



GM “Arctic Apple” Update

An apple a day keeps the doctor away. It may also keep consumers away, if it's genetically modified. The Arctic non-browning apple may be approved for sale as early as this year, but some B.C. retailers, 18 so far, have committed to not selling it. Find out who.

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Geopathic Stress: Investigating Earth Energies

We're surrounded by earth energies that impact our health and well-being. Geopathic consultant Vlasty Senovsky shares his decades of expertise in recognizing these invisible yet powerful energy fields.

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Feed Life, Starve Cancer

Discover the power of nutrition against cancer and other degenerative diseases with registered holistic nutritionist and culinary artist, Eden Elizabeth. Her Vancouver-based company, Feed Life, is positively changing lives, plate by plate. Here, she shares her tips for health.

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The Power of the Old-fashioned Petition

No time to stop and sign? In this era of online communication, the old-fashioned petition nevertheless still holds power over politics. Read about the petition for the Charter of Health Freedom, which is rivalling the largest petition in Canadian history and is still growing.

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The Science behind Traditional Chinese Medicine

Chinese medicine is a complete system of medicine that dates back thousands of years. In the modern age, this ancient medicine still has undeniable applications.

Chun-Kai Wang, DTCM, R.Ac

Humans have evolved over the course of millennia. Societies and institutions have changed over time. In the wake of such shifts, technology has played a definitive role. Despite all these changes, the human body remains what it is from the beginning. The diseases that

afflicted the people of the past remain largely unchanged. For example, as much as the influenza virus has undergone various permutations, at the end of the day it is the same disease—a cold, albeit of varying levels of contagiousity. What people used to suffer, we still suffer from today.

Chinese medicine therefore has indisputable relevance in today's medical community, as

the age-old prescriptions used more than 2,000 years ago are still employed effectively for today's conditions.

Not all would agree. One big misconception out there is that Chinese medicine, hailing from a technologically underdeveloped past, must be unscientific quackery in comparison to modern medicine. But if we examine what “science” is, we realize it is

actually modern methods that don't really fit the scientific standard that well compared with Chinese medicine.

What is science?

Science can be summed up as a process of hypothesis to experiment to evaluation, for the purpose of finding reliable explanations for natural phenomena. From these explana-

tions we then derive ways of further applications.

The scientific method is in itself an empirical method, that is, a process of validation by trial and error. We know truly reliable science needs to be backed up by indisputable and reproducible outcomes that come from repeated trials in order to test the truthfulness of a hypothesis, which, if proved relatively consistent, is then ascended to a form of theory, then to the highest level of law once it is deemed infallible. Between these three, the only difference is the amount of trials it has gone through and the relative stability of its assertions.

Therefore, time becomes a crucial factor. The history of modern medical science goes back not more than 200 years. Even 100 years may be a stretch because the modern medicine we're used to today really only started after the First World War, following the breakthrough of penicillin. One hundred years ago many doctors in the western world were still using homeopathy instead of the antibiotics characteristic of modern medicine. On the other hand, Chinese medicine has been in clinical use and gone through subsequent refinements over millennia, surprisingly using a relatively non-changing set of herbs. Essentially, the assertions of Chinese medicine and its methods have been proven to be effective repeatedly without much revision.

Based on this, Chinese medicine is the more scientific "science," and modern medicine seems to be dubious to some degree, especially when we consider the short time for

many drugs trials before becoming commercially available (in addition to the frequent market removal of drugs once side effects escalate), as well as the constant revisions in textbooks and theories, supposedly in light of new findings.

What makes Chinese medicine so effective?

Or how does Chinese medicine stick to the same set of herbs in light of new diseases emerging every day? The viewpoint of Chinese medicine towards the concept of disease is crucial in this matter. It is not surprising most people believe alternative medicine doesn't treat disease, for this has come to be known as an exclusive right of modern medical orthodoxy. But as far as I can tell from my clinical work and those of our peers, Chinese medicine does treat diseases and conditions in the strictest sense. But it does not treat diseases like modern medicine.

Why? Technically "disease" is the worst term that can be used to address any medical condition. Put simply, there is no such thing as disease in Chinese medicine.

