

# A Preliminary Discussion on the Treatment of Emotional Disorders in Traditional Chinese Medicine

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**Abstract:** *In recent years, with the development of the bio-psycho-social medical model, more and more attention has been paid to the relationship between mental and emotional factors and the Five zang organs. Emotional disorders is a series of related diseases caused by the dysfunction of the five zang organs of the human body caused by the seven emotions too much, and the harm to the human body should not be underestimated. When treating diseases, we should start from two aspects: medication and emotional regulation.*

**Keywords:** Traditional Chinese medicine, Emotional disorders, Psychological counseling.

## 1. Etiological Factors:

The relationship between emotions and health and disease, especially the impact of negative emotions on health and disease has become the focus of attention of the whole society today. According to authoritative statistics, the number of emotional diseases caused by negative emotions has accounted for 30% [1], which severe patients account for about 30% to 40% of the patients with physical discomfort in general hospitals in China, and there are no corresponding organic changes in laboratory tests, but their mental pain is far greater than physical discomfort [2]. Emotional disorders refers to the disease caused by the stimulation of various emotions. Emotion is called "emotion" in traditional Chinese medicine, which mainly refers to joy, anger, worry, thinking, sadness, fear and surprise. Emotional disease in traditional Chinese medicine is a disease with abnormal emotional reaction as its clinical manifestation, which is caused by excessive or persistent stimulation of seven emotions, beyond the scope of human body regulation, resulting in abnormal spirit and qi, dysfunction of viscera, qi and blood [3]. Emotional diseases in traditional Chinese medicine include mania, Lily bulb disease, Hysteria, Plum pit qi, depression, insomnia and so on, which are similar to depression, anxiety and neurosis in modern medicine. The category of physical and mental diseases such as functional diseases and mental diseases [4]. "Joy and anger" here does not simply refer to the two emotions of joy and anger, but is actually used to refer to the seven emotions. There is a saying in 《Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine》: "Anger leads to the rise of qi, joy leads to the slow rise of qi, sorrow leads to the disappearance of qi, fear leads to the fall of qi, surprise leads to the disorder of qi, and thinking leads to the stagnation of qi.". During the Southern Song Dynasty, Chen Wuzhe regarded emotion as a very important pathogenic factor, as important as climate and geographical location. On the basis of the theory of "three causes", later physicians further expanded the etiology, which included human beings. Case factor, physical factor, etc. Different from western medicine based on modern science and technology, traditional Chinese medicine is based on ancient philosophy. Traditional Chinese medicine believes that emotional changes are closely related to the functions of

the five viscera, so the treatment of emotional diseases in traditional Chinese medicine is to combine the understanding of human psychology with the functions of the five viscera.

## 2. Characteristics of the Five Zang Organs

Liver, the five elements belong to wood, In the mood belongs to anger. Only when the function of the liver is balanced, can people feel comfortable and healthy. In other words, if a person frequently becomes angry over trivial matters. then it is easy to suffer from liver disease, allergies, hypertension, nervous system diseases and so on. Therefore, the emotional diseases of the liver are treated by soothing the liver and relieving depression. Heart, the five elements belong to fire, In the mood belongs to joy, when ecstasy, the heart is easy to relax and lax, leading to absent-minded, incoherent, abnormal behavior, so, nourishing the heart and tranquilizing the mind should be the treatment of emotions. The basic method of disease. Spleen, the five elements belong to the earth, In the mood belongs to thinking. Excessive thinking will lead to the loss of transportation and transformation of the spleen, lungs, the five elements belong to metal, and in the mood belongs to sadness. The lung governs the qi of the whole body. Excessive sorrow leads to lung qi damage, which is manifested as depression, depression, lack of qi and laziness to speak, and weakness of limbs. Kidney, the five elements belong to water, In the mood belongs to fear. Personality types represent a unique amalgamation of characteristic traits shared among individuals. The identification of personality types holds significant importance for medical practitioners in facilitating precise analysis of patients' conditions. The harmonious development of the five zang organs is imperative, as an overactive organ can induce alterations in an individual's disposition, akin to the principles elucidated in Western psychology's "personality psychology". While not directly translatable to this concept, a meticulous comparison reveals both congruences and disparities. Personality psychology delineates eight distinct personality types: extroverted thinking type, extroverted feeling type, extroverted sensing type, extroverted intuition type, introverted thinking type, introverted feeling type, introverted sensing type, and introverted intuition type. Numerous psychologists have

endeavored to classify personalities into various typologies or theories; however, due to the intricate nature of personality issues, consensus remains elusive. Conversely, Traditional Chinese Medicine categorizes human characters into five classifications based on organ function. Individuals with robust liver function tend toward outgoingness and quick-wittedness but may exhibit emotional instability; those with strong heart function exude warmth and enthusiasm; those with sturdy spleen function demonstrate stability and benevolence; individuals with potent lung function possess broad-mindedness and exceptional organizational prowess; while those with formidable kidney function lean towards introspection and strategic acumen but may be more susceptible to illness due to their reserved demeanor. This underscores the profound insights offered by traditional Chinese medicine in comprehending human character from a holistic standpoint within medical academia.

### 3. The Research on Constitutional Types in Traditional Chinese Medicine

The modern theory of constitutional typing in traditional Chinese medicine emerged in the 1970s, drawing on foundational principles of traditional Chinese medicine and employing a holistic perspective and systematic approach. This development has been supported by methods such as literature review, theoretical discourse, epidemiological investigation, and contemporary experimental research. Over more than three decades of dedicated inquiry, a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding constitutional types in traditional Chinese medicine has been established [5-8]. Literature review has played a crucial role in elucidating historical physiological phenomena and studies on constitution, thereby enhancing the systematization of constitutional type theory. Theoretical discourse has expanded the scope for further development within this field. Epidemiological investigations have become pivotal in uncovering the constitutional characteristics and composition laws prevalent among modern populations. Furthermore, contemporary experimental research holds promise for explicating the fundamental tenets of constitutional type theory while serving as an intersection between traditional Chinese medicine and modern scientific inquiry. Constitutional typing emphasizes the study of human body differences, susceptibility to specific causes of disease based on different constitution types, as well as certain propensities related to disease transmission. These insights aim to discern patterns that can guide early prevention strategies and clinical treatment approaches [9-10]. Notably, scholarly attention towards constitutional typing extends beyond ancient China to encompass Japan, Korea, as well as contributions from modern physicians, philosophers, and physiologists. Internationally there is significant focus on individual differences within Japanese Kampo medicine (traditional Japanese herbalism), Korean Four-Phase Medicine (a system based on East Asian philosophy), and Indian traditional medicine. In summary: foreign scholars' exploration into individual differences was influenced by religious philosophy alongside demands from European medical communities during the 18th and 19th centuries regarding psychiatric research. Consequently emphasizing psychological behavior traits led to an emphasis on studying individual differences through psychological characteristics rather than delving

comprehensively into temperament psychology alone. One of the significant manifestations of human life phenomena is constitutional types, as different constitutions serve as the intrinsic basis for variations in disease presentation. Therefore, research on constitutional classification is essential for a comprehensive understanding of diseases. The categorization of different constitutional types contributes to capturing individual variabilities and holds crucial clinical implications. The classification of constitution in traditional Chinese medicine has its origins in the Qin and Han dynasties, with the Huangdi Neijing providing an in-depth exploration of constitutional types. In modern Chinese medicine, research on constitutional classification typically involves categorizing constitutions from a clinical perspective based on changes in constitution within disease groups, characteristic manifestations, and their relationship to diseases. Therefore, it is important to emphasize body maintenance and cultivate healthy lifestyle habits in daily life rather than waiting until illness strikes before seeking treatment.

### 4. Treatment Methods

With the continuous advancement of society, science and technology are progressing at an astonishing rate. Presently, China has successfully eradicated absolute poverty, leading to a steady improvement in people's living standards—a noteworthy achievement for all Chinese citizens. However, this development not only brings about accomplishments but also introduces accompanying pressures. In pursuit of a better life, individuals work diligently every day to earn a livelihood, often experiencing states of anxiety as a result. Over time, this can give rise to numerous psychological issues that pose significant hidden risks to both physical and mental well-being. When individuals encounter psychological challenges, they frequently seek assistance from psychologists—directly contributing to the advancement of Western psychology. Western psychology is an independent discipline rooted in modern medicine and integrates philosophical perspectives with contemporary medical knowledge related to psychology in order to explore human psychological issues. Fundamentally focused on bodily changes, it posits that certain physiological disruptions lead to psychological disorders—thus creating a division between body and mind. In contrast with Western medicine's approach, traditional Chinese medicine has consistently regarded philosophy as an essential component since its inception—an inseparable aspect developed alongside humanity itself. A person's psychology determines their future character; thus these two elements are inherently intertwined. Given that psychology is integral within traditional Chinese medicine practice, understanding the human body necessitates comprehension of psychology. Consequently when treating illnesses one must identify and address root causes before alleviating symptoms with appropriate medication—thereby facilitating natural recovery from disease.

#### 3.1 Treatment Methods with Classical Formulas

Through reviewing and summarizing various sources, I have found that Professor Dong Xiangyu from Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine effectively utilizes classic prescriptions as a treatment method. In this context, "Classical formulas" refer to the formulas found in Zhang Zhongjing's

"Shanghan Zabing Lun" She stated, "If the disease symptoms align with those described in the literature, classic prescriptions can be directly used for treatment. If there is no direct alignment but similarity in pathogenesis, classic prescriptions can still be employed." [11] The concept of "prescription-syndrome correspondence" indicates that when the primary symptoms of a mental disorder correspond to the indications of a classic prescription, it can be directly utilized. However, in clinical practice, patients whose symptoms perfectly match those described in literature are exceedingly rare; complex cases make up the majority. In such instances, careful analysis of patient symptoms and understanding of fundamental pathogenesis are essential for flexible application of acquired knowledge.

### 3.2 Acupuncture and Moxibustion

Acupuncture and moxibustion are not only classic treatment methods in traditional Chinese medicine, involving needle insertion at acupuncture points to treat diseases, but also a significant invention of the Chinese civilization. Numerous historical documents note that acupuncture and moxibustion have a longstanding and significant impact on treating emotional disorders, with 130 acupoints closely related to such disorders. Numerous Chinese scholars have successfully applied acupuncture in both basic experiments and clinical settings for depression treatment, achieving promising results. This further demonstrates that acupuncture is effective and safe for depression, meriting wider clinical adoption.

### 3.3 Music Therapy

In the realm of Western medicine, music therapy has rapidly advanced and widely disseminated for treating emotional disorders, offering valuable insights. Music therapy encompasses three methods: receptive, improvisational, and re-creative. Simply put, receptive music therapy involves listening to music for therapeutic purposes and is considered the most patient-friendly among the three methods. Improvisational music therapy entails freely playing specific instruments to achieve therapeutic effects. Despite technical differences among these methods, they all share a common goal of treating emotional disorders by facilitating emotional expression and catharsis. From a theoretical perspective, music therapy indeed holds value for further research and development. However, there are certain limitations in its clinical application. This is due to the strong personal subjective consciousness of music, as individuals have their own preferences and aversions to specific melodies. Even if healthcare professionals select appropriate music based on the patient's condition, if these compositions are not accepted by the patient, they may not only be ineffective but could potentially exacerbate symptoms. Therefore, careful consideration is necessary in clinical practice. Firstly, it is important to understand the patient's musical preferences in order to select or compose pieces that can alleviate their condition within this framework. Additionally, given that music possesses distinct regional and ethnic characteristics, it cannot be applied universally from textbooks. Only through establishing a unique Chinese music therapy system can more effective treatment be provided for Chinese patients.

### 3.4 Restraining Emotions Method

In traditional Chinese medicine, the concept of holism is emphasized. The specific embodiment of the concept of "man and nature as a whole" is the holistic view. Therefore, in addition to prescribing medication to treat patients' physical discomfort, psychotherapy should also be adopted. Psychotherapy has developed alongside traditional Chinese medicine, from the primitive shamanic healing practices of the Wushen period to the Four Great Physicians of the Jin Yuan period; methods of psychological treatment have gradually become more sophisticated. Huangdi Neijing describes a process for emotional regulation therapy: joy calms sadness, fear overcomes joy; anger harms the liver, sadness overcomes anger; worry harms the lungs, joy overcomes worry; fear harms the kidneys, thinking overcomes fear. This indicates that extreme happiness may lead to near-insanity and loss of rationality. Therefore, various methods are employed during treatment to induce feelings of fear in order for mental equilibrium to be restored naturally. When an individual experiences intense anger resulting in flushing or even fainting, guiding them towards experiencing some degree of sorrow can significantly suppress their excessively angry state. Similarly when someone is overwhelmed by profound sadness leading to low mood and diminished willpower or even dementia-like symptoms—efforts should be made to uplift their spirits which would facilitate natural recovery from illness. This drug-free approach involves communication between doctor and patient through language or behavior as well as creating specific scenarios aimed at gaining trust and gradually uncovering deep-seated emotions within patients' hearts. Subsequently, every effort is made by medical professionals to help alleviate pain and soothe emotions with a goal toward achieving overall physical and mental well-being.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the treatment of "psychosomatic diseases" involves two aspects: "treating psychological problems by regulating physiological conditions" and "treating physiological problems by regulating psychological conditions," which represents the unique approach of traditional Chinese medicine in addressing emotional disorders [12]. These discussions primarily focus on treatment methods aimed at preventing the exacerbation of the condition after disease onset. There are numerous other treatment methods worthy of further exploration. However, the most effective approach is to implement reasonable preventive measures before disease onset to reduce its incidence. Many classical works in traditional Chinese medicine emphasize the benefits and importance of disease prevention. Therefore, individuals should not only prioritize work without considering their health until they fall ill; instead, they should learn to incorporate appropriate rest into their daily lives, regulate their inner emotions, and find healthy outlets for repressed emotions.

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