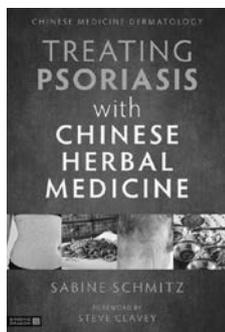


Reviews



Treating Psoriasis with Chinese Herbal Medicine

by Sabine Schmitz
Singing Dragon, softback, £35.00

I was delighted to read Sabine Schmitz' book *Treating Psoriasis with Chinese Herbal Medicine*. It fulfilled all my criteria of a good clinical book. It is written by an experienced practitioner who conveys practical and essential clinical information. For example, how we convey our diagnosis and treatment to patients so that they can follow our clinical approach, or how we include lifestyle suggestions so that the root causes of disease can be addressed from the patient's side. The author also covers the need to discuss the likely course of treatment beforehand to give the patients a realistic idea of the timeline of treatment and how, for example, if the patient suffers from constipation, moving the bowel has to be the foremost treatment strategy before other treatment principles can be followed.

The book is structured well and reads very clearly and easily. It is laid out in nine concise chapters with several appendices. Chapter 1 goes briefly over the historical context of TCM dermatology before discussing treatment options available to Chinese herbal practitioners,

such as decoctions (which Sabine particularly recommends for difficult skin conditions), granules, tinctures, washes and compresses, pastes, ointments and creams.

Chapters 2 and 3 go through the biomedical understanding of skin anatomy and psoriasis. This is essential information, as the more we understand about the condition the better practitioners we can be. It allows us to classify the types and stages of psoriasis and helps us understand contributing factors such as streptococcus infection and the treatment options offered by Western medicine (which many patients will have tried already). It also helps us to converse with our biomedical colleagues as well as our patients. I find that biomedical explanations like 'hyperproliferation of the epidermis with epidermis turnover time from one month to several days ... causes the pile up of scales typically seen in plaque psoriasis' corresponds nicely to the concept of heat in TCM; patients can easily understand what we are trying to do when we reduce heat in their body, i.e. return cell turnover from high-speed back to normal.

Chapter 4 goes through the TCM perspective of psoriasis. This section includes helpful photographs of skin lesions in clinically relevant body locations. This visual aspect teaches practitioners to recognise both common and also more uncharacteristic psoriatic lesions (such as in the groin where they often mimic fungal infections), and see examples of how psoriatic arthritis might appear. The author then discusses how the zang organs relate to psoriasis and how psycho-emotional factors can be an important cause of psoriasis in modern society: 'Asking patients about personal

circumstances and their emotional state is therefore an essential part of any first consultation. In conventional medicine, the emotional state ... does not receive the same priority as it does in TCM. Moreover, Western medication is not suited to adaptation in response to emotional influence.' In my clinic I also find that emotional factors play a large part in skin conditions. High levels of stress, lack of sleep, working long hours and the pursuit of perfection, status, beauty and wealth can cause Liver heat and blood heat, or deficiency pathologies. Past emotional trauma such as bereavement, rape or abuse may not be associated with the aetiology of a patient's psoriasis until we question the origin of the Liver fire that is causing their very active psoriasis.

Chapter 5 discusses pattern differentiation for psoriasis. This is comprehensively and clearly laid out: the patterns Liver heat, blood and ying level heat, wind-heat, damp-heat, heat-toxin, blood deficiency with wind-dryness, and qi deficiency are discussed with clinical symptoms, a representative formula, formula analysis, cautions, modifications, clinical experience, external treatments and again, photographs, which make this section particularly accessible and valuable.

Chapter 6 discusses modern pharmacological research for the most commonly used herbs in TCM dermatology. It is useful to see the action of the herbs according to modern science, and this information can be incorporated into clinical discussions with patients and medical colleagues who may find TCM language bewildering.

I am particularly glad that Sabine included the information in Chapters 7 and 8: 'Useful advice about the course

and prognosis of treatment’ and ‘Preventative healthcare: dietary and lifestyle advice’. This material should not be omitted from any clinical textbook. I appreciated Sabine’s direct approach: ‘It is our duty to educate patients regarding their food consumption and lifestyle habits, and the relationship of these to their individual disease. This is an essential approach because simply prescribing Chinese drugs or giving acupuncture often does not suffice. Without considering and changing these external factors, Chinese medicine treatment is often not enough to treat stubborn and complicated skin diseases. Psoriasis illustrates this very clearly.’

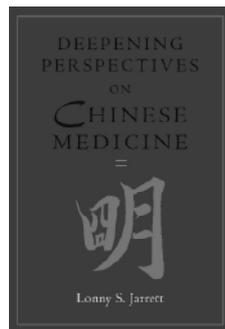
Chapter 9 covers clinical cases, each laid out clearly with photographs. Here we find additional clinical information that is useful when working with psoriasis, for example how lesions might look when they are healing. Such information (including the photographs) can be shared with patients.

