

# Pricking the Vessels

Bloodletting Therapy  
in Chinese Medicine

Dr Henry McCann

**PRICKING THE VESSELS**  
**BLOODLETTING THERAPY IN CHINESE MEDICINE**

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**Henry McCann, DAOM**

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ISBN 978-0-9786766-0-5

*Published by*

INSTITUTE FOR CLASSICAL ASIAN MEDICINE

300 Madison Avenue, Madison, NJ 07940

[www.asianmedicine.org](http://www.asianmedicine.org)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None of us accomplishes anything in a vacuum. Therefore, special thanks are due to those people who have contributed to the production of this book, either directly or conceptually. To my teachers at the New England School of Acupuncture and the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine, special thanks for allowing me to have been a part of the two preeminent Oriental medicine institutions in the United States. Thanks are due to my other primary teachers, Jeffrey Yuen, Dr. Richard Tan, Ou Wen Wei, and others; these people and others have taught me what acupuncture is truly capable of, and what medicine should be. Special thanks go to Candace Sarges, Dr. Edward Chiu, Dr. Peter Borten, and Dr. Rosa Schnyer for their support and suggestions. And of course, my eternal gratitude goes to my wife Jennifer and my son Henry who put up with me while I finished my doctoral degree.

## NOTICE

Chinese medicine (also known as Oriental medicine) is a professional system of healthcare. The information in this text is not meant to be implemented by laypersons, and neither the author nor the publisher advocate self treatment. Other healthcare providers interested in learning Chinese medicine should seek personal instruction. Patients who would like to receive Oriental medical treatment are urged to contact a professional healthcare provider.

Medical science is a constantly evolving and ever changing field. The information in this text is provided in good faith, but the author is not responsible for errors or omissions, and cannot be held responsible for treatments undertaken after having read this book. This book is provided for the purpose of educating health professionals about Chinese medicine, and is for scholarly and research purposes only.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

*Everyone who aspires to be a great physician must be intimately familiar with the following classics: the Simple Questions (Huangdi neijing suwen), the Systematic Classic of Acupuncture and Moxibustion (Zhenjiu jiaqi jing), the Yellow Emperor's Needle Classic (Huangdi neijing lingshu), and the Laws of Energy Circulation from the Hall of Enlightenment (Mingtang luezhub). Furthermore, one must master the twelve channel systems, the three locations and nine positions of pulse diagnosis, the system of the five zang and the six fu organs, the concept of surface and interior, the acupoints, as well as the materia medica in the form of single herbs, herb pairs, and the classic formulas presented in the writings of Zhang Zhongjing, Wang Shuhe, Ruan Xian, Fan Dongyang, Zhang Miao, Jin Shao, and other masters.*

How a Great Physician Should Train for the Practice of Medicine

*Qian Jin Yao Fang*, Sun Simiao (581-682)<sup>1</sup>

Chinese medicine is an eclectic collection of various theoretical constructs as well as interventional therapies. Unlike modern Western sciences Chinese medicine is accretionist; it adapts then adopts new concepts and therapies, adding them onto previous ones without having to necessarily abandon previously held convictions or therapeutic protocols. In the spirit of an inherently eclectic medical system, physicians, too - both historically and in contemporary times - utilized a wide variety of interventions depending on the individual needs of a patient. As the introductory quote suggests, those who aspire to be a “great physician” need to study and implement a wide variety of therapies, including both herbal medicine and acupuncture. In the *Huang Di Nei Jing, Su Wen*, Chapter 12 (*Yi Fa Fang Yi Lun*),<sup>2</sup> the different therapies from the regions of China are expounded upon, the chapter concluding with the admonition that the physician should be able to diagnose and then flexibly use different therapies as needed. Later, in Chapter 25 (*Bao Ming Quan Xing Lun*) of the same text, the requirements of study for a physician are laid out. These include first caring for the *shen*, second

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understanding the principles of nourishing life (*yang sheng*), third a knowledge of herbal medicines, fourth the use of stone implements, and fifth knowledge of diagnosis. Like the *Qian Jin Yao Fang* as quoted above, the *Neijing* advocates multi-faceted understanding of a wide range of diagnostics and therapeutics.

However, the reality is that Chinese medicine providers often limit themselves to the practice of *either* herbal medicine, or acupuncture or manual therapies (such as Tuina). In China today hospital departments are mostly segregated both by specialty as well as therapy. For example, in gynecology departments herbal medicine alone is prescribed, and in acupuncture departments only acupuncture is performed for patients. In the United States most schools allow students the option of studying acupuncture without ever learning herbal medicine, and in Japan acupuncturists may not legally practice herbal medicine due to historical constraints on their practice.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, acupuncture is a rich and complex enough therapy that it can justify a lifetime of study devoted to it alone. Thus, a practitioner's focus on acupuncture to the exclusion of herbal medicine or manual therapies is, I believe, justified and a valid professional choice.

That said, the incorporation of a wide range of therapies, including not only herbal medicine but also modern Western medical treatments, vastly increases the number of diseases and patients that can be adequately treated. Oriental medicine professionals who only practice acupuncture are limited by their therapy as to what they can effectively treat. However, acupuncturists historically have incorporated in their practices a variety of sub-therapies that are generally seen to be included under the rubric of what is translated into English as “acupuncture” – needle therapy, moxibustion, cupping, gua sha, bloodletting therapy, and today newer procedures such as electric or laser stimulation. Indeed, I would argue, that needle therapy as mono-therapy - that



is, needle based acupuncture to the exclusion of *all* other techniques - is not what was intended by the classics or even our most illustrious historical and contemporary acupuncture teachers.

As both a teacher and practitioner of Chinese medicine, what I find most saddening is not that many American acupuncturists never use herbal medicine in their practices, but rather that they fail to use other therapies beyond needle stimulation as a part of their “acupuncture” practice. In my opinion, all acupuncturists must be adept at using, at the very least, the cardinal three therapies of acupuncture (to be defined in this book from this point forth as fine needle stimulation), moxibustion and bloodletting therapy. Each has its own place and therapeutic strengths that can be exploited for the benefit of patients.

Acupuncture, theoretically, is best at and preeminent for readjusting the qi of the channel system. Moxibustion, essentially herbal medicine applied to acupuncture points, can *add* new qi to the channel network. Thus, while moxibustion can be used to drain as well as supplement, it is *best* at supplementation. Bloodletting more specifically *removes* something from the system, either external evils such as heat, or internal disruptions such as blood stasis. In this respect it can be seen as the opposite of moxibustion.<sup>4</sup>

A recent survey in Korea found that bloodletting is very popular among senior doctors of Oriental medicine; 89.4% of the practitioners surveyed used the therapy.<sup>5</sup> Anecdotally, however, as an acupuncture teacher at the post-graduate level both in the United States and Europe, my western trained students report utilizing bloodletting infrequently at best. I think the reasons for the possible western aversion to bloodletting are manifold, but stem primarily from lack of understanding, lack of training, or fear that patients or legislators will not tolerate the therapies. Moxibustion is commonly taught in American schools of Chinese medicine, and while I think it may not be taught as thoroughly as it could be, it is covered as a mandatory and essential skill.

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Bloodletting, however, is taught in a very limited capacity. For example, when I was a student at the New England School of Acupuncture, bloodletting was covered in less than 1 class of a semester long course on needle and moxibustion techniques (although it was covered slightly more in some elective classes). My post-graduate students report back similar experiences in their acupuncture school training. It is no wonder then why some acupuncturists neither understand nor use the therapy in their practices. My motivation for writing this book is to help remedy this situation. Bloodletting therapy is an incredibly flexible and useful part of Chinese medicine, and therefore I hope this monograph can serve as a basic instruction manual on bloodletting for new students in Chinese medical colleges as well as seasoned acupuncturists who never had the opportunity to learn bloodletting adequately. Once providers have a better understanding of the theory and practice of bloodletting, they can use it effectively with patients. When combined with acupuncture and moxibustion, acupuncturists will then be able to treat a much wider range of patients and disease presentations.

As with everything in Chinese medicine, we begin from classic texts. Our exploration of bloodletting therapy must therefore begin with an historical perspective. Following that, we will look at the *Huang Di Nei Jing* as a rich source for understanding bloodletting therapy by surveying treatment strategies, indications, and general references to bloodletting. This then will serve as a jumping off point to look at fundamental Chinese medical therapy related to blood and the network vessels, the actual areas we apply bloodletting therapy to, and the Chinese medical functions associated today with bloodletting therapy. In this section I will describe my own conceptual structure of looking at primary and secondary functions of bloodletting. I will also present my own theories of bloodletting in treating complex and chronic disease, and describe in theoretical terms why, according to my clinical experience, bloodletting can be used to treat chronic or degenerative disease associated with kidney vacuity. After a

thorough theoretical exposition we will move on to a look at bloodletting as presented in contemporary standard professional Chinese medicine, and then look at the classical acupuncture lineage of Tung Ching Chang and its extensive use of bloodletting therapy.

## II. AN OVERVIEW AND HISTORY OF BLOODLETTING THERAPY

In Chinese medicine, bloodletting therapy is the purposeful elicitation of bleeding from the surface of the body for therapeutic purposes. As will be described later in this book, bloodletting therapy can be applied to specific acupuncture points, channels, or other zones of the body that may or may not relate to the channel system of acupuncture. Unlike in Western medicine's historical approach to bloodletting, bloodletting in Chinese medicine typically does not involve venisection that lets large amounts of blood.

Chinese medical literature uses several terms that refer to bloodletting therapy. First is *luo ci*<sup>a</sup> – network vessel pricking. This term refers to one of the Nine Needle Methods that first appears in the *Guan Zhen*, Chapter 7 of the Miraculous Pivot (*Huang Di Nei Jing Ling Shu*), and is defined by Wiseman as “bloodletting by pricking the small vessels with a three-edged needle.” Another term that describes this same therapeutic procedure is *fang xue*<sup>b</sup>, rendered into English by Wiseman specifically as “bloodletting.” Yet other terms are *tiao ci fang xue*<sup>c</sup> or *tiao ci chu xue*<sup>d</sup>, pick to bleed, and *san ci*<sup>e</sup>, diffuse pricking.<sup>6</sup>

Physicians and other healers from just about every culture throughout history have practiced some form of bloodletting. Archeological evidence of sharpened stones or bones justifies the supposition that bloodletting has been

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<sup>a</sup> 刺絡

<sup>b</sup> 放血

<sup>c</sup> 挑刺放血

<sup>d</sup> 挑刺出血

<sup>e</sup> 散刺

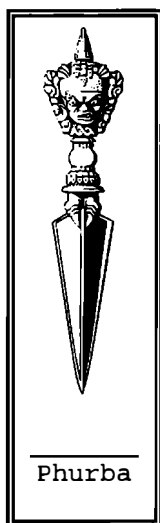
practiced across many cultures since at least the Stone Age,<sup>7</sup> and Egyptian and Hippocratic medical literature also mention bloodletting.<sup>8</sup> Although contemporary biomedical physicians look askance at bloodletting, the fact is that “if bloodletting is considered nothing more than corrupt chicanery... then nearly all physicians in the past were charlatans.”<sup>7</sup>

The earliest examples of writing in China are Shang dynasty (1600 – 1027 BCE) Oracle Bones, fragments of bone used for divination onto which questions were written in early Chinese script. Many of these bones dealt with questions of disease and treatment, and according to historian Miyashita Saburo, there are references to bloodletting in Oracle Bone writings.<sup>9</sup> During the Shang dynasty, disease was thought to result from the influences of displeased ancestors or other malevolent spirits, and thus bloodletting was most likely done simply to release negative influences of these external entities. If in fact Oracle Bone writing does document bloodletting therapy, it would mean that this practice has been part of the Chinese medical landscape for at least 3,000 years (as opposed to acupuncture’s historically verifiable history of only about 2,000 years). However, as pointed out by Harper, Miyashita’s findings of bloodletting evidence in Oracle Bone writings are uncertain and not proof positive of its use in China since the Shang dynasty.<sup>10 (p.94)</sup>

Later, around the time of Confucius (551 – 479 BCE), it was common practice for exorcists to run through city streets in China waving spears in the air and using them to strike at invisible demons in order to break their control over the populace. Unschuld links this practice to acupuncture, specifically treatments for demonic possession such as the Thirteen Ghost Points of Bian Que, transmitted to us today through the writings of Sun Si Miao.<sup>11</sup> While most of the points in this protocol are treated with needle or fire-needle therapy, one point is bled. The use of spears to release the influence of evil spirits and its similarity to piercing the surface of the body to release negative influences internally cannot be unacknowledged. I would argue, however, that exorcistic

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spears are more similar to bloodletting needles than they are to acupuncture needles. The very shape of three edge needles used for bloodletting is reminiscent of spears or even ritualistic phurba daggers (used in Tibetan Buddhism in exorcism rituals).

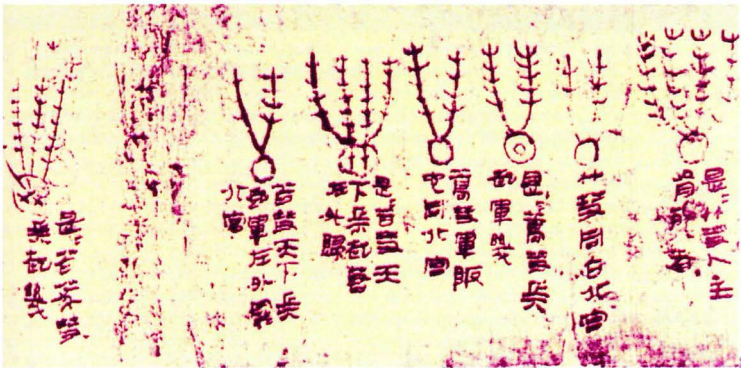


Actual archeological and historically sound evidence of bloodletting or even acupuncture practice is hard to find and was scarce until the 1972 to 1974 excavations of the Ma Wang Dui tomb site in Changsha (Hunan Province). The principal occupant of the Ma Wang Dui tombs was Li Cang, Lord of Dai, who died in 186 BCE. Li was an avid manuscript collector (manuscripts at this time were not books as we know them but slats of bamboo strung together with silk cords on which characters were written), and seven of the manuscripts found,

representing 22,000 extant characters, were medical treatises.<sup>10</sup> What is particularly important and striking about the Ma Wang Dui manuscripts is that they are the earliest untouched evidence of a Chinese medicine similar to what is practiced, at least in theory, in contemporary times. Oracle Bone medical writings document treatments mainly considered to be in the magico-religious realm, such as activities of worship and animal sacrifice. In contrast, the Ma Wang Dui manuscripts document early notions of the channel system with which we are familiar today, and describe naturalist treatment with herbal medicine, Daoyin exercises, and moxibustion (although acupuncture is conspicuously absent). Additionally, some manuscripts make frequent reference to *bian*<sup>11</sup>, lancing stones. These early lances were used to let pus from abscesses or wounds and may have been the predecessors of the lance needle mentioned in the *Huang Di Nei Jing*, and the three-edged needle used in later and contemporary times for bloodletting.<sup>9</sup>

## Overview and History

Bloodletting therapy then makes a very significant appearance in the *Huang Di Nei Jing*, *Su Wen* and *Ling Shu*, and is the therapy of choice in many chapters. In fact, there is an interesting parallel between one of the Ma Wang Dui manuscripts (designated Manuscript I.C, entitled *Mai Fa*<sup>a</sup> -Model of the Vessels) and the *Guan Zhen*<sup>b</sup> (*Ling Shu* Chapter 7), demonstrating the development of needles from *bian*. There is parallel language in these two documents where the terms *bian* and pus (*nong*) in the Ma Wang Dui text are replaced respectively by needle (*zhen*<sup>d</sup>) and disease (*bing*) in the *Ling Shu*.<sup>10</sup> (p.93) While it is impossible to actually trace, it is easily hypothesized that lancing the body to let pus or blood may have led to the development of needle stimulation of the channel system.<sup>9</sup>



Astrological Charts from the Ma Wang Dui Manuscripts

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<sup>a</sup> 脈法

<sup>b</sup> 官針

<sup>c</sup> 膿

<sup>d</sup> 針

<sup>e</sup> 病

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Even though the actual origins of Chinese bloodletting will probably forever escape a thorough understanding, it is clear that this therapy has a long history of use. In order to understand contemporary bloodletting therapy however, we must now turn our attention to the *Huang Di Nei Jing*. Since that text is the foundation of Chinese medicine, its references to bloodletting will serve as both a historical look at bloodletting and its wide range of indications in the modern clinic.



### III. BLOODLETTING IN THE HUANG DI NEI JING

The *Huang Di Nei Jing* (hereafter to be referred to as *Nei Jing* for short) is the seminal pre-modern text of Chinese medicine. Compiled during the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE)<sup>12</sup>, it consists of two books, the *Su Wen* (Plain Questions) and the *Ling Shu* (Divine Pivot). Of the two, the *Su Wen* focuses more on developing a framework of systematic correspondences between the natural world and the body using the images of the five phases and yin-yang theories while the *Ling Shu* is written more as a clinical text of channel theory, acupuncture techniques, and the application of acupuncture in treating a wide variety of diseases. To a lesser extent, the *Nei Jing* also contains passages that describe the therapeutic use of acupuncture related therapies such as moxibustion and, as previously mentioned, bloodletting.

Interestingly, a close reading of changing terms in the *Nei Jing* sheds light on the development of channel theory. This change in terms hints that acupuncture and contemporary channel theory grew out of an earlier medical focus on vessels and bloodletting, which, in the earliest Chinese medical writings was as essential focus of practice.<sup>9</sup> In the oldest extant Chinese medical texts, the aforementioned Ma Wang Dui medical manuscripts, the pathways now known as acupuncture channels are referred to by the term *mai*<sup>a</sup>, meaning “vessels,” and not *jing*<sup>b</sup>, the term associated with “channels” in modern times. The term *mai* more closely refers to what today would be considered structures of the actual vascular system of the body; the radical of the Chinese character *mai* means “flesh” and implies these vessels would have been tangible anatomical entities. The term *jing*, to the contrast, is written with the radical referring to a net or string-like connections. The inherent meaning of the *jing*

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<sup>a</sup> 脈

<sup>b</sup> 經

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character is less physical and more intangible, as is the general nature of the channel system in contrast to the physical blood vessels. By the time of the *Nei Jing*'s compilation, both the terms *mai* and *jing* were in use, and both terms appear in different chapters of the text.

