

Chinese Medicine and Autism

For the
Chinese Medicine Practitioner

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Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to Jeffrey Yuen, an 88th generation Taoist priest for his inspiration and teachings. Mr. Yuen is a master scholar, teacher and practitioner of Chinese Medicine and dean of the Chinese Medicine program at the Swedish Institute in New York City. He was essential in helping me bring this paper to fruition. I feel blessed by the support, illumination and knowledge offered by Mr. Yuen.

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CHINESE MEDICINE AND AUTISM

Introduction

In 1998, I traveled to China and Korea to research treatment modalities for Autism. My interest in the treatment of Autism with Chinese Medicine began in 1993 when a parent brought a three-year-old non-verbal child into our office. Since that time, I have worked with children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders. This paper is an introduction to the treatment of Autism with CM based on my experience and studies.

While in Seoul, Korea I observed at the Kyung Hee University Hospital with Professors Jae-Hwan Chung and Doeg-Kon Kim. I observed Autistic children being treated with acupuncture. This hospital had the only written literature that I was able to discover, concerning the treatment of Autism with Oriental Medicine. ¹ Upon leaving Korea I traveled to Beijing where I observed at the Chinese- Japanese Friendship Hospital. The head of Pediatrics, Dr. Yang Meng Lan, was extremely helpful in sharing her many years of experience and knowledge in treating Autistic children. In addition to Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine, Massage was an integral part of her treatment plan. I also spent time at Beijing Medical University's Institute of Mental Health, with Dr. Xiaoling Yang, MD, President of the Beijing Autism Society. Dr. Xiaoling Yang's primary focus was on Western medical treatments, but as President of the Beijing Autism Society, she was able to assist in my search for Oriental Medical treatment information. At the Beijing Western District Intelligence Cultivation School and Clinic, I observed Autistic children who were treated three times weekly with acupuncture within the school setting.

¹ Kim, Doeg-Kon, & Chung, Jae-Hwan, *Clinical Study on Autism in Oriental Medicine*, Kyung Hee University Hospital.

Along with the education I acquired overseas, I continue to build on my knowledge and skills in the treatment of Autism with Chinese Medicine. I have acquired a much wider understanding of Autism and Chinese Medicine through clinical experience and extensive studies with Jeffery Yuen, an 88th generation Taoist Priest who is a master scholar, practitioner and teacher of Chinese Medicine.

These studies and my continuing study in the US as well as my clinical experience in treating Autistic children is shared below. This is by no means a definitive treatise on the treatment of Autism with CM, but it is my beginning. I encourage others who have had experience with Autism to contact me so that we might learn from each other. I hope that others will be inspired to reach out to this population of children that have so few treatment options.

Autism: A Western Perspective

Autism is a developmental disability with primary symptomology affecting social interactions and communication skills. There are many theories regarding the etiology of Autism, yet no clear consensus exists among professionals in Western Medicine. It has been postulated that semi-digested peptide chains form morphine which interferes with nerve transmission to the brain. It is recognized that Autistic children have an underdeveloped limbic system, which deals with sensory input and learning. ²

Autism is a behaviorally defined syndrome. Within a western framework there are no clear causes of Autism, although it is believed to be a biological neurological disorder affecting brain function. There are strong indicators, which reflect a genetic basis. ³ There is growing concern that environmental toxins and pollution may be contributing factors as well as viral infections. Though the DSM IV does not list any digestive symptomology associated with Autism, many have postulated that these children have some type of anomaly surrounding food or digestion. There are no medical tests for the diagnosis of Autism.

There is wide variation in behaviors and responses of the Autistic child. Although they may walk, talk and crawl earlier than the average child, language is either slow to develop or does not develop. Many children develop normally for the first year of life, then Autistic symptoms begin to appear. They may fall behind their same age peers in areas of communication, social and cognitive skills. Some Autistic children have speech but have difficulty processing information. Some Autistic children will seek solitude,

² Baker, S.M. & Pangborn, Jon, *Biomedical Assessment Options for Children with Autism and Related Problems*, (1999) San Diego, C.A.

³ Konstantareas, Mary M. & Homatidis, S., (1999). Chromosomal Abnormalities in a Series of Children with Autistic Disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. (Vol.29 No. 4) NY, NY.

rarely interact with others and make little demand on their caretakers. They are limited in their ability to respond to social cues and may have limited eye contact. Sensory impairment, whether sight, hearing, touch, smell or taste, may be exhibited. Auditory hallucinations, attention deficits, and delayed motor skills may be apparent. There is often a lack of spontaneous or imaginative play. Some children may be aggressive to themselves, i.e. head banging, hand biting, or to others. They will often have a difficult time with any changes in routine and may perseverate (exhibit obsessive interest in something, be it a person, activity or an item). They may stare at or play with the same item or they may rock repetitively for hours, exhibiting hypo or hyperactivity. They may laugh or cry for no apparent reason. Insomnia or other sleep disorders are often experienced. At puberty there may be an onset of seizures. Difficulties with communication and social interaction usually continue throughout their lifetime.

