Chinese Medicine and the Elixir of Life

Hong Hai
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Information slides

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Cheating Death:
Biomedicine revives the elixir of life
Australian scientist claims pill extends life

‘Elixir of life’ pill will let us live until 150

A WONDER pill letting us live to the ripe old age of 150 and beyond may be available within five years.

By JO WILLEY
00:00, Thu, Oct 20, 2011

Drugs for the body to repair itself and new stem cell therapies could be on the market in five years
The *Huangdi Neijing* on Immortality

The great medical classic, *The Huangdi Neijing* ("The Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Medicine") of the Han dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD), declared immortality to be unattainable.

A man’s natural life span is about 100 years if he lives a healthy lifestyle.
The Nature of Chinese Medicine (TCM)

TCM looks at a box from above; Western medicine (biomedicine) looks from below. They focus on different physiological dimensions.

For TCM:

- Foods/herbs are classified according to warm/cold; tonifying or clearing, etc
- Environmental and emotional factors are the causes of illness. (Mildew caused by dampness or a fungus?)
- Flow and movement are essential to health.

Hua Tuo: “A door that is regularly opened and closed will not have sticky hinges

Reference: Chapter 2 of Pursuing the Elixir of Life
The Elixir of Longevity

Peng Zu 彭祖 (circa 1500 BC) lived to about 130 years

Longevity Hill in Sichuan is dedicated to the legacy of Peng Zu

Emphasized diet, herbal tonics, exercise and good living habits for longevity.
What the Qianlong and German philosopher Immanuel Kant had in common

Qianlong 乾隆 (1711-99) lived to 88 years despite the rigours of ruling China for over 60 years.
Rose at 5am, held court 6am-2pm, spent the rest of the day exercising and enjoying himself. Bedtime 9 pm.

Kant (1724-1804) lived to 80, rose daily at 5am, worked for 2 hours before starting lectures. Took daily walks and lived an ascetic life.
Precise in daily habits
Health Cultivation 养生
from *The Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Medicine* 黄帝内经

The Ancients understood the way of *yin* and *yang*
And how to engage in (*qigong*) **exercises**
Practise **moderation** in food and drink,
Observe **regularity** in living habits,
Avoid **over-exertion**
Keep **body and mind** in harmony

上古之人，其知道者；法于阴阳，和与术数。
饮食有节，起居有常；不妄作劳，故能形与神俱
Avoiding Illness

虚邪贼风，避之有时；
恬淡虚无，真气从之
精神内守，病安从来。

Avoid climatic stresses,
Live a placid life with plain needs,
Maintain the defensive forces in your body,
Keep yourself in good spirits:
How then could you fall ill?

Compare: Stephen Ilardi “Depression as a Disease of Civilization” (TED Talk)
The Blue Zones
with world’s highest rate of centenarians; one in three live past 90 in good health

Sardinia, Okinawa, Loma Linda, California, Costa Rica, Ikaria, Greece, Bama (Guangxi, China)

1. Physically active but not necessarily with vigorous cardiovascular exercises
2. Strong sense of community spirit; low stress
3. No common diet
## Comparing blue zone lifestyles and Yangsheng

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blue zones</th>
<th>TCM yangsheng</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regularity in living habits</td>
<td>Regular schedules facilitate communal activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong sense of community</td>
<td>Qigong exercises for nurturing <em>qi</em> and promoting its flow.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physically active but not vigorous cardiovascular exercises.</td>
<td>Daily activities like walking and working in the garden</td>
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<td>Household chores with few electrical appliances</td>
<td>Plain needs; less ambition</td>
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<td>Low stress levels</td>
<td>Diet fits constitution, environment</td>
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<td>No common magic diet</td>
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Food and Health in TCM

• No common diet; diet governed by one’s constitution and physical environment
• Classifies food *not* by carbos, protein, fat … but by its effect on the human body (c.f. we classify people by various dimensions – ethnicity, IQ etc)
• Can combine TCM and Western nutrition guidelines
Different kinds of constitutions

Besides the healthy, balanced constitution, there are eight in total. Five common ones:

1. Qi weakness
2. Blood weakness
3. Yin deficiency
4. Yang deficiency
5. Heat with dampness (common in Singapore)
Cooking foods to balance and heal: Principles of Chinese yaoshan 药膳

- Good grasp of the properties of different foods and herbs (see chapters 7, 8 and appendices)
- Teas, soups, porridges and cooked dishes
- Appetising and provides medical benefits
- Suitable for frequent and long-term consumption
- Cooking methods used are braising, boiling, steaming and simmering (very little frying)
- Less seasoning – use natural flavours
5 delicious recipes for home use

1. Tonic soup for Qi and vigour
2. Soup for removing heat dampness
3. Tea for nourishing blood, better complexion and sleep
4. Porridges for strengthening yang and virility
5. Tea for nourishing yin and moisturizing and thirst quenching
Chicken soup for Qi and Vigour
参芪鸡汤

Ingredients (4 servings):

Chicken 200g
Dangshen 党参 15g
Astragalus 黄芪 10-15g
Fresh Chinese yam 山药 100-150g
2000ml of water

Suitable for the family to replenish body qi
Soup for clearing heat and dampness:
“Job’s tears and green bean soup” (苡仁绿豆粥)
*Cools and removes dampness*

**Ingredients**
Job’s tears 薏苡仁 100g
Green beans 绿豆 50g
Dried tangerine peel (陈皮) 5g-10g
Tea for Nourishing Blood
“Nourishing & Calming Tea” 养血宁心茶

Longan meat 6g
Lily bulb 5g
Red dates 3pcs
Wolfberry seeds 枸杞子 3-6g

Method
Steep the herbs in hot water or boil for stronger concentration.

For good complexion by nourishing blood, can also use “complexion enhancing tea“ 贵妃养颜茶
Porridges for strengthening yang

**Chinese chives porridge**  
韭菜粥

- Chinese chives 30-60g
- *Jingmi rice* 粳米 60g (round-grained non-glutinous rice)
- Small amount lean minced pork or sliced snakehead fish

**Chestnut porridge**  
栗子粥

- Fresh chestnuts 10-15g (small chunks)
- *Jingmi rice* 100g
- Wolfberry seeds 10-20g (optional)
Tea for Nourishing Yin

Yin Nourishing & Thirst Quenching Tea

Dendrobium 石斛 6g
Yuzhu 玉竹 3g
American ginseng 4-5pcs
Wolfberry seeds 枸杞子 3-6g

Preparation

Steep the herbs in hot water or boil the herbs or a stronger concentration.
Thank you!
For more details please refer to book and also see www.renhai.com.sg

1. Principles of TCM
2. Herbs and formulations
3. Yangsheng
4. Recipes for teas, soups and porridges
5. List of YouTube videos on using herbs, acupressure, etc