The Five Stagnations in Gynecology

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Four broad mechanisms that lead to most gynecological disorders

1. Insufficient blood affects the regularity and volume of menses.
2. Insufficient qi or yang fails to contain blood and fluids or leads to cold that impedes the flow of blood.
3. Blood heat causes the blood to move frenetically outside the vessels.
4. Stagnation of qi or blood or fluids leads to obstruction of the free flow of the menstruate.

What is the difference between stagnation, depression, constraint & stasis?

- 郁 yù = Constraint or Depression
  - Often specific to the liver, or has an emotional component.
- 滞 zhì = Stagnation
  - Often more general or referring to stagnation unrelated to the liver.
- 塞 yì = Stasis
  - Often refers to a condition where there is a component of blood stasis.

The Six Stagnations of Zhu Dan-xi

The Five Stagnations

Liu Wan-su’s Theory of Similar Transformation

Life is qi, Qi is warm, Guest qi matches host qi, Evil qi will become FIRE
Yue Ju Wan (Escape Restraint Pill)
Treats each of the five stagnations plus the resulting heat

- Cang Zhu (Rz. Atractylodes)
- Chuan Xiong (Rz. Chuanxiong)
- Xiang Fu (Rz. Cyperi)
- Zhi Zi (Fr. Gardeniae)
- Shen Qu (Massa Medicata Fermentata)

Ban Xia Xi Xin Tang (Pinelliae Decoction to Drain the Epigastrium)
How addressing stagnation in the middle jiao can treat a GYN disorder in the lower jiao.

- Zhi Ban Xia (Rz. Pinelliae Preparatum)
- Gan Jiang (Rz. Zingiberis)
- Huang Qin (Rx. Scutellariae)
- Huang Lian (Rz. Coptidis)
- Ren Shen (Rx. Ginseng)
- Da Zao (Fr. Jujube)
- Zhi Gan Cao (Rx. Glycyrrhizae Preparata)

Sample Acupuncture Prescriptions to Move GYN Stagnation

- To move liver qi and calms the heart
  HT7, GB 34, LV14, Ren17

- To move blood in the lower jiao
  Ren9, Ren4, SP6, SP10, LI4

- To move damp in the lower jiao
  Ren5, SP9, LU7, KI7, SP3, 13

- To move damp-heat in the lower jiao
  Ren5, SP9, LV8, LI11, LV5

The take home...

- Zhu Dan-xi identified 6 stagnations
  “10,000 illnesses all start with Yu”

- Of the six stagnations, qi stagnation leads to stagnation of blood, phlegm, damp and food (all of which are yin substances)

- According to Liu Wan-su’s Theory of Similar Transformation – Evil Qi will become fire

- Zhu Dan-xi’s formula Yue Ju Wan treats all six stagnations

- Treat stagnation where you find it to correct the ascending and descending mechanism of qi

Qi Stagnation: PMS
A recurring cyclic cluster of physical and behavioral symptoms, developing 7-14 days prior to menstruation (during the luteal phase) and dissipating when menstruation or the follicular phase begins. Symptoms are only present during the luteal phase.

(McPhee & Papadakis, 2010)

Beyond Xiao Yao Wan (and the 4 gates!)....

PMS Possible Causes and Cofactors
- Elevated estrogen
- Estrogen/progesterone imbalance
- Elevated prolactin
- Hormone allergy
- Hypoglycemia
- Vitamin B6 deficiency
- Lowered neurotransmitters
- Stress
- Family history of PMS
**Chinese Medical Etiology**

Deficiency of yang or qi

Leads to stagnation of qi

Which leads to stagnation of blood or fluids.

Or

Stagnation of qi and or blood

Leads to weak yang or qi

Leading to fluid accumulation.

**Xiao Yao Wan**

(Free Wanderer Powder)

- Chai Hu (Bupleuri Radix)
- Dang Gui (Angelicae Sinensis Radix)
- Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba)
- Bai Zhu (Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rh)
- Fu Ling (Poria)
- Bo He (Mentha H)
- Sheng Jiang (Zingiberis RH)
- Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix)

**Si Ni San**

(Frigid Extremities Powder)

- Chai Hu (Rx. Bupleuri)
- Bai Shao (Rx. Paeoniae Lactiflorae)
- Zhi Shi (Fr. Citri seu Ponciri Immaturus)
- Gan Cao (Rx Glycyrrhizae Uralensis)

**Dao Shui Fu Ling Tang**

(Poria Decoction to Drain Water)