The DSM IV does not list specific pharmaceuticals, but physicians may treat presenting symptoms pharmaceutically. Pharmaceuticals utilized include neuroleptics, anti-depressants and anti-anxiety agents. ⁴

Educational and Behavior based treatment programs include:

1. Applied Behavioral Analysis (for example, Lovaas)
2. TEACCH (An Educational/Vocational Intervention which is a classroom based model)
3. Inclusive Education

⁴Gordon, C.T., *Psychopharmacological Treatments for Symptoms and Behaviors in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, Advocate, (Vol. 33, no. 6) Bethesda, MD, Nov.-Dec. 2000.

4. Speech and Language Therapy
5. Occupational Therapy
6. Physical Therapy

Other treatment approaches considered ‘alternative’ within the mainstream western medicine community include:

1. Sensory and Auditory Integration Training
2. Music Therapy
3. Vision Therapy
4. Dietary Interventions

There are many suggested regimens which include vitamin and mineral supplementation, allergy elimination techniques, gluten/casein-free diet, yeast/mold-free diets, supplementation with digestive enzymes, and a diet free of sugar, additives, preservatives and hormones.

Autism: An Eastern Perspective

“On an emotional level, the state of the Heart determines a persons capacity to form meaningful relationships. A healthy Heart and Mind will positively influence our ability to relate to other people...” This quote from The Foundations of Chinese Medicine , by Giovanni Maciocia, ⁵ is paramount to the understanding of Autism within the framework of CM.

Autism is an imbalance of the Heart, Spleen and Kidney with Phlegm accumulation. Phlegm is not only a pathological factor for the Autistic child but also etiological. In CM, Autistic individuals suffer from Heart Blood imbalances that inhibit connecting on an emotional level with other persons, including their immediate family. These children often present with digestive anomalies characterized as Spleen Qi Deficiency. As Autism is most often diagnosed before the age of three, CM recognizes this disorder as having a Pre-Heaven connection, i.e., Kidney Essence Deficiency.

⁵ Maciocia, Giovanni, The Foundations of Chinese Medicine, A Comprehensive Text for Acupuncturists & Herbalists, (1989) NY.

ETIOLOGY

Contributing factors to the development of Autism in CM are genetics, digestive weakness, lifestyle, emotions, antibiotics and immunization.

1. Genetics

The diagnosis of Autism at young ages signifies a Pre-Heaven connection. The diagnosis of Autism at birth is not possible because there are many co-factors, which must arise for a child to develop Autism. Most children will also be exposed to these same co-factors, yet develop normally. This genetic predisposition must be addressed in order to reverse Autism.

2. Digestive Weakness

Parents often say that their children seemed normal to about one to one and a half years of age at which time they began regressing. This is also the time that children begin to consume a much wider variety of foods. If Spleen Qi is deficient, a person will tend to digest foods poorly and will have a propensity to develop Phlegm. Many of the behaviors associated with Autism are due to Phlegm accumulation. One of the primary pathways for Phlegm development is Deficiency of Spleen Qi.

Diet is of paramount importance in the etiology of Autism. All foods that weaken the Spleen and create Phlegm are implicated in the development of Autism. This includes dairy, wheat, raw and cold foods and excessively sweet food. There is controversy surrounding the link between Autism and diet in the western community, but CM recognizes diet as an important contributing factor.

Food sensitivities and allergies in Chinese Medicine are due to Fire Toxins in the Small Intestine. This relates to Lingering Pathogenic Factors.

3. Lifestyle Factors

A discussion of Autism must address the needs of infants at birth.

Children are not only born with weak Spleen and Lung Qi, but also with vulnerability of spirit. Traditionally, babies remained at home with the mother and family in quiet environments. Our culture's propensity to take young infants everywhere, including malls and sports arenas is detrimental to their Shen. Babies, particularly those who have a propensity to startle easily, should be kept in quiet, peaceful, soothing environments. It is important that an infant not be over-stimulated, as this depletes Heart Qi and Blood.

4. Emotions

As Autistic children age, they may exhibit a great deal of frustration due to their inability to communicate. This frustration generates heat and this heat may contribute to more aggressive behaviors. This heat coupled with puberty and its accompanying rise in Yang Qi may lead to seizures. Many Autistic children experience anxiety due to Heart Qi and Blood Deficiency. Spleen Qi Deficiency can lead to obsessiveness and obsessive behaviors weaken Spleen Qi further.

5. Antibiotics

Some believe that there is a link between the development of Autism and over usage of antibiotics. The excessive cold nature of antibiotics weakens the Spleen, which leads to an accumulation of Phlegm. Antibiotics are a contributory rather than causal factor in the development of Autism. Repeated antibiotic usage

will manifest as a Lingering Pathogenic Factor that heavily influences a child's ability to mobilize Wei Qi to ward off further External Pathogenic Factors thus leading to more illness and accompanying antibiotic usage.

6. Immunizations

Immunizations are heat toxins introduced directly into the Blood system through injections. Because of the relationship of the Blood to the Heart this heat can affect the child in a number of ways.

Heat consumes Blood and Yin and may give rise to Internal Wind or Heart Fire. Many of the side effects associated with immunizations are recognized as Heat Invading the Pericardium. A child that is constitutionally Heart Qi or Blood Deficient will be at a greater risk from side effects from immunizations.

As immunizations create heat, the Triple Heater will respond with dampness in order to control this heat. The Triple Heater is responsible for Yuan Qi. If Yuan Qi is being utilized for controlling heat, in time the Triple Heater is depleted, Essence compromised and Phlegm develops.

