

Syndromes and patterns in traditional East Asian medicine

Opinion

Proper diagnosis is essential for the quality and results obtained in the treatment, through which the individual's health quality and the existence of imbalances or pathologies are defined.

The western concept of syndrome is a set of symptoms and/or signs that occur in association and that can be determined by different causes,¹ identifying a pathological pattern, in Traditional East Asian Medicine (MTLA), the conceptual definition is supported, symptom is the sensation that the individual reports and signs are the objective data obtained during the anamnesis and syndrome will be its association; however, oriental medicine focuses its attention on the primary energetic imbalance that resulted in the pathology, thus, instead of relating signs and symptoms to a specific pathology, oriental medicine points to nature, energetic alterations and location. Thus, to avoid confusion, some authors such as Maciocia² choose to use the "standard" nomenclature to replace the term "syndrome".

Based on this principle, as in Western medicine, in MTLA the sum of physiological, mental, environmental, psychological and social characteristics make up the diagnosis and allow for the establishment of specified standards that result in treatment protocols. However, in parallel with the assessment of pulses and tongue, skin conditions, sleep and dream characteristics, aspects of the menstrual cycle, feces and urine, the origin and history of signs and symptoms, food and environmental habits, quality of life, behavioral elements such as irritability, fear, insecurity, worry, and susceptibility to emotions are also important diagnostic factors.³

As in all sciences, there are specific frameworks, protocols, which are adopted as references, clinical characteristics linked to signs and symptoms, location, nature, pathogenic changes that indicate the severity, the energetic aspect, the vital-Qi status, the etiology or origin of the imbalance. They energetically seek to harmonize the free flow of Qi and blood energy (Xue) through channels or meridians throughout the body.

The following energetic aspects are considered: Qi is the energy that is in everything, which harmonizes the being with the universe; the blood (xue) carries this energy within the body, the Qi transforms and transports the organic liquids or bodily fluids that circulate with the defensive Qi (Jin) and the nourishing Qi (Ye), the organs and viscera are distributed between organs Yin (zang) that store the pure essences and Yang (fu) viscera that transform, differ and excrete and the channels or meridians (Jing Luo), are distributed in 14 main channels and a large number of secondary ones that form a complex network of distribution of the Qi and blood.^{2,3}

The patterns are based on eight principles that allow establishing the etiology of the imbalance, the factor that is interfering with the free flow of Qi and Xue through the meridians: 1. Nature, whether the Yin or Yang aspect of Qi energy is being expressed; 2. The location of the disorder, internal or endogenous aspects (internal organs) and external or exogenous aspects (skin, muscles and channels); 3. The characteristic or intensity of expression, it is an event associated with deficiency or excess and 4. The typification of pathogenic factors

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Maria Lúcia SG Jorge

Department of Pharmacology, IBRATE – Faculty of Technology, Brazil

Correspondence: Maria Lúcia SG Jorge, Department of Pharmacology, IBRATE – Faculty of Technology, Brazil, Email mljorge@icloud.com

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defined as cold and heat, reaching environmental characteristics such as dryness, humidity, wind.⁴

Didactically speaking, the diagnosis in MTLA has as its basic pillars the anamnesis (interview, inquiry, questionnaire), inspection (observation of the individual's conditions, general appearance, vitality, weight, posture, tone of voice, way of expressing emotions) always that it is possible to characterize smells and colors, and aims to identify disharmonies using the eight principles as a reference; identify its causes, if possible its primary causes; form a treatment strategy, select the points and monitor the individual's evolution at each therapeutic session. On the other hand, the body as a whole reflects the imbalance factors directly in the affected location, eg pain, redness at points on the meridian in question; in the various micro-systems (ear shell, abdomen, hands, feet, skull, face) that indicate places in disharmony or by the manifestation of organs and viscera, for example, eyes expressing liver problems.

Besides, in their review, Matos et al.⁵ evaluated the availability and applicability of technological methods to quantify variables related to the diagnosis of tongue and pulse and electrophysiological properties of acupuncture points and concluded that positive results were obtained in the development of diagnostic tools that reach the fundamental concepts of MTLA. In their work to evaluate and build an algorithm for the treatment of type 2 Diabetes Mellitus through Traditional Oriental Medicine, Zhao et al.⁶ emphasize that despite the model built from the study of stomach heat flourishing (SHF) syndrome and Qi Yin deficiency syndrome in patients, it is necessary to consider the objectivity of the diagnosis of patterns or syndromes, adopting quantitative and qualitative studies and using the combination model of several statistical analysis programs.

Conclusion

It is important to establish that when observing the energetic aspects of a disharmony there is no space for pragmatism, such as cold as empty, it can be full, full or deficient, empty, where Kidney Yin deficiency occurs, heat will be empty or phlegm can happen. We can

conclude that every diagnosis in the MTLA is based on anamnesis, interviews and mainly on the therapist's experience, observational capacity and evaluation.

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Conflicts of interest

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