- Fu ling (Poria Rubra)
- Ze Xie (Rz. Alismatis)
- Bai Zhu (Rz. Atractylodis)
- Mu Gua (Fr. Chaenomelis)
- Bing Lang (Sm. Arecae)
- Mai Men Dong (Rx. Ophiopogonis)

**Wen Dan Tang**

(Warm the Gallbladder Decoction)

- Ban Xia (Rhizoma Pinelliae Tennatae)
- Chen Pi (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae)
- Fu Ling (Sclerotium Poriae Cocos)
- Zhu Ru (Caulis Bambusae in Taenias)
- Zhi Shi (Fructus Citri seu Ponciri Immaturus)
- Sheng Jiang (Rhizoma Zingiberis)
- Gan Cao (Radix Glycyrrhizae Uralensis)
- Da Zao (Fructus Zizyphi Jujubae)

**Developing a Point**

**Prescription for PMS**

Look for the root stagnation in this patient

Eg. Epigastric stagnation PC6, R13, SP4

Identify the kind of stagnation and treat the cause

Damp stagnation SP3, SP9, R6
Qi stagnation LV3, LI4, ST36

Treat the manifestations of stagnation

For breast tenderness LV3, R17, PC6
Headache LI2, LI4, R6
PMS: The take home...

- PMS symptoms are often caused by deficiency of qi and yang as well as stagnation.
- Damp stagnation is a factor in many PMS symptoms such as breast tenderness, fatigue, cloudy mind, weight gain and clumsiness.
- Look beyond Xiao Yao Wan and the 4 gates!
- Don’t forget about Ban Xia Xin Tang (or Si Ni San).
- PMDD is often caused by stagnation of blood and phlegm with heat from stagnation.

Blood Stagnation: Dysmenorrhea

- Primary dysmenorrhea: Normal menstrual cramps that are recurrent and are not due to other diseases.
- Secondary dysmenorrhea: Pain that is caused by a disorder in the woman’s reproductive organs, e.g., endometriosis, adenomyosis, uterine fibroids, or infection (PID) cervical stenosis.

What Causes the pain?

- Uterine contractions: Due to excessive prostaglandin production.
- Passing clots.
- Structural abnormalities.
- Diet and lifestyle exacerbate the pain.

Dysmenorrhea in TCM

- Stagnation of blood is always a branch diagnosis.
- Look for the root!
  - Trauma, cold, heat
  - Qi stagnation, qi deficiency
  - Deficiency of blood, yin or yang

The relationship between cold and blood stagnation

- Warmth moves and cold stops movement.
  That means that warming can be a helpful part of any general prescription for pain from stagnation.

Wen Jing Tang (Menses Warming Formula)

- Ren Shen (Ginseng Radix)
- Dang Gui (Angelicae Sinensis Radix)
- Chuan Xiong (Chuanxiong Rhizoma)
- Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba)
- Niu Xi (Achyranthis Bidentatae Radix)
- E Zhu (Curcumae Rhizoma)
- Rou Gui (Cinnamomi Cortex)
- Mu Dan Pi (Moutan Cortex)
- Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix)
**Shao Fu Zhu Yu Tang**  
*(Lower Abdomen Stasis Expelling Formula)*

- **Dang Gui** *(Angelicae Sinensis Radix)*
- **Chi Shao** *(Paeoniae Radix)*
- **Chuan Xiong** *(Chuanxiong Rhizoma)*
- **Xiao Hui Xiang** *(Foeniculi Fructus)*
- **Gan Jiang** *(Zingiberis Rhizoma)*
- **Rou Gui** *(Cinnamomi Cortex)*
- **Yan Hu Suo** *(Corydalis Rhizoma)*
- **Wu Ling Zhi** *(Trogopteri Faeces)*
- **Pu Huang** *(Typhae Pollen)*
- **Mo Yao** *(Myrrha)*

**Regulating the cycle to treat dysmenorrhea**

- **During the menses (days 1 - 7)** - Move qi and blood and relieve pain.  
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  SP10, LI4, LV3, R4, SP6
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- **After the menses (days 8 - 21)** - Supplement qi and nourish blood.  
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  KI3, ST36, Zi Gong Xue, R3, R4
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- **Before the menses (days 22 - 28)** - Move qi to prevent stagnation.  
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  ST36, LI4, LV3, SP6, DU20
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**Endometriosis**

The presence of endometrial tissue outside the uterus.

**Two types:**
- Pigmented (bleeding)
- Non-pigmented (not bleeding)

**Endometriosis Symptoms**

- Often asymptomatic
- Dysmenorrhea
- Dyspareunia
- Painful bowel movements
- Painful urination
- Menorrhagia or menometrorrhagia
- Infertility
- Other (fatigue, diarrhea, constipation, bloating or nausea, especially during menstrual periods).

