

“No go through: pain. Go through: no pain.”

- A basic principle of Chinese medicine

CHAPTER SEVEN

BLOCKED QI: TROUBLE

Basic channel flow theory

When channels and all their bifurcations and subsets are running perfectly, all the body systems can grow, maintain, die, or respond correctly to external changes, in an optimal manner. That's health.

But sometimes, the flow of Qi goes wrong. The result is illness or pain.¹

This chapter explains just a few of the problems that can interfere with the correct flow of channels, according to the “rules” of Asian medical theory. It includes the snafus pertinent to the Stomach channel blockage seen in all people with Parkinson's.

Channel obstructions

When the electrical flow of channels is blocked or stopped due to a break in the tissue or the presence of some non-