If a child is constitutionally weak or ill at the time of immunizations a Lingering Pathogenic Factor can result. This Lingering Pathogenic Factor will contribute to recurrent illnesses that may lead to Phlegm accumulation. It is this Phlegm that is a primary pathological and etiological factor in the development of Autism.

PATHOLOGY

Phlegm is the primary pathological factor related to the development of Autism. Spleen Qi Deficiency is the primary pathway for development of Phlegm. Autism has components of Heart, Spleen and Kidney organ/energetic deficiencies. The Chong Mai Meridian is important in any discussion of Autism pathology due to the connection to the Heart, Kidney and Spleen.

Phlegm

In Autism, Phlegm is not only an etiological factor, but also pathological. Sun Si Miao, a Taoist priest developed and refined the treatment of Phlegm diseases in the Tang Dynasty. Many of his writings focused on Phlegm creating Shen disturbance and it is this Shen disturbance that mystifies western practitioners with its multifaceted symptomology.

Phlegm Misting the Mind

A child who manifests this condition will generally appear to be mentally slow, with incoherent speech or aphasia. Often this child will not be able to initiate speech but may copy speech heard. For example, you may say “bye-bye John” and rather than respond with your name the Autistic child would repeat “bye-bye John” in speaking to you. This child will tend toward lethargy and have a very limited attention span. They may manifest with repetitive patterns of behavior.

Phlegm Fire Harassing the Heart

This child will often have dream disturbed sleep, constipation and episodes of talking to themselves. They may exhibit uncontrolled laughing or

crying. They will tend to be short in temperament, easily agitated, exhibit rash behaviors and may tend to aggression to themselves or others.

Spleen Qi Deficiency

Spleen Qi Deficiency is primary in development of Phlegm. Autistic children may have Damp Phlegm, Cold Phlegm, Hot Phlegm, Dry Phlegm or Wind Phlegm. Dry Phlegm and Wind Phlegm become more common in Autism as the child ages, particularly as they enter puberty.

The following are primary classifications of Phlegm in Autism.

- Damp or Cold Phlegm –This child will be lethargic. Because the Shen is active at night due to Phlegm in the chest, the child wakes exhausted. This child may exhibit obsessive behaviors.
- Hot Phlegm –This child will have more impulsive behaviors rather than compulsive behaviors. They will be aggressive and exhibit loud verbalizations.
- Wind Phlegm –This can develop due to Cold or Hot Phlegm. An Autistic child with Wind Phlegm may manifest seizures, epilepsy or tremors.

The treatment of Autism requires that not only the condition be treated but also the process. Phlegm is the condition that manifests, but the root of this Phlegm must be elucidated and addressed if treatment is to be successful.

Heart Disharmonies

Heart Disharmonies in Autism include, Heart Blood Deficiency, Heart Yin Deficiency and Heart Fire.

Heart Blood Deficiency

An infant with Heart Blood Deficiency has a propensity to startle easily. Signs of Heart Blood Deficiency include a pale complexion, pale tongue, insomnia, dream disturbed sleep, a propensity to anxiety and emotional difficulties. An Autistic child with Heart Blood Deficiency will tend toward lethargy and quietness.

Heart Yin Deficiency

Symptoms of Heart Yin Deficiency include more heat signs. This child will manifest with rosy cheeks and may experience night sweats and sweating of the palms and soles of feet. They may easily develop mouth ulcers with a white rim around the ulcer. A child with Heart Yin Deficiency will tend to be more restless or fidgety than the child with Heart Blood Deficiency.

Heart Fire

The child with Heart Fire will be extremely agitated. Mouth or tongue ulcers will have a red rim. This ruddy child will often have a very rosy face, whereas the Heart Yin Deficiency child only exhibits red cheeks. These Autistic children will manifest more manic behaviors than the autistic child with Heart Blood Deficiency and Heart Yin Deficiency. This child will tend towards aggressive behaviors.

Kidney Essence Deficiency

The young age at which Autism develops indicates Kidney Essence Deficiency. Kidney Essence is necessary for brain nourishment and a deficiency in Kidney Essence will result in poor mental development. If Kidney Essence is Deficient it will not support the Spleen Yang function of transporting and transforming.

Chong Mai Deficiency

The Eight-Extra Meridians are associated with imbalances at the constitutional level. The Chong Mai is considered the first ancestry and gives birth to the Ren Mai and Du Mai.