**Causes of Endometriosis**

- Retrograde menstruation
- Embryonic cell growth
- Post-surgical scars
- Cell transport
- Immune dysfunction

**The most common patterns I observe in my patients with endometriosis**

- Root deficiency of Spleen qi and/or Kidney yang.
- Stagnant qi, blood or phlegm/damp
- Heat from stagnation (which may rise)
**Days 25 - 4**

Use blood moving herbs

**Acupuncture**
SP6, R4, SP8, SP10, Bai Liao, LV8, LI 4, PC5, abdominal ashi (ST28, ST29, SP12, SP13)

**Moxa**

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**Xiao Zheng Fang**
(Concretion Dispersing Formula)

**Menstrual Formula (days 25 – 4)**

- Ji Xue Teng (Spatholobi Caulis)
- San Leng (Sparganii Rhizoma)
- E Zhu (Curcumae Rhizoma)
- Mu Dan Pi (Moutan Cortex)
- Dan Shen (Salviae Miltiorrhizae Radix)
- Chi Shao (Paeoniae Radix Rubra)
- Tao Ren (Persicae Semen)
- Zhi Ke (Qiao) (Aurantii Fructus)
- Fu Ling (Poria)
- Bai Zhu (Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma)

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**Days 5 - 24**

Tonify qi and yang, move qi and supplement blood

**Acupuncture**
Ki3, St36, SP6, DU20, R3, R4, Zi Gong Xue, Yin Tang

**Moxa**

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**HuoJjing Zhong Zi Fang** (Quicken the Channels to Plant Seeds Decoction)

**Post Menstrual Formula for Endometriosis (days 6 – 28)**

- Dang Gui (Angelicae Sinensis Radix)
- Chai Hu (Bupleuri Radix)
- Dan Shen (Salviae Miltiorrhizae Radix)
- Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba)
- Fu Ling (Poria)
- Bai Zhu (Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma)
- Zhi Ke (Qiao) (Aurantii Fructus)
- Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix)

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**Dysmenorrhea and Endometriosis. The take home...**

- Stagnation of blood is always a branch diagnosis. Look for the root!
- Warmth moves and cold stops movement. That means that warming can be a helpful part of any general prescription for pain from stagnation

- In fact warmth moves so well that you may need less blood movers – think Wen Jing Tang.
- Non-pigmented endometriosis is more likely to cause infertility because of the presence of damp
- When treating endometriosis give blood moving herbs during the menses.

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**Damp Stagnation:**

**Chronic Pelvic Inflammatory Disease**

PID is caused by a bacterial infection in the upper female genital tract.

There are 3 main ways that an infection can occur.

1. From the lower genital tract to the upper: Often from sexually transmitted bacteria, but also from gynecological procedures such as insertion of IUD, D&C, abortion and endometrial biopsy.
2. From infection of surrounding organs: Infection of the bladder, appendix or other surrounding organs can also lead to Pelvic Inflammatory Disease
3. From transfer of bacteria through the circulatory or lymphatic system: Bacteria from the respiratory system such as pneumonia can travel through the body and cause PID.
Chinese Medicine’s View on the Etiology of Chronic PID

- Deficiency of righteous qi
- External evils (hot or cold)

Evils accumulate in the lower jiao and obstruct the qi dynamic, leading to qi and blood stagnation obstructing the Chong and the Ren.

The qi and blood stagnation, combined with the external pathogen, causes damp stagnation, which can become damp-heat due to stagnation.

All of which is exacerbated by underlying spleen qi deficiency (which leads to more damp) or kidney yang vacuity (which leads to more blood stagnation).

The Three Stages of PID

- Early stage, acute PID
  - Damp-heat-toxin

- Middle stage, chronic PID
  - Damp-heat and blood stagnation

- Late stage, chronic PID
  - Spleen qi and yang vacuity with qi and blood stagnation and either damp-heat or damp-cold

Late Stage, Chronic PID Treatment Strategy in Order of Priority

1. Treat the underlying deficiency
   - Spleen qi vacuity
   - Kidney yang vacuity
2. Treat the stagnation
   - Qi stagnation
   - Blood stagnation
   - Damp stagnation
3. Clear heat and toxicity (if appropriate)

Wan Dai Tang
(Discharge Ceasing Decoction)