Sabine concludes the book with two very useful appendices. Appendix I lays out in detail how to prepare and prescribe external herbal medicines. Appendix II is a colour tongue atlas that illustrates the clinical patterns discussed in Chapter 5.

In my 20 years of TCM experience I have come to understand how important it is to explain to our patients our clinical thinking: our diagnosis, why we think their condition started, and how they might achieve improved health through lifestyle changes. We need to discuss treatment and its duration, and alert the patient to the possible ups and downs within the course of treatment. When patients are properly informed in this way they become very loyal, and treatment becomes a co-operative journey undertaken by both patient and practitioner. This book covers all of these aspects and is thus extremely

useful in clinical practice. In its clarity and directness it is an inspiration and it constitutes solid guidance for TCM practitioners to apply Chinese herbal medicine responsibly and effectively in the treatment of psoriasis.

Inga Heese



Deepening Perspectives on Chinese Medicine

by Lonny Jarrett
Spirit Path Press, hardback, \$111.00

At first glance, Lonny Jarrett’s new book is an enormous volume of around 850 pages. Yet, after reading it, the contents actually seemed brief and immensely profound. It starts with Lonny’s personal journey and his experiences in meditation, setting a distinct atmosphere and energy that permeates the rest of the pages of his work. He then moves on to elucidate the interaction of the five elements, from the perspective of external observation, from within, and from other medical traditions, philosophies and the study of psychology. He moves on to perform a complete dissection and elucidation of each element as a constitutional type, including identity, sexuality, choices, life cycle, and the various forces that act on each constitutional type; he then resynthesises these parts into a clinical whole. He provides a number of important case studies to demonstrate how these ideas can be practically applied in the clinic. I found

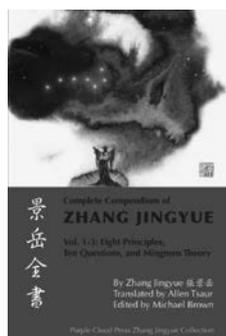
those to be very well selected and insightful, and I believe that they will be majorly influential for those readers who decide to follow this approach towards medicine. The final parts of the book are the author’s integration of various systems (including Daoism, Buddhism, Judaism, Kabbalah, Freud, Jung, TCM, and the five element, Ayurvedic and Greco-Roman approaches to medicine).

By strict definition, *Deepening Perspectives on Chinese Medicine* is not exactly a Chinese medicine book. In my opinion it is very hard to even try to categorise where this text belongs. For me it is a personal and highly philosophical journey into the roots of medicine. Mind you, this is not a Chinese medicine or five element journey, but a journey to understand why you feel sick, to seek the deepest root of your imbalance, understand what went wrong, put this knowledge into perspective and rediscover the path back to health. It is also a book of many levels and divisions as well as unity. It integrates myth, legend, theory, philosophy, religion, spirituality and enlightenment by masterfully exploring the depths of Chinese cosmology, astrology, myth, history, philosophy, terminology, Daoism, Buddhism and Hinduism, Ayurveda, modern theology, hermetic and kabbalistic teachings, art and symbolism. He breaks down archaic concepts and then resynthesises them in a perspective that borrows much from the theories of Freud, Jung, Aurobindo, Gebser, Wilber and others. Although different to his previous books, the author never loses focus of the primary objective: to offer a clear view of the very core of health and disease.

I have to admit that this was not an easy book to read, mostly because by design it is so packed with ideas, all interwoven with clinical practice in a most wonderful way that truly contributes to our understanding of

medicine. I will need to revisit this book again, to allow the ideas time to sink in. I found myself stopping every few pages and reflecting back on what Jarrett was describing. Sometimes I had to flip back and forth to look again at a quotation or the clarification of a term. This book will inspire many who wish to move away from the standardised forms of medicine that many of us tend to adhere to, and seek to explore a much greater and far more inclusive approach to our traditional medicine than has even been put down on paper.

Ioannis Solos



Complete Compendium of Zhang Jingyue, Vol. 1-3: Eight Principles, Ten Questions, and Mingmen Theory

Translated by Allen Tsaur, edited by Michael Brown
Purple Cloud Press, softback,
£48.00

All ten thousand things cannot be detached from the principle; and for a physician, the principle is absolutely crucial.

So begins the first part of this new translation of Zhang Jingyue's voluminous seventeenth century text. As can be deduced from this opening, Zhang's primary concern in this first part is the very roots of our medicine, which for him depend

on the physician's grounding in 'principle' (*li*). An introductory section provided by the author elucidates the neo-Confucian understanding of this concept in terms of a physician's innate understanding of 'all that is' (including health and disease), and which comes about due to refinement of their mind. Having clearly stated this core principle, in subsequent chapters Zhang expands his focus outwards to elucidate yin and yang, interior and exterior, vacuity and repletion, hot and cold and so on, but always emphasises that the technical details should stay within the context of the core principle:

By penetrating the principle within one's chest, [all] transmutations and transformations can be calculated by one's fingers. (Chapter 32).

