channels in the patient’s head are painful, he feels sad, apt to cry, his head is trembling and the collaterals are overabundant, prick the collaterals and let out the blood, then, prick the Foot Jueyin Channel of Liver for adjusting” (Wu &Wu p. 624).

Unlike in modern clinical settings, the Nei Jing classifies the Jueyin headache to include not only vertex headaches, but also pounding headache and sadness. The treatment is to find overabundant vessels and drain the blood out to adjust the foot Jueyin channel.

5. Headache Due to Blood Stasis

“In some of the cases of headache, it must not be treated by pricking the acupoints, such as wound by strikes or tumble with stagnated blood inside, if the patient has internal
injury, and the pain has not yet eliminated, it can only prick the site of pain on the head by oblique insertion. The pricking of the remote acupoint is forbidden” (Wu & Wu p. 624).

This is an interesting statement. The treatment is to puncture the local site to eliminate the blood stasis. It is not clear why one cannot needle the distant (remote) points for this condition.

6. Jue Ni headache

In chapter 47 of Suwen, Huangdi asks: “what is caused of headache lingering for years? and what is the name of this disease?” Qibo answered “it is caused by attack of serious cold that penetrates deep into the bone marrow that is mainly stored in the brain. Invasion of cold into the brain certainly causes headache and also toothache. This disease is called Jueni (headache due to invasion of cold into the brain)” (Li p. 551). From the statement, we may conclude that chronic headache is characterized with cold pathogen and deep location. It will be helpful for us to treat some lingering headaches.

**Shoulder and Upper back pain**

Besides injuries, channels blockages, shoulder and upper back pain often reflect the diseases happening inside of the chest, mainly lung and heart disorders. In Chapter 17 of Shuwen, it states, “the back is the house of the chest. So bent back and shoulders is the sign that the house is being damaged” (Li, p. 203). By observing the upper back and shoulder, one can estimate the condition of the organs in the chest:

- Lung disorder:
“In the lung disease, when the lung is of asthenia, cough, respiration, adverseness of vital energy, pain in the back and shoulders” (Wu & Wu p. 126).

- Heart disorder:
  “In the heart disease, when the heart is of asthenia, pain in the chest, distension of the hypochondrium, pain under the armpit, on the upper back, and on the medial side of the arms” (Wu & Wu p. 125).

Shoulder and upper back pain in Nei Jing seems to be an important sign of heart and lung disease, which still has clinical significance in the practice.

Foot Taiyang meridian passes through the back and shoulder. The blockage of the meridian can also cause pain in the upper back and shoulder.

“Invasion of evil into the collaterals of foot- Taiyang leads to pain of the head, nape and shoulder that can be cured by needling the region above the nail of small toe that converges with the muscles (UB 67) once respectively. The pain will be immediately relieved.”

Chest pain

1. Heart Yang Congestion

   “In the heart disease, when the heart is of asthenia, pain in the chest, distension of the hypochondrium, pain under armpit, pain between the breast, back and upper arms will occur” (Wu & Wu p. 125).
Heart diseases often manifest as chest pain. The pain can radiate to the shoulder and upper back, hypochondrium, and arm. This description still reflects the diagnosis of heart disease in modern clinic. These symptoms are also used to diagnose angina pectoris.

2. Kidney Deficiency

“In the kidney disease…if the kidney is deficient, the patient will have chest pain” (Wu & Wu p. 126) Wangbing and Gao Shizong explains it as disharmony of heart and kidney. Another explanation is that the kidney meridian passes and ends in the chest.

3. Cold Damp Congestion

“The condition of chest pain and shortness of breath is due to the retaining of water in the viscera, as the fluid belongs to the Yin energy when it retains in the body, the syndrome of chest pain and short of breath will occur.” (p. 232).

Water retention and chest pain may indicate pleuratitis or acitis. Both are relate to chest pain and shortness of breath.

**Heart Pain:**

Heart pain in Nei Jing may indicate both of cardiac pain or stomach ache. In China, some patients still use “heart pain” to describe their stomachache in the clinic. Perhaps this is why Nei Jing uses the term “true heart pain” to distinguish them.