This change in terms, from using *mai* in earlier writing to the use of *jing* in the *Nei Jing*, marks a significant conceptual shift relating to bloodletting and acupuncture. In the Ma Wang Dui medical manuscripts, the sole therapies that influenced the blood vessels were moxibustion and lancing; there is no mention of fine needle acupuncture therapy. By the time of the *Nei Jing* the development of channel systems associated with the movement of qi marked the change of therapeutic focus. While in earlier times clinicians opened the body (as in bloodletting) to simply remove malign influences, in the *Nei Jing* therapy centers on diseases of repletion or vacuity of qi, with qi now being the dominant physiological substance in the body. Consequently acupuncture becomes paramount over bloodletting since acupuncture, rather than bloodletting, harmonizes vacuity and repletion of qi.

The *Nei Jing* is thus a collection of treatises from various periods, with those referring to *mai* and bloodletting therapy being older, and those referring to *jing* and acupuncture being more recent.<sup>9, 13</sup> Explicit references to bloodletting therapy are amply represented in much of the *Nei Jing*, 14 chapters of the *Su Wen* alone refer to it specifically and many others refer to therapies that may be indirect references to bloodletting.<sup>13</sup> Even *Nei Jing* descriptions of acupuncture needle manipulations show a close relationship to bloodletting and its therapeutic functions of removing evil pathogens from the body. For example, the emphasis on opening or closing the hole on needle withdrawal to control retention or loss of qi despite its immaterial and invisible nature, is a clear reference to opening the surface of the body to let blood.<sup>9</sup>

In the *Nei Jing*, bloodletting is applied most commonly to general areas of the body, visible blood vessels, or the channels, and less often to specific

acupuncture points.<sup>9</sup> The most common area referenced for bloodletting is the popliteal fossa, followed by the lateral and medial malleoli. There is little reference to bloodletting the upper extremities.<sup>9</sup> The indications for bloodletting are wide and include specific diseases as well as general types of patients, such as patients with chronic disease (see below for specific indications).

### Nei Jing Treatment Principles Related to Bloodletting

Most Chinese medical treatment principles are either extracted or extrapolated from passages in classical texts, most notable the *Nei Jing*, *Su Wen* and *Ling Shu*. While contemporary texts quotes liberally from the *Nei Jing* to justify needling methods, there is less exposition of treatment principles related to bloodletting. This is, of course, contrary to the fact that bloodletting is mentioned frequently in treatment principles of the *Nei Jing*. Here is a brief representation of passages that relate to bloodletting, and my commentary on their significance to bloodletting.<sup>2, 14</sup>

1. **“Use bloodletting to treat blood repletion”** (血實宜決之) – Su Wen, Chapter 5 (Yin Yang Ying Xiang Da Lun); **“Prick the construction to let blood”** (刺營者出血) – Ling Shu, Chapter 6 (Shou Yao Gang Rou)

These are basic passages that define what bloodletting can treat and at what level it can be applied. One of the most important actions associated with bloodletting is quickening the blood to expel stasis, as blood stasis is a form of repletion of the blood. A second form of blood repletion is blood heat. The association of blood with construction-ying illustrates the close relationship

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between qi and blood. Furthermore it explains why bloodletting can rectify qi as well as blood.

### 2. **“Treat people in the East with stone needles”** (東方治宜砭石) – Su Wen, Chapter 12 (Yi Fa Fang Yi Lun)

Su Wen, Chapter 12 (*Yi Fa Fang Yi Lun*) discusses the 5 treatment methods that correspond to the 5 regions of China. Here, stone needles (*bian* stones) refer to both bloodletting and opening pustulating sores or abscesses. This chapter explains that people who live in the East of China have diets rich in salt and fish. Over-consumption of fish causes heat evils to accumulate in the middle jiao, and over-consumption of salt is described as damaging to the blood. Thus, East dwellers are treated with bloodletting to clear repletion heat. Furthermore, because of this repletion heat these people develop sores that should be opened with stone needles.

### 3. **“Chronic blood clots should be expelled”** (宛陳則除之) – Ling Shu, Chapter 1 (Jiu Zhen Shi Er Yuan); **“Decayed blood that has been accumulated should be treated by bloodletting to remove blood clots slowly”** (菴陳則除之者，出惡血也) – Su Wen, Chapter 54 (Zhen Jie)

These passages draw attention to the idea that chronic stasis of the blood needs to be expelled, and that this can be accomplished by bloodletting. Chinese medicine believes that chronic disease will eventually engender blood stasis. Thus, to treat chronic disease, blood should be quickened and stasis expelled.

### 4. **“For light diseases treat shallowly, for severe diseases treat deeply”**

(病間者淺之，甚者深之) – Ling Shu, Chapter 59 (Wei Qi Shi Chang)

Chronic or severe diseases stagnate the blood, and do so at the level of the deep network vessels. Stasis can be expelled by bloodletting, and while this particular passage does not specifically mention bloodletting, it can be implied that severe or chronic diseases that involve stasis at the level of the deep network vessels, can and should be treated by bloodletting.

### 5. **“When blood vessels are diseased, regulate the blood;”**

(病在脈，調之血) **“When blood is diseased, regulate the network vessels”** (病在血，調之絡) – Su Wen, Chapter 62 (Dong Shu)

Blood relates to both the blood vessels as well as the network vessels. Again, the primary method of rectifying blood, in addition to acupuncture and herbs, is bloodletting. Bloodletting can thus be used to treat diseases of the blood vessels, an idea further discussed in the Ling Shu, Chapter 7 (Guan Zhen – see below for more information). Since bloodletting is done at the network vessels, it can also treat pathologies of the blood in general, including blood stasis and blood heat, for example.

### 6. **“If knotting occurs in the network vessels this is disharmony of the blood, sedate to rid the clots and restore movement”**

(其結絡之，脈結血不和，決之乃行) – Ling Shu, Chapter 64 (Yin Yang Er Shi Wu Ren)

According to Wiseman, “knot” or “bind” (jie) implies something has become stiff, tight or hard. In this case there is a local accumulation of a pathogen of sorts, such as accumulation of static phlegm or blood. Here, the

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Ling Shu describes binding or knotting in the network vessels, meaning blood stasis. To treat this one needs to sedate and remove the clots, which is accomplished by bloodletting.

7. **“When a person lives a leisurely life and is happy, disease arises in the flesh; treat with stone needles”** (形樂志樂，病生於肉，治之以針石) – Su Wen, Chapter 24 (Xue Qi Xing Zhi)

This statement needs to be understood in the context of the rest of Su Wen, Chapter 24 (Xue Qi Xing Zhi). Another line in this same chapter says that when a person lives a life of leisure but suffers emotionally, disease attacks the channels and needs to be treated with acupuncture and moxibustion. Chinese medicine believes that internal damage by the 7 affects (emotional suffering) particularly disturbs the liver’s governing of free coursing. Thus, qi easily becomes stagnant, and then, as a result, other diseases arise.<sup>15</sup> Thus, since the original pattern of disharmony is liver depression, qi stagnation in the channels, acupuncture and moxibustion are the effective treatment since they specifically are best at rectifying qi. When people lead a life of leisure (e.g. have enough food and do not want materially), and they are emotionally happy, they are less prone to internal damage by the 7 affects. Thus, diseases may be ones due to a life of excess, such as accumulation of dampness phlegm from dietary irregularities, or blood stasis patterns from inactivity combined with indulgence in rich foods. Such diseases manifest as repletion pathogens of a material basis (at the level of the flesh), and as such can be drained by bloodletting.

8. **“One may let blood and qi from the Yangming (刺陽明，出血氣); one may let blood without damaging qi on the Taiyang (刺厥陰，出血惡氣);**

## Bloodletting in the Huang Di Nei Jing

one may let blood without damaging qi on the Jueyin. (刺厥陰，出血惡氣)” – Su Wen, Chapter 24 (Xue Qi Xing Zhi)

There are differences in the distribution of qi and blood in the various channels based on their six-stage designations. The Yangming is replete with both qi and blood, and the Taiyang and Jueyin channels are replete more with blood than qi. Thus, it is relatively safe to let blood from these channels without worry of damaging qi or blood. Common areas to bleed include, for example, the popliteal fossa, which, as previously mentioned, is the most frequently cited area for bloodletting in the Nei Jing. This area is of course located on the Foot Taiyang. In Tung’s acupuncture, the posterior trunk is one of the most commonly bled areas and all points on the posterior trunk, with few exceptions, are only bled and not needled. This use of bloodletting thus satisfies the rules in this passage.

## Bloodletting in the Guan Zhen

*Ling Shu*, Chapter 7 (*Guan Zhen*<sup>a</sup>) is the *locus classicus* of many classical acupuncture techniques still used in modern clinical practice. It is in this chapter, as well as *Ling Shu*, Chapter 1 (*Jiu Zhen Shi Er Yuan*), that the Nine Needles are introduced and their manipulations described. In terms of the general writing of the chapter, it is not specifically written in the format of question and answer between Qi Bo and Huang Di as is most of the *Nei Jing*, but, according to Ma Yuan Tai,<sup>b</sup> the style of the chapter is consistent with a discussion given by Qi Bo.

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<sup>a</sup> 官針

<sup>b</sup> Ma Yuan Tai, stylized Ma Shi, was a Tang dynasty (618 – 907 C.E.) physician who wrote important commentaries on the *Ling Shu*

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Bloodletting makes several appearances in the *Guan Zhen*. First is in the general description of the lance needle (*jeng zhen<sup>a</sup>*), which is the predecessor of the modern bloodletting needle, the three-edged needle (*san leng zhen<sup>b</sup>*). This chapter explains that the lance needle is used to bleed the *luo* vessels and is used to treat deep-lying disease, e.g., disease that has entered into the five *zang*. Later in the chapter, 12 needle methods based on the 12 channels are listed. The twelfth method, *zan ci<sup>c</sup>*, is when needling purposefully elicits bleeding, even though the use of the lance needle is not specified. This method is indicated in the text for treating inflammation and welling-abscesses (*yong<sup>d</sup>*).

After the discussion of the Nine Needles, their methods, and the 12 methods by channel, there is a description in the characteristic style of systematic correspondences of needling methods for the 5 phases, and thus, by extension, the 5 *zang*-viscera and 5 tissues. *Bao wen ci<sup>e</sup>*, leopard spot pricking, is described as needling the superficial *jing luo*, visible as spider nevi, to create bleeding that looks like spots on the surface of the skin. This method is a way of treating the blood vessels and is thus related to the fire phase and the heart viscus. To summarize, in this key chapter of the *Ling Shu* we see bloodletting indicated for chronic or deep-seated disease, diseases of inflammation, welling-abscesses, and diseases of the heart viscus or blood vessels.<sup>2, 14, 16, 17</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> 鋒針

<sup>b</sup> 三棱針

<sup>c</sup> 贊刺

<sup>d</sup> 癰

<sup>e</sup> 豹文刺



### Indications for Bloodletting in the Nei Jing

In addition to the *Guan Zhen*, as already mentioned, many chapters of the *Nei Jing*, *Su Wen* and *Ling Shu* refer directly to bloodletting or filiform needling methods that purposely let blood. Below is a list organized by specific indications along with chapter references, my commentary, and translations of the relevant passages. This is by no means an exhaustive list but rather a sampling of the wide range of indications for bloodletting. The translations are based on the Wu and Wu *Nei Jing* translation with corrections and editing based on my own translations from this and other modern versions of the text.<sup>2, 16, 18</sup>

#### 1. Dental Caries

*Su Wen*, Chapter 63 (*Min Ci Lun*) says, “For dental caries prick the hand yangming. If this does not work, prick the vessel above the damaged teeth [to let blood] and it will be cured.” For example, in contemporary texts, points such as LI1 (*Shang Yang*) and LI2 (*Er Jian*) are indicated for diseases of the teeth.<sup>19</sup> These points may be bled to treat these indications.

#### 2. Epistaxis

*Ling Shu*, Chapter 26 (*Za Bing*) says, “When a nosebleed does not stop flowing, treat the foot Taiyang. To clot blood, treat the hand Taiyang. If it does not stop, needle Wangu (SI4). If this still does not stop the bleeding, prick Weizhong (BL40) until it bleeds.”

## Pricking the Vessels

### 3. Impediment (Bi)

As previously mentioned, *Ling Shu*, Chapter 7 (*Guan Zhen*) indicates bloodletting for the treatment of chronic impediment. This chapter, and *Ling Shu*, Chapter 1 (*Jiu Zhen Shi Er Yuan*) can also be read to infer that bloodletting indeed treats all chronic disease.<sup>17</sup>

*Ling Shu*, Chapter 6 (*Shou Yao Gang Rou*) gives a general description of length of treatment based on the length of time a disease has been present. It begins by stating that a disease of 9 days duration requires 3 treatments. A disease of longer duration requires more treatments, and the most chronic conditions require bloodletting. Specifically, it says, “In long-term impediment, inspect the superficial blood vessels and treat by letting blood.”

### 4. Headache

*Ling Shu*, Chapter 24 (*Jue Bing*) says, “For Jue headache when the head’s vessels are in pain, the heart is sad, the patient cries, the head trembles and the stirring pulses (*dong mai*<sup>a</sup>) are full, prick to let blood then regulate (*tiao*<sup>b</sup>) the foot jueyin.” This is a case when liver repletion causes headache. Zhang Shi<sup>c</sup> explains that this means to bloodlet vessels on the head locally and then needle points on the foot jueyin liver channel<sup>17</sup> (for example, Lv3 is indicated for headache).

The same chapter continues, “For jue headache when the patient sighs and is forgetful, and the pain undetectable by pressure, treat the stirring pulses on the right and left of the head, followed by the foot taiyin.” In this case

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<sup>a</sup> 動脈

<sup>b</sup> 調

<sup>c</sup> Zhang An Yin, stylized Zhang Shi, was another Tang Dynasty physician who wrote commentaries on the *Ling Shu* as a collaborator of Ma Yuan Tai.

Zhang Shi says that since the spleen governs reflection (y<sub>2</sub>), there is forgetfulness in headache related to the foot taiyin channel. He advises bloodletting locally on the head and then needling the spleen channel<sup>17</sup> (i.e., distal spleen points such as Sp3 and Sp4 are indicated for headache<sup>19, 20</sup>).

Finally, *Ling Shu*, Chapter 24 (Jue Bing) states, “For jue headache when the patient has acute pain and the vessels anterior and posterior to the ears are hot, drain by letting blood, then treat the foot shaoyang.” In this case the acute pain is a result of upstirring of ministerial fire, which, is governed by the shaoyang. According to Zhang Shi, Treatment is to bloodlet the network vessels anterior and posterior to the ear and then needle the foot shaoyang<sup>17</sup> (at points such as Gb41).

### 5. Heart Disease

As previously mentioned, *Ling Shu*, Chapter 7 (*Guan Zhen*) discusses bloodletting in the form of “leopard spot pricking” as a general method of treating the heart viscus. *Ling Shu*, Chapter 23 (*Re Bing*) says, “For heart mounting sudden pain prick the foot taiyin and jueyin and let the blood network vessels.” According to Zhang Shi, the blood network vessels that are implied in this passage are located distally along these channels on the feet.<sup>17</sup>

### 6. Kidney Disease

According to *Ling Shu*, Chapter 20 (*Wu Xie*), “Evil in the kidney causes disease. There is pain in the bones and yin impediment. In yin impediment, pressing cannot localize the pain, there is abdominal swelling, lumbar pain, difficult bowel movements, pain and stiffness in the shoulders, and periodic dizziness. Treat yongquan (Kd1) and Kunlun (Bl60). If there are visible spider nevi prick them to bleed.” While not specified by the source text, the spider

## Pricking the Vessels

nevi to be pricked may be located distally along the channels or locally to the site of disease.

### 7. Liver and Gallbladder Disease

*Ling Shu*, Chapter 19 (*Si Shi Qi*) says, “When there is vomiting and in the vomit bitterness (bile), and the breaths are long, the heart center is shaking and shaking, and the person is fearful of being arrested, the evil is in the gallbladder. There is counterflow in the stomach. The gallbladder overflows and there is bitter taste in the mouth. The stomach qi counterflows and causes vomiting, and there will be bile. Treat Sanli (St36) to descend stomach qi counterflowing. Prick the shaoyang blood network vessels to block gallbladder counterflow. Regulate vacuity and repletion to expel evil.”

According to *Ling Shu*, Chapter 20 (*Wu Xie*), “For evil in the liver, there is dual pain in the center and rib-side, cold in the center [middle jiao], and diseased blood is inside. There is pain of the joints and foot swelling when walking. Prick Xingjian (Lv2) to lower qi from the rib-side, supplement Sanli (St36) to warm the stomach and center. Prick the blood network vessels to disperse evil blood.” While the source text does not mention which blood vessels should be bloodlet, Ma Shi suggests bloodletting at the visible spider nevi along the foot jueyin channel.<sup>17</sup>

### 8. Loss of Voice (Dysphonia)

*Ling Shu*, Chapter 21 (*Han Re Bing*) states, “When there is sudden loss of voice and blocked qi, needle Futu (LI18) and let blood from the root of the tongue.” *Ling Shu*, Chapter 69 (*You Hui Wu Yan*) says, “Huang Di asked: What pricking can treat [loss of voice]? Qi Bo answered: Treat the leg shaoyin, which ascends to the tongue...Doubly drain the blood vessels to remove turbid qi.”

Jin Jin and Yu Ye (M-HN-20) are points, which, according to contemporary texts as well, are bled to treat dysphonia.