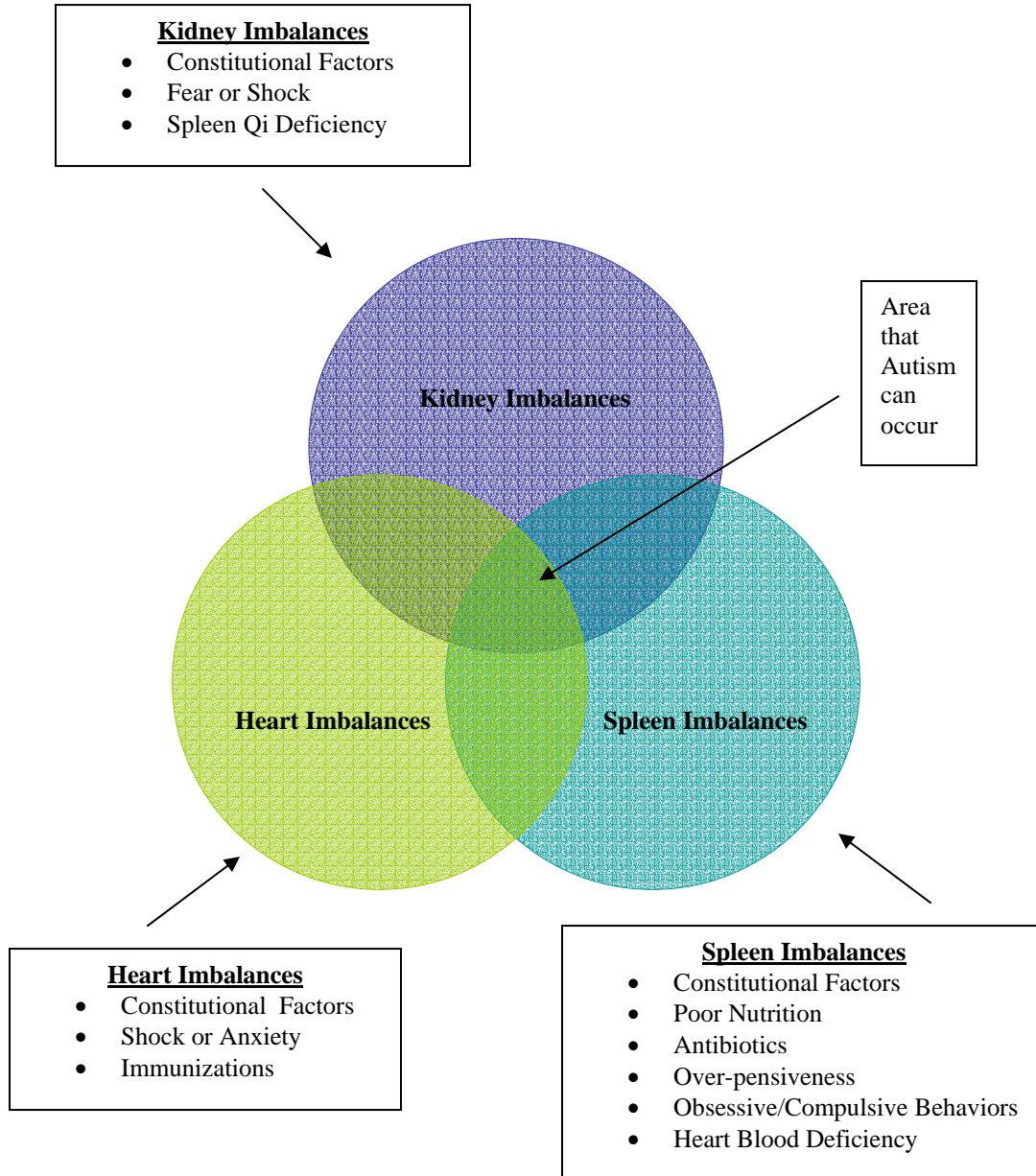
In current CM textbooks the Chong Mai is most often associated with menstrual difficulties and is known as the Sea of Blood. Blood is the median that carries ones experiences and Shen resides in the Blood. The treatment of the Chong Mai is primary for resolving Autism. According to the Su Wen, the Chong Mai originates in the lower abdomen and travels up to K21. The Ling Shu further elucidates the lower pathway of the Chong Mai emanating out at ST30, the sea of Food point, traversing the Spleen Meridian to the dorsum of foot and connecting to the Qiao Mai vessels at the big toe. Another branch of the Chong Mai traverses the mouth, opens into the throat and transports Jing Essence and Yang energy to the head.

The ability of the Chong Mai to positively affect Autism is based on its ability to treat imbalances that have components of Pre and Post-Heaven Deficiency through its connection to the Kidney, Spleen and Heart. The Chong Mai connection to the Spleen strengthens a weak constitution that manifests with digestive problems of poor appetite and assimilation of food. The Chong Mai is connected to the Heart as it is the Sea of

Blood. Strengthening Chong Mai will create and nourish Blood through the Spleen and Heart connection. Chong Mai can also nourishes Prenatal Essence, thus positively affecting Kidney Jing Essence.