1. True heart pain:

“In myocardial infarction, when the cold of the limbs reaches the joints and the heart has acute pain, the patient will die in the evening when the disease attacks in the
morning, and will die in the next morning when the disease attacks in the evening” (Wu & Wu p. 626).

True heart pain is severe cardiac pain and is fetal. From the statement, it may include the angina pectoris and myocardial infarction etc.

2. Jue Heart pain:

In Chapter 24 of Lingshu, (“Jue Syndrome”), group heart pain syndromes are discussed under the name “Jue heart pain.” They are caused by the reversal of Zang Fu organs Qi.

“Jue heart pain with drawing pain on the back, the patient apts to be frightened like something is propping his heart from behind, and he dares not to extend his waist straightly to become somewhat hunchbacked, it is called heart pain of kidney type. When treating, prick the Jinggu (UB 64) point and the Kunlun (UB 60) point first, if the pain is still not relieved, prick Rangu (Ki 2) point.”

“Jue heart pain with abdominal distension and fullness of the chest is the called heart pain of stomach type and is particularly painful. When treating, prick the Dadu (SP 2) point and the Taibai (SP3) point.”

“Jue heart pain with acute pain in the heart like being pricked by a drill, is called heart pain of spleen type. When treating, prick the Rangu (KI 2) and Taixi (KI 3).”

“Jue heart pain with a greenish complexion like the dead ember and the patient has difficulty to have deep breath. It is called heart pain of liver type. When treating, prick the Xingjian (LR 2) point and Tai Chong (LR3) point.”
Jue heart pain, when the patient’s heart ache is somewhat relieved when lying or staying leisurely, and the pain becomes acute with activities, but his complexion remains unchanged, it is called heart pain of lung type. When treating, prick the Yuji (LU 10) point and Taiyuan (LU 9) point.” (Wu&Wu p. 625).

From the above statements, these syndromes are heart pains caused by reversals of Zang Fu organs Qi. The stomach is the only Fu organ which is included in “Jue heart pain” syndromes. This also hints at the special relationship between the heart and stomach.

3. Heart pain due to the disorder of Foot Shaoyin Channel.
   The disorder of Foot Shaoyin channel can also result in heart pain because of the connection between the hand and foot Shaoyin. In chapter 63 of Shuwen, it states: “invasion of Evil into the collateral of foot-Shaoyin leads to sudden heart pain, sudden abdominal destention, fullness of the chest and hypochondrium. If there is no mass, it can be treated by needling Rangu (KI 2) for bloodletting” ( Li p. 691).

4. Simultaneous pain in heart and Hypochondrium:
   In chapter 49 of Shuwen, it also discusses the simultaneous pain in heart and hypochondrium. “The condition of pain in the heart and hypochondrium of Shaoyang channel is: the Shao Yang belongs to the ninth lunar month of the year which is the month of Xu (戌). Xu belongs to Shaoyang channel which is connecting the pericardium,
and the onset of the disease will affect the heart channel. In the ninth month, the Yang energy is about to become exhausting, and the Yin energy is becoming more and more prosperous, so, it causes the pains of heart and hypochondrium” (Wu & Wu p.232).

**Hypochondrium pain**

Hypochondriac pain is considered as a typical liver/gallbladder symptom in Huang Di Nei Jing. The following are main pathological changes that lead to hypochondriac pain.

1. Liver Qi Stagnation

   “In the liver disease, when the liver is excessive, there will be pain over the hypochondrium which affects the lower abdomen, and the patient will get angry often” (Wu & Wu p. 125).

2. Cold in Liver Meridian

   “When the cold-evil invades the Jueyin Channel, which surrounds the external genitals and connects the liver, when the cold-evil retains, the blood circulation will become unsmooth and the pulse condition will become rapid, the hypochondrium and the lower abdomen will draw against each other and cause pain” (Wu & Wu p. 193).