### 9. Lumbar Pain

*Ling Shu*, Chapter 26 (*Za Bing*) says that bloodletting at *Wei Zhong* (Bl40) is indicated for lumbar pain, as is the case with modern acupuncture texts.<sup>19</sup> *Su Wen*, Chapter 41 (*Ci Yao Tong*), a chapter dedicated specifically to treatment of lumbar pain, lists multiple indications and contraindications associated with bloodletting for lumbar pain during different seasons:

- “Foot Taiyang vessel back pain – heavy sensation on neck, spine, buttocks and back; bleed *Wei Zhong* (Bl40), but do not bleed in spring.”
- “[Foot] Shaoyang vessel back pain – feels like skin being pricked by needle, patient cannot face up or down and cannot look around; bleed the end of the shaoyang bone [probably Gb34], but do not bleed in summer.”
- “[Foot] Yangming vessel back pain – so painful patient cannot look backwards and they are sorrow stricken; bleed three marks in front of the knee cap on the yangming (St36), do not bleed in autumn.”
- “Foot Shaoyin back pain – pain pulls at the inner spine; bleed two marks above the inner malleolus on the shaoyin (Kd7); do not bleed in spring, too much bleeding will cause blood weakness.”
- “[Foot] Jueyin back pain – severe pain and tightness like a bowstring when drawn; needle the vessel of the jueyin (Lv5).”

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- “Resolving vessel (jie mai<sup>a</sup>) back pain – chest pain, dim eyesight, urinary incontinence; prick the resolving channel located at back of knee tendons (Bl39); prick the dark vessels until the blood runs red.”

## 10. Lung Disease

*Su Wen*, Chapter 32 (*Ci Re*) says, “For patients with lung heat...prick the hand taiyin and yangming to let blood the size of a large bean. The disease is thus cured.” While the location for bloodletting is not specifically mentioned here, points such as the jing well point and luo network point of the hand taiyin, and the jing well point of the hand yangming are indicated for diseases related to lung heat.<sup>19</sup>

## 11. Mania and Withdrawal (Dian Kuang<sup>b</sup>)

*Ling Shu*, Chapter 22 (*Dian Kuang*) describes the theory and treatment of mania and withdrawal. It says, “At the onset of mania, first there is sadness, joy forgotten. Then there is bitter anger, the person is easily frightened, and grief and wasting away. Treat the hand taiyin and yangming. Use bloodletting and stop when the blood changes. Then treat the leg taiyin and yangming.” *Su Wen*, Chapter 62 (*Tiao Jing Lun*) says, “When there is surplus of spirit, the person will laugh uncontrollably...Prick the small network vessels to let blood.”

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<sup>a</sup> 解脈

<sup>b</sup> 癲狂

### 12. Replete Diseases

*Ling Shu*, Chapter 48 (*Jin Fu*) generally suggests that bloodletting is appropriate for diseases of repletion. It says, “Regulate vacuity and repletion and vacuity and repletion will end. Drain the blood network vessels; when the blood is exhausted the danger will be over.”

More specifically, *Ling Shu*, Chapter 75 (*Ci Jie Zhen Xie*) indicates that bloodletting is used to treat diseases of repletion heat. It says, “When there is great heat over the entire body and mania causing the patient to see, hear and speak abnormally, inspect the foot yangming and great network vessel. For vacuity supplement and for static blood drain [by bloodletting].” In modern texts, *Feng Long* (St40), the luo-network point of the foot yangming, can be bloodlet to treat repletion heat diseases such as mania and withdrawal, or epilepsy.<sup>21</sup>

### 13. Tetany (Jing<sup>a</sup>)

*Wei Zhong* (Bl40) is indicated for pain and stiffness especially along the spine and back. It is also indicated for wind stroke that can result in tonic contracture.<sup>19, 21</sup> *Ling Shu*, Chapter 23 (*Re Bing*) says, “For wind tetany patients, first prick the foot taiyang at *Wei Zhong* (Bl40); prick the network vessels until they bleed.”

### 14. Diseases of the Throat and Mouth

*Su Wen*, Chapter 63 (*Miu Ci Lun*) says, “When the throat becomes so swollen the patient cannot swallow, and the patient cannot spit out the saliva, prick in front of *Rangu* (Kd2) to let blood. For the right treat the left and for the

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<sup>a</sup> 瘰

## Pricking the Vessels

left treat the right.” *Ling Shu*, Chapter 9 (*Zhong Shi*) tells readers, “To treat double tongue<sup>a</sup> (e.g. swollen blood vessels on the underside of the tongue), insert a sword shaped needle into the tendon below the tongue to let bad blood.”

## 15. Traumatic Injury

Traumatic injury causes blood stasis, and bloodletting effectively quickens blood, as will be described in more detail in a later section of this book. *Su Wen*, Chapter 63 (*Min Ci Lun*) says, “When one is injured and there is stagnated blood internally, it causes abdominal pain, constipation and urinary retention; first drink herbs; in the upper the jueyin vessel is injured and in the lower the shaoyin network vessel is injured, prick to bleed in front of Rangu (Kd2) below the medial malleolus; prick the moving vessel on the dorsum of the foot (St42); if ineffective prick three hairs above one mark (Lv1), prick the left for the right and the right for the left.”

## 16. Disease of the Lower Abdomen

*Ling Shu*, Chapter 19 (*Si Shi Qi*) says, “Pain and swelling in the lower abdomen and inability to pass urine is due to evil in the sanjiao, treat with the taiyang great network. Also treat by needling the visible network vessels along the bladder channel and the knotted network vessels on the decreasing yin (liver).” Zhang Shi explains here that this passage means to bloodlet the vessels near *Wei Yang* (Bl39) at the popliteal fossa.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> *Chong She* 重舌



### Bloodletting Contraindications in the Nei Jing

Whenever there are indications for a particular therapy there must also be contraindications. The *Nei Jing* is very specific about contraindications to different therapies based on the conditions and needs of the individual patient, as well as the protocols appropriate for different diseases. A good example of very specific bloodletting contraindications is found in *Su Wen*, Chapter 41 (*Ci Yao Tong Lun*), where, as mentioned above, in certain seasons bloodletting should not be allowed when treating lumbar pain. Other chapters list yet more contraindications specific to bloodletting.

Since bloodletting is a draining technique, one must be careful in its application when the patient is particularly vacuous. The Tang dynasty *Nei Jing* commentator Ma Yuan Tai admonishes in *Ling Shu*, Chapter 10 (*Jing Mai*) that bloodletting is contraindicated for vacuity patterns. *Ling Shu*, Chapter 61 (*Wu Jin*), “Five Contraindications,” lists five types of depletions. These include wasting of the bodily form, massive hemorrhage, copious diarrhea, profuse sweating, and post-partum blood loss. In general, bloodletting is contraindicated or should be used with extreme caution in these conditions. *Su Wen*, Chapter 52 (*Ci Jun Lun*), “Treatise on Prohibitions in Pricking,” mentions other cautions in bloodletting. If one pricks the large artery on the foot dorsum, it may not stop bleeding and death will result. Improperly pricking the large vessels under the tongue may lead to unstoppable bleeding and will damage speaking. When the collaterals under the foot are damaged by bloodletting, swelling results. Pricking the large vessel at *Wei Zhong* (Bl40) too deeply will cause fainting and pallor. Improper pricking of *Qi Chong* (St30) will not allow blood to exit and swelling results. When pricking the large blood vessels on the inner thigh, there may be continuous bleeding and death. Improper pricking at the hand *taiyin* at *Tian Fu* (Lu3) will cause copious blood

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loss and death. Most of these prohibitions seem to focus on damaging arteries leading to swelling and pain from hematoma, or uncontrolled bleeding.

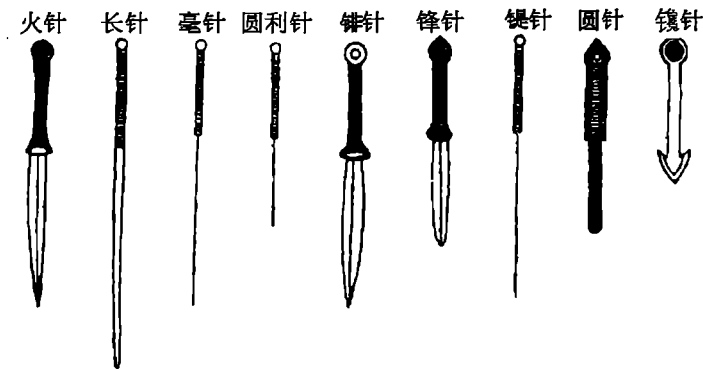


Diagram of the Nine Ancient Needles  
(From the Zhen Jiu Da Cheng)<sup>22</sup>

## IV. BASIC CHINESE MEDICAL THEORY

### RELATED TO BLOODLETTING

As with all aspects of Chinese medical treatment, detailed understanding is predicated on mastery of basic theory, and thus, before discussing the functions and indications for bloodletting, it is important to review some basic concepts in Chinese medicine. Since bloodletting deals primarily with one physiological substance, blood, first we must review the formation, function, and pathologies related to it. Second, we must examine the structures of the body that are actually bled; as discussed above, the *Su Wen* instructs us to treat blood by regulating the network vessels. Thus, a review of the network vessels can further illustrate how and why bloodletting is applied.

#### Blood in Chinese Medicine

Blood, along with qi, fluids and jing, is one of the main physiological substances Chinese medicine recognizes. However it is important not to conflate the Chinese medical and modern biomedical understandings of what blood is. For example, in Chinese medicine blood is said to flow in both the blood vessels as well as in the channels, and, of course, this is not the case in western medicine. Likewise, a patient with a Chinese medical blood vacuity pattern may not be anemic, and *vice versa*. According to *Ling Shu*, Chapter 30 (*Jue Qi Pian*), blood formation begins in the middle jiao with the spleen extracting, by its power of movement and transformation, the finest material components of food and drink that enter the stomach. This base material is then sent to the upper jiao where it mixes with fluids and jing-essence in the heart to form blood. Blood then circulates through the body along with

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construction qi. Because of this close relationship it is said that “blood is the mother of qi” and that “qi is the commander of blood,” and sometimes blood is referred to by the compound term construction-blood.<sup>a</sup>

The primary function of blood, like construction qi, is to nourish the body, including the viscera, bowels, tissues, and channels. When the body structures are nourished they can then function. According to *Su Wen*, Chapter 10 (*Wu Zang Sheng Cheng Lun*), “the liver receives blood, so there is sight; the legs receive blood and thus are able to walk; the hands receive blood and so are able to grip; the fingers receive blood and are able to grasp.” Since blood is a yin substance closely related to fluids and jing-essence, it furthermore has the function of moistening the body.<sup>15</sup>

Also, like qi, blood is related to the viscera. Chinese medicine states that the heart governs the blood, the liver regulates and stores the blood, and the spleen manages the blood (e.g. prevents blood extravasation). When there is an excess of blood in storage by the liver, it is redirected back to the kidney to undergo transformation into jing-essence. Although not directly related, since the lungs govern qi, which in turn commands the blood, and the ancestral qi which resides in the chest aids in the circulation of qi and blood, there is a connection between lungs and blood as well.

## Pathologies of Blood

There are 3 main pathologies associated with blood. First, as with all the other essential substances (qi, fluids and essence), there can be vacuity of blood (xue xu).<sup>b</sup> Blood vacuity arises for several reasons, primarily, either loss of

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<sup>a</sup> 營血

<sup>b</sup> 血虛

blood, as in hemorrhage, or failure of the body to produce blood leads to its vacuity. However, blood stasis can also lead to a vacuity pattern by interfering with the production of new blood. The main manifestations of blood vacuity are, understandably, signs and symptoms of malnourishment, including pallor, dizziness, flowery vision (*mu hua*)<sup>a</sup>, dry skin or hair, and a pulse that is fine and weak.

The other two blood pathologies are primarily ones of repletion, namely blood stasis (*xue yu*)<sup>b</sup> and blood heat (*xue re*).<sup>c</sup> Blood stasis can refer to either systemic impairment in blood circulation or local accumulation of blood. A more detailed description of the etiology and pathogenesis of blood stasis will follow later. Blood heat arises when heat or heat toxins enter the blood, either from external contraction or internal engenderment of heat. The signs and symptoms of blood heat usually include bleeding as heat causes extravasation of blood, and visible maculopapular eruptions. Since bloodletting therapy is primarily a method of draining, the main functions of bloodletting relate to blood's repletion patterns, namely quickening the blood and transforming stasis (corresponding to blood stasis pattern), and clearing heat (corresponding to blood heat). These main functions and then secondary functions of bloodletting will be described in the next section.

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<sup>a</sup> 目花

<sup>b</sup> 血瘀

<sup>c</sup> 血熱

## Pricking the Vessels

### The Network Vessels (*Luo Mai*)<sup>a</sup>

The network vessels are the aspect of the channel system most closely related to blood and thus the actual structures directly treated by bloodletting therapy. The network vessels fill the interstices (*cou li*),<sup>b</sup> the space between the skin and flesh, and then spread out over the entire body as the grandchild network vessels (*sun luo*).<sup>a</sup> There are also deeper pathways of the network vessels that penetrate the interior. The network vessels have several functions, including balancing yin and yang channels in the limbs by connecting interior-exterior related channel pairs, nourishing the body by supplying blood, protecting the body during external attack, connecting the exterior and interior, connecting the right and left sides of the body (by networking between channels at the surface over the midline), and aiding in blood production.<sup>23</sup>

According to *Ling Shu*, Chapter 10 (*Jing Mai*), the network vessels are the visible vessels on the body (i.e., they can be seen as spider nevi and other visible vessels) while the primary channels are invisible. Furthermore, pathology can be determined by inspecting the vessels: blue vessels indicate cold and pain, red indicates stomach heat, and black vessels, especially at the thenar eminence, indicates chronic impediment. This same seminal chapter describes that, unlike the primary channels, network vessels do not cross the large articulations of the body such as the knees, shoulders, elbows or hips. The confined nature of the network vessels explains why they are prone to blood stasis. Interestingly, in some Chinese qigong systems the major articulations are thought to be common locations of qi stagnation and blood stasis, and are thus physically stimulated or exercised to prevent systemic problems.

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<sup>a</sup> 絡脈

<sup>b</sup> 腠理

Ma Shi explains that *Ling Shu*, Chapter 10 (*Jing Mai*) implies that treatment of the network vessels is accomplished by bloodletting the visible vessels lying near the network points (*luo xue*).<sup>17</sup> The confinement of the network vessels to the spaces between the large articulations explains why the network points are mostly located between either the knees and ankles, or the elbows and wrists. This also sheds light on why some of the most important points to bloodlet in certain acupuncture traditions, such as in Tung's lineage of acupuncture, are located between the knees and ankles, since they correspond to the locations of the network vessels and network points. Similarly it sheds light on why the most commonly bloodlet area mentioned in the *Huang Di Nei Jing* is the popliteal fossa, a location at a major articulation. Quickening the blood at the major articulations would allow for movement of blood at the areas that act as the gates, so to speak, of the network vessels

Each of the network vessels has a distinct trajectory and pathology in both repletion and vacuity. For a more detailed description please see *Ling Shu*, Chapter 10 (*Jing Mai*).<sup>17</sup>

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³ 孫絡

ᵇ 絡穴

## V. FUNCTIONS OF BLOODLETTING

Because the production and circulation of blood is complex and involves many of the zang-viscera and various levels of the channel system, bloodletting therapy has a number of reliable actions on the body, both when applied in general and when applied to specific points or areas.<sup>16</sup> Conceptually, these can be divided into primary and secondary functions. Primary functions are effects that are the direct result of the intervention due to its mechanical effects on the body. Secondary functions are understood as the results of a primary function or functions. Again, since bloodletting is a method of draining (*xie fa*), primary functions reflect the two main repletion pathologies related to blood as a physiological substance, namely blood stasis and blood heat.

### Primary Functions of Bloodletting

#### 1. Quickens the blood and transforms stasis (*huo xue hua yu*) 活血化瘀

This is an essential and primary function of bloodletting. When blood fails to move properly, stasis forms. The physical act of creating a wound that bleeds on the surface of the body induces obvious movement of blood from that wound. When blood begins to move from that wound, locally stasis is transformed. When bloodletting is done over areas of visible spider nevi blood is quickened both locally as well as distally along the pathway of the *luo*-network vessels and primary channels (which both carry blood) to which the bled area pertains. Since the *luo*-network vessels and primary channels

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<sup>16</sup> 瀉法



penetrate interiorly to the viscera and bowels, bloodletting on the surface can quicken blood internally in the viscera and bowels.

### 2. Clears heat (xie re) 瀉熱

Bloodletting clears heat both locally to where it is applied as well as systemically. In injuries associated with localized heat and swelling, opening the surface of the body allows for the venting of heat evils. In *Ling Shu*, Chapter 23 (*Re Bing*) bloodletting is mentioned several times as a treatment for diseases caused by heat internally. Bloodletting at certain specific points allows it to clear heat based on the dual inherent function of clearing heat coupled with the functions of the point pricked. For example, jing-well points are treated for conditions of repletion heat. When jing-well points are bled, their inherent function of clearing heat is accentuated by bloodletting's specific function of clearing heat as well.<sup>21</sup>

The heat-clearing effect of bloodletting can furthermore be related to its function of quickening the blood and transforming stasis. In some cases heat can be the direct result of blood stasis. *Ling Shu*, Chapter 81 (*Yong Ju*) states, "When ying-construction and wei-defense stay in the channels for a long time, blood will stagnate and stop moving. Wei-defense qi thusly cannot penetrate and move due to the obstruction and starts producing heat." Blood is yin and since yin tends towards non-movement, blood becomes static easily. Wei-defense qi is yang and wants to move because of its yang nature. When blood stagnates, so too can the wei-yang, as the movement of qi and blood are intimately connected. Similarly, in the taiyang stage of cold damage (*shang han*), stagnation of wei-yang qi can result in heat formation. Thus, bloodletting, by virtue of its ability to quicken blood and transform stasis, can indirectly induce movement of wei-yang that has become stagnant and clear the resulting heat of

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that stagnation. This is why, for example, bloodletting can clear heat and resolve the exterior in exterior cold damage.

