

The traditional Chinese medicine concept of dampness explained in terms of modern medicine

Keywords: TCM, obesity, dampness, inflammation, pain, meridian, vessel, du, ren, yin, yang, vertical, transverse, horizontal, cycle, hormonal, metabolism, blood, food, oil, estrogen, cortisol, osteoarthritis, endometriosis, polycystitis, infertility, signs, symptoms; human; body-field

Introduction

In light of the current crisis in the USA concerning the epidemic of obesity in children, teens and adults; the author will attempt to elucidate, in terms of contemporary cell biology and physiology, the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) concept of Dampness.

A very good discussion of Dampness may be found at this link¹ to provide you the reader a very comprehensive background for gaining a basic understanding of just what TCM means by the term “Dampness”. Also provided there is information about “Dampness” in relation to physiology. This article will attempt to further and update this basic information and expand it into the area of cell biology as well.

TCM developed over many centuries but building on many concepts that was of local and foreign origin. The insights that were incorporated into the body of knowledge that we now know as TCM were done without the knowledge of modern day physiology and cell biology. However, those insights are remarkably able to assist in the diagnosis and treatment of human illness. Both observation and empirically derived evidence contributed to treatment of disease in the human population by practitioners of TCM. What worked was retained and what did not was discarded. Those insights were codified by the various factions within the TCM community according to the knowledge and practice of those with outstanding ability and passed on to other select individuals and students. Thus, the various schools of thought were started, developed and progressed within the cultural background of what is now known as mainland China. This information spread to Japan, to Indochina and eventually to Europe and the Americas.

Today, modern research into the areas of cell biology and physiology has afforded a very good idea of the how, what and being of the workings of the human body. The author will attempt to put the concepts and insights of TCM into a new perspective in relation to the contemporary knowledge base of modern medical knowledge.

Discussion

A. The starting point for this discussion will be the fact that the 2 brains of the human body deal with 2 very different aspects of body metabolism.^{2,3} This fact is subtended by the guiding energetic control system afforded by the human body-field (HBF).⁴ The Yin-Yang balance is mediated by the balance of the Du and Ren governing vessels, the transverse orientation of the HBF. The Du vessel is very closely tied to the central nervous system (CNS) and the Ren vessel is very closely tied to the enteric nervous system (ENS). These 2 vessels mediate the overall temperature of the body as a whole. The Du vessel and CNS via the hypothalamus determine the metabolic rate of the

Volume 2 Issue 1 - 2015

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Received: November 10, 2015 | **Published:** November 13, 2015

cells of the body. The CNS governs the overall biochemical integration and biological rhythms of the human body via the hormonal system.⁵

The Ren Vessel is very closely tied to the ENS as stated. This means that the accumulation, distribution and storage of the required nutrients for the maintenance of the physical body come under its preview. The liver⁶ is particularly involved in this task as the liver virtually makes all of the non-cellular components of the blood that, in turn, transports those required nutrients to all the cells of the body. Thus, the Ren vessel supplies and the Du vessel regulate usage.

B. The horizontal orientation of the HBF is regulated by the hormonal system (that is in turn mediated by the CNS). It is with this system that the aspect of Dampness is particularly apt. It is also with this system that the food product that a person consumes is of paramount significance. In this so called modern age, the food available in post industrial societies is of dubious growing environments and not “organic” in the main. Most foodstuffs are highly processed and as such nutrients are removed and sold as high cost nutritional supplements. Soy products high in residual estrogen or phytoestrogenic substances^{6,7} are routinely added to the various aspects of production protocols. These foods are regularly consumed by the majority of people in the USA. Also, cooking oil of soy origin is utilized in production processes or sold as cooking oil for household usage. This oil is a major source of estrogen and phytogenic substances for consumers. These substances are well characterized as being endocrine disrupters.⁸ This site details endocrine science.⁹ Too much estrogen in your diet will also tend for you to getting osteoarthritis.¹⁰

The outcome for the regular eating of foodstuffs with high levels of estrogen or estrogenic compounds is obesity! Chronic exposure to high levels of estrogen are a body stressor and thus results in cortisol release by the adrenal glands that in turn disposes the body to put on weight. Consequently, eating foods empty of nutrients except starch, sugar, fat and salt in conjunction with high levels of estrogen or estrogenic substances is literal causing inflammation in your blood vessels and cellular tissues. Obese people are unhealthy people! Please see section D. for more on the inflammatory response. Women with obesity and too much estrogen in the tissues are prone to endometriosis¹¹ and polycystitis^{12,13} of the ovaries. Infertility is the result.

In TCM the signs and symptoms (S&S) for “Dampness” are revealing. Internal dampness is most common and will easily combine with Heat or Cold to cause Damp-Heat or Damp-Cold. Dampness can be thought of as the condition of “high humidity” inside the body. Symptoms can include a feeling of heaviness, swelling (edema or inflammation) or water retention, distended abdomen, any type of phlegm discharge, nodular masses (lymph nodes, ovaries, kidneys), loose bowels and turbidity of excreted and exuded fluids. Individuals with a Dampness condition often have sluggish energy and easily gain weight that is difficult to lose. The pulse is commonly described as slippery; the tongue is often puffy with teeth mark indentations on the sides, very moist looking and with a greasy, yellow looking tongue coating. These S&S are very similar to those detailed above.

C. The vertical orientation of the HBF balances the influence of the geomagnetic factors in the person’s environment with the reception of and influence of the electromagnetic radiation impinging upon the CNS. Of particular significance is the regulation of the wake/sleep cycle and the continued cycle of what is referred to in TCM as the 24-hour clock. This 24-hour cycle is directly tied to the flow of energy sequentially through the 12 meridian/organ systems and their 2-hour priority influence on the body accordingly.

D. Physical injury of the body and recovery to a state equivalent to that before injury is mediated by both the peripheral nervous system and the hormonal systems. Also involved are the white blood cell components of the immune system. Injury is a body stressor. Consequently, the (a) adrenal glands and (b) adipose tissue respond by the secretion of cortisol (a) to speed overall body metabolism and spur the release of estrogen (b) to initiate the healing processes quod by DNA/RNA cellular processes necessary to coordinate wound healing mediated by cellular activities.

The inflammatory process within the physical body may have various causal factors. Acute inflammation is of short duration, usually 2-3 days. Chronic inflammation may last several weeks until the healing process is complete. Chronic inflammation may never heal as the body is in a state of chronic injury due to the constant consumption of harmful foodstuffs, response to endocrine disruptors, response to harmful chemical substances and an imbalanced endocrine system. At the site of injury, several events are initiated by the release of cellular components of the injured tissue cells and disrupted blood vessel serum and white blood cell (WBC) components. This site has a very good video that details the inflammatory response.¹⁴ Please avail yourself of this video.

The result of chronic inflammation is that the various non-specific, i.e., non-cellular and not T-cell & B-cell type, response biochemicals are flooding your arterial, blood capillary and venous system and

causing a gradual degradation of cellular integration and functionality. This why obese people are chronically ill, swollen, lethargic and in pain. This is why their various organs begin to fail, their joints become arthritic and they are always in pain in the system most susceptible due to their genome and lifestyle.

Conclusion

In TCM, Dampness is known to be a very difficult diagnosis to recover from and may take a very long time in doing so. We now know this to be because the S&S of Dampness are those of hormonal imbalances within a person contributed by inflammation due to lifestyle choices.

Acknowledgments

None.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

Funding

None.

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