In modern clinic hypochondriac pain is still considered a typical liver symptom. However, according to the above statement, it happens more often in excess patterns though it can also be seen in deficiency syndromes.
3. Blood Stagnation

“When the evil energy is in the liver, the patient will have hypochondrium pain on both sides, cold in the middle Jiao and stagnation of blood inside” (Wu & Wu p. 608). The liver stores blood and internal cold can cause the blood stagnation in liver.

4. Reversal of Qi in Shaoyang channel.

“Jue syndrome of Shaoyang is characterized by sudden deafness, buccal swelling, feverishness, hypochondriac pain and inflexibility of legs” (Li p. 535). This statement provides the differentiation for hypochondrium pain between liver and gallbladder. Deafness and buccal swelling are typical Shaoyang symptoms.

**Abdominal pain**

Abdominal pain is one of most common pain symptoms and is often complicated. It often involves internal organs, especially Fu organs, which also can be found in the other part of this study. There are many different types of abdominal pain in the clinic and they are hard to differentiate. Here is a summary of different abdominal pains in Nei Jing.

1. Cold Invasion

“If the Yang energy is deficient and the Yin energy is overabundant, there will be cold in the stomach and the patient will have borborygmus and pain in the abdomen…” (Wu & Wu p. 608).
“When the cold evil invades into the inner side of the thigh, the disharmony of the Qi and blood will cause the blood circulation of the lower abdomen and the inguinal area to become unsmooth and affecting each other. In this way, the pain of the abdomen will draw inguinal area” (Wu & Wu p. 193).

As a major pathogen, cold may be the most common reason for abdominal pain. Expelling cold and warming up Yang Qi is a treatment principle. Moxibustion and heat compression are very effective in addition to acupuncture or herbal treatment.

2. Qi Stagnation

“In the disease of small intestine, there will be fullness and distention in the low abdomen and the scrotum…”

“When the large intestine is affected, there will be acute pain in the abdomen with borborgmus now and then …” (Wu & Wu p. 523).*

“The Jue-disease of the Jueyin Channel causes one to have swelling and pain of the lower abdomen, fullness and distention of the abdomen, dysuria…” (Wu & Wup. 218).

Abdominal pain caused by qi stagnation seems primarily associating with liver, small intestine and large intestine. Accompanied symptoms include abdominal fullness and distention.

3. Blood stagnation:
Retention of blood stasis in the abdomen can cause pain, or form the masses, the abdominal diseases such as Fu Liang, Chang Xun and Shi Jia are examples which we will discuss later.

4. Damp-heat in Urinary Bladder

“In the disease of bladder, the lower abdomen is swelling and painful. When the site of pain is pressed by hand, the patient will like to pass urine but can hardly begin the ruination” (Wu & Wu p. 524).

Here is an example that abdominal pain can also be caused by heat. It is similar to the condition that can also happen in the small intestine which has been mentioned in Nei Jing.

5. Sanjiao Blocking

In chapter 19 of Lingshu, it states, “When a patient has swelling and pain in his lower abdomen, dysuria, it is evil energy in the Sanjiao, prick the acupoints on the large collateral of the foot Taiyang channel.”. Abdominal pain caused by Sanjiao blocking will be accompanied by the disorder of water metabolism.

As we have discussed above, there are many different pathologies of abdominal pain in Nei Jing. However, most of them seem to be excess conditions, though deficiency can also lead to abdominal pain.

Lumbar Pain
Lumbar pain is probably the most common complaint in current acupuncture clinics. However, based on my observations, the differentiation of low back pain by the practitioners has become characterized by more structural and biomedical patterns, such as sciatica, herniated discs, degenerative changes etc. The consequence of this is that we cannot reach the potentially best solution for treating low back pain. Nei Jing has provided quite a bit of information on this matter, as seen in the discussion of treating lumbago with acupuncture in Chapter 41 of Shuwen.

1. Major Meridian Lumbago

Taiyang lumbago

“When the Foot Tai Yang Channel contracts disease, it will cause the patient to have lumbago, and the pain will make the patient to feel like something heavy is on his neck, spine, buttocks and back. When treating, prick the Weizhong point (Politeal Centre BL. 40) of the Foot Tai Yang Channel until bleeding. If it is spring, the pricking must not cause bleeding” (p 200).