## Secondary Functions of Bloodletting

### 1. Stops pain (zhi tong) 止痛

There is a statement of fact in Chinese medicine that pain is a result of stagnation (*bu tong ze tong<sup>a</sup>*), and that the treatment to stop pain is thus rectifying qi and blood to eliminate stagnation (*tong ze bu tong<sup>b</sup>*). Bloodletting, as a primary function, quickens blood. Qi and blood circulate together in the channels, and thus rectifying blood will also rectify qi. Bloodletting thus eliminates both qi stagnation and blood stasis, and consequently it can stop pain.

### 2. Resolves toxins (jie du) 解毒

The term “toxins” has several meanings in Chinese medicine.<sup>6</sup> First, toxins can refer to any particularly virulent evil qi. As previously mentioned, bloodletting clears heat and also induces movement of stagnant qi, including wei-defense qi, by quickening blood. This has the combined function of expelling external evils, especially external heat evils. When qi and blood move normally and in balance with each other, the body is better able to counter external evils; bloodletting can thus be seen to help not only in the resolution of toxins but also in the prevention of their reemergence.

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<sup>a</sup> 不通則痛

<sup>b</sup> 通則不痛

Second, toxins refer to evil qi that causes painful reddening and swelling. Reddening and swelling indicate heat, while pain and swelling indicate stagnation; since bloodletting both clears heat and rectifies qi and blood, it can resolve this second type of toxins as well.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Disperses swellings (xiao zhong) 消腫

Swellings are enlargements due to accumulated blood, fluids, pus or toxins.<sup>6</sup> Opening the surface with a three-edged needle can allow fluids, blood and pus to exit the body to expel and resolve toxins. Thus, using the three-edged needle can disperse all the causes of swelling.<sup>18</sup>

### 4. Disperses concretions (xiao zheng) 消癥

A concretion is a type of abdominal mass located typically in the lower burner and associated with pain, distension and a definite shape. It is a result of obstruction of qi leading to gradually accumulation of blood stasis, and is seen in many types of gynecological diseases. Because bloodletting quickens the blood and transforms stasis, it can help to disperse concretions as well as other types of masses. In Tung's acupuncture, bloodletting is commonly indicated in the treatment of a variety of masses and cancers.<sup>24</sup>

### 5. Stops itching (zhi yang) 止癢

Itching is caused by either wind or blood diseases.<sup>6</sup> Wind-cold, wind-heat and wind-dampness all can result in itching, and either blood heat or vacuity can likewise create itching (although bloodletting is only appropriate in blood vacuity cases when blood stasis is present simultaneously). Wind conditions fetter the exterior, and blood vacuity means that the skin and

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exterior cannot be nourished. In blood stasis, blood does not normally circulate normally failing and consequently fails to nourish and moisten the skin. In all these cases, qi cannot arrive at the surface and itching results. According to Wang Qing Ren in the *Yi Lin Gai Cuo* (Correcting the Errors in the forest of Medicine), the treatment for this type of condition is the use of blood quickening medicinals to free stasis and allow qi to move to the exterior.<sup>25</sup> Thus, because bloodletting quickens blood, and blood stasis can result in itching, bloodletting can resolve itching.

When itching is caused by heat, especially heat in the blood, clearing heat by bloodletting is an applicable treatment to ameliorate symptoms and resolve the root pattern.

## 6. Settles and tranquilizes (zhen jing) 鎮靜

In the *Ling Shu*, Chapter 7 (*Guan Zhen*), one of the five needle methods listed is called *bao wen ci*, leopard spot pricking. It is described as needling the superficial jing luo, visible as spider nevi, to create bleeding that looks like spots on the surface of the skin. This method is a way of treating the blood vessels and is thus related to the fire phase and the heart viscus. In Chinese medicine the heart is said to house the shen-spirit. Bloodletting, by treating blood vessels, thus directly affects the heart and can be used to settle the spirit.<sup>18</sup>

Heat, especially heat in the Yangming, is another cause of irritability and agitation. For example, the *Ling Shu*, *Dian Kuang* (Chapter 22), mentions bloodletting the Yangming channel for treating mania. Blood stasis can likewise create mental confusion and possibly agitation as in senile dementia. According to line 237 of the *Shang Han Lun*, “when in a Yangming disease the person is forgetful, there will be blood amassment.”<sup>26</sup> Later in the *Shang Han Lun*, a

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<sup>25</sup> 豹文刺

condition of heat entering the blood chamber is described (lines 143 through 145). This pattern is a combination of static blood and blood heat due to transformation of exterior pathogens to heat as they enter the uterus. A major symptom of this condition is a disquieted heart-spirit that may lead to delirious speech. Again, since bloodletting both quickens blood and clears heat, it can treat mental disorders due to either or both of these patterns.

### 7. Opens the orifices in emergency conditions (ji jiu kai qiao) 急救開竅

Evils such as blood stasis, heat toxins, or turbid phlegm-heat may block the orifices of the heart leading to acute loss of consciousness. Examples can include traumatic injury leading to loss of consciousness due to development of static blood, or a high fever leading to acute loss of consciousness. In each of these cases, bloodletting to expel stasis, clear heat, and resolve toxins can restore normal cognitive function by opening the orifices. Bloodletting certain specific points accentuates this action. For example, jing-well points restore consciousness, partly because, in terms of the holographic framework (*Quan Xue*) inherent in acupuncture and the channel system, they represent the head or brain.<sup>27</sup> Thus, when there are evils blocking the orifices of the heart and the brain (the seat of cognitive function and consciousness), bloodletting the jing-well points is especially effective at opening the orifices to restore consciousness.

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<sup>27</sup> 全息

## **VI. BLOODLETTING MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Procedure for Bloodletting**

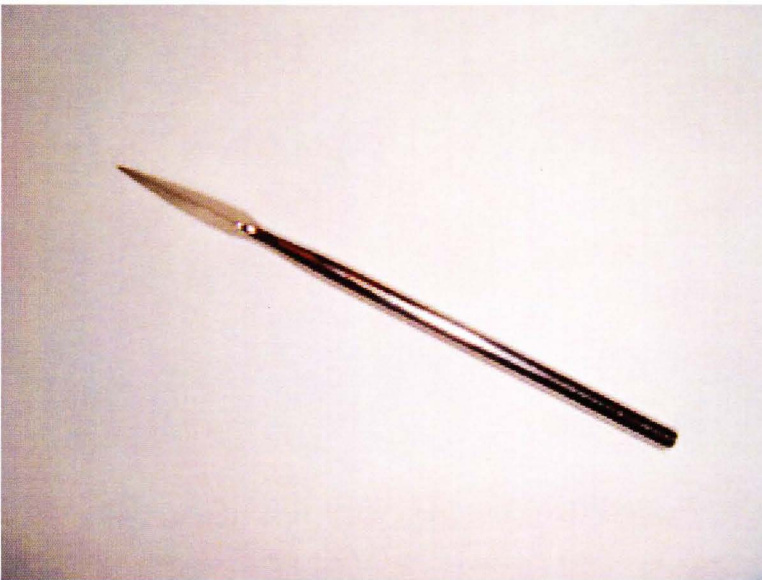
The procedures for bloodletting are similar to those for conventional acupuncture. After the area to be bled has been chosen, the practitioner follows clean needle technique protocols. Before doing any technique, hands should be washed, and prior to the needle insertion there should be a general inspection of the treatment site for cuts, wounds or diseases. Using 70% isopropyl alcohol, swab the area in a manner that touches the area only once (such as in a single circular movement or a linear swipe). The three-edged needle or lancet should then be used to prick the area to be bled deep enough to allow blood to flow, which should then be absorbed with cotton balls. Once the appropriate amount of blood is removed, or the color of the blood lightens and clears (or it stops flowing on its own), then a clean cotton ball can be used to apply direct pressure to the area. If bleeding continues longer, a cotton ball can be taped over the point. Since the general nature of bloodletting creates bleeding, the Clean Needle Technique Manual strongly recommends the use of gloves.<sup>28</sup>

In general, bloodletting should be used cautiously in patients with poor wound healing, such as those with diabetic neuropathies or venous insufficiency. It is also contraindicated for patients with hemorrhagic diseases or vascular tumors. Caution is warranted in overly scared, extremely fatigued, or pregnant patients.<sup>19</sup>

### Needles Used for Bloodletting

#### Three-Edged Needle (San Leng Zhen) 三棱針

The three-edged needle, sometimes called a prismatic needle or a lance needle, is the traditional tool and my preferred needle for bloodletting. They can vary in size, but a typical size that is readily available in disposable form is 2.6mm x 65mm, with a very sharp prismatic tip. Because of the wide tip of the needle, it easily creates bleeding and is appropriate for bloodletting any area of the body. Since the needle is wide, however, caution must be used when being applied over areas of very thin skin.

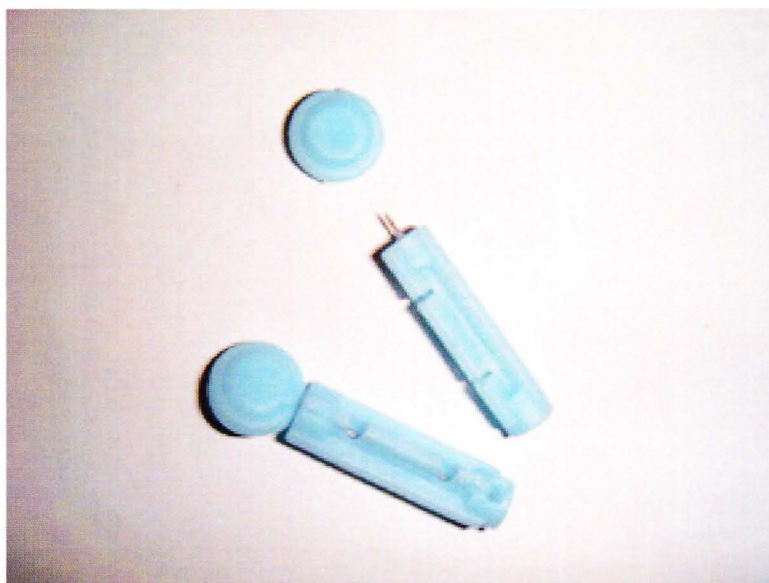


Modern Disposable Three-Edged Needle

## Pricking the Vessels

### Lancet (Cai Xue Zhen) 采血針

The lancet is a small needle in a plastic mounting used to prick the skin for bloodletting. It is commonly used along with a spring-loaded holder to facilitate self glucose testing for diabetics or other patients. The needle body itself is very thin, between 21 to 28 gauge (0.495 – 0.165mm). Because of the very thin diameter, lancets are appropriate for bloodletting shallow points such as jing-well points, but have a harder time drawing blood from points on the trunk.

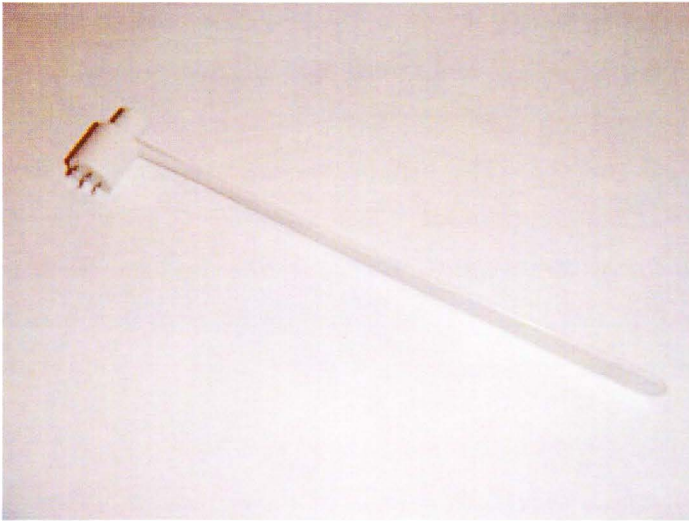


Lancets (One Capped, One Uncapped)



### Seven Star Needle (Qi Xing Zhen) 七星針

The seven star needle, also known as a cutaneous or plum blossom needle, is used to stimulate the skin, sometimes causing bleeding but sometimes not. The needle is composed of between 5 and 7 short needles mounted on a round head and then attached to a flexible handle in the shape of a hammer. (Traditionally, they were made by binding sewing needles to a thin bamboo handle.<sup>19)</sup> The needles are then tapped along areas of the body so that all tips hit at once, creating a mild, superficial stimulation; prolonged or stronger tapping will create slight diffuse bleeding in a pattern similar to the classical leopard spot technique.



Modern Disposable Seven Star Needle

## Pricking the Vessels

### Methods of Applying Bloodletting<sup>29</sup>

#### Point Pricking (Dian Ci Fa) 點刺法

In point pricking, either a three-edged needle or a lancet is used to bleed a specific point or blood vessel in a treatment zone. This method draws on the function of a specific point. For example, jing-well points are bled to clear heat,<sup>21</sup> and single points in Tung's acupuncture are bled for distal indications (see Appendix 6 for point locations and indications).<sup>30</sup>

#### Picking Therapy (Tiao Ci Fa) 挑刺法

In picking therapy the three-edged needle is used to briskly insert and flick out to cause bleeding, in a cutting motion. Alternatively, the three-edged needle is inserted to a depth of about 2-3mm and then lifted to sever white fibers beneath the skin. This method was originally a folk method that was incorporated into professional Chinese medicine after the Communist Revolution in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Examples of points for which this can be applied are *Da Chang Shu* (BL25) or *Ci Liao* (BL32) to treat hemorrhoids, or *Da Zhui* (Du14) to treat conjunctivitis.<sup>29</sup>

#### Diffuse Pricking (San Ci Fa) 散刺法

Diffuse pricking is the use of the three-edged needle, lancet or seven star needle to bleed over a large area, or around the perimeter of a diseased area.<sup>30</sup> This can be used to treat pain conditions, localized inflammation, or dermatological disorders related to heat or blood stasis patterns. Specifically, after a diseased area is chosen, the needle is used to create bleeding in a circular

pattern around the target area. For example, in a patient with eczematous lesions, the area around the perimeter of the lesion will be pricked to bleed in a circle around that lesion.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, areas of pain or local inflammation can be treated by diffuse pricking to create bleeding around the specific lesion.<sup>32</sup> Diffuse pricking is a type of local treatment and is not applied distally to the site of disease.

### Pricking and Cupping (Ci Luo Ba Guan) 刺絡拔罐

Pricking and cupping method uses a three-edged needle, lancet or seven star needle to make one or more small cuts in the treatment area which is subsequently covered with a cup to allow for removal of a greater amount of blood. This method is commonly used to treat cinnabar toxins, high fever (when applied to *Da Zhui* Du14, for example), injury with inflammation, or mammary welling abscesses.<sup>6</sup> Research has suggested this method may also treat hyperlipidemia.<sup>33</sup>

## VII. BLOODLETTING IN CONTEMPORARY

### CHINESE MEDICINE

Bloodletting is described in contemporary Chinese acupuncture texts, however, at best it is given a cursory overview. The most commonly bled points today are the jing-well points.<sup>34</sup> In general this group of points is used to treat heat patterns, unconsciousness or collapse, the opposite and upper regions of their respective channels, fullness below heart, and disquietude of the spirit. Likewise, the *Shi Xuan* (M-UE-1), which are also located on the ends of the fingers, are bled to restore consciousness or to treat high fever.<sup>a</sup> The ying-spring points, especially on the yin channels, also clear heat<sup>21</sup> and these points can consequently be bled for heat indications. According to the *Jia Yi Jing* the jing-well points are also bled for chronic diseases.<sup>35</sup>

Luo-network points, because they are associated with the network vessels, are the last category of points that are traditionally bled. *Ling Shu*, Chapter 10 (*Jing Mai*) lists specific indications for fullness in the network vessels, the treatment for which is bloodletting. The following chart summarizes indications for which luo-network points may be bled.<sup>17, 21</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Interestingly, Dr. Zhong Yong Xiang (see Appendix 3) believes that jing well points are superior to the *Shi Xuan* points for these indications, and that the *Shi*

## Bloodletting in Contemporary Chinese Medicine

Point	Indication	Point	Indication
Lu7	Heat in the palms	LI6	Toothache, deafness
Sp4	Intestinal pain	St40	Epilepsy, mania
Ht5	Burning sensation in the heart	SI7	Pain in the elbow
Kd4	Hemorrhoids, urinary retention	BL58	Lumbar pain, nasal obstruction
Pc6	Cardiac pain	SJ5	Spasms in the elbow
Lv5	Orchitis, priapism	GB37	Jue disease
Ren15	Abdominal pain	Du1	Pain in the spinal column

The most commonly bled point that is not located on the distal extremities, and as previously mentioned, the one that is most commonly indicated for bloodletting in the *Huang Di Nei Jing*, is *Wei Zhong* (BL40). This is an area where venous congestion and spider nevi are seen regularly, and the list of indications for bloodletting is extensive. Contemporary texts state that bloodletting *Wei Zhong* can treat wind stroke, cholera, strangury, back pain, menstrual clots, cinnabar toxins, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, hemorrhoids, sciatica, skin diseases, spinal pain, headache, joint inflammation, post polio syndrome, etc.<sup>21, 36</sup> (See Appendix 1 for a photograph of bloodletting at *Wei Zhong*).

Contemporary Chinese physicians commonly bleed the ear as well. The area of the posterior ear known as the Pressure Lowering Groove is bled to treat hypertension.<sup>37</sup> A case series published in 2003 in the *Jiang Xi Zhong Yi Yao* (Jiangxi Chinese Medicine & Medicinals), described the successful treatment of 69 patients with a combination of bloodletting the ear and conventional acupuncture.<sup>38</sup> The apex of the ear is also an important site for bloodletting.

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*Xuan* points are simply analogs of the jing well points that can easily be applied by laypeople who are unfamiliar with channel pathways and point locations.