ORGAN PATHOLOGY

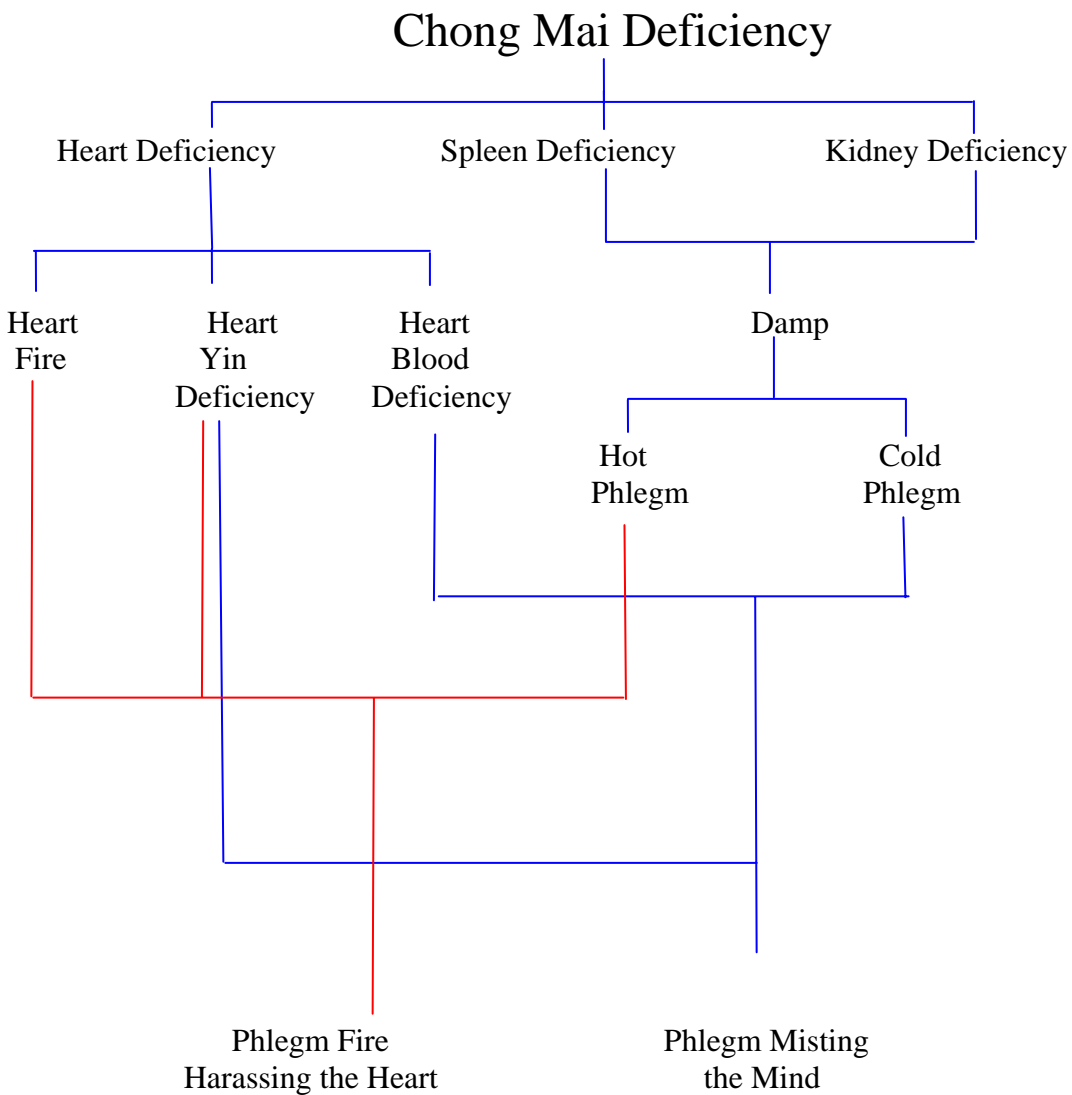
On an organ level the diagnosis of Autism relates to Heart, Kidney and Spleen imbalances.



The development of Autism can occur at the intersection of these three imbalances, as diagrammed by circles.

Autism & Meridian

Pathology Pathways



CHINESE MEDICINE DIAGNOSTICS FOR AUTISM

Tongue Diagnosis

Tongue color will be pale in Deficiency Syndrome or red in Excess Syndrome. Many Autistic children rarely have thick white or yellow coats even though they have Cold or Hot Phlegm.

The tongue of an Autistic child often has one of two notable characteristics. The tongue tip may have a notch in it, or the tongue will often have a thin crack going from the center of the tongue down to the very tip. The notch on the tip of the tongue indicates severe Heart Qi and Blood Deficiency while the thin crack to the tip of the tongue indicates Heart Yin Deficiency.

Pulse Diagnosis

Pulse qualities for the Deficient type are often a combination of slow, thready and rolling. For the Excess type they are fast, wiry and rolling.

Facial Diagnosis

Complexion

A pale complexion indicates deficiency or cold. A red complexion is indicative of heat. If just the cheeks are red, it is empty heat, whereas a ruddy complexion indicates full heat.

Eyes

Eyes that are clouded can indicate Essence deficiency and Phlegm Misting the Mind. Eyes that move constantly and quickly often indicate an excess of heat

or wind. An inability to make eye contact with another is a clear sign of heart imbalances.

Communication

Aphasia or limited speech is usually associated with Deficiency. In Excess Syndrome there will be excessive talking or maybe just excessive noise making without speech.

Some parents have communicated that if their children become angry their speech improved. This is because anger creates rising Yang Qi and this rising Yang Qi facilitates movement through Phlegm. This rising Yang Qi allows an Autistic child to communicate more clearly for a short time.

TREATMENT

Nutrition

It is essential to eliminate foods that induce dampness and phlegm. By eliminating foods that produce dampness it is possible to strengthen the Spleen Qi. A child diagnosed with Phlegm Heat Harassing the Heart, must also eliminate foods that are hot in nature.

1. Eat warming foods that have been lightly cooked or steamed. Foods that are considered tonifying or warming include vegetables (particularly root vegetables), legumes, grains and small amounts of animal protein.

Some suggested vegetables include: acorn squash, spaghetti squash, butternut squash, pumpkins, kale, spinach, Swiss chard, collard greens, mustard greens, sweet potatoes, yams, turnips, radishes, carrots, button mushrooms, scallions, brown rice, white rice, amaranth, millet, barley, quinoa and beans, including lima, navy, adzuki, kidney and lentil beans.