The Foot Tai Yang meridian is the longest meridian in the human body and covers the entire back. UB 40 is still considered an important point in treating low back pain in current acupuncture practice. Both regular needling and bloodletting can be applied to UB 40 for Lumbago.

Yangming Lumbago
“The lumbago caused by the disease of Foot Yangming Channel is so painful that the patient can not look back, if he looks back, he seems to have seen something, and besides, the patient is often sorrow-stricken. When treating, prick the Zusanli point (Foot Three Li ST.36) of the Foot Yangming Channel until bleeding to cause the combination of the upper and the lower energies. If it is in autumn, the pricking must not cause bleeding”. (Wu & Wu P. 200)

From this statement, a patient with Yangming Lumbago will have difficulty turning his back, and will tend to be depressed in addition to the low back pain. St 36 is selected to treat the pain. According to the commentary of Gao Shizong, “combination of upper and lower energy” here means puncturing ST 37 and ST 39 at same time.

Shaoyang Lumbago

“The pain of lumbago caused by the disease of Foot Shaoyang Channel is like the pricking of skin by the needle. If it becomes aggravated gradually, it will cause one unable to face up and down, nor can he look around. When treating, it should prick the starting point of the tibia until bleeding. If it is in summer, the pricking must not cause bleeding” (Wu & Wu P. 200).

A patient with Shaoyang lumbago will have a stabbing pain and difficulty bending forward and backward, as well turning around. Puncturing GB34 is recommended here to treat this type of lumbago. In current clinics, GB 34 is often used to treat sciatic pain when patient has shooting pain on the lateral side of the leg along the GB meridian.
Shaoyin Lumbago

“The lumbago caused by the Foot Shaoyin Channel draws the inner side of the spine to become painful. When treating, it should prick the Fuliu point (Repeating Slip KI.7) of Shaoyin Channel twice. If it is in spring, the pricking must not cause bleeding; if the bleeding is excessive, the blood will become asthenic and will be hard to recover” (Wu & Wu p. 200).

Lumbago of Foot Shaoyin channel is seldom mentioned in current acupuncture texts. From above statement, lumbago that is caused by the disorder of spine or vertebra should be treated from Foot Shaoyin meridian. It deserves more clinical study.

Jueyin Lumbago

“The lumbago which is brought by the disease of Foot Jueyin Channel causes the pain so severe and tight like the string of a bow which is fully drawn. When treating, prick the collaterals of Jueyin. One can seek by touching to locate the location which is like a string of pearls between the calf and the outer flank of the fish belly sticking out in the middle of the heel (the Ligou point LR. 5) and make the pricking” (Wu & Wu p 201).

Low back pain with extreme muscle tightness could be differentiated as Jueyin lumbago. Ligou (LR 5) is selected to treat the pain.

Taiyin Lumbago

In the chapter, no Taiyin Lumbago is directly mentioned. Later, scholars explained that Taiyin dominates the abdominal area and has no redirect connection to
lumbago. However, the following statement in this chapter is considered as Taiyin Lumbago by some Nei Jing scholars:

“When the lumbago affects the lower abdomen, drowning the hypochondrium to cause uneasiness, and the patient can not stand erect, it should prick the Xialiao point (in between the space of bone) under the buttock on the hard muscle of the hipbone under both sides of the loins. The times of pricking should be calculated according to the wax and wane of the moon to cause the pricking effective. In pricking, when the pain is on the left side, prick the acupoint of the right side, when the pain is on the right side, prick the acupoint on the left side (Wu & Wu p. 203).

