

Ancient Diagnosis, Modern Results!

by Jane Wurwand

Western medicine believes that each organ of the human body is separate from one another, leaving its specialists to practice in each of the different fields. But the Chinese see the body as a whole, where each organ is related to each other. For example, the lungs and skin, liver and eyes, kidneys and ears and stomach and muscles are all sister organs. And it is the whole being, and notably, the cause, that is treated and not just the symptoms, which is typical in Western medicine. In addition, a health problem may not just be physical, as the Chinese believe that a mental or spiritual imbalance could be the cause.

Presenting a subject such as Chinese diagnosis offers an alternative and does not mean that one method is right or wrong. But it does give skin therapists a different way of looking at skin analysis and the consultation, and it allows an understanding of the client from a well-rounded perspective.

The Basics of Chinese Medicine

The earliest book on Chinese medical theory, The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic, otherwise known as Nei Jing, by Kwang-Ti, dates back to around 2500 B.C. This book describes how the Chinese view symptoms in relation to the whole body, not as isolated problems to be dealt with on an individual basis.

Western medicine starts with a symptom, then it searches for a cause, then it determines a specific disease. But Chinese medicine looks for the disharmony of natural body energy and does not seek a specific disease. The Chinese method is, therefore, holistic, based on the idea that no single part can be understood except in relation to the whole.

The essential ideas of Chinese medicine are simple. They form a basis of discussion of "what's going on" in the body. They define the basic landscape of the body as:

- **Chi:** Also known as Qi this is our basic life force and energy, which is formed from maternal energy in the prenatal state then replenished by food and breath. It directs and determines the body's energy state, and it is predominantly either Yin (passive) or Yang (active) in nature. It flows through the entire body via the meridian network.
- **Blood:** A liquid, Yin in nature, that nourishes and maintains the body parts.
- **Jing:** Translated as essence of the body. Supportive and nutritive, it is the basis of reproduction, growth, ripening and withering. Ongoing development through life corresponds to changes in the body's Jing.
- **Shen:** Best translated as Spirit, an elusive concept in the medical tradition. Human personality and consciousness indicate the presence of Shen, which is the capacity to form ideas and the desire to live life. Shen is Yang in nature.
- **Fluids:** These are bodily liquids other than blood and include sweat, urine, gastric juices and saliva. Their function is to moisten and lubricate the hair, skin, membranes, orifices, muscles, organs and flesh.

Balancing the Meridians

So far, we've learned that Chinese analysis looks at the person as an entire being, not separate as in Western medicine. In Chinese medicine, practitioners treat the cause of a problem, whereas those in Western medicine treat the symptoms. Two elements are incorporated into Chinese diagnosis: the constitution of the person – this being the current condition, which varies each day, month and year – and balance. The body needs balance; we do not want to be ecstatically energetic or tired, happy or depressed. If we are in perfect balance, then we are in perfect health.

Chinese Facial Skin Analysis

In traditional Chinese medicine, the face is an indicator of health or disease. By studying skin conditions and changes, we can determine inner imbalances and stressed areas of the body. Because each area of the face is said to relate to an internal body area, disharmony in that internal area will, in turn, lead to a change in the complexion, texture or moisture of the corresponding facial area. In general, red, pustular breakouts are indicative of Yang-type energy, and oily, comedone-prone breakouts are indicative of Yin-type energy. Lines indicate a long-term imbalance or stress, while breakouts indicate a more short-term imbalance or stress.

The following information is not intended for medical diagnosis, but merely to illustrate the Chinese approach to facial diagnosis. This information is to be used by the professional skin therapist to provide answers and understanding as to why certain skin problems can manifest on the skin if all Western causes have been considered and provided no help. Do not ever attempt to diagnose a client's health condition.

Forehead: Linked to digestion. The upper forehead is linked to the bladder and the lower forehead links to the intestines. Check the client's elimination habits, noting any constipation.

Eyebrows: Linked to the adrenal glands. Coarse hair of the eyebrows indicates adrenal stress, with thick eyebrows being Yang and thin eyebrows being Yin. The adrenal glands are our fight or flight response and secrete over 40 hormones and steroids. Overactive adrenal glands are commonly linked with stress, and lines stemming from the start of the eyebrow are linked with long-term adrenal stress and may correlate with tightness in the shoulder area, which is a referred pain area (pain felt near the site of origin not on it).

Eyes: Linked with the liver. Large eyes, eyes set wide apart, long eyelashes and white showing underneath the iris of the eye are Yin. Eyes that are small and close together are Yang. Eyelid allergies are linked with allergies and lung stress.

Between the Eyes: Linked with the liver. Check the client for a history of hepatitis, jaundice and/or liver stress. A diet that is high in fat, and eating late, may cause this area to show sensitization or flaking. Deep lines from liver stress may also be visible. This is commonly known as the wine and dine area.

Under the Eyes: Linked with the kidneys. Eyes may be puffy (Yin) or darker (Yang). If a client suffers puffiness and fluid retention, she or he needs to improve water intake. Grittiness under the eyes links with an excess of uric acid, common in Yin energy types. A pale white appearance of the inner lid indicates Yin energy, while a red inner lid area indicates Yang energy.

Nose: Linked with the lungs. Naturally large and open nostrils indicate strong lungs. Smaller or flaring nostrils indicate lung stress, allergies and asthma. A long nose is more Yin, and a small nose, pointing upward, is more Yang. Numerous comedones and oiliness over the nose indicate Yin energy, which is prone to colds and bronchitis. Redness, broken capillaries and puffiness over the nose indicate Yang energy, which is prone to allergies, respiratory stress and sinus problems (hay fever, sensitivity to smoke, etc.).

Cheeks: Linked with the lung area. Broken capillaries across the upper cheeks indicate a tendency to allergies and sinus congestion. Pustular breakouts in line with the teeth may indicate sinus or gum inflammation and infection. Comedones and congestion beneath the surface indicate a Yin condition, while red, inflamed, pustular breakouts indicate a more Yang condition.

Mouth: Linked with the stomach and large intestine. The upper lip and cracking/dry lips are Yang and link with stomach/gastric stress. A turned upper lip indicates stomach acid, indigestion or a nervous stomach (Yang). The lower lip links with the large intestine, and a pouty, full lower lip links with constipation and poor elimination (Yin).

Chin: Linked with the reproductive organs. Breakouts in this area are often associated with the menstrual cycle in women. Micro-comedones are often present at the sides of the chin and may erupt into papules or pustules at the onset of menstruation.

Skin Therapy and Chinese Medicine

While skin therapists cannot legally treat disease, we can definitely use Chinese medicine as a way to treat any factors that go along with a disease or health problem. Knowing the medical problems of a client, combined with your knowledge of the body through the Chinese eye, can not only make the diagnosis and treatment of skin conditions that much easier, but your client will appreciate the unusual approach and understand just how much you view skin care as a matter of health. Take the opportunity to not only treat your clients' skin issues, but restore balance to their bodies as well.

To learn how to conduct a complete skin analysis using Chinese Diagnosis, join us for our Chinese Diagnosis class at The International Dermal Institute.