

The Essence of Chinese Gynecology Medicine

By Jo George

Like all branches of Chinese Medicine, traditional gynaecology has a long history. The earliest records of gynaecological medical writing dates from the Shang dynasty (1500-1000 BC). Since 1949 the combination of Western and Chinese medicine has been emphasised, and many innovative treatments have been devised.

The main difference between Western and Chinese gynaecology is that western gynaecology deals in general with problems of structural diseases detectable by visual or microscopic examination of the tissues and organs involved. Treatment usually consists of repair, excision, or replacement of the diseased tissue. The disadvantage of this approach becomes apparent if the disease has not yet reached a destructive state, in which case diagnostic tests are often inconclusive.

It is precisely this area to which Chinese gynaecology and Chinese medicine addresses itself, in the lack of coordination in the bodys functions that may not, as yet perceptually have damaged the body structurally. Endometriosis for example does not happen overnight, as it were. In Chinese gynaecology, attention is directed to the regularity, amount, colour and texture of the menstrual flow, and abnormalities are corrected as they arise.

Diagnosis in Chinese gynaecology does not involve a gynaecological examination as performed in Western gynaecology, although the findings of such examinations are taken into account in determining the nature of the problem. This is because the results of such an examination describe the status of the structure of the tissues examined, while as we have seen the interest of the Chinese physician is directed primarily at the status of the functioning of the body.

It is as if a quarrelling family are renting your home. It would be better to intervene before the structure of your house was damaged, the windows smashed, and the doors ripped from their hinges. And the earlier the intervention, the less drastic it need be. If one waits, however, until the house is burning down, a whole team of experts may be necessary to save it- or part of it costing you dearly.

Diagnosis of the functioning of the body involves the attention to the symptoms of the patient: what kind of pain or tension, where, when; the presence or absence of thirst, perspiration, dizziness, tinnitus, emotional upset or stress; attention to food intake, functioning of the bowels and urination; the menstrual flow; the condition of the home and working environments, etc. These findings are combined with observations made by the physician of the complexion and build of the patient, the tongue, and later reading the pulse at both wrists.

Traditionally Chinese gynaecology has four areas of concern-

- Infertility, menstrual disorders that include shortened or lengthened cycle, irregularity, excessive or insufficient flow, amenorrhoea, dysfunctional uterine bleeding, PMS, period pain, and symptoms at the menopause.

Chinese herbs have a long history of use in aiding fertility. No individual herb is considered especially useful for promoting fertility. Rather more than 150 different

herbs are used, usually given in a complex formula of 15 herbs or more. The differences among individuals being treated accounts for the variation in the selection of the formulas and herbs used. Although the outcome for any given individual cannot be predicted, the clinical studies conducted in China indicated that about 60% of all cases of infertility (male and female) treated by Chinese herbs result in pregnancy of restored fertility. Included in these statistics are cases of infertility involving obstruction of the fallopian tubes, amenorrhoea, absent ovulation, endometriosis, uterine fibroids, low sperm count, and other causes.

The following describes the personal experience of one of my patients.

'Having already had one child successfully through IVF treatment, I had been trying for 4 years to conceive again through IVF unsuccessfully. I originally went along to see Miss George for Reflexology to support my general health whilst having the IVF treatment, but she ended up giving far more than this.

Miss George listened carefully to the diagnosis I reported of the Western medicine and recommended alternative therapies at each stage to support the IVF treatment. She performed acupuncture as well as prescribed Chinese herbs, which have been very specific to my problems. She has carefully tweaked these prescriptions through each stage and I am now in the early stages of pregnancy.

I do believe that Miss George's contribution has made a difference to the IVF cycle this time and I am convinced that her treatments can work fantastically alongside the traditional Western methods of assisted conception.

LS, Mother, London N10

Another area of concern in Chinese Gynaecological medicine is-

- Pregnancy. Whilst Chinese obstetricians relinquish supervision of delivery to western medicine, Acupuncture has been used effectively both in private practice, and in a unique NHS maternity clinic in Plymouth where nearly three thousand pregnant women been treated. Antenatal ailments successfully treated with Acupuncture include- breech presentation, nausea and hyperemesis, backache and sciatica, varicose veins, haemorrhoids, constipation, headaches/migraine, heartburn, carpal tunnel syndrome, oedema, abdominal pain, skin problems, anxiety, and even the side effects of becoming a non-smoker.

The following case study reflects the personal experience of one of my pregnant patients.

'I first visited Jo when I was 9 weeks pregnant with my first child. I was suffering from chronic constipation and was already having problems sleeping. As I was only in the UK for 8 weeks, I asked for weekly appointments. I was amazed how relaxing the Acupuncture sessions were. Although I'm not keen on needles, Jo's professional touch meant I felt virtually no discomfort and I was able to relax completely. The energy that flowed through my body after these wonderful sessions was very uplifting and I always felt really positive and alive. My sleep improved immediately.

The herbal remedies she advised me to take helped give me energy and relieved my constipation. I had a wonderfully healthy pregnancy and am now the proud mum of a beautiful baby girl.

MT, Mother Singapore

Finally the last area of concern in Chinese Gynaecological medicine involves-

- Post partum difficulties include lochia retention, vaginal bleeding, fever, abdominal pain, constipation, impeded or uncontrollable urine flow, anaemia, generalised aching of the joints, and deficient and excessive lactation.

Treatment in Chinese Gynaecology

Chinese Medicine has a whole range of therapeutic techniques at its disposal, including herbs, acupuncture, diet, massage, and specialised exercises, some of which involve breath training. Each of these techniques is a field of a study with its own specialists.

Herbs and acupuncture are by far the predominant mode of therapy in Chinese Medicine. Herbs can be taken in a decoction (like soups), in powders, pills, plasters, and syrups. Modern dosages include instant preparations, and capsules, and even I.V. drip for emergencies.

Chinese herbs are rarely prescribed singly. Following diagnosis, a standard prescription is chosen for the patients condition, and then sculpted by the addition or deletion of different but related herbs until the formula exactly suits the state of the individual patient. The effect of the prescription upon the patient is determined at the next consultation and the herbs are again adjusted accordingly.

While the average treatments may be slower than with Western medicine because of the more conservative methods employed by physicians of Chinese gynaecology, and while no treatment western or Chinese, can ever claim 100% success, still it is generally conceded that of all the departments of Chinese Medicine, gynaecology obtains the best results.

For the reasons outlined above, Chinese gynaecology can be seen too provide a viable complement to Western Medicine, in an area where it is much needed. It supplies a comprehensive framework for the classification and treatment of the 'vague' symptoms accompanying a functional disorder, by re establishing the proper functioning of the body with methods both gentler and subtler than contemporary Medicine can offer. Moreover when necessary, its non-invasive, conservative treatment combines well with standard Western medical techniques.

Jo George MBAc; BSc (Hons) Acupuncture; Dip. Clin. Acu (China); 2 Post Graduate Dips Chinese Herbal Medicine; IIHHT; Dip TTM (Thailand); Reiki Master; Member of The British Acupuncture Council; Member of the Register of Chinese Herbalists; Friend of the Association of Reflexologists.

Jo George is the founder of The North London Clinic of Chinese Medicine and Gynaecology N6 T 0208 374 4566

For more information and testimonials www.joGeorgeclinic.co.uk.