For PID with underlying Spleen Qi Vacuity
- Ren Shen (Rx Ginseng)
- Shan Yao (Rh. Dioscoreae)
- Bai Zhu (Rh. Atractylodis Macrocephalae)
- Bai Shao (Rx Paeoniae Alba)
- Chai Hu (Rx. Bupleuri)
- Cang Zhu (Rh Atractylodis)
- Chen Pi (P. Citri)
- Che Qian Zi (S. Plantaginis)
- Jing Jie (H. Schizonepetae)
- Gan Cao (Rx. Glycyrrhizae)

Liu Jun Zi Tang
(Six Gentlemen Decoction)

To support the spleen, if the patient is receiving antibiotic treatment.
- Ren Shen (Rx Ginseng)
- Bai Zhu (Rh. Atractylodis Macrocephalae)
- Fu Ling (Poria)
- Gan Cao (Rx. Glycyrrhizae)
- Chen Pi (P. Citri)
- Ban Xia (Rh. Pinelliae)

Nei Bu Wan
/Internal Supplementation Pill

For PID with underlying kidney yang vacuity
- Lu Rong (Cervi Cornu)
- Tu Si Zi (S. Cuscutae)
- Sha Yuan Zi (S. Astragali)
- Rou Cong Rong (H. Cistanches)
- Rou Gui (C. Cinnamomi)
- Huang Qi (Rx. Astragali)
- Ci Ji Li (Fr. Tribuli)
- Sang Piao Xiao (Ootheca Mantidis)
- Zhi Fu Zi (Rx. Aconite preap.)
- Zi Wan (Rx Asteris)
Vaginal Douche for Chronic PID

Hong Teng 15g (Caulis Sargentodoxae)
Bai Jiang Cao 15g (Herba Patriniae)
Pu Gong Ying 15g (Herba Taraxaci)
Ru Xiang 6g (Gummi Olibani)
Mo Yao 6g (Myrrh)
San Leng 5g (Rhizoma Sparganii)
E Zhu 5g (Rhizoma Curcumae)
Mu Dan Pi 3g (Cortex Moutan)

Cook the herbs in water to make a 100ml thick decoction and use as a retained douche (retain for 20 minutes 1 x a day)

Acupuncture for Chronic PID

• Open the Dai, Ren and or Chong
  GB41, SJ5, LU7, KI6, PC6, SP4
• Support the spleen and kidney
  KI7, SP3, ST36, R6
• Move blood and qi
  SP10, LV5, SP6
• Clear damp and heat
  LV8, SP9, ST44
• Local points
  Zi Gong Xue, R3, R4
• Moxibustion

Chronic PID. The take home...

PID is the most common cause of female infertility and ectopic pregnancy. About 1 million women a year suffer from it.

Chronic PID is resistant to antibiotic therapy because the spleen qi and kidney yang have been compromised.

Chronic PID responds best to a formula like Wan Dai Tang because it supports the spleen.

If there is ongoing antibiotic treatment use Liu Jun Zi Tang to support the spleen and clear damp.

Phlegm Stagnation: Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)

The Rotterdam Criteria
Two out of three of the following

biochemical signs of hyper-androgenism
irregular and/or no ovulation
appearance of small cysts in the ovaries

PCOS

What causes phlegm?

• Fluids become phlegm when they are unable to move.
• Therefore phlegm can have it’s roots in:
  • Qi or yang vacuity or
  • Qi or blood stagnation
• Phlegm thickens due to
  • Cold constricting or
  • Heat congealing
• Blood and fluids move together

“To treat phlegm it is essential to treat the blood. Quickening the blood leads to transformation of phlegm”
- Zhu Lian-chun

Biomedical Understanding of PCOS

Excess insulin
Low grade inflammation
Ovarian cysts

Excess insulin
Low grade inflammation
Ovarian cysts

Elevated androgens
Block follicular development
Alter HPO Axis feedback

Elevated estrogen
Decreased FSH
Increased LH & testosterone

Prompt the ovary to increase androgen production

Impedes ovulation and makes endometrium less hospitable
Chinese Medicine and PCOS

Kidney Jing Deficiency
Kidney yang vacuity
Disrupts flow in Ren and Chong
Spleen qi vacuity
- Damp
- Phlegm
Liver qi stagnation
- Blood stagnation
- Heat
- Congeals phlegm

Stagnation of qi, phlegm and blood disrupt the Chong and Ren leading to irregular menses and anovulation.