2. Lumbago and Extraordinary meridian, Branches and collaterals.

Besides the major meridians mentioned as above, the chapter also discussed the lumbago due to the disorders of extraordinary meridian, branches and collaterals.

a) Jie Mai (branch of UB meridian): Lumbago involves the shoulders and leads to blurred vision and frequent enuresis. It can be treated with Weiyang (UB 39) to let out blood. The needling is continued until the color of blood changed. If lumbago leads to breaking pain and frequent fear, it can be treated by needling the stagnant point, like a grain of the broomcorn millet, till black blood shot out. The needling stops when blood turns red. (Li p. 497)

b) Tong Yin Zhi Mai (GB branch): Low back pain and heavy, feel pain as if a small hammer in the waist and accompanied by swelling. It can be treated by Needling Yang Fu (GB 38) 3 times (Li p. 497).
c) Yang Wei Zhi Mai 陽維之脈: It is marked by severe pain and swelling too. It can be treated by needling Cheng Shan (UB 57) (Li p. 497).

d) Heng Luo Zhi Mai 衡絡之脈 (Dai Mai): It is marked by difficulty to bend and lift the waist and fear to fall down when lifting. It is caused by impairment of the waist due to heavy load that results in stagnation of Heng Luo Zhi Mai and retention of blood stasis. Needle Wei yang (UB 39) and Yin Men (UB 37) twice each and Let blood out (Li p. 499).

e) Hui Yin Zhi Mai 會陰之脈 (Du/Ren meridian): It is marked by continuous sweating due to pain. The patient feels thirsty after sweating, and wants to move after drinking. Puncture Cheng Jin (UB 56) 3 times to let out blood. (Li p. 499).

f) Fei Yang Zhi Mai 飛陽之脈 (UB branch): Low back pain and distention or even sorrow and fear. Needle the converging points of the foot Taiyang and foot Shaoyin at Zhubin (KI 9) (Li p. 499).

g) Chang Yang Zhi Mai 昌陽之脈 (Foot Shaoyin branch): It is marked by low back pain involving chest, blurred vision, even opisthotonus, cured tongue and difficulty to speak. Treated by Needling FuLiu (Ki 7) twice. Wangbing noted it as Jiao Xin (K8) (Li p. 499).
h) San Mai (足太陰經) (Foot Taiyin branch): Fever, restlessness due to high fever. Low back pain with distention as if there were a piece of wood poking in it, or even enuresis. Needle Diji (SP 8) 3 times (Li p. 501).

i) Rou Li Zhi mai (臍裏之脈) (foot Shaoyang branch): Low back pain makes the patient unable to cough and causes muscle spasm. If the patient coughs, Needle yang Fu (GB 38) twice (Li p. 501).

3. Treatment of lower back pain with accompanied symptoms

Low back pain is often accompanied by other symptoms. In chapter 41 of Suwen, it discusses the following accompanied symptoms and their treatment (Wu & Wu p. 203).

a) Lumbago affects the spine and the pain goes up to the top of head, the head will feel heavy and the eyes will be staring and it seems that the patient is going to fall down.——prick UB 40 until bleeding.

b) Lumbago with cold sensation: prick foot Taiyang and foot Yangming channels.

c) Lumbago with heat sensation: prick foot Jueyin channel.

d) If the patient cannot bend forward and back ward: prick foot Shaoyang channel.
e) The pain is accompanied with internal heat and rapid breathing: prick foot Shaoyin channel, and bleeding UB 40 of foot Taiyang.

f) Patient feels cold in the upper part of body with lumbago and cannot look around: prick foot Yangming channel.

g) Lumbago is accompanied with constipation: prick foot Shaoyin channel.

h) Lumbago is accompanied with the fullness and distention of the lower abdomen: prick foot Jueyin channel.

i) When low back is painful like being broken, unable to face up and down or to move about: prick foot Taiyang channel

j) Lumbago is affecting the inner border of spine: prick foot Shaoyin channel.