The book begins with numerous preliminary sections: a publisher's vision, testimonies, a poetic epigraph, a foreword, a translator's preface, an editor's preface, an introduction, translation methodology, even a 'who's who' of prominent figures mentioned in the text, are all presented prior to the original text itself. The inclusion of the publisher's vision speaks of the passion and integrity of this young publishing house 'to make accessible the profundity of treasures previously hidden from the English-speaking world'. The poetic epigraph by Leo Lok, together with the long list of 'thankyous', situate this publication in a wide and talented community of scholar practitioners devoted to disseminating authentic East Asian medical teachings.

This handsome volume, along with other recent texts by Purple Cloud Press, seem to mark something of a watershed in English language East Asian medical texts. Scholarly translations have hitherto tended to be the domain

of sinologists based in academic settings. This material comes from a grass-roots publisher run by scholar-physicians and is intended for other practitioners. This makes the translation, but also the commentary and supplementary materials, much more clinically relevant. For example, the translator points out the tendency for modern practitioners to polarise either around Zhu Danxi's focus on yin deficiency and empty heat or the *jingfang* focus on qi and yang vacuity; Zhang Jingyue is presented as a physician who transcends such limiting distinctions and it is suggested that study of his work might help others to reconcile such polarities; this transcendence is evidenced by Zhang not only formulating the prescription *Zhi Bai Di Huang Wan* (Anamarrhena Phellodendron and Rehmannia Pill) but also repopularising the use of Fu Zi (Aconiti Radix lateralis), Rou Gui (Cinnamomi Cortex) and Ren Shen (Ginseng Radix).

The integrity of the translation and commentary provides the reader with a rich understanding of East Asian medicine. In particular, there is much to be learned where the authors diverge from conventional renderings of terms. For example, take the following passage from chapter 2:

For the diagnosis and treatment of any disease, one must first assess the yin and yang, which are the headropes and outlines for the art of medicine.

In this quote the authors choose to render 綱 *gang* (as in 八綱 *ba gang*) as 'headropes' rather than the conventional 'principles', and thus retain the rich associated imagery of the main rope that defines the structure of a fishing net which - when pulled - closes the net to capture everything

therein. The thoughtfulness and creativity of the translation can also be seen in Chapter 9, 'Ten Subjects of Questioning', where Zhang presents ten areas requiring investigation in clinic (cold and heat, sweating, urine and stool, diet, etc.) in the form of mnemonic verses, for which the authors include the *pinyin* so that those unable to read the original Chinese can get a sense of the sound and rhythm of the text. This section brings Zhang's text resoundingly into the treatment room. Zhang points out that those who commit this material to memory will be able to utilise it not only to help others in the clinic, but to help themselves. As already stated, the text is detailed enough to be useful in the clinic:

When one has a bowel movement of sloppy stool subsequent [to hard stool], although it is hard at first, one can no longer regard it as replete heat ...

That said, some of the translations are not only instructive, but also rather beautiful in their encapsulation of the author's meaning: 'The pulse and complexion are the shadows of qi and blood.'

In later volumes Zhang takes on some gnarly debates - including the nature of sovereign and ministerial fire ('the function of fire is of the most subtle Dao'), early and late heaven, root and branch, and mingmen, and includes essays on important understandings in clinical practice such as 'Further Investigation Into the Insufficiency of Yang' or 'Supplementing the Kidneys in Children'. However, even when the focus is on theoretical aspects, Zhang does not lose the grounding of clinical practice and real patients:

There are those who find fatty and

greasy [diets] suitable, as they find it intolerable without the moistening and lubricating [of fatty food]. There are those who find clean and vegetarian [diets] suitable, as they dread the smell of goat and seafood. There are those with qi repletion who should not be stagnated, and those with qi vacuity who should not be broken. (chapter 18)

Reading through this text, Zhang's passionate exhortations to guard against laziness and poor understanding can act rather like a trans-historical continuing professional development (CPD) course, helping us to reflect on our preconceived notions and fuzzy thinking. Seasoned practitioners will find much to ponder in Zhang's statements, for example: '... the essence of a treatment is to be refined, single-minded, and non-eclectic, only then does it embody perfection. Rather than restraining the supplementation by dispersing, is it not better to purely supplement in small doses, with gradually increased dosage until [the disease] is cured?' Or take another example, which put words to a method with which I am familiar, but have never actually read about: 'One must not overlook the method of probing a disease ... when it is difficult to clarify vacuity and repletion or identify cold and heat, if one is uncertain about the disease ... one should first probe it with a formula ... gently and shallowly ... with few ingredients.'

Moving forward, this text should be a core text for undergraduate Chinese medicine education. Whilst some of the ancient foundational texts of Chinese medicine can be baffling for students and newer practitioners, Zhang's authorial voice is easily understandable and remains eminently accessible and relevant for modern readers. In many ways Zhang forms a bridge between the ancient texts that he

would have been steeped in and the modern presentation of TCM. Reconciling the ancient and the modern, the theoretical and the clinical, I have no hesitation in recommending this text.

Daniel Maxwell



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