Conclusions from clinical experience and case studies explain this rationale. First, medical conditions or diseases merely reflect a point in the spectrum of health, that is, a point between death and the perfectly healthy state. This point is nothing more than an arbitrary designation by the western medical community. This point is not static and can be shifted through adequate treatment (such as Chinese medicine or acupuncture), the passing of time or other factors.

In other words, the health of an individual is a changing dynamic; one person is just as likely as the next to get certain "diseases" but just as likely to suddenly not have it. The shifting dynamic of this point in a person's health reflects itself in different clinical presentations, which Chinese medicine terms as "patterns."

So yes, Chinese medicine does treat diseases but in reality we are treating patterns, because only patterns are truly relative to the flowing nature of a person's health, while disease is a rigid and fixed concept in space-time, incongruent with clinical reality. This explains the often-heard incidence of individuals who have certain diseases or conditions but who don't have it anymore a few years later, such as in the case of frozen shoulder. Sadly not everyone is this fortunate and some treatment is required.

With this concept understood, it becomes apparent why Chinese medicine is effective and, most importantly, why there is no need to find new herbs for disease treatment. The logic is simple: Chinese herbs are used to treat patterns, not diseases. But since patterns encompass essentially all diseases and conditions (excluding a few

special ones) within the aforementioned spectrum framework, these herbs technically treat all, if not most, diseases and conditions.

Unfortunately, this is a joke to many scientists. In light of the billions poured into research to develop new drugs for today's diseases, it is unacceptable to

Chinese herbs are used to treat patterns, not diseases.

believe that herbs used as far back as 2,000 years ago have already solved all the problems. This would render all of modern medicine's hard work nil, not to mention threaten the hegemony of pharmaceutical conglomerates over health policy and education. Many would rather believe that Chinese medicine works because there must be an active ingredient involved. In an effort to discover the secret behind Chinese herbs, massive funds are poured into research that seeks to

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extract this active ingredient, essentially conducting but another drug trial.

So it's no surprise that today the "secret" of Chinese medicine remains elusive—not because the active ingredient has not been discovered, but because the active-ingredient theory so dominant in modern science cannot be applied to Chinese medicine and, more importantly, because it cannot be applied to humans. We are more much advanced than machines with predictable responses to simple agents.

The case of ginseng

Anyone would agree ginseng is one of the most widely researched natural substances. Results by many institutions around the world seem to conclude that ginseng extract, or the ginsenoside family of compounds, possesses the qualities of a wonder drug, having the ability to treat everything from memory loss to cancer.

However, in ancient China it was not surprising to hear of wealthy people who could afford the herb actually dying from over-intake of ginseng, believing it to be a cure-all. This fatal result may sound unbelievable given the medical properties of ginseng confirmed in modern



studies. But trained professionals in Chinese medicine know full well the reason—because it has been incorrectly used against the "pattern" it was intended for. Just as much as it is in the past, ginseng and many herbs are being used today according to their active ingredient, instead of following the correct method of prescribing according to the pattern.

So what is the pattern of ginseng? Its pattern is what Chinese medicine calls qi deficiency, which can be likened to the dampening of the body's energy-generating ability, leading to systemic weakness and general malaise. This weakness is based on Chinese medicine diagnosis, not modern medicine (for example, hypo-

thyroidism does not always mean qi deficiency). Likewise, many of the actual diseases modern medical studies show ginseng useful for frequently

Chinese medicine has been in clinical use and gone through refinements over millennia.

do not fall into the above pattern based on what we see in actual clinical practice from the perspective of Chinese medicine. Intake of ginseng against its intended pattern is not only

unbeneficial to the patient, but actually contraindicated, with the possibility of making matters worse. Patients who say they take ginseng and experience headaches, dizziness and feverishness point to this problem.

With these issues set straight, readers should have a clear idea that Chinese medicine is a scientific system of medicine with its own time-tested theories and not the unfounded practices people would like to believe. 🌿

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Ancient wisdom

"Disease" is the worst term that can be used to address any medical condition. Put simply, there is no such thing as disease in Chinese medicine.