



HCA Acupuncture & Herbal Medicine

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Chinese Medicine Theories

The **NeiJing** (The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic of Medicine) is the oldest known text on Chinese philosophy and medicine. The **NeiJing** is actually two works, **SuWen** (Questions of Organic and Fundamental Nature) and **Lingshu** (Canon of Acupuncture). Written as a conversation between Huang Di (Yellow Emperor) and Qi Bo, one of his ministers, it gives deep insight into the universal truths of Daoism and how to live a meaningful, balanced life. The texts include theories on yin yang, five elements, energetic pathways of the body, and the treatment of various diseases with acupuncture.

Ba Gong (Eight Principles)

The Eight Principles are the foundation for all methods of pattern identification. The principles are not meant to categorize the disharmony, but to understand its genesis and nature.

Hot-Cold; Exterior-Interior; Excess-Deficiency; Yin-Yang

Yin Yang symbolizes the creation process through the interaction of bipolar forces; the necessity of duality.

Wu Xing (Five Phases/Elements)

The Five Phases or Elements further differentiates the yin yang dynamic into the relationship between five fundamental powers. The five phases identify stages of transformation that have many correlates. For our purpose, we will only discuss the five phases as they relate to our topics of meridians and herbalism.

Elements	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Seasons	Spring	Summer	18-Day Shift	Autumn	Winter
Tastes	Sour	Bitter	Sweet	Pungent	Salty
Yang Organs	Gallbladder	SI/San Jiao	Stomach	Large Intestine	U Bladder
Yin Organs	Liver	Heart/PC	Spleen	Lung	Kidney
Emotions	Anger/ Kindness	Mania/Joy	Pensiveness/ Clarity	Grief/ Acceptance	Fear/ Courage



Jing Luo (Meridians & Collaterals)

Meridians are pathways that run relatively deeply throughout our body and connect with our internal organs. Collaterals are a network of finer branches that connect to meridians, connective tissue and cutaneous regions.

Together, the meridians and collaterals connect the organs to one another and the exterior of the body to the interior of the body. JingLuo create a passage for qi and blood to circulate so that organ functions can be regulated.

The insertion of needles into acupressure points along the twelve primary and other meridians is known as acupuncture. Acupuncture has been practiced for thousands of years for prevention and treatment of disease and to balance the body's yin yang . Research has shown that acupuncture decreases nociceptive and neuropathic pain and has a calming effect on the autonomic nervous system.

If we were to study the effects of acupuncture on the Endocannabinoid system, I believe we will see that acupuncture would enhance the ECS' ability to regulate key processes like mood and pain since they both have an effect on nociceptors and pain.

Chinese Herbal Medicine

The oldest surviving herbal text is the **Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing** (The Divine Farmer's Materia Medica), a collection of teachings by the legendary Shen Nong. Shen Nong is credited with bringing herbalism and agriculture to the Chinese people. Cannabis is mentioned in the Ben Cao Jing as being one of the superior plants that with moderate, prolonged use would lead to physical and spiritual well being.

Si Qi Wu Wei (4 Temperatures/5 Tastes)

In Chinese medicine, herbs are known to have specific temperatures – hot, cold, warm, cool. Herbs also have specific tastes that correspond to their actions.

- Sweet: tonify, reinforce, strengthen. Good for fatigue, deficiency.
Examples of sweet herbs: cannabis seed, ginseng, jujube date
- Pungent: disperse, invigorate, promotes circulation. Disperses pathogens from exterior of body; invigorates qi & blood; opens pores; promotes sweating. Good for flu, common cold.
Examples of pungent herbs: cannabis, ginger, mint
- Salty: softens & dissolves hardness, moistens & lubricates intestines. Dissolves lumps, nodes, cysts, masses. Good for goiter, constipation.
Examples of salty herbs: seaweeds, cuttlefish bone
- Sour: absorbs, consolidates, astringent. Stops abnormal discharge of body fluids. Good for excess sweating, diarrhea.
Examples of sour herbs: Chinese sour plum, suan zao ren



- Bitter: dries dampness, disperses, clears heat. Good for edema, cough due to qi stagnation
Examples of bitter herbs: apricot kernels, Artemisia

Herbal Categories

After about 1250 AD, herbs began to be divided into herbal categories based on what action the herb performs in the body. Some reference books have slightly different categories, which is important to remember when references Chinese herbs.

An example of an herbal category is Herbs that Regulate Qi. Diverse herbs from citrus peel to sandalwood are in this category because they both regulate qi and stop pain, which in turn will smooth the flow of qi throughout the entire body.

Chinese medicine also describes herbs as having an affinity to specific areas or organs of the body. This is important as we differentiate between what herbs to use for specific conditions. To make an accurate decision on a patient's formula, we need to know the herb's toxicity, taste, temperature, affinity in the body, and herbal category.

Cannabis in Chinese Herbal Medicine

In modern Chinese medicine books, any mention of the cannabis plant is removed and only cannabis seed remains.

Hemp seeds, Huo Ma Ren

Taste/Temperature: Sweet and Neutral

Affinity: Large intestine, stomach, spleen

Herbal Category: Downward Draining, Moist Laxative

According to the modern textbooks, hemp seeds are used for constipation due to dryness or deficiency and are recommended for the elderly or postpartum. Hemp seeds are also used as an auxiliary herb for sores and ulcerations.

Cannabis has been an important food and medicine source in China for at least 10,000 years. The Chinese herbal text Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing, written around 2500BC lists hemp as being only one of two "superior cereals." Plants in the superior category were used to awaken the vital energies of the person and to have a beneficial effect on the three treasures. In the Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing, hemp seeds were used to supplement the digestion and strengthen qi. Regular eating of the hemp seed makes one grow fat and never senile. The hemp plant itself is said to treat the 7 damages (excessive emotions) and smooth the flow of qi and blood. Prolonged, moderate use may enable one to connect to the spirit light. Taking too much of the hemp plant may make one see ghosts and frenetically run about (mania). This terminology may seem archaic, but we may be able to make sense of it with modern research.

Modern research has shown that the ECS is a neuro-modulating regulatory system for mood and pain. In Chinese medicine, pain is caused by an obstruction of qi and blood and hemp use promotes the smooth flow of qi and blood- thereby reducing pain.



The 7 damages are when we are in a state of discomfort or disease by having excessive emotional responses to stress (grief, anxiety, pensiveness, anger, joy (mania), fear, fright); the endocannabinoid, anandamide, creates a sense of bliss and happiness in a person that may allow them to relax and get out of their extreme emotional state.

We know the essential fatty acids and amino acids in hemp seed make it a complete protein and highly nutritious. As for treating sores and skin ulcerations with hemp seeds, this could be due to the cannabinoid receptors found in the skin.

We are just beginning to understand how cannabis and other plants react to our ECS. We know cannabis and acupuncture have had a long and safe history of use within Chinese medicine. My hope is that more research is done to understand the similarities between the ECS and meridian distribution.