## Pricking the Vessels

According to Dr. Yang Wei Jie, bloodletting the ear apex treats any condition of blood stasis in the head, and promotes interaction between the heart and kidneys to treat conditions such as insomnia and disquietude of the spirit. Furthermore bloodletting the ear apex effectively clears heat to treat conditions such as hypertension, fever and eye diseases.<sup>37, 39</sup>

Other acupuncture points are bled according to traditional indications. Below are 2 case studies that illustrate contemporary professional Chinese medical uses of bloodletting therapy. Appendix 5 contains charts describing acupuncture points that are typically bled; these points and their corresponding indications are taken from a variety of English and Chinese language sources.<sup>18, 21, 36</sup>

### Case 1 – Pediatric Fever

A 6 year old boy was brought to my office with a fever of about 40° C. He had already been prescribed antibiotics the day prior, but his fever failed to break with conventional treatment. He was diagnosed with common cold due to wind heat invasion, and the treatment principle was to clear heat and dispel wind. *Da Zhui* (Du14) was pricked with a lancet to express several drops of bright red blood and then *Qu Chi* (LI11) was needled and drained without retention. His temperature was measured at 38° C about 5 minutes after treatment, and by the next day the fever broke completely.

### Case 2 – Acute Shoulder Pain

A 55 year old woman arrived at the clinic having just injured her shoulder carrying groceries. Upon inspection there were several small spider

## Bloodletting in Contemporary Chinese Medicine

nevi in the region of *Jian Yu* (LI15) on the right shoulder. Her range of motion was significantly diminished and the pain was sharp upon movement. The region of *Jian Yu* was pricked several times in the manner of Diffuse Pricking Method, and then she was needled at contralateral *Tiao Kou* (St38) and *Yang Ling Quan* (GB34). During the treatment the patient was asked to mobilize the shoulder, and at the end of the treatment the sharp pain had abated with only a generalized soreness remaining. Furthermore, range of motion returned to normal.

The following chart summarizes examples of other typical contemporary, professional Chinese medical treatment protocols that utilize bloodletting therapy.<sup>40</sup> (For more specific information on indications for each point please see Appendix 5).

## Pricking the Vessels

Disease	Points to Bloodlet for Treatment
Acute Vomiting/Diarrhea	12 Jing Well Points, Pc3, Bl40
Aphasia	Jin Jin, Yu Ye, Pc9, SJ1
Asthma	Ren17 (with cupping at Bl13) (for repletion types)
Cough	Lu10, Lu5 (from external damage); Lu5 (for internal cough)
Epistaxis	Lu11, Du23
Facial Paralysis	St4, Tai Yang, St6, St7; also bloodlet visible blood vessels inside the oral cavity opposite St4
Fever	Du14, Shi Xuan, Lu5, Bl40
General Qi Depression and Blood Stasis	Bl40, Lu5 or Pc3
Headache (Frontal)	Bl2, Yu Yao, Du23
Headache (Lateral)	Tai Yang
Headache (Occipital)	Bl67
Headache (Parietal)	Si Shen Cong
Hypertension (Replete type)	Du20, Pc9
Ischuria	Lv8, Sp6
Lack of Appetite in Children	Si Feng, Ht8
Lumbar Pain	Bl40, Du28
Mania	Ren26, Pc9, Pc7, Lu11
Numbness of the Extremities	Shi Xuan (Upper limb for upper limb numbness and lower limb for lower limb numbness)
Rubella	12 Jing Well Points, Pc3, Bl40
Sore Throat	Lu11
Sun Stroke	Ren26, Shi Xuan, Bl40
Tinea Pedis	Wai Huai Jian M-LE-22
Vertigo (Due to Yang Rising)	Si Shen Cong, Bl2
Wind Stroke (Acute)	12 Jing Well Points, Ren26 (for repletion type)



## VIII. BLOODLETTING IN THE TREATMENT OF CHRONIC DISEASE

One of the most clinically relevant uses of bloodletting therapy in the West is in the treatment of chronic, recalcitrant, or degenerative diseases (hereafter referred to “chronic” disease for short). Even though bloodletting can treat acute conditions effectively, in the West acupuncture and Oriental medicine providers will more commonly see chronic rather than severe acute conditions. The ability of bloodletting to treat chronic disease stems first and foremost from its function of quickening the blood and transforming stasis. While historically in Chinese medicine, chronic disease is usually associated with vacuity patterns of the internal viscera, in particular the kidneys, many physicians of more recent times believe that blood stasis is intimately related to chronic conditions. According to the contemporary Chinese physician and gerontologist Yan De Xin, static blood is the chief mechanism of decline in function due to ageing (*shuai lao*).<sup>41</sup> The twentieth century acupuncture master Tung Ching Chang concurred, believing that all chronic, serious or fatal diseases must involve blood stasis.<sup>42</sup>

### Blood Stasis in Chinese Medicine

Blood stasis is defined by Wiseman as the “impairment or cessation of the normal free flow of blood” and can occur as the result of trauma, bleeding, vacuity patterns, blood cold, or blood heat.<sup>6</sup> The *Huang Di Nei Jing, Su Wen* presents an early model of blood stasis, identifying four major causes for the pattern, namely trauma, cold leading to stasis, fits of anger and other emotional

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<sup>41</sup> 衰老

## Pricking the Vessels

causes, and chronic diseases of vacuity. However the actual term blood stasis, *xue yu*<sup>a</sup>, does not appear in the *Su Wen*; it is first found in the writings of Zhang Zhong Jing.<sup>43</sup> The specific term *xue yu* can be found for example in *Jing Gui Yao Lue*, Chapters 16 and 22.<sup>44</sup> Later, other physicians discussed blood stasis in various contexts. Chao Yuan Fang (Sui dynasty) gave us the first link between blood stasis and gynecological diseases, and Zhu Dan Xi developed his concept of the six depressions, which includes blood stasis. Zhu Dan Xi also used the term *Si Xue*<sup>b</sup>, dead blood, to describe the pattern we recognize as blood stasis.<sup>43</sup>

The basic signs and symptoms associated with blood stasis include visual signs such as dull complexion, cyanosis, stasis macules on the tongue, painful swelling, stabbing and fixed pain, mass formation, bleeding, and occasionally mental symptoms such as delirium.<sup>15</sup> Modern physicians have expanded the pattern identification of blood stasis with other more extensive signs and symptoms. For example, Yan De Xin includes fever, itching, numbness, poor memory and excessive dreaming as indicators of blood stasis.<sup>41</sup> Modern Chinese medical physicians have further extrapolated the paradigm of blood stasis to include a variety of modern medical findings (see Appendix 2 for a description of blood stasis signs and symptoms). Thus, Chinese physicians see increase in blood sedimentation rate, an enlarged heart, arteriosclerosis, hyperlipidemia, the presence of thrombi, high bilirubin levels,<sup>41, 43</sup> white blood cell c-fos gene expression,<sup>45</sup> or the presence of tumors and masses as manifestations of blood stasis patterns. It should be remembered however that these modern findings should be taken into consideration along side other signs and symptoms to make a complete differential pattern diagnosis.

Classical references to bloodletting confirm the fact that it is a therapy used for chronic conditions in general, and especially those related to stasis. It

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<sup>a</sup> 血瘀

<sup>b</sup> 死血

is also indicated for treating diseases due to pathogens that have been retained long term. According to the *Ling Shu*, Chapter 6 (*Tu Yao Gang Ru*), “a disease of 3 days needs 3 treatments; a disease of 1 month needs 10 treatments; the number of treatments depends on the chronicity of the condition; for cases of chronic impediment, inspect and bleed the blood network vessels.” The *Jia Yi Jing* concurs:

“When a person, after having been struck by one of the winds of the eight directions and four seasons, develops a chronic illness where the evil has invaded and penetrated the channels and connecting vessels, then (this condition) is treated by the sharp needle. The sharp needle is based upon the wadding needle. It has a cylindrical body and a pointed end of three blades and is 1 cun and 6 fen in length. It is used to drain heat and let out blood to dissipate and drain chronic disease. Accordingly, it is said that, if the disease is securely housed within the five viscera, the sharp needle should be selected...”<sup>46</sup>

### Kidney Vacuity and Blood Stasis

Kidney vacuity and blood stasis are closely related and clearly occur together in clinical practice. Blood is created from the intermingling of the post-natal clear qi, which is the finest essence of food and drink extracted by the spleen, and the pre-natal kidney essence and fluids. While this intermingling happens in the upper burner, the production of blood is also dependent on the strength and normal functioning of the middle and lower jiao. In the case of chronic disease, if the kidney essence is depleted, then blood cannot be adequately produced. When blood is insufficient, it fails to circulate normally and can become static. Thus kidney vacuity can lead to blood stasis.

Likewise, blood stasis can lead directly to kidney vacuity patterns. One of the main functions of blood is to nourish and moisten the four limbs, the bones, the bowels, and the viscera. If blood stasis is present, then blood fails to return to the kidney where excess blood undergoes transformation to replenish jing essence. So, if there is ample blood and its circulation is good, then there

## **Pricking the Vessels**

will be fullness of the essence and marrow. If blood is deficient, even if it is due to blood stasis causing an insufficient amount of blood returning to the kidneys, the essence and marrow will become weak.

## **Bloodletting to Treat Kidney Vacuity**

Some acupuncturists fear that bloodletting in vacuous patients may lead to worsening of their weakened condition. However, when blood stasis and kidney vacuity present simultaneously, bloodletting is clinically appropriate and can treat both patterns effectively. Bloodletting is capable of quickening blood to remove stasis, and as described previously, blood stasis can directly lead to kidney vacuity. Bloodletting, by quickening blood, allows for the reestablishment of normal blood circulation so that it can return to the kidney to supplement essence and marrow. The amount of blood drawn during bloodletting in the Chinese medical tradition is relatively small, thus it is not likely to deplete blood or fluids unless it is repeated very frequently.

## **Case Study – Kidney Vacuity and Blood Stasis**

An 80 year-old male presented with a main complaint of back pain. He had a diagnosis of spondylosis and fractured lumbar vertebrae, and presented with a severe kyphosis (he had lost 12 centimeters in height in the last year alone). The pain was worse in the morning when getting out of bed and after standing for any period of time, and walking was difficult. His tongue was pale and his pulse was deep and very weak; there were small spider nevi on his face near *Cheng Qiang* (Ren24). He was diagnosed with lumbar pain (*yao tong*) due to kidney yang vacuity, and local qi stagnation and blood stasis in the spine and lumbar area. In Tung's acupuncture the chin is associated with the kidney and a

dark color or presence of spider nevi in this area is indicative of kidney vacuity, further corroborating the tongue and pulse findings. Acupuncture points from Tung's acupuncture were needled, including *Shui Jin* (1010.20), *Shui Tong* (1010.19), *Hou Zhui* (44.02), *Shou Ying* (44.03), and *Shen Guan* (77.18),<sup>30</sup> and the spider nevi on the chin were bled (as a distal analog of the lumbar region). After the first treatment the patient noticed that there was no longer any pain getting out of bed in the morning although there was some pain by the end of the day when he was tired. He was able to stand, however, for much longer periods of time without discomfort, and he had much greater stamina. After the second treatment he was able to stand and sit straighter than he had before and the pain relief lasted almost the entire week between treatments. On inspection, his pulses improved in strength, meaning that both the stagnation was expelled and kidneys supplemented, all without the use of moxibustion, herbal medicine, or other therapies that are more known for their ability to supplement. In this case, even though bloodletting was applied, it contributed to supporting the kidneys.

## IX. TUNG'S BLOODLETTING

Tung's acupuncture is a classical family lineage of medical practice that originated in Shandong, China. According to its own stated history, Tung's lineage was a family system passed down from father to eldest son from the Han (206 BCE to 220 CE) dynasty, although all documents related to Tung's acupuncture were lost during China's civil war in the 20th century. The last descendant of the Tung family to practice acupuncture was Tung Ching Chang, also known as Master Tung<sup>a</sup>. He was born in 1916 in Ping Du County, Shandong Province, Republic of China. As a young man Master Tung assisted his father in treating local patients with all sorts of ailments, and later, in his early adulthood, he joined the Republican Army. After the Communist revolution, in 1949, Tung retreated to Taiwan along with the Chinese Republicans. Once there he opened a private clinic in Taipei where he treated thousands of patients and eventually took disciples so that his lineage would continue.<sup>42</sup>

The most prominent feature of Tung's acupuncture is the Tung family's set of points, which Master Tung termed "orthodox channel extra (curious) points." While some of these points lie in approximately the same location as some of the conventional points of 14 channel acupuncture, the majority of Tung's points are in unique locations, and even when analogous to conventional points have different point groupings and functions. Furthermore, Tung's points are always needled distally and contralaterally to the site of disease, and minimal points are typically selected during treatment. For

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<sup>a</sup> N.B. - Tung is the Wade Giles Romanization of the Pinyin name Dong (董). Master Tung was a staunch anti-communist who resisted anything related to the People's Republic of China, including the Pinyin system. Since he chose "Tung" as the Romanized spelling of his own name, I have decided to respect his choice.

## Tung's Bloodletting

example, Master Tung himself would never use more than 6 needles per treatment.<sup>42, 47</sup>

The distribution of Tung's points covers the entire body, although, unlike conventional 14 channel acupuncture, they are arranged topographically by anatomical zones rather than by channel. For example, zone 1 contains points located on the fingers, zone 2 on the hand, and zone 3 on the forearm (see the table below for a list of zones and number of points found in each zone). Each zone contains points that have wide-ranging effects over many areas of the body, and in fact, each zone can be viewed as an independent microsystem.<sup>42</sup>

**Point Distribution in Tung's Acupuncture**

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Number of Points</b>
1	Fingers	27
2	Palm and dorsal hand	11
3	Forearm	16
4	Upper Arm	17
5	Plantar aspect of foot	6
6	Dorsal Foot	6
7	Leg/Calf	28
8	Thigh	32
9	Ear	8
10	Head	25
<i>Note:</i> there are also more than 160 additional points on the neck, and both the dorsal and ventral trunk.		

## **Pricking the Vessels**

### **Role of Bloodletting in Tung's Acupuncture**

Bloodletting therapy plays a major role in Tung's acupuncture, far more so than in 14 channel acupuncture. Like previous masters before him, such as Wang Qing Ren, Master Tung believed that most chronic disease, painful conditions, and all fatal diseases involve stagnation of qi and, especially, blood stasis.<sup>42</sup> In Tung's acupuncture, points over the entire body are bled, and, unlike in 14 channel acupuncture, Tung made frequent use of bloodletting points on the trunk. Actually, the majority of Tung's points on both the dorsal and ventral trunk are never needled, only bled.<sup>47</sup>

### **Tung's Bloodletting Method and Selection of Points**

Like Tung's acupuncture technique, Tung's bloodletting focuses almost entirely on distal point treatment. In conventional acupuncture, distal bloodletting is employed for systemic conditions; for example, jing-well points are bled to clear heat or revive consciousness. Nevertheless, for localized conditions such as pain or dermatological conditions, bloodletting is performed locally. To the contrary, Tung's acupuncture employs distal points even for localized conditions such as pain treatment.

The location of points selected for bloodletting is broadly chosen in two ways. First, individual points can be selected for bloodletting based on classical indications, and, many of Tung's points are indicated specifically for bloodletting. For example, as previously mentioned, the vast majority of Tung's points on the dorsal and ventral trunk are bled and never needled. Second, aside from choosing specific points, various zones of the body in Tung's system are distal treatment areas for the internal organs or other body areas. This



method of bloodletting zones rather than points is not included in Master Tung's original textbook, although it is discussed by many of his living disciples.

In either case, points are chosen by visual inspection. Local signs of blood stasis that indicate a need for bloodletting include visible spider nevi, areas of venous congestion, or areas of abnormally colored or textured skin. Even in the case of bloodletting applied to specific points, if areas as described above are found in the vicinity of the points to be bled, these areas are chosen over precise point location. Once the treatment location is chosen, the area is punctured with a three-edged needle. If needed, the skin is then squeezed to express a few pea-sized drops of blood. Bloodletting is performed about once per week, and traditionally the patient is advised to avoid bathing or exposing the bled area to cold for several days following treatment. Tung did not use lancets, plum blossom needles, or cups when he bled patients, and unlike Tung's needling technique, bloodletting is applied ipsilaterally to the site of disease.

### **Bloodletting Zones in Tung's Acupuncture**

The zones for bloodletting are found on the lower extremities. In Tung's acupuncture, the points in zones 7 and 8, namely the points on the lower and upper legs, are considered to be the most effective points on the body for chronic, recalcitrant diseases. Since bloodletting is used to treat blood stasis, and chronic diseases relate to blood stasis, it is understandable why this area of the body is so important for bloodletting in Tung's acupuncture. These zones are described by Tung's disciple, Dr. Hu Bing Quan.<sup>24, 48</sup> For the bloodletting zones, when there is a disease in a particular organ or location of the body, the corresponding zone is inspected for visual signs of blood stasis. If any are found, the site can be bled for treatment.

## Pricking the Vessels

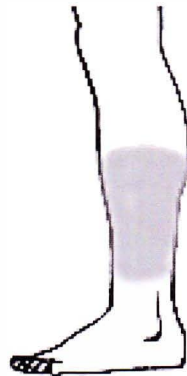
### Ear Zone

The ear zone is located around the lateral malleolus. It is bled to treat diseases of the ear, including, tinnitus, deafness, earache, otitis externa or media, otorrhea, etc.



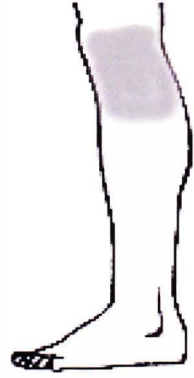
### Lung Zone

The lung region is located on the lateral leg. It is bled to treat disorders of the lungs and upper jiao, including pneumonia, asthma, bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disorders, chest pain, pulmonary edema, dyspnea, arrhythmias, etc.



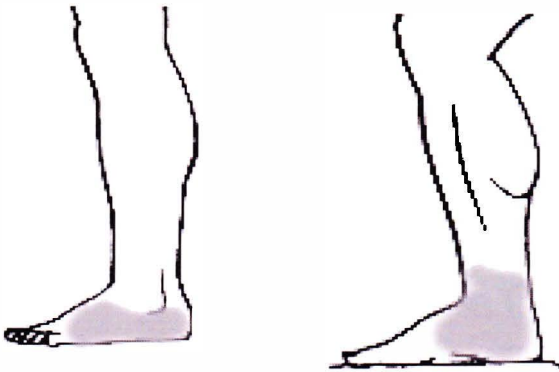
### **Mouth and Tooth Zone**

The mouth and tooth zone is located on the lateral leg superior to the lung zone. It is bled to treat diseases of the mouth, teeth and gums, including toothache, oral cancers (supportive therapy, not a radical cure), stomatitis, oral herpes lesions, etc.