4. Kidney deficiency

The low back pains mentioned above mostly belong to excess conditions. It reflects primary pathology of low back pain in Nei Jing. However, Nei Jing does mention the Kidney deficiency could lead to low back pain. In chapter 17 of Suwen, it states, “The waist is the house of the kidney. So inability of the waist to turn around indicates that kidney is declining” (Li, p. 203).
All of the Zang Fu organs dysfunction can cause the pain or manifests with pain themselves. We have discussed some of them. In chapter 22 of Shuwen (discussion on the association of Zang-Qi with the four seasons), Nei Jing has listed the symptoms and treatment as follows:

1. “Liver disease is characterized by hypochondriac pain involving the lower abdomen and susceptibility to rage. Xu (deficiency) of the liver leads to blurred vision, deafness and frequent fear as if someone was about to arrest him. To treat this disease, The Acupoints located on the Jueyin and Shaoyang can be selected. Adverse flow of Qi leads to headache, loss of hearing and buccal swelling which can be treated by bloodletting” (Li p. 305).

2. “Heart disease is characterized by pain in the chest, distending hypochondriac fullness, hypochondriac pain, pain involving the chest, back and scapula as well as pain of the medial sides of the arms. Xu (Deficiency) of the heart leads to distension of the chest and abdomen as well as referred pain in the hypochondrium and waist. To treat the disease, the Acupoints located on the Shaoyin and Taiyang can be selected and the sublingual vessel is pricked to let out blood. If the disease has changed, it can be treated by pricking Xizhong to let out blood” (Li p. 307).
3. “Spleen disease is characterized by heaviness of the body, frequent hunger, myasthenia, flaccidity of the feet, frequent spasm and pain of the soles in walking. Xu (Deficiency) of the spleen leads to abdominal of fullness, bordborygmus, diarrhea with undigested food and dyspepsia. To treat this disease, the Acupoints located on the Taiyin, Yangming and Shaoyin Can be pricked to let out blood” (Li p. 307).

4. “Lung disease is characterized by painting, cough, adverse flow of Qi, pain of the shoulders and back, sweating and pain of the buttock, genitals, thigh, knees, head of the femur, gastrocnemius muscle, tibia and feet. Xu (Deficiency) of the lung leads to shortness of breath, deafness and dry throat. To treat this disease, the Acupoints located on the Tia yin, the lateral side of Foot-Tai yang and the medial side of Jueyin are selected and pricked to let out blood” (Li p. 307).

5. “Kidney disease is characterized by abdominal distension, swelling of the tibial region, panting, cough, heaviness of the body, sweating in sleep and aversion to wind. Xu (Deficiency) of the kidney leads to pain of the chest, upper and lower abdominal pain, Qingjue (adverse flow of cold Qi) and unhappiness. To treat this disease, the Acupoints located on Shaoyin and Taiyang can be selected and pricked to let out blood” (Li p. 307).
In chapter 35 of Lingshu entitled Zang Lun (On distention), there is a discussion on Zang (distention) syndromes. However, many of the pain symptoms are also discussed, as pain and distention are often accompanied by each other. For example, the chapter states: “In the distention due to liver disorder, the patient will have distention and fullness under the hypochondria and drawing pain in the lower abdomen…In the kidney distention, the patient will have fullness in the abdomen which drawing the back to become uncomfortable, and the loins, joints of extremities to become painful…In the flatulence of large intestine, the patient will have borborygmus and pain in the intestine, when catching cold in winter, he will have diarrhea with indigested food; In the flatulence of the small intestine, the patient will have distention and fullness in the lower abdomen and pain in the abdomen” (Wu & Wu p. 655).

In the clinic, heart and liver pain are more common in Zang organs while in stomach and intestinal pain is more common in Fu organs.

Other Diseases

In the Nei Jing, there are many diseases or syndromes which have pain as a primary or a accompanied symptom. The following conditions are selected from Nei Jing to discuss.

Yong & Ju 瘿癰 (Carbuncles and boils)
Carbuncles and boils are often accompanied with pain. The Nei Jing has a special chapter to discuss of these. In chapter 81 of Lingshu, it states: “The Ying energy and Wei energy are circulating unceasingly, it symbolizes the stars above and symbolized tunnels below. If the cold energy invades the channel, the channel will become obstructed and stagnant, the obstruction will cause the accumulation of the Wei energy and it can hardly operate normally and thus, the carbuncle is formed” (Ni p. 826).