2. Eliminate cold and raw foods. This includes foods that are cold physically and cold energetically. Cold foods physically would refer to frozen foods such as Popsicles, ice cream and drinks that are heavily iced. Foods that are energetically cold include: soy products, dairy, tomatoes, and most fruits.

3. Eliminate damp producing foods. Foods that produce dampness include: dairy, sugar, peanuts or peanut butter, fruit, eggs, fried or greasy foods, chilled or frozen foods, wheat and excessive amounts of soy.

4. Eliminate heat producing foods. Foods that create heat are spicy, hot foods, food additives and preservatives, caffeine and sugar.

HERBAL MEDICINE

Herbal therapies for Autism must address the following areas:

- Resolve Phlegm
- Tonify Spleen Qi
- Nourish Heart Blood and Yin
- Tonify Kidney Essence
- Open the Orifices
- Clear Heart Fire

Basic Autism Formulas

Deficiency Syndrome	Shi Syndrome
Shi Chang Pu	Shi Chang Pu
Yuan Zhi	Yuan Zhi
Tian Zhu Huang	Tian Zhu Huang
Qian Shi	Qian Shi
Long Chi	Long Chi
Bai Zhu	Huang Lian
Tian Nan Xing	Rou Gui
Bei Xie	Suan Zao Ren
Bai Zi Ren	Hu Po
Xi Yang Shen	Dan Zhu Ye
Chuan Xiong	Yu Jin

These formulas are basic for the treatment of Autism. Shi Chang Pu, (Acorus Rhizome) has the function of opening the portals. It is also helpful in clearing Phlegm, which obstructs the Mind. Yuan Zhi, (Polygala Root) calms the Spirit and Mind. It helps to expel Phlegm from the Heart orifices and treats many emotional and mental problems. Yuan Zhi and Shi Chang Pu are used for eliminating damp that affects the Spleen and Triple Heater according to Sun Si Miao. Tian Zhu Huang treats Phlegm and Wind conditions that manifest with emotional symptomology. Qian Shi is used in this formula due to its ability to help the body bank Essence. Long Chi, (Dragon's Teeth) is important in treating emotional distress due to an agitated Heart.

In Deficiency Syndrome, there is more focus on tonification with the use of Bai Zhu and Xi Yang Shen. Bie Xie allows the Spleen to separate pure fluids from turbid. Xi Yang Shen, (American Ginseng) tonifies Qi and Yin. This herb acts on both the Heart and Spleen channels to treat deficiency of Qi and Yin. Tian Nan Xing, (Arisaema Tuber) expels Phlegm.

In children who exhibit more Heat or Excess Syndrome the following herbs are part of the standard formula: Yu Jin, (Curcuma Root) clears heat from the Heart. This herb is especially useful in treating hot Phlegm blocking the Heart orifices, which can cause anxiety or mental problems. Suan Zao Ren, (Wild jujube) is an important herb to nourish the Heart and Liver Yin. It is particularly useful for children exhibiting aggressive behaviors. The use of Rou Gui and Huang Lian in combination establishes communication between the Heart and Kidneys.

Other herbs are prescribed depending on the constitution and manifestations of the child. Herbs for Heart Fire include: Huang Lian, Dan Zhu Ye and Zhi Zi. If there are

also signs of Wind which manifests as seizures or “hand-waving” Tian Ma and Di Long are indicated. Nourishing of Heart Yin and Blood includes the use of Bai He, He Shou Wu and Dang Gui.

Acupuncture Treatment for Autism

Acupuncture for the treatment of the Autistic child might focus on a number of different pathways.

1. Eight Extra Meridian Approach

The Chong Mai represents ones integrity and allows a person the ability to create their individuality. It allows a person to become the architect of their life. The Ren nourishes Yin and regulates Blood. The Du Mai tonifies Kidney Yang and nourishes the Brain.

2. According to Primary Meridians and Zang Fu

Specific points on an organ level include points for tonifying Spleen, nourishing Heart Blood or Yin, sedating Heart Fire and nourishing Kidney Essence. There are also points on the Primary Meridians for resolving Phlegm. Other points may be utilized for opening the orifices, clearing the mind and promoting speech.

3. Curious Organ Treatment

The Gall Bladder is the link between the Zang Fu and the Curious Organs. The Gall Bladder has direct access into Brain through DU20. The connection between the Gall Bladder and the Brain makes this a viable treatment approach.

Eight Extra Meridian Points

Suggested Extra Meridian points include:

Chong Points

K16-Huang Shu: Chong meridian: This point removes channel obstruction. It tonifies the Kidneys, particularly if Kidney is failing to nourish and benefit Heart.

PC6 – Nei Guan: This point is the opening point of the Chong. It treats Heart and Liver imbalances with manifestations of anxiety and irritability and promotes the free flow of Liver Qi. This point helps to internalize Blood and bring it inward. It calms the Shen, moves Qi, Blood and Phlegm and regulates the Yin Wei.

SP4 – Gong Sun: This point is the opening point of the Chong meridian and tonifies Spleen Qi.

ST 37 and **39** are transporting points for Chong Mai used for its effect on the bowels.

Du Mai Points

DU4 – Ming Men: This point tonifies Kidney Essence and nourishes Yuan Qi.

