Most patients are in need of internal healing and transformation; therefore, in order to promote change at the source of their disharmony, we as practitioners need to understand the internal causes of disease – the emotions. Chinese medicine offers a deep understanding of life, well-being, disease and suffering. This understanding is rooted in the movement of Qi between heaven and earth. Although these concepts are ancient, they present a very detailed system, which explains the functions of the Shen and the mind as well as the interaction between the two.

It seems that in the current usage of TCM external pathological factors such as Wind, Damp etc. receive greater emphasis, while the root of understanding, diagnosing and treating psychological and autoimmune disorders lies within the Interaction between the Qi, Shen and the emotions.

The seven internal causes of disease i.e. the 7 emotions and their pathological effects on the body are described in different ancient texts, such as in Su Wen 39, for example: “when one is angry the Qi rises upwards”. This statement presents an emotion such as anger, while simultaneously explaining the movement of Qi and its effect both on liver function and on the Shen – Hun. The two appear to be inherently interconnected.

In the presentation there will be a discussion of clinical cases including the most effective acupuncture points for treatment, points which can evoke a deep healing and transformation of the directive effect of the 7 emotions into the 5 virtues.

For example in the case of anger The ability to help a patient transform anger and suffering into human kindness is the ultimate goal of CM as stated in the classics: “…the superior doctors treat the Shen, the inferior treat the body, the superior doctor prevents disease, the inferior treats the disease”.

This presentation deals with issues such as: how to diagnose the root of emotional imbalance, emotions and trauma. The effect of emotions on Qi, Zang Fu and Shen. A detailed discussion of the 7 emotions with references to pathology, a description of the nature of the emotion in various classical texts including special pulse observation as well as diagnostic methods.

A close look at the relationship between the Chinese medical approach with reference to Western medical psychological disorders such as: depression, anxiety, panic attacks etc. will be discussed within the context of the transformation of the
negative forces of the seven emotion into positive qualities. Most importantly the emphasis will lie in the transformation of each emotion into a virtue that aids the healing process and offers a deeper understanding of purpose and inner peace.

**Emotions**

Emotions are viewed as a yang and Qi movement, as a reaction to inner stimulation. “Emotions are light, but light has to be harmonized, tempered and soft. If this light is shaky and bedazzling, then the direction of life is no longer possible”. (1) The Emotions’ function is to regulate the Qi and keep a free flow thereof. When the emotions are intense they become internal causes of disease. The number 7 in Chinese etymology represents “Passage between exterior and interior” (2). This is also the reason why we have seven orifices. The Number 7 also indicates “the difficulty to contain things within their limits” (3). Hence alluding to an internal response which can cause an imbalance. Extreme or exaggerated interference of emotions have a pathological effect on their corresponding Zang Fu. For example, a state of fear or anxiety, especially a prolonged one, may cause kidney deficiency.

In the *Su Wen*, Chapter 39, there is an explanation of the disturbances in the movement of Qi as a direct result of emotional triggers. This chapter describes each respective emotion, while indicating the pathological changes. Other references from classical texts shed additional light on the effects of emotions on the Qi, Shen, heart and the Zang Fu.

**Emotions and Shen**

There is a close link between the emotions and Shen. They are both yang in nature while they create movement in the Zang Fu, they are both experienced in the mind. Shen is at the core of bringing about unity. Emotions are of distractive nature, they act in an oppositional manner.

The discussion of this close link between the emotions and Shen opens up an entire sphere of understanding, diagnosis and treatment of psychological, autoimmune disorders and other diseases.

**7 Emotions and 5 Virtues**

In Chinese medicine emotions should be viewed in two manners: one is destructive relating to the 7 emotions as internal causative factors of disease, which create limitation, have a negative effect and are a potential cause of disease. The other is the human ability to transform the negative effect of emotions into virtue which ultimately furthers growth.

The true potential of emotions is to motivate the individual and to create internal balance, which essentially allows serenity and virtue to flourish. Serenity is not the absence of emotions, but the control of emotions. “The emotions must be ruled by self-constrained strength which comes from the depths of the individual nature”. (4)

**Diagnosis**

How emotions impair the movement of Qi: these changes can be felt on the pulse and seen on the tongue, eyes, complexion and appearance of the patient. Noting those changes is the root of swift and accurate diagnosis.
Treatment

Different acupuncture treatment approaches can be utilized in the treatment of disharmony created by the emotions. In the acute phase, the pulse can provide a good indication. Treating the heart directly and indirectly should be considered, since it is the Zang which is primarily affected, as all the emotions are filtered through the heart. According to Fei Bo-xiong (1800-1879) “The seven emotions injure the five yin organs selectively but they all affect the Heart” (5). Points such as HT-7, the Yuan source point of the heart and PC-7 Yuan source point of the pericardium should be considered. These points can be chosen because of their effect on the heart, but other Yuan-source points of the yin channels can also be used. As they are Yuan-source points and earth points, they have a tonifying and harmonizing effect on the related Zang. The earth is in the middle of the axis fire-earth-water. Their location being at the center between fire-heart and water-kidneys makes them important in promoting internal unity.

In acute stages, the xi-cleft points can be used. At these points the Qi and Blood of the channel is deeply converged (6) especially if the Xi-cleft points on the yin channels, which treat numerous blood disorders, as would be in this case, the pulse of the relative Zang should be felt as “full”. For example - Xi cleft of the Pericardium 4 (Ximen, Xi Cleft Gate) can resolve stasis of blood and is able to treat both emotional disharmony and to resolve the Heart-blood stasis.

In the chronic stage the Luo connecting points of the yin channels, can be used due to their special ability to treat psycho-emotional disorders and their function in calming the spirit (7). They harmonize the yin-Zang and yang-Fu pairs of the same element and by doing so produce the effect of restoring balance.

Another option of treatment, especially when the pulse pertaining to a specific organ is chaotic, is to treat the relevant ZangFu.

In choosing the most appropriate point in treatment, one should consider the name of the point, its location, its relation to the symptoms and signs presented, as well as the dynamic of Qi especially as felt on the pulse. Hence there are many possibilities of treatment.

This Deep understanding of internal factors of disease and the right choice of points can offer dramatic opportunities in providing a cure for a multitude of diseases and disorders rooted in emotional imbalance.

Notes

1. The Seven Emotions, p. 27 (Claude Larre and Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallee: The Seven Emotions., Monkey press 1996)
2. Ibid, p.24
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid, p.27
5. Fei Bo Xing et.el. 1985 Medical Collection from the four Families from Ming He (Ming He Si Jia Yi Ji), Jiangsu Science Publishing House, p.40. Quoted in G. Maciocia: The Practice of Chinese Medicine, Churchill Livingston, p.221