**Fu Liang**: 伏樑

In chapter 40 of Suwen, it states: “When the leg, thigh, and hip are all swelling and with pain around the navel, what is the disease? Qibo said: It is called Fu Liang and it is stemmed from the wind cold. When the wind cold is discharged from the large intestine and retains on the membrane outside of the intestine, and as the root of the membrane is on the Qi hai point, pain will occur around navel. This disease must not be treated rashly, if it is treated improperly, dysuria will occur” (Wu & Wu p. 197).

Abdominal masses and tumors are common reasons for abdominal pain. We have discussed the pathology of abdominal pain in previous part. Besides Fu Liang, there are some other abdominal masses recorded by Nei Jing, such as Chang Xun (intestinal mass), Shi Jia (stony mass) etc.

**Hernia**: 腹部

“Invasion of evil into the collaterals of foot Jueyin leads to sudden hernia and sharp pain that can be cured by needling the region above the nail of the big toe that
converges with the muscles (LR 1) once respectively. If the patient is a man, he will be cured right away; if the patient is a woman, she will be cured after a while” (Li p. 693).

Hernia is often accompanied by pain. In Nei Jing, different types of hernia are discussed, including hernias of Zangfu organs. In general, hernias always involve foot Jueyin meridian and liver.

Malaria

Nei Jing has discussed several types of malaria. Besides alternate chills and fever, headache and body ache are also primary symptoms of malaria. In chapter 35 of Suwen, Qibo states, “The onset of malaria is marked by upstanding of fine hair on the body, stretching limbs, yawning, chills with bulging cheeks, lumbago and backache. After chills, the patients feel feverish internally and externally with piercing headache, extreme thirst and desire to drink cold water.” He further explains: “if Taiyang is deficiency, the patients will suffer from pain of the waist, back, head, and neck; if three Yang channels are all deficiency, Yang qi will become predominant, leading to cold and pain of the joints.” (Li P 433)

Regarding to the treatment, chapter 36 of Suwen states: “malaria of foot Taiyang channel is marked by lumbago, heaviness of the head….this kind of malaria is difficult to cure. It can be treated by needling Xizhong (BL 40) to let out blood” (Li p 451)

Parasite

In chapter 24 of Lingshu, it states: “In abdominal pain, when the patient makes sound during the disease attacks, his abdomen is swelling with mass inside, the onset of
Parasite infection can cause abdominal pain. Round worm is the most common parasite discussed in Nei Jing. In modern clinics, parasites are usually treated with medications. In China, herbal medicine is used more often than acupuncture for parasites in TCM treatment. However, it will be helpful to understand how “large needles” could manage the pain caused by round worm or other parasites.

**Therapies and Treatments for Pain**

*Acupuncture*

As discussed in previous parts, acupuncture is the most important therapy for pain in Huang Di Nei Jing. Selections of needles, meridians, acupuncture points and needle techniques can all determine the result of the treatment. In chapter one of Lingshu, nine needles are discussed. All of them could be used for pain. Among them, filiform needles and long needles are described as follows:

“The point of the filiform needle is like the proboscis of a mosquito, when the needle is inserted slowly into the skin and retains inside, it can repose one’s mind, it can
be used to treat the painful Bi; The point of the long needle is sharp and the body of the needle rather long which can be used to treat the protracted Bi syndrome” (Wu p. 496). Acupuncture technique is also very important in treating pain. For example, in chapter 63 of Suwen, it introduces contralateral needling therapy in treating heart pain, hernia, shoulder and neck pain, as well other conditions. Selection of meridians and acupuncture points has also been discussed in most pain conditions previously.