DU15- Ya Men: This point clears the mind, promotes speech and nourishes the brain.

DU20- Bai Hui: This is the meeting point of all Yang channels. It helps to bring fresh Yang up to head.

Ren Mai Points

R4- Guan Yuan: This point generates Essence, nourishes Yin and Blood, strengthens mind and body and calms Shen.

R12- Zhong Wan: This point helps to resolve dampness and nourish nutritive Qi.

Gall Bladder Points

The Gall Bladder is the link between the Zang Fu and the Curious Organs, (particularly the brain). The Gall Bladder links post-natal and pre-natal Qi and is particularly useful in the treatment of Autism. It is also important as it addresses phlegm accumulation that is blocking the sensory orifices.

Suggested Gall Bladder points include:

GB 7, 11, 13, 20, 39, 44

GB7-Qu Bin: This point is used for Phlegm blocking sensory organs and Wind Phlegm in the brain, ears, eyes and nose.

GB11-Tou QiaoYin: This point is used for sensory organs blocked by Yin Dampness (Phlegm blockage). This point opens all portals.

GB13-Ben Shen: This point is used for mental and emotional problems and addresses obsessive thoughts and behaviors. It is particularly useful for Phlegm Harrassing the Heart.

GB20-Feng Chi: This point eliminates Wind in the head and sensory organs. It promotes the ability to change and affects neck and throat blockage that inhibits speech.

GB39-Xuan Zhong: This point supports Essence and is important for the treatment of malnourishment in children.

GB44-Zu Qiao Yin: This point, like **GB11**, is for sensory organs that have excess Yin (Phlegm blockage). It also opens all portals.

Triple Heater

Proper functioning of the Triple Heater allows the Spleen to function. If Triple Heater does not support the Spleen, the Spleen becomes turbid and is unable to produce postnatal Essence. TH points are chosen for their ability to affect sensory organs. The TH also disseminates Kidney Essence to the Zang Fu.

Suggested Triple Heater points include:

TH 4, 6,16

TH4-Yang Chi: This point supports Postnatal Qi and is powerful for treating childhood malnutrition.

TH6-Zhi Gou: This point is good for phlegm blocking speech. It clears middle burner turbidity.

TH16-Tian You: This is a Window to the Sky point. This point opens the soul and is used for treating psychological conditions and dampness and heat blocking the sensory organs.

Small Intestine Points

If the Heart is Deficient, the SI's ability of discernment is compromised. Heat Fire transferred to the SI can become Fire Toxins. These Fire Toxins prevent the SI from performing its job of separating pure and impure food substances. Fire Toxin accumulation in the SI will manifest as gluten sensitivity.

SI3,5,17

SI3 –Hou Xi: Clears heat and eliminates Internal Wind. It resolves Damp and clears the Wind. Opening point for Du Meridian.

SI5 –Yang Gu: It clears heat and benefits Wind problems due to sensory organ blockage and poor digestion due to Fire Toxin in SI.

SI17 –Tian Rong, Window of Sky Point: It addresses Fire Toxins in the Small Intestine.

Pericardium Points

The Pericardium meridian is utilized with Shen disturbance and mental confusion affecting the Heart. The PC is responsible for emotional clarity. The PC also treats seizures due to Phlegm and Wind Phlegm.

Suggested Pericardium points include:

P5, P6, P7, P8, P9

P5-Jian Shi: This is a ghost point and according to SSM it is useful for the autistic child who has conversations with “ghosts”. This is the child who appears to be having a conversation with the proverbial “childhood fantasy friend”. Press deeply on this point before needling. It is also useful for aphasia.

P6-Nei Guan: This point is the opening point of the Chong. It treats Heart and Liver imbalances with manifestations of anxiety and irritability and promotes the free flow of Liver Qi. This point helps to internalize Blood. It calms the Shen, moves Qi, Blood and Phlegm, and regulates the Yin Wei.

P7-Da Ling: This is also a Sun Si Miao ghost point. It is used for Phlegm Harassing the Heart, calms the spirit and sedates Heart Fire with mental/emotional manifestation of restless and manic behavior. It also addresses aphasia or excessive talking.

P8-Lao Gong: This point is used to Clear Heart Fire. It calms the restless or agitated mind. It is used clinically for self-injurious behavior or aggression towards others.

P9-Zhong Chong: This point connects with the Chong. It opens the portals and affects all sensory organs. It is particularly useful for childhood malnutrition.

Extra Points

Si Shen Cong -Tranquilizes the mind, invigorates the spirit, strengthens brain and regulates the nervous system.

Resolve Phlegm points –The resolution of phlegm is paramount for the successful treatment of Autism. The four points below are particularly important for resolving phlegm.

K26 – Yu Zhong: All Phlegm conditions.

GB8 – Shu Ai Gu: Wind Phlegm

R18 – Yu Tang: Cold Phlegm

GB43 – Xia Xi: Hot Phlegm

TREATMENT STRATEGIES

There are a great many acupuncture points that can be used in treating Autism. In the beginning, it is suggested that only one or two points are used until the child is acclimated to the clinic and the practitioner. After a child is comfortable, eight to ten points can be used in a treatment.

Remember that this is a long-term process. It will not usually resolve in a short time. An intensive sixth month to two-year commitment is necessary based on the child's condition. We have had some children for shorter periods of time, but in order to address deep constitutional changes I suggest a two-year commitment.

