

East Meets West

By Richard Esquivel, L.Ac., MTCM

This is the second in a series of articles designed to educate the public on Traditional Chinese Medicine.

All diseases originate from the environmental conditions of wind, rain, cold, and heat; from seasonal changes; excess joy and anger; from what one drinks and eats; the condition of one's residence; and by incessant worry and sudden fear. All of these factors cause a deviation from normal physiological function.

—Nei Jing Ling Shu 28 (Verbal Inquiry)

Chinese view of Health and Disease

For the ancient Chinese, maintaining a state of health is viewed in terms of a continuing physiological balance or homeostasis. Normally, homeostasis is maintained over a relatively wide range of internal and external conditions. Only when adverse factors become overpowering, or when the body is weak, do problems result. Life was frequently harsh in ancient times and the Chinese observed that disease is related to environmental, emotional, dietary, and physical factors. The key to health is for each person to maintain a balance with their environment, including such factors as weather conditions, seasonal changes, emotional stress, and physical stress. Health requires a constancy in daily activity patterns, moderation in eating and drinking habits, not being reckless, not worrying to the point of fatigue, not being consumed by grief, remaining calm and unperturbed, and not overachieving. This view of health is truly holistic in the sense that the human condition is thought to be the result of how individuals function in their total environment. All external and internal stressors are considered, even the condition of one's residence—both the location of the residence and the state of tranquility among family members are regarded as significant. The ancient Chinese understood that the strain of living in civilized communities is a major cause of much disease; factors held responsible include the environment (pathogenic factors), emotions, and diet.

A deviation in normal physiological function impairs the body's homeostatic process of maintaining biological balance and control. If this impairment is more than transitory, then pain, dysfunction, and disease can result. Functional balance must be maintained constantly under all extremes of external factors. Under normal conditions of health and function, the body responds to external demands without impairing homeostasis. However, disease still occurs both in an excess condition, where exposure can be excess in terms of time, magnitude, or both, and when the body is in a state of deficiency, often as result of long-term or chronic exposure.¹

Richard Esquivel is a Licensed Acupuncturist, trained in Traditional Chinese Medicine. He practices in Evergreen at Healing Touch Clinic, 2724 Aborn Rd. (at White Rd.), San Jose, CA 95121. ph: 408-528-7024, fax: 408-528-8557, email: richard@essentialhealthcare.com

The following article in this series will address the methods of diagnosis in Chinese medicine.

¹ Kendall, Donald; Dao of Chinese Medicine, Understanding an Ancient Healing Art; Oxford University Press, 2002.