**Herbal Medicine**

Paul Unschuld points out: “The main text of the Suwen (excluding the “seven comprehensive discourses” added by Wangbin in the eighth contrary) mentions very few drugs by name. Drugs are hinted at mostly as a therapeutic category without any reference to the specific properties of individual substances or to their potential to influence pathological processes in the organism. In this regard, the main text of the Suwen belonged to a group of ancient Chinese medical texts that largely neglected or, like the Nan Jing and the Lingshu, entirely disregarded the contributions of Chinese pharmacotherapy to health care and healing” (Huang Di Nei Jing Shuwen p. 285). Only a few herbs and herbal formulas are mentioned in Hunag Di Nei Jing. However, some herbs like Pepper, Gui Zhi and Ginger have been listed in heat compressing formula for pain, and are still very useful in current clinical practices. Medicinal wine is first introduced by Nei Jing and has been used often in the clinic for pain remedies.

**Moxibustion**
Moxibustion is a main therapy in Nei Jing for many diseases as well for the pain. As discussed above, cold is considered as the most important pathogen in leading to pain. It is fitting that moxibustion would be useful for treating pain, since it can eliminate cold from body and warm up the channels and tissues. Although some similar devices have been invented for same purpose, there is no other material and therapy that can act as a complete substitute for moxibustion. Unfortunately, from my observation, moxibustion tends to be used less in current clinics due to several reasons, such as time consumption and office building regulations etc.

**Bloodletting**

Bloodletting is a common therapy in Nei Jing for the treatment of pain. We have mentioned it in the pain syndrome and diseases, especially for headaches and Lumbago. Bloodletting can quickly reduce the blood stagnation and release the pressure in blocked channels. It has been proven to be effective in relieving pain, especially acute pain. Bloodletting therapy is similar to moxibustion and seems to be used less in current acupuncture clinics.

**Heat Compressing**

In Lingshu chapter 6, a heat compressing formula is introduced for cold Bi. The formula and its processing are introduced as the following:

Take twenty catties 斤 (one catty equals about one and one-third pounds) of pure medicinal wine, one catty of Shu Jiao (Sichuan pepper), one catty of Gan Jiang (dried ginger) and one catty of Gui Xin (cinnamon twig), masticate the ingredients and soak
them in the wine; then take one catty of cotton fiber, forty chi (one chi = 1/3 meter) of
white cloth and soak them also into the wine with the ingredients; cover and seal the
utensil of the wine, so there is no leakage. Then put the utensil in the warm horse manure
to heat it up. Take out the white cloth and fiber from the wine after five days and nights,
dry them in the sun and soak them again in the wine, repeat the soaking process until all
the wine is absorbed. Each soaking should take a day and a night before the cloth and
cotton are taken out to dry in the sun; when they are all dry, take six or seven chi of the
cloth to make a double layer bag, and put the ingredients’ dregs and the cotton fiber into a
bag there should be six or seven of the bag ready for use. When using, scorch the bag
with burning mulberry charcoal and put the heated bag on the location where the cold-
type Bi has been needled. The heat transmits and reaches the illness directly. When the
bag becomes cold, scorch it again and repeat the process until thirty times. Wipe away
the sweat of the patient’s body after each warming for thirty times too.

I would suspect that modern practitioners would not have the patience to spend
time to make a heat pad with such a complicated procedure. This is probably why we
cannot achieve as good a result as we could if we followed Nei Jing.

Conclusion

Nei Jing is the first and one of the most important classics in TCM. Though TCM
has gone through great developments during the past two thousand years, I truly believe
as a contemporary acupuncturist and TCM practitioner that Nei Jing is still needed to
guide our clinical practice, as it still provides useful information.
After reviewing the Nei Jing, we can see that the core theories and pain treatment are preserved in current textbooks and clinical practice. For example, Qi and blood stagnation is still considered the most important pathology for pain and acupuncture is still a primary tool for its treatment. Many new therapies have been developed for pain since the Nei Jing’s time and have enriched TCM theory. However, much of the precious information in Nei Jing have been abandoned or ignored for a variety of reasons. For example, Nei Jing gives a very detailed classification for headaches and lumbar pain, which are missing in modern textbooks. By reviewing the Nei Jing, we are able to re-evaluate theories related to pain and become more enlightened, especially with theories that have been largely ignored in modern practices. It will help us find the clue to solving difficult pain problems and benefit people who have been suffering from pain.

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