When a child first enters the clinic, I spend a good deal of time taking history from the parents. I then demonstrate on the parent what a 36-gauge needle feels like. I encourage you to needle the parent first, as this will allay some of their fears.

An Autistic child will often be very disturbed at this point, even if you have not needled them. One child that I treated cried for the entire duration of each visit to the office for two months. This child has now not only ceased crying, but is truly excited and happy when he comes to the clinic.

When I first began working with one child, he was non-verbal. He still does not like change and he likes to choose what points get needled first. Our conversation will go like this:

“John, head or feet?”

“Head.”

So I will needle those points.

“Feet or belly?”

“Belly.”

And so on, until I am through. After a child has gone through their initial fear of this process they are very relaxed in the treatment and needles are usually retained for ten minutes. It is important to remember that with this population of children it will take more time to establish a trusting relationship.

CASE HISTORIES

1. A. was diagnosed with mild Autism at the age of three. According to his mother, his childhood development had been normal until about age one, at which time he took antibiotics for three months to correct a recurrent ear infection. A. began receiving acupuncture in March of 1998 at age five. He presented with a vocabulary of fifteen to twenty words and could only make sentences of two to three words. He rarely initiated conversation. After nine months of treatment with acupuncture, herbal medicine and dietary modification, A's communication skills improved to such a degree that he was able to participate in a regular public school classroom. He is currently in the second grade. According to his mother his communication is good, he excels in math and he no longer has extreme temper tantrums.

2. B. began treatment in February of 1999. His development had been normal until eighteen months of age. His father believes that immunizations were a contributing factor to his Autism. Before treatment, he would often entertain himself with small objects or pieces of paper for hours at a time. He would not initiate conversation. During his treatment, he improved in the following ways: more eye contact, more coherent conversations and more interest in socialization. After six months of treatment, B. was initiating and carrying on conversations and his ability to concentrate on tasks improved. He no longer rocks and sits idly for hours.

3. According to his parents, C. was a normal child until approximately twelve months of age. They were pleased because he began eating solid foods at a younger age than his three older siblings and also ate a wide variety of foods. At eighteen months of age C. had no language development and his pediatrician suggested he might be hearing

impaired or Autistic. He was diagnosed with Autism at three years and nine months of age. According to his parents, C. did not seem to have any negative effects from immunizations but did have repeated antibiotics due to recurrent Upper Respiratory Infections.

C. was first seen at the Acupuncture clinic in January of 1998 when he was five years old. At this time, C. displayed no eye contact, no speech and did not respond to direct questions. His diet consisted primarily of spaghetti, peanut butter and jelly and bread.

C. is now eight years old and is in the first grade. Though he works below grade level, he is excited about learning to read. He now establishes eye contact and answers questions if given multiple choices. His parents believe Chinese Medicine has made substantial contributions in improving his behavior, his ability to concentrate and focus his attention and his gains in both receptive and expressive language. His parents have had to reduce his acupuncture treatments to twice monthly due to the long travel distance, but continue with herbal medications daily and dietary regulations.

4. D. was diagnosed with mild Autism in December of 1995. He had limited speech development, extreme fear and repeated upper respiratory infections. D. presented at the Chinese Acupuncture Clinic in March of 1996 at age three and a half. He received treatment consisting of acupuncture, herbal medicine and nutritional therapy for one year and two months.

After six months of treatment there was dramatic improvement in speech and eating habits with acceptance of a wider variety of foods and increased appetite. Social skills also improved with noticeably more eye contact. After fourteen months of

treatment, D's improvement was remarkable. According to his mother, "Today my son is like any other five year old boy and very different from the three year old he was, before seeking acupuncture."

As of October of 2000, D. is participating in a normal second grade classroom, making straight A's and B's and reading at a fourth grade level.

CONCLUSION

In Chinese Medicine textbooks the diagnosis of Phlegm Misting the Mind and Phlegm Fire Harassing the Heart are standard. Many practitioners would assign Autism Spectrum Disorder to these categories, yet to effectively treat this condition, the pathway by which it develops must be understood and delineated with each child.

The development of Autism is a multi-faceted pathway. There is no direct cause and effect for Autism Spectrum Disorders though there are a set of cofactors that must be present. The External and Internal factors can be a source of difficulty, but a major focus in Autism is on the Miscellaneous factors. Genetic factors can set the stage but there must be other co-factors in order for Autism to develop. Nutritional and lifestyle factors must be addressed in the treatment plan of the autistic child. The manifestations of Phlegm and the root cause of Phlegm must be elucidated. It is due to the very different pathways by which Autism develops that makes it difficult to assign causality.

Chinese Medicine can address Autism through a variety of modalities, including herbal medicine, acupuncture, Tui Na (massage), nutrition, aromatherapy, and manipulative therapies. The foundation for effective treatment for Autism within the CM framework is based on a multi-tiered approach that includes synergistic CM modalities.

Autism is an imbalance that has the possibility of reversal. My experience in treating Autistic children has resulted in significant gains in communication skills and a reduction of behaviors associated with Autism.

I hope to hear from other practitioners who have utilized treatment modalities that are not covered in this paper. It is my hope that professionals in Oriental Medicine will

feel more equipped to reach out to the population that has so few treatment options available at the present time.