PCOS Treatment Principals

Tonify Kidney jing, qi and/or yang to regulate the Ren and the Chong
Support the Spleen to address damp and phlegm
Move liver qi and harmonize the spleen and liver to clear heat from stagnation

Acupuncture Points for PCOS

During menses
Sp10, LI4, LV3, R4, SP6, Yin Tang, SP9

Follicular phase
PC6, SP4, ST36, DU20, Zi Gong Xue, SP9, LI4, Yin Tang

Ovulation
LI4, SP6, KI7, Zi Gong Xue, R3, R4, Yin Tang, SP9

Luteal phase
St 36, SP9, KI7, DU20, Yin Tang

Dietary Therapy for PCOS

- Swap sugar and refined carbohydrates for small portions of complex whole grains.
- Avoid sweeteners
- Eat lean protein
- Plenty of slightly cooked vegetables
- Avoid cold foods and dairy products
- Eliminate alcohol and caffeine

Zhong Yao Ren Gong Tiao Qi Zu Fang (Formula to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle) Number 1 (for after the period)

Xian Mao (Rhizoma Curculiginis orchioidis)
Yin Yang Huo (Herba Epimedii)
Dang Gui (Radix Angelicae sinensis)
Shan Yao (Radix Dioscoreae oppositae)
Tu Si Zi (Semen Cuscutae chinensis)
Ba Ji Tian (Radix Morindae officinalis)
Rou Cong Rong (Herba Cistanchis deserticolae)
Shu Di Huang (Radix Rehmanniae)

Zhong Yao Ren Gong Tiao Qi Zu Fang (Formula to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle) Number 2 (for ovulation)

Dang Gui (Radix Angelicae sinensis)
Dan Shen (Radix Salviae miltiorrhizae)
Tao Ren (Semen Persicae)
Hong Hua (Flos Carthami tinctorii)
Ji Xue Teng (Radix et Caulis Jixueteng)
Yi Mu Cao (Herba Leonori heterophylli)
Xu Duan (Radix Dipsaci)
Xiang Fu (Rhizoma Cyperi rotundi)
Gui Zhi (Ramulus Cinnamomi cassiae)
Zhong Yao Ren Gong Tiao Qi Zu Fang (Formula to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle) Number 3 for the luteal phase

- E Jiao (Gelatinum Corii Asini)
- Gui Ban Jiao (Colla Plastri testudinis)
- Dang Gui (Radix Angelicae sinensis)
- Shu Di Huang (Radix Rehmanniae praeparata)
- Wu Yao (Radix Linderae strychnifoliae)
- Tu Si Zi (Semen Cuscutae chinensis)
- Xu Duan (Radix Dipsaci)
- Xiang Fu (Rhizoma Cyperi rotundi)
- Gui Zhi (Ramulus Cinnamomi cassiae)

Zhong Yao Ren Gong Tiao Qi Zu Fang (Formula to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle) Number 4 (during the period)

- Dang Gui (Radix Angelicae sinensis)
- Shu Di Huang (Radix Rehmanniae praeparata)
- Dan Shen (Radix Salviae miltiorrhizae)
- Chi Shao (Radix Paeoniae rubrae)
- Ze Lan (Herba Lycopi lucidi)
- Chuan Xiong (Radix Ligustici Chuanxiong)
- Yi Mu Cao (Herba Leonori heterophyllii)
- Xiang Fu (Rhizoma Cyperi rotundi)

PCOS. The take home...

- PCOS is a complex syndrome affecting the endocrine system and metabolism
- Rotterdam Criteria is two out of three of the following:
  - Signs of hyperandrogenism
  - Irregular and/or no ovulation
  - A chain of small cysts in the ovaries
- Disruption to the Ren and the Chong causes anovulation and irregular menses
- This disruption is the result of weak kidney function and stagnation
- A 5-7% weight reduction can reduce hyperandrogenism, improve insulin sensitivity, and restore ovulation in 75% of women with PCOS

Bao He Wan (Preserve Harmony Pill)

- Can be used to help underweight women gain weight and therefore restore the menses
- Shan Zha (Fr. Crataegi)
- Shen Qu (Massa Medicata fermentata)
- Lai Fu Zi (Sm. Raphani)
- Chen pi (Per. Citri Reticulatae)
- Ban Xia (Rz. Pinelliae Preparatum)
- Fu Ling (Poria)
- Lian Qiao (Fr. Forsythiae)

Food Stagnation

Hypothalamic Amenorrhea

HA occurs when the hypothalamus, slows or stops releasing gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH), the hormone that starts the menstrual cycle. Common characteristics of women suffering from HA include:

- Low body weight or low percentage of body fat
- Very low intake of calories or fat
- Strenuous exercise that burns more calories than are taken in through food
- Deficiency of leptin, a protein hormone that regulates appetite and metabolism
- Emotional stress and some medical conditions

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