### **Temporal Zones**

There are temporal zones on both the medial and lateral aspects of the foot and ankle. These zones are bled to treat conditions such as migraine headaches, temporal headaches, temporomandibular joint disorders or pain, hypoacusis, etc.



## Pricking the Vessels

### Frontal Zone

The frontal zone is located on the dorsum of the foot and is bled to treat frontal headache, vertex headache, panic disorders, neurasthenia, amnesia, dementia, dizziness, duodenal or peptic ulcers, etc.



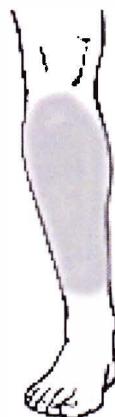
### Stomach Zone

The stomach zone is located on the anterior ankle superior to the frontal zone. It is bled to treat abdominal pain, gastric ulcers, indigestion, stomach cancers (as supportive therapy), esophageal spasms, disorders of the larynx, wheezing, hiatal hernia, glomus lump, etc.



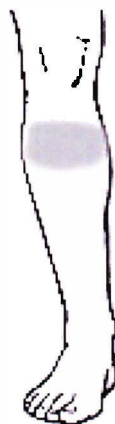
### Heart Zone

The heart zone is located on the anterior lower leg around the leg yangming channel. It is bled to treat cardiovascular disease, palpitations, chest pain, angina, arrhythmias, pulmonary edema, congestive heart failure, disorders of the eye due to Chinese medical heart patterns, etc.



### Liver Zone

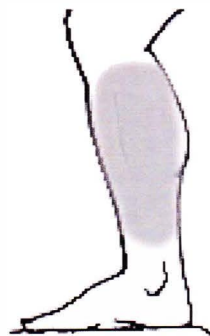
The liver zone is on the anterior lower leg in part of the heart zone. It is bled to treat liver depression qi stagnation, ribside pain, and supraorbital pain.



## Pricking the Vessels

### Kidney and Bladder Zone

The kidney and bladder zone is located on the medial lower leg, and is bled to treat disorders of the lower abdomen including lower abdominal distension, gynecological disorders, etc.



### Occipital Zone

The occipital zone is on the posterior lower leg extending to just above the popliteal fossa, including the commonly bled *Wei Zhong* (BL40) area. It is bled to treat a very wide variety of disorders such as headache, back pain, enteritis, hemorrhoids, impediment of the lower extremities, degenerative disc diseases of the spine, hypertension, wind stroke, post polio syndrome, strangury, measles, etc.



In addition to the lower extremities, there is one very commonly bled area of the upper extremities: the cubital fossa. Where there are visible spider nevi here they can be bled to treat disorders associated specifically with the upper body and upper jiao, for example, respiratory diseases, cardiovascular disease, impediment of the upper extremities (especially shoulder pain), hemiplegia, heatstroke, and acute gastroenteritis. Interestingly, Wang Qing Ren wrote in the *Yi Lin Gai Cuo* that bloodletting the vessels in the cubital fossa near *Chi Ze* (Lu5) treats scourge toxins with simultaneous vomiting and diarrhea.<sup>25</sup>

### Points for Bloodletting in Tung's Acupuncture

As previously mentioned, in addition to the bloodletting zones described above, many of Tung's points can be bled for specific indications. Appendix 6 includes charts that summarize and describe the locations of the most commonly bled points in Tung's acupuncture, along with their respective indications. These points are distributed over the entire body, and, once again, the majority of the points on the trunk are exclusively bled.

### Case Study – Non Healing Wound

A 78 year old patient presented to my office after having injured her right lateral malleolus 3 weeks prior, to an extent that an ulceration had developed. This was complicated by cardiovascular disease that made the ulceration recalcitrant to treatment, and, furthermore, it caused excruciating pain. The patient had difficulty walking and had reduced range of movement as a result of the wound. She had already started using prescription topical

## Pricking the Vessels

medications, but these did not help with the pain. When she was in the office for treatment, each time Tung's points *Zhi Wu* (11.26) were bled on the ipsilateral thumb, and each time this was done her pain reduced almost immediately. Over the course of about 10 regular treatments, the combination of the western topical medication with the bloodletting affected a total cure of the area.



View of patient's lateral malleolus about half way through treatment. Note darkened skin with purple color as well indicating blood stasis.



View of same lateral malleolus after successful treatment. Notice completely healed skin and lack of dark veins.



## **X. TREATMENT OF COMPOUND PATTERNS WITH BLOODLETTING AND ACUPUNCTURE**

In Chinese medicine, treatment is based on both disease as well as pattern diagnosis. Any time therapy is applied, whether it is herbal medicine, acupuncture, moxibustion or bloodletting, the provider must have a clear idea of the pattern of disharmony underlying the disease manifestation. Previously in this book bloodletting as a therapeutic intervention, especially related to blood stasis patterns, has been looked at almost as if it were to be applied in a vacuum or as a monotherapy. However, clinicians will most likely will utilize bloodletting along side other interventions.

Since I believe that bloodletting is especially relevant to the acupuncture provider, I will describe the treatment of compound pattern combinations with bloodletting, acupuncture and moxibustion; this systematic approach to bloodletting therapy is based on my own clinical experience with the therapy in treating actual patients. The writings of Dr. Yan De Xin<sup>41</sup> and his approach to treating blood stasis with herbal medicine inspired me to identify guidelines for 7 clinical approaches that can enhance treatment by using bloodletting along with acupuncture and moxibustion, based on clear differentiation of pattern syndromes.

In the sections that follow I will give a brief theoretical overview of each clinical approach, along with treatment protocols. In the treatment sections I recommend points that help treat the pattern of disharmony and then give suggestions for areas to bloodlet. In many cases, such as in the treatment of pain, bloodletting can be applied as a type of local treatment; this is especially do when it is applied as a form of diffuse pricking. Bloodletting can also be applied directly on the disease channel (e.g. one can bloodlet the jing-well point of any channel to quicken blood or clear heat from that channel). Additionally,

## Pricking the Vessels

bloodletting can be performed distal to the site of disease. The following chart describes areas I recommend for bloodletting arranged by the target areas they treat. In other words, when a disease is located in a certain area, refer to the following chart to determine possible distal areas to bloodlet.

Disease Location	Treatment Area
Head (including local pain, stroke, post stroke sequelae, poor memory, etc.)	Bl40 area (Tung's Occipital Zone), sacrum, other Tung's Zones on the lower limb based on location of disease
Oral Cavity	Tung's Mouth and Tooth Zone
Chest/Lung (asthma, coughing, common cold, etc. - diseases of the lung zang)	Upper back, upper chest, cubital fossa
Chest/Heart (angina, chest pain, diseases of the heart zang)	Upper back, cubital fossa, stomach channel on the lower leg
Upper abdomen/Spleen/Stomach	Epigastric region, back at the height of T11 to L1, stomach channel on the lower leg, Tung's Stomach Zone
Liver Zang	Tung's Liver Zone, ribside, back at the height of T7 to T10
Kidney Zang and Lower Jiao (including diseases of the reproductive organs, leukorrhea, lumbar pain, sciatica, prostate disease, pain in the lower extremities, etc.)	Lumbar region at the height of L2 to L5, sacrum, Tung's Kidney and Bladder Zone; for gynecological diseases and diseases of the lower abdomen the lower abdomen may also be bled
Diseases of the upper extremities	Cubital fossa. Shuang Feng (DT05) points [see Appendix 6]
Diseases of the lower extremities	Popliteal fossa, Shuang Feng (DT05) points [see Appendix 6]; bloodlet Kd2 for plantar fasciitis
Generalized Qi Stagnation and Blood Stasis (without disease that can be generally localized in one region of the body)	Popliteal and cubital fossae

## **Treatment of Compound Patterns**

Aside from these distal bloodletting areas, one may choose areas as described previously as Tung's Bloodletting Zones, or one may choose specific points, either Tung's points or conventional acupuncture points, based on their individual indications. For more information on point indications related to bloodletting, please see Appendices 5 and 6.

## **Treatment Methods for Complex Patterns**

### **1. Rectifying the Qi and Quickening Blood Method**

Qi stagnation and blood stasis are commonly seen together since “qi is the commander of blood” and “blood is the mother of qi.” The liver is in charge of coursing and discharge. When the liver fails in this job movement of both qi and blood are impaired. Thus, in order to better treat blood stasis one can rectify the qi, and in cases of long standing qi stagnation, blood stasis develops that must be treated. Clinically this means that blood stasis patterns are treated better by additionally performing acupuncture on the diseased channel, or in some cases, performing acupuncture to generally course liver and rectify the qi.

Signs and symptoms indicating this method include generalized tension, depression, emotional lability or irascibility, irregular menstrual cycles, premenstrual breast distension, ribside distension, or pain in the chest.<sup>6</sup> These all show liver binding and depression. These symptoms will be combined with manifestations of blood stasis.

**Treatment Principle:** Course liver, rectify qi, quicken blood, eliminate stasis

## Pricking the Vessels

**Treatment Method:** *Bloodlet* areas related to target the area of complaint (e.g. the sacrum for gynecological disorders – see the above chart for other suggestions), or the diseased channel; bloodletting can also be applied locally in some situations. *Acupuncture* is applied to the channels effected (e.g. in cases of pain to the diseased channels), or to points that systemically course liver or rectify qi – *He Gu* (LI4), *Tai Chong* (Lv3), *Wai Guan* (SJ5), *Yang Ling Quan* (Gb34). For generalized qi stagnation and blood stasis without specific diseased areas, *needle* points that course the liver such as *He Gu* and *Tai Chong*. *Bloodlet* the cubital and popliteal fossae (please see chart above).

**Case:** A 24 year old presented to my clinic with a chief complaint of pain in the left ribside following a rib fracture of almost one-year prior. He complained of sharp pain on stretching or with deep breaths, but otherwise had only a dull distended sensation. He was diagnosed with ribside pain due to qi stagnation and blood stasis, and during his first treatment he was needled at contralateral *Wai Guan* and *Zhi Gou* (SJ6), and ipsilateral *Yang Ling Quan*, with the application of a blood quickening, channel warming herbal poultice (*gao*) locally. When he returned for his second treatment there was little improvement. The same acupuncture points were needled but bloodletting was applied to visible spider nevi local to the area of pain and at the ipsilateral *Yang Ling Quan*. Subsequent treatments followed the same protocol and within 5 treatments the patient reported amelioration of symptoms.

## 2. Scattering Cold and Quickening Blood Method

Cold may induce blood stasis, as cold, by its nature, congeals. Bloodletting effectively quickens blood, but it is unable to warm the channels (to the contrary bloodletting has more of a cooling effect on the body). When a

## Treatment of Compound Patterns

patient has significant cold internally, combined with blood stasis, warming methods combined with bloodletting will significantly speed amelioration of symptoms and recovery.

This method is especially applicable to painful impediment (*tong bi*), and can also be applied to treat gynecological conditions where there is cold in the uterus (e.g. painful menstruation, irregular menstruation, infertility, or uterine masses). Symptoms will include fixed intense pain better with warmth, a pale swollen tongue with white coating, pale complexion, possible palpable masses, visible spider nevi, and a pulse that is deep and tight.<sup>6</sup>

**Treatment Principle:** Warm the channels, expel cold, quicken blood, expel stasis

**Treatment Method:** *Bloodlet* distally based on target area or diseased channels (e.g. the sacrum or *Zhao Hai* Kd6 region for gynecological disorders,<sup>3</sup> or popliteal fossa for posterior pain conditions – see previous chart). Apply *moxibustion* or *TDP Lamp* to local areas. For gynecological conditions topical application of heated herbs (such as *Xiao Hui Xiang*) is also helpful.

### 3. Clearing Heat and Transforming Stasis Method

Heat can lead to stasis by drying the blood. Bloodletting already has the dual function of quickening the blood and clearing heat, so by itself it can accomplish both branches of this treatment method. In some cases however,

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<sup>3</sup> *Zhao Hai* (Kd6) is in an analogous area to Tung's point *Shui Jing* (66.13). This point is indicated for diseases such as metritis, uterine distension or pain, uterine tumors or myomas, and abdominal distension.<sup>29, 47</sup>

## Pricking the Vessels

depending on the severity of heat, it will be necessary to apply additional treatment to more systemically clear heat. For these cases, patients will manifest with blood stasis signs and symptoms, as well as heat symptoms such as redness and swelling, palpable sensation of heat on the patient, heat effusion, facial flushing, insomnia, restlessness, red tongue with possible yellow coating, and a rapid pulse.<sup>6</sup>

**Treatment Principle:** Clear heat, transform stasis

**Treatment Method:** *Bloodlet* distally or locally based on target area or diseased channels; *Acupuncture* or *Bloodlet* jing-well points, ying-spring points, or other points that systemically clear heat such as *Da Zhui* (Du14), *Qu Chi* (LI11), *Wei Zhong* (BL40) or Ear Apex. For conditions of generalized repletion heat bloodlet all 12 jing-well points or the *Shi Xuan* points.

**Case:** A 68 year-old female presented to the office with a long history of post-traumatic migraines following her internment in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. The pain was severe and stabbing in nature, was worse with her menstrual cycle when she was still menstruating, and worse with heat. She also suffered from severe gastric reflux, and had a history of numerous surgeries including breast lumpectomies, a hysterectomy, and surgery to treat esophageal damage from reflux. She was diagnosed with blood stasis in the network vessels, liver-stomach disharmony with liver and stomach fire, and yin vacuity in the liver, heart and kidney. Interestingly, when she was younger, spontaneous nosebleeds would temporarily improve her headache when the pain would flare. At the onset of each treatment she was bled at points that both can quicken blood and clear heat, such as ear apex, *Tai Yang*, *Tai Chong* (Lv3), and *Di Wu Hui* (Gb42); there were very dark visible spider nevi around

these points with the exception of ear apex. She was then needled at points such as *Ling Gu* (22.05)<sup>a</sup>, *Tai Chong*, and *Feng Shi* (Gb31). While headaches never resolved completely, over the course of her first 10 treatments she noticed significant improvement in head pain and reflux, and improvement in quality of and inability to sleep.

### 4. Eliminating Phlegm and Quickening Blood Method

Zhu Dan Xi is known for his theory of six stagnations, of which phlegm and blood are included. Whenever there is blood stasis, by definition there must be qi stagnation. As blood and qi stagnate, so too do the fluids, which, can congeal into phlegm. Consequently, blood stasis and phlegm binding frequently appear together, especially in recalcitrant conditions. In these cases patients present with blood stasis signs and symptoms along side phlegm pattern symptoms, such as palpable nodulations, coughing or asthma, obesity, and a thick tongue coating. In terms of western medical diagnoses there may be coronary artery disease, chronic respiratory conditions such as emphysema, stroke sequelae, peripheral neuropathy, or senile dementia<sup>41</sup> (although a detailed pattern differentiation should still be made based on signs and symptoms).

**Treatment Principle:** Transform and eliminate phlegm, quicken blood, expel stasis

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<sup>a</sup> *Ling Gu* (22.05) 靈骨穴 is a point from Tung's acupuncture located proximal to *He Gu* (LI4) at the dorsal junction of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> metacarpal bones. It is indicated for a wide variety of conditions such as sciatica, lumbar pain, foot pain, enlargement of the bones, headache, menstrual disorders, tinnitus, and dizziness.<sup>29, 47</sup> It has a strong ability to systemically rectify qi and blood.

## Pricking the Vessels

**Treatment Method:** *Bloodlet* visible vessels along the leg *yang ming* channel, especially around *Tiao Kou* (St38) and *Feng Long* (St40). *Acupuncture* the arm *jue yin* channel especially at *Nei Guan* (Pc6) and *Jian Shi* (Pc5). For stroke patients needle additionally *Bai Hui* (Du20) and *Shang Xing* (Du23). For copious phlegm in the lungs consider cupping on the upper back. If other localized complaints are present, choose local or distal points based on the location of disease (see chart at the beginning of this section).

**Discussion:** The leg *yang ming* is full of both qi and blood, and draining this channel with bloodletting effectively eliminates stasis. The leg *yang ming* traverses the chest and can treat diseases of the cardiac system, and *Tiao Kou* is close to *Si Hua Zhong* (77.09) in Tung's acupuncture, a point specifically indicated for treating cardiac disease. Furthermore, this area is near the *luo*-network point of the Stomach channel (*Feng Long* St40) and as such can eliminate phlegm. Points such as *Nei Guan* and *Jian Shi* can open the chest, expel phlegm, and treat heart patterns. Some modern Chinese physicians consider high cholesterol levels to be a manifestation of blood stasis with phlegm accumulation.<sup>41</sup> As previously mentioned, research suggests that bloodletting with cupping may help lower high cholesterol levels,<sup>38</sup> and likewise other research suggests that acupuncture at *Feng Long* may have a similar effect.

**Case:** A 71 year-old male presented to my office with a history of glucose intolerance and cardiovascular disease for 10 years, including elevated cholesterol levels and hypertension, both of which were managed with medication. He had a very strong appetite, experienced tachycardia, and tended toward rage, which triggered his tachycardia and arrhythmias. His pulse was rapid, flooding and skipping (*cn*). The tongue was purple and red with distended sublingual veins, and with a yellow coat in the rear. The diagnosis was liver and heart fire damaging the yin, leading to blood stasis, with



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simultaneous phlegm-heat encumbrance. He was treated several times, and common points included *Tai Chong* (Lv3), *Nei Guan* (Pc6), *Da Ling* (Pc7), and *Jie Xi* (St41), and he was bled at the visible spider nevi near Tung's point *Si Hua Zhong* (corresponding to St38). (See discussion above for the discussion of bloodletting the leg *yang ming* around this area.)

### 5. Attacking, Precipitating and Transforming Stasis Method

This method is used when there is blood stasis in the lower abdomen with bound stool, presenting simultaneously. *Su Wen*, Chapter 63 (*Min Ci Lun*) says, "When one is injured and there is stagnated blood internally, it causes abdominal pain, constipation, and urinary retention."<sup>2,16</sup> Pathogens need a route to be expelled from the body, and static or dead blood in the lower abdomen can move outwards along with the stool. Thus, constipation is an impediment to eliminating static blood. In western medical terms this method may be used to treat lower abdominal pain, various gynecological conditions such as amenorrhea or retained lochia, pancreatitis, cholelithiasis, or even traumatic injury.<sup>41</sup>

**Treatment Principle:** Quicken blood, transform stasis, free the stool

**Treatment Method:** *Bloodlet* points that effect the lower abdomen such as visible spider nevi on the sacrum or lower abdomen, visible spider nevi on the ribside, or visible spider nevi at *Zhao Hai* (Kd6). *Acupuncture* points that effect the abdomen, precipitate down, and free the stool such as *Ling Gu* (22.05), *Zhi Gou* (SJ6), and *Tian Shu* (St25). Use deep needling and strong stimulation.

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**Discussion:** This is the equivalent of prescribing herbs such as *Da Huang*, which both quicken blood and free the stools.

## 6. Boosting the Qi and Transforming Stasis Method

As previously discussed, spleen vacuity and blood stasis patterns are interrelated. When stasis is eliminated, then the spleen will be able to normally move and transform again, and thus produce post-heaven qi. Likewise, when qi is insufficient, boosting the qi allows the spleen to move and transform,<sup>a</sup> as it usually does. Boosting qi also allows the spleen to upbear the clear. When the spleen's normal movement is reestablished, it encourages the liver's free coursing and systemically moves qi and quickens blood.

An illustrative example of this principle is found in the functions and indications of the herb *Huang Qi* (Rx. *Astragalus membranaceus*). This herb is primarily a supplementing medicinal that enters the spleen and lung channels, although it also quickens blood<sup>50</sup> and stops pain;<sup>51</sup> it has these secondary functions despite the fact that its only flavor is sweet<sup>50</sup> (usually medicinals that rectify qi and blood, and stop pain are acrid). In the *Ben Cao Gan Mu*, Li Zhi Zhen concurs in stating that *Huang Qi* quickens the blood.<sup>50</sup> *Huang Qi* has the ability to move because it strongly supplements the qi. There is a statement of fact in Chinese medicine that pain results from stagnation.<sup>b</sup> There is another statement of fact that says pain results from lack of luxuriance, and by

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<sup>a</sup> The spleen governs movement and transformation, most importantly of food qi.<sup>6, 15</sup>

<sup>b</sup> 不通則痛

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nourishing we eliminate pain.<sup>a</sup> This method combines both reducing and supplementing to more effectively treat these cases.<sup>b</sup>

Patients for whom this method is appropriate will present simultaneously with signs and symptoms of blood stasis, and generalized qi vacuity, or vacuity of the spleen. Since the spleen is vacuous, there may be signs of blood vacuity as well. In western medical terms patients may present with coronary artery disease, various chronic pain syndromes, or stroke sequelae for example.<sup>25, 41</sup>

**Treatment Principle:** Boost qi, fortify the spleen, quicken blood, transform stasis

**Treatment Method:** *Bloodlet* points or areas based on the target area or diseased channels, but especially choose the *yang ming*, *tai yang*, or *jue yin* channels. Additionally, for systemic rectification of blood, bloodlet the cubital and popliteal fossae. *Acupuncture* or *moxibustion* at *Zusanli* (St36), *Zhongwan* (Ren12), *Qihai* (Ren6), *Baihui* (Du20), or other suitable points to generally supplement the qi.

**Discussion:** *The yang ming, tai yang, and jue yin* are full of qi; according to *Su Wen* Chapter 24 (*Xue Qi Xing Zhi*) bloodletting can be applied to these channels without damaging qi.<sup>2</sup> According to *Ling Shu*, Chapter 19 (*Si Shi Qi*),

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<sup>a</sup> 不榮則痛，榮則不痛

<sup>b</sup> Another example of this principle is in the formula *Bu Yang Huan Wu Tang*, which both quickens the blood and supplements qi. This formula uses both functions to assist the other.<sup>25</sup>

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*Zu San Li* is indicated for chronic impediment (bi) patterns,<sup>2</sup> demonstrating the close relationship between supplementation and elimination of stasis.

**Case:** A 70 year old male presented to my clinic with hemiparesis of the right side follow a stroke he had suffered 6 months previously. His limb movements were impaired and he had a significantly weakened grip on the effected side; he also had trouble walking. Overall he felt tired and fatigued. His tongue was pale and swollen with dark sublingual veins, and his pulse was deep and weak. The right hand and foot were very cold to the touch and his nail beds were purple. He was diagnosed with hemiparesis and wilting impediment as stroke sequelae, due to qi vacuity and blood stasis.

Since the patient did not want to take herbs he was treated with acupuncture. At each treatment bloodletting was applied to generally expel stasis and quicken the blood; treatment areas included for example the cubital and popliteal fossae on the effected side, and Tung's point *Shuang Feng* (DT05). He was then needled to supplement the qi at points along the *Du Mai*, such as *Bai Hui* (Du20), *Da Zhui* (Du14), or *Ming Men* (Du4), and points along the *yangming* channels such as *He Gu* (LI4), *Qu Chi* (LI11), *Zu San Li* (St36) and *Fu Tu* (St32). Over time stiffness was diminished and he regained some use of the effected side.

## 7. Supplementing the Kidney and Quickening Blood Method

As previously described, kidney vacuity can lead to blood stasis patterns and vice versa. Once stasis is eliminated, fresh blood can be engendered, which, in turn, will then be able to nourish the kidney and bolster essence. Likewise, since stasis can result from vacuity, nourishing can directly have an effect, as with the previous method, on eliminating stasis. Like the previous method then, this method accomplishes both supplementing and draining at the same

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time. For patients with long-standing or severe kidney vacuity patterns, the addition of supplementation or nourishing will speed removal of stasis and thus symptom amelioration and recovery.

Patients for whom this method is appropriate will present with kidney vacuity and blood stasis signs and symptoms. The disease will most likely be prolonged or recurrent. The patient may have senile dementia, weakness of the four limbs, stroke sequelae, all types of chronic pain syndromes (but especially pain in the neck, back or lower extremities), infertility or sexual dysfunction, long standing fatigue, etc.<sup>41</sup>

**Treatment Principle:** Supplement the kidney, quicken blood, expel stasis

**Treatment Method:** : *Bloodlet* points or areas based on the target area or diseased channels (e.g. for senile dementia bloodlet vessels on the head, or bloodlet distally on the sacrum or around the popliteal fossa – see chart earlier in this section for other suggestions), but especially choose visible spider nevi along the leg *tai yang*. *Acupuncture* or *moxibustion* points to supplement the kidney such as *Shen Shu* (Bl23), *Ming Men* (Du4), *Guan Yuan* (Ren4), or *Shen Guan* (77.18).

**Discussion:** Since the leg *tai yang* is full of blood, it can be bled without damaging the qi. Furthermore the leg *tai yang* bladder channel has an interior-exterior (*biao li*) relationship with the leg *shao yin* kidney channel. *Shen Guan* is a major point in Tung's acupuncture for supplementing the kidney. Other points in Tung's acupuncture that are appropriate include *Shui Jin* (1010.20) and *Shui Tong* (1010.19).

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**Case:** An 85 year-old male presented to my clinic complaining of chronic back and neck pain of more than 10 years duration. Pain was distributed across the lower lumbar region and was severe enough (usually self reported as 8 to 9 out of 10 with 10 being the worst pain) that he walked hunched over. He had a pale complexion and felt cold frequently. His tongue was pale with very dark sublingual veins, and his pulse was deep and thin. He was diagnosed with kidney yang vacuity and blood stasis in the network vessels. The veins at the popliteal fossa were always dark and distended, and at the onset of treatment were bled. The blood that was let was frequently very dark, indicative of the stasis present. After bloodletting, he was treated with acupuncture each time with Tung's points *Shui Jin*, *Shui Tong*, and *Shen Guan* being the main treatment to supplement the kidney.

## XI. CONCLUSIONS

Bloodletting extends throughout the current of Chinese medicine, from the earliest extant texts to the modern period. It is well represented in the seminal work of Chinese medical theory, the *Huang Di Nei Jing*. However, despite this fact, bloodletting is underrepresented in contemporary English language acupuncture textbooks. For example, in *Acupuncture, A Comprehensive Text*, by O'Connor and Bensky, over 100 pages of text are devoted to acupuncture and related techniques, but within that section only about 1 page details bloodletting therapy.<sup>19</sup> In the *Acupuncturist's Handbook*, by Tsay, a book of about 500 pages in length, 3 pages are devoted to bloodletting.<sup>20</sup> While both these books are written and published in the United States, English language acupuncture texts published in China are similar; in Liu's *Diagrams of Acupuncture Manipulations*, just over 3 pages, out of 164, describe bloodletting.<sup>29</sup>

Bloodletting therapy can and should be a part of every acupuncturist's clinical practice, especially those who do not provide professional level herbal treatment for their patients, and, thusly, are able to treat a wider range of disease and pattern diagnoses. Bloodletting excels at treating repletion patterns, just as moxibustion excels at supplementing vacuities. The two patterns of blood repletion are blood heat and blood stasis, and since bloodletting deals specifically with expelling replete pathologies of the blood, its 2 primary functions are to clear heat and quicken the blood. Starting with Wang Qin Ren, and extending through today with modern clinicians like Tung Ching Chang and Yan De Xin, blood stasis has been considered a primary factor in chronic, recalcitrant, and degenerative diseases. Since many patients in western clinics present with these types of diseases, and since bloodletting excels at quickening blood, it is an especially relevant therapy to those acupuncturists who work with elderly or chronically ill patients.

## Pricking the Vessels

In my own clinic, hardly a day goes by without bloodletting on 1, or usually more, patients. Throughout this book I have endeavored to describe the wide clinical applicability of bloodletting therapy by examining classical and modern sources. Furthermore, a detailed look at the Tung family lineage of classical acupuncture, a system that utilizes bloodletting frequently, can expand our concept of how and when to apply the therapy. It is my hope that by providing acupuncturists with a deeper historical and theoretical understanding of bloodletting, they will become more comfortable with its application on a daily basis.

A thorough look at the Chinese medical theory underpinning bloodletting also allows for the clinician to understand how this therapy, when properly applied, can be used in cases of long standing vacuity. In fact, it is my contention that, not only can it be used in patients with vacuity, it can also help treat kidney vacuity. Chinese herbal medicine already understands that quickening the blood medicinals can be used effectively in many chronically ill, vacuous patients.<sup>23, 41</sup> I hope that my contribution to Chinese medical theory related to acupuncture will help providers understand that bloodletting, albeit a purely draining and stasis expelling intervention, can likewise be safely and effectively used with chronically ill, vacuous patients. Furthermore, when used in a comprehensive treatment protocol along with acupuncture and other related therapies, bloodletting can expand which complex and chronic patterns can be treated effectively. To this end I have systematized 7 clinical methods of combined bloodletting and acupuncture, and provided basic protocols for, and discussions of their use.

Once acupuncture providers understand bloodletting's flexibility, it is my hope they begin using it clinically. Over time, as more western acupuncturists utilize bloodletting, as a group we will come to better understand its strong and weak points. In this way, our medicine will continue to grow and



expand, based not only on an understanding of the past, and of Chinese medical theory, but also on the collective experiences of contemporary physicians.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **BLOODLETTING IMAGES**

#### **Chronic Lumbar and Cervical Pain**

This photo is taken of bloodletting at *Wei Zhong* (Bl40) to treat chronic back and neck pain in an 85 year old male. Notice the presence of dark spider nevi and very dark blood leaving the puncture site.



### Chronic Migraine

This photo is taken of bloodletting at a dark, almost black vein on the lateral foot of a 33 year old female complaining of severe chronic migraines. Bloodletting was performed ipsilaterally to the pain and immediately upon pricking the vessel pain was almost completely ameliorated. This area corresponds to the “temporal zone” used in Tung’s acupuncture.



## APPENDIX 2

### DIAGNOSIS OF BLOOD STASIS<sup>41, 43</sup>

#### **Traditional signs and symptoms associated with blood stasis:**

Fever

Localized redness, swelling

Fixed, sharp or recalcitrant pain

Pain worse with pressure

Bleeding (e.g. hematemesis, hemoptysis, hematuria)

Recalcitrant feeling of distention or fullness

Itching

Numbness in the limbs or body

Stiffness in the limbs or body

Dry mouth

Little sleep with dreams of fright/apprehension

Poor memory

Palpitations, chest pain, tachycardia

Mental confusion

Depression

Constipation or diarrhea

Withered and dry hair that is brittle

Black or dark complexion

Purple or dark moles on the face

Spider nevi on the face or especially chin

Dark color around the eyes

Flushed or dark red cheeks

Redness on the nose

Stasis macules in the sclera

Purple/dark tongue with stasis macules

Dark, distended sublingual veins

Distended abdomen with protruding navel

Presence of abdominal masses, hard on touch

Protruding vertebrae, painful on palpation

Enlarged, pestle shaped distal phalanges

Bluish/purple nails  
Superficial edema of the lower limbs  
Stiff, stagnant, hard skin  
Visible spider nevi anywhere  
History of enduring disease  
History of traumatic injury  
Irregular menstruation, esp. with dark blood or clots  
History of eating sweet/fatty foods  
History of alcohol or tobacco consumption  
Choppy pulse (may also be deep, wiry, weak, or slow)  
Jaundice

### **Modern Western diagnostics associated with blood stasis:**

History of surgery  
Increased blood viscosity  
Elevated ESR  
High K value  
Increased fibrinogen in blood  
Decreased cardiac output  
Damage to the myocardium on ECG  
Enlarged heart, hypertrophic ventricles  
Diseases of cardiac valves  
Hepatomegaly  
Splenomegaly  
Hydronephrosis  
Presence of masses or tumors  
Arteriosclerosis  
Cerebral hematoma  
Presence of thrombi  
Hyperlipidemia  
High bilirubin  
Increased erythrocytes, leukocytes or platelets  
Positive rheumatoid factor  
Presence of papilledema  
Presence of white blood cell c-fos gene expression

## Pricking the Vessels

### Example of tongue confirmation of blood stasis:



Tongue of an 84 year old patient with myelodysplastic syndrome. Note the pale-purple tongue body with stasis spots, and extremely dark and branching sublingual veins. Also of note is the dusky /pale complexion and darkened chin.

## APPENDIX 3

### THE BLOODLETTING METHODS OF ZHONG YONG-XIANG

Dr. Zhong Yong-Xiang<sup>a</sup> is a contemporary Taiwanese acupuncturist who uses a bloodletting protocol to treat summerheat strike (*zhong shu*<sup>b</sup>). When a patient presents with typical symptoms of summerheat strike, such as malaise, fatigue, low-grade fever or heat effusion, low-grade headache, nausea, etc., Dr. Zhong performs a visual diagnostic inspection to confirm the pattern diagnosis. To accomplish this the area of *Shou San Li* (LI10) and/or *Jian Jing* (Gb21) are pinched such that the underlying muscle tissue is lifted and then let slip back through the fingers. If, after the pinch, there is a resultant lump that remains for several seconds, Dr. Zhong diagnoses summerheat strike and commences treatment.

Treatment for this pattern is to bloodlet all 12 jing-well points on the hands. The points are located at the purple-enlarged area near the nail bed and not measured exactly at 0.1 cun as is typically taught in acupuncture texts. The method of insertion is slow, followed by a slow withdrawal of the lancet, and then the point is squeezed until the blood stops flowing on its own. During the procedure, Dr. Zhong positions himself such that his squeezing fingers do not cross the trajectory of the channel on the patient's finger, with the intention of not occluding that channel while eliciting bleeding from the point.

Another unique approach used by Dr. Zhong is in choosing treatment points for bloodletting wind stroke patients. In these cases he chooses a trio of points on each of the toes; there is one point located like a jing-well point at

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<sup>a</sup> Special thanks to Dr. Zhong's student, Dr. Edward Chiu, who taught me these treatment protocols

<sup>b</sup> 中暑

## **Pricking the Vessels**

each of the proximal corners of the nails, and a third point located just behind the midpoint of the proximal border of the nail. Each of the toes will be bled at these points, for a total of 30 points.





## APPENDIX 4

### BLOODLETTING IN THE XUN JING

The *Xun Jing Kao Xue Bian*<sup>a</sup> (Investigations Into The Points Along The Channels) is a Ming Dynasty text written c. 1575 by Yan Zhen. In it, several points are listed as being appropriate for bloodletting. This chart summarizes those points and the indications cited for each.<sup>18</sup>

Point Name	Point No.	Indications When Bled
Bai Hui	Du20	Headache
Da Du	Sp2	Base joint red and swollen (mtp joint), aching lumbus
Dui Duan	Du27	Swollen lips, lip eversion
Guan Chong	SJ1	Upper arm and elbow pain, heart vexation
Han Yan	GB4	Head wind pain, pearl of the ear pain (tragus pain)
Jian Liao	SJ14	Heavy pain of and inability to move the shoulder
Jian Zhen	SI9	Shoulder pain
Qi Chong	St30	Vomiting blood
Qi Mai	SJ18	Tinnitus, dizzy vision, pediatric convulsions
Qu Chai	BI4	Disease of the nose/sinuses
Ran Gu	Kd2	Sudden hunger
San Yang Luo	SJ8	Acute lumbar sprain
Shang Ju Xu	St37	Spleen and stomach pain
Shang Xing	Du23	Vents all types of yang heat qi
Shao Chong	Ht9	Heart oppression, unregulated happiness and anger
Shao Shang	Lu11	Vents visceral heat, throat bi
Shui Quan	Kd5	Ankle bone pain
Su Liao	Du25	Cinnabar eye (palpebral cellulitis)
Tai Chong	Lv3	Red, swollen leg qi

## Pricking the Vessels

Point Name	Point No.	Indications When Bled
Tou Lin Qi	GB15	Eye diseases
Wei Zhong	Bl40	Pain in the lumbar and thigh, sores (chuang yang)
Xin Hui	Du22	True headache (zhen tou tong)
Xuan Li	GB5	Redness and swelling of the eye
Zan Zhu	Bl2	Eye diseases
Zhi Yin	Bl67	Damp leg qi
Zhong Feng	Lv4	Sores on top of the foot, retracted genitals
Zu San Li	St36	Spleen and stomach pain

### Case Study – Acute Eye Irritation

A 36 year old male presented to the clinic with an acute right eye irritation. The discomfort began 24 hours previously after having gotten some sort of dust or debris in his eye while walking through New York City. His eye was red and painful; there was a scratching sensation whenever his eyelid closed or he blinked. The treatment consisted solely of bloodletting the ipsilateral *Tou Lin Qi* (GB15), based on the recommendation from the *Xun Jing*, and also bloodletting the ipsilateral *Shang Yang* (LI1). The patient also used 2 drops of a lubricant eye wash at the same time. Within several minutes the pain had dissipated significantly and within the hour the pain had almost completely dissipated.

# **APPENDIX 5**

## **COMMONLY BLED POINTS IN**

### **CONTEMPORARY PROFESSIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE**

The following charts summarize commonly bled points in contemporary professional Chinese medicine. Indications are given for each point, and describe what the points treat when they are stimulated with bloodletting; these indications are not exhaustive but the most commonly seen indications when comparing several modern texts. The information in these tables is abstracted from several English and Chinese language sources.<sup>18, 21, 36</sup>

Point	Number	Action	Indications
Chize	Lu5	discharges heat, downbears counterflow	cholera, cough with phlegm, inflammation in the shoulder region, chronic tracheitis, cerebrovascular disease
Lieque	Lu7	diffuses lung, clears heat	drinker's nose
Yuji	Lu10		chronic tracheitis, cough, hemoptysis
Shaoshang	Lu11	disinhibits the throat, clears heat	eye diseases, fever, sore throat
Shangyang	LI1	resolves the exterior, clears heat, clears the lungs, disinhibits the throat, restores consciousness	toothache, sore throat, heat diseases, clouding inversion, tinnitus
Hegu	LI4	frees the channels and quickens the network vessels, courses wind, resolves the exterior, clears heat	wind stroke, toothache, drinker's nose, itching over the entire body, headache
Quqi	LI11	clears heat, courses wind, resolves the exterior	cholera, cough with phlegm, swelling of the mouth, tongue or pharynx, heat diseases, itching, inflammation of the shoulder region, joint inflammation, skin diseases, hypertension, esophageal cancer
Jianyu	LI15	frees the channels and quickens the network vessels	shoulder joint inflammation, wind damp in the shoulder joint, cerebrovascular disease
Touwei	St8	dispels wind, discharges fire, relieves pain, clears the head, brightens the eyes	headache, swelling or pain in the eyes, eye diseases in general
Biguan	St31	clears heat, frees the channels and relieves pain	acute appendicitis, joint inflammation, cerebrovascular disease

Point	Number	Action	Indications
Tiaokou	St38	clears heat, frees the channels and relieves pain	chronic tracheitis, cinnabar toxins, cerebrovascular disease, shoulder pain
Fenglong	St40	clears heat, quickens blood, downbears counterflow, quiets the spirit	chronic tracheitis, cough, mental emotional diseases, heart disease, stomach pain
Lidui	St45	clears stomach channel heat	swelling of the face, wryness of the mouth, nosebleed, heat diseases, throat bi, toothache, cracked lips, clouding inversion
Yinbai	Sp1	regulates and manages blood, clears the heart, restores consciousness	spasms of gastrocnemius, jaundice, mania and withdrawal, bleeding disorders due to heat, excessive dreaming, pain below the heart
Sanyinjiao	Sp6	courses the lower jiao	strangury, menstrual disorders, infertility, post polio syndrome
Yinlingquan	Sp9	clears heat, disinhibits dampness, quickens blood	urinary tract infection, acute strangury, infertility, pain in the channel
Shenmen	Ht7	clears heart heat	mouth ulcerations
Shaochong	Ht9	opens the orifices, restores consciousness, clears heart heat	palpitations, cardiac pain, mania and withdrawal, heat diseases, clouding inversion
Shaoze	SI1	clears heart fire, frees the channels, quickens the network vessels, restores consciousness	heart diseases, clouding inversion, sore throat, breast pain or swelling, eye screens, heat in the mouth and vexation, wind strike, headache

Point	Number	Action	Indications
Zanzhu	BL2	dispels wind, brightens the eyes	dizziness, headache, hemorrhoids, redness and pain of the eyes
Feishu	BL13	regulates qi, quickens blood	shoulder pain
Geshu	BL17	clears blood heat, rectifies vacuity and detriment	pediatric gan disease, cinnabar toxins
Ganshu	BL18	dispersed stasis, dispels damp heat, brightens the eyes	lateral costal pain, eye diseases, pediatric gan disease
Pishu	BL20	rectifies the spleen	jaundice
Weishu	BL21	regulates the center and harmonizes the stomach, transforms damp, disperses stagnation	jaundice, pediatric gan disease
Shenshu	BL23	regulates qi, stops pain	shen (mounting) qi
Shangliao	BL31		chronic lumbar pain, sciatica
Fuxi	BL38	regulates qi, stops pain	stomach pain, abdominal pain, spinal pain, breast swelling and pain
Weiyang	BL39	regulates qi, stops pain	(same as BL40)
Weizhong	BL40	clears blood, discharges heat, dispels wind damp, disinhibits the back	wind stroke, cholera, strangury, back pain, menstrual clots, cinnabar toxins, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, hemorrhoids, sciatica, skin diseases, spinal pain, headache, joint inflammation, post polio syndrome
Chengshan	BL57	soothes the sinews, cools the blood	foot qi

Point	Number	Action	Indications
Zhiyin	BL67	courses wind, rectifies qi, quickens blood, clears brain, brightens eyes	headache, eye pain, eye screens, retention of the placenta, difficult delivery
Quze	Pc3	clears the construction, cools blood, downbears counterflow, stops vomiting	heat at the blood level, summerheat strike, sudden turmoil, vomiting, diarrhea, heat in the four limbs, thirst
Zhongchong	Pc9	clears heart, eliminates heat, restores consciousness	cardiac pain, vexation and oppression, clouding inversion, stiffness of the tongue with impaired speech, heat diseases, summerheat strike, fright inversion
Guanchong	SI1	resolves Sanjiao pathogenic heat, clears heat and drains fire	tinnitus, deafness, earache, headache, dizziness, redness of the eyes, throat painful obstruction, bitter taste in the mouth; according to the <i>Ode of the Jade Dragon</i> , bleeding this point removes toxic blood and treats congested Sanjiao heat in the upper jiao
Qimai	SI18	clears heat, resolves tetany, quickens the network vessels	tinnitus, deafness, headache, pain behind the ear, infantile fright epilepsy, fright and fear
Luxi	SI19	clears heat, frees the channels and relieves pain	tinnitus, headache, ear pain, fright and fear, insomnia; NOTE: several classical texts contraindicate this point to bleeding
Jianjing	GB21	frees the channels and quickens the network vessels	wind stroke

Point	Number	Action	Indications
Fengshi	GB31	frees the channels and quickens the network vessels	acute appendicitis, chronic back pain, numbness of the lower extremities
Yanglingquan	GB34	clears heat, expels dampness	mania and withdrawal, chronic tracheitis, liver and gallbladder disease, joint inflammation
Yangjiao	GB35	clears heat, expels dampness	mania and withdrawal, liver and gallbladder disease, pain when passing stones, acute appendicitis
Zuqiaoyin	GB44	extinguishes wind, courses the liver and gallbladder, clears heat, drains fire	unilateral headache, flowery vision, timmitus, lateral costal pain, heat diseases, eye pain, pain in the outer canthus
Dadun	LV1	restores consciousness, clears the spirit-disposition, rectifies qi	stomach pain, abdominal pain, genital pain, clouding inversion, mania and withdrawal
Changqiang	Du1	quickens blood, frees the channels	hemorrhoids, anal prolapse, chronic diarrhea
Yaoshu	Du2	quickens blood, frees the channels	chronic lumbar pain, sciatica, diseases of the lumbar vertebrae, post polio syndrome, stroke sequelae, chronic nephritis, pediatric enuresis, hemorrhoids, uterine prolapse
Yaoyangguan	Du3	quickens blood, frees the channels	(same as Du2)
Shenzhu	Du12	dispels pathogens, clears the construction	pediatric gan disease, heat in the chest



Point	Number	Action	Indications
Dazhui	Du14	courses exterior pathogens, frees yang qi of the body, clears the heart and quiets the spirit, clears lung heat	heat disease, malaria, common cold, steaming bone tidal fever, cough, neck stiffness, stiffness in the spine, infantile fright wind
Baihui	Du20	extinguishes wind, subdues yang discharges heat	headache, food damage, eye diseases, itching over the entire body
Suliao	Du25	discharges heat, opens the orifices	clouding inversion, drinker's nose, clonic spasm, nasal block
Yinjiao	Du28	clears heat, drains fire	mania and withdrawal, pain and swelling of the gums, redness, pain and itching of the outer canthus, pain and bleeding of the teeth or gums, red facial complexion, hemorrhoids
Yaoyan	M-BW-24		pediatric gan disease, back pain
Erjian	M-HN-10	clears and discharges heat, quiets the spirit	red eyes, eye screens, eye pain, high fever, insomnia, heat diseases in general, anxiety
Jinjin, Yuye	M-HN-20		painful or swollen tongue, mouth ulcerations, aphasia, vomiting, diarrhea
Taiyang	M-HN-9	courses wind, clears heat, clears the head, brightens the eyes	headache, wryness of the eyes and mouth, trigeminal neuralgia, redness and swelling of the eyes, mania and withdrawal, hypertension, esophageal cancer

Point	Number	Action	Indications
Shixuan	M-UE-1	extinguishes wind, discharges heat, restores consciousness	acute tonsillitis, child fright wind, hypertension, wind strike, high fever, loss of consciousness, mania and withdrawal, fright wind, summer heat stroke, epilepsy
Sifeng	M-UE-9		pediatric gau disease

## **APPENDIX 6**

### **COMMONLY BLED POINTS OF TUNG'S ACUPUNCTURE**

As mentioned earlier in this book, Tung's acupuncture focuses on a collection of unique extra-channel points. A key feature of Tung's acupuncture is the heavy use of bloodletting, and bloodletting can be applied either in an area or zone (as already described), or at specific points. The following charts summarize the most commonly bled points of Tung's acupuncture, along with locations and indications.<sup>29, 47, 52</sup>

Tung's Points of the Ventral Trunk

Point Name	Number	Location	Indications
Hou E Jiu 喉蛾九穴	VT01	9 point group. The first line has the center point located at the superior thyroid notch of the thyroid cartilage, and then 1 point each to the right and left 1.5 cun away from the center point. The superior line of three points is 1 cun superior to the first and similarly spaced, and the inferior line is 1 cun inferior to the first and similarly spaced.	Sore throat, thyroiditis, throat itching, sputum obstructing the throat
Shi Er Hou 十二胸穴	VT02	12 point group (6 on the right and 6 on the left). First line is 3 points parallel to the clavicle, 1 point in the center and 1 point each to the right and left 1.5 cun from the center point. The second line is inferior to the first, 1.3 cun inferior and equally spaced as the superior line. One group of 6 points is on the right and one is on the left chest.	Asthma, common cold
Jin Wu 金五穴	VT03	5 point group located on the sternal midline (Ren channel). The first point is located at the upper border of the manubrium, and each successive point is located on the midline 1 cun inferior to the previous one.	Rib pain, indigestion, acute enteritis, dyspnea

Point Name	Number	Location	Indications
Wei Mao Qi 胃毛七穴	VT04	7 point group located along 3 lines. 1st line is on the midline; the first point is located at the tip of the xyphoid process, the other two points are on the midline 1 and 2 cun respectively inferior to the first. 2nd and 3rd line are lateral to the first line by 1.5 cun, each with 2 points level with the inferior 2 points of the first line.	Enteritis, palpitation, stomach disease, gastric hemorrhage
Fu Chao Er Shi San 輔巢二十三穴	VT05	23 point group, located on the abdomen arranged in a grid shape with 1 cun between each of the points. No point at the navel (see diagram).	Uteritis, nephritis, enteritis, appendicitis, abdominal pain

## Tung's Points of the Dorsal Trunk

Point	Number	Location	Indications
Qi Xing 七星穴	DT03	(1) On Du Mai, 0.8 cun above posterior hairline, (2) 1 cun below first point, (3) 2 cun below first point, (4, 5) 0.8 cun lateral to second point, (6, 7) 1 cun below fourth and fifth points	nausea and vomiting, common cold, headache, high fever in children
Wu Ling 五横穴	DT04	(1 <sup>st</sup> line) one point below each spinal vertebra from T1 to T10; (2 <sup>nd</sup> line) bilaterally 3 cun lateral to the spine each points at the levels of vertebrae T1 to T8; (3 <sup>rd</sup> line) bilaterally 6 cun lateral to the spine each points at the levels of vertebrae T2 to T8 [40 points total]	fever, common cold, hypertension, headache, lumbar pain, numbness of the hands and feet, hemiplegia, acute stomachache, vomiting, acute enteritis
Shuang Feng 雙風穴	DT05	Bilaterally, 1.5 cun lateral to the Du mai, at the level of the spinous processes from T2 to T8 [14 points total]	pain in the extremities, numbness in the extremities, arteriosclerosis

Point	Number	Location	Indications
San Jiang 三焦穴	DT15	(1 <sup>st</sup> line) one point below each spinal vertebra from L1 to S2; (2 <sup>nd</sup> line) bilaterally 3 cun lateral to the spine each points at the levels of vertebrae L2 to S2	lumbar pain, uteritis, amenorrhea, chest pain on breathing, acute enteritis; second line also used to treat arm pain, tennis elbow, shoulder pain
Chong Xiao 冲霄穴	DT17	beneath the spinous processes of S3, S4 and S5	headache, dizziness, neck pain

## Commonly Bled Points of the Distal Extremities

Point Name	Number	Location	Indications
Dan 膽穴	11.13	0.3 cun lateral to the median line of the proximal phalanx of the dorsal middle finger	palpitations, children crying at night, hysteria
Zhi Wu 刺五穴	11.26	Set of three points located on the midline of the dorsal proximal phalanx of the thumb	abscess, poor wound healing, decubitus ulcerations
Qu Ling 曲陵穴	33.16	In the cubital fossa, 0.5 cun lateral to the center	gastro-enteritis and cardiac diseases
Bei Mian 背面穴	44.07	In the depression just below the acromion	fatigue, leg pain, vomiting, enteritis
Shang Qu 上曲穴	44.16	1 cun posterior to the midpoint of the deltoid muscle	liver diseases (cirrhosis)
Shui Yu 水愈穴	44.17	0.5 cun superior to and 1.5 cun posterior to the midpoint of the deltoid muscle	kidney diseases, wrist pain, and arm pain
Si Hua Zhong 四花中穴	77.09	4.5 cun distal to St36 (on the Stomach channel)	cardiac diseases, arteriosclerosis, stomachache, bony swelling, frozen shoulder



Point Name	Number	Location	Indications
Si Hua Fu 四花副穴	77.10	2.5 cun distal to Si Hua Zhong	cardiac diseases, arteriosclerosis, stomachache, enteritis
Si Hua Wai 四花外穴	77.14	1.5 cun lateral to Si Hua Zhong	migraine, ear pain, shoulder pain, arm pain (lateral epicondylitis), sciatica (Gallbladder channel), instep or sole pain, toothache, intercostal neuralgia, enteritis
Shang Chun 上唇穴	77.15	at the lower lateral margin of the knee cap	lip tenderness or mouth sores
Xia Chun 下唇穴	77.16	1 cun inferior to Shang Chun	lip tenderness or mouth sores
Er Bei 耳背穴	99.07	0.3 cun superior to the midpoint of the posterior auricle	laryngitis, vocal cord nodules or polyps
Er San 耳三穴	99.08	Three points in this group, located at the upper point and mid point of the helix, and inferior tip of ear lobe	diarrhea, common cold, migraine
Zong Shu 總樞穴	1010.07	0.8 cun superior to the hairline on the posterior midline (on the Du mai)	aphasia, cholera, vomiting, neck pain, palpitations (bloodletting very effective but must use caution)
Shang Li 上眉穴	1010.09	0.2 cun above the medial corner of the eyebrow	acute headache, blurry vision

Point Name	Number	Location	Indications
Si Fu Er 四髎二穴	1010.10	0.2 cun above the midpoint of the eyebrow	blurry vision, acute headache, abdominal distension
Si Fu Yi 四髎一穴	1010.11	0.2 cun above the lateral end of the eyebrow	blurry vision, acute headache, abdominal distension
Zheng Ben 正本穴	1010.12	at the tip of the nose	allergic rhinitis, paranoid psychosis

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Bloodletting extends throughout the current of Chinese medicine, from the earliest extant texts, to the modern period. However, despite this fact, bloodletting is under represented in contemporary English language acupuncture textbooks. This text, the first of its kind in English, provides students and seasoned practitioners alike with a practical overview of bloodletting therapy. It includes an historical overview of bloodletting, an exploration of bloodletting in the Huang Di Nei Jing, and detailed expositions on the theory and practice of bloodletting in the modern clinic. Most importantly, it discusses bloodletting therapy in chronic, recalcitrant, and degenerative diseases, as well as combining bloodletting and acupuncture for complex pattern combinations.

Henry McCann, DAOM, is a professional practitioner of acupuncture and Oriental medicine who has taught extensively in the United States and Europe. He is a former Fulbright fellow to Japan, and a graduate of Oberlin College. Dr. McCann completed his professional training at the New England School of Acupuncture, and then finished a doctorate in women's health and geriatric medicine at the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine.

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ISBN 978-0-9786766-0-5