

*As published in September, 1997 issue of Whole Life Times*

## **Your Tongue Tells All Broken Hearts and Blocked Chi**

*by Lucy Postolov, L.Ac.*

A 29-year-old woman who complained of shortness of breath, wheezing, cough and low energy had been diagnosed with asthma by a Western medical doctor. She explained to me that her asthma attacks had begun about two years prior. She was using inhalers daily and, since her condition hadn't improved, her doctor had suggested hormone therapy.

After taking her complete medical history and listening to her breath with a stethoscope, I checked her pulse and tongue and agreed with the Western diagnosis of asthma. The TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) diagnosis was lung chi (or qi) deficiency; however, there was more to it.

"Do you have a broken heart?" I asked. The patient started crying.

"How do you know?" she said, swallowing her tears.

I explained that, while she had all the indications of asthma in her weak pulse and pale tongue, her tongue's bright red tip also indicated an abundance of heat in the heart, typical of someone suffering from a "broken heart". Heart in TCM is not only an organ or channel but also the "home of the soul." She then told me that she had indeed broken up with her boyfriend just before the onset of the attacks and was still grieving from the loss.

As a holistic discipline, TCM looks at the entire body instead of just the symptoms. The doctor sees the body as a dynamic flow of energy or chi. Disease results when the flow of chi is hindered.

Our tongues are remarkable instruments. First, as a sense organ, the tongue is one of the primary ways we experience the world. All our enjoyment of eating originates with the tongue. Second, as one of few muscles that is not connected at both ends, the tongue has great flexibility of movement, giving us the ability to speak. Finally, the tongue is the only surface of our body that doesn't scar when damaged.

Since ancient times, the Chinese have known that the tongue is a mirror that reflects all the inner organs and systems of the body. The surface of our tongues is like a map of our bodies. Different areas of the tongue's surface corresponds;and to the various organs and body features.

Observation of the tongue is based on shape, color, coating and moisture. The color of the tongue indicates the condition of the patient's chi, blood, and yin organs. The shape indicates the state of

blood and chi. The coating indicates the state of the yang organs, particularly the stomach. The tongue's moisture indicates the state of the body fluids.

A normal tongue appears pink with a very thin white coating. Following are some examples of tongue pathology:

Red tongue always indicates heat.

Red tongue with no coating indicates a condition of empty or deficient heat, such as menopause.

Red tongue with coating indicates full heat, such as infection of the internal organs.

Purple tongue indicates stasis of blood.

Thin tongue indicates blood or yin deficiency.

The pathological coating colors can be white, yellow, gray, or black.

This is just a brief introduction to tongue diagnosis, which requires years of study and practice to fully comprehend. You should not try to diagnose your conditions by yourself.

Healing the spirit is an important part of Chinese medicine. In the case of the asthmatic patient mentioned earlier, it was necessary to work not only with her body, but also with her mind and soul. Chinese herbs and acupuncture tonified her lung energy and calmed her spirit.

Today, her asthma has completely subsided. She is not using inhalers and has been free of symptoms for six months. She is engaged to a new man and plans to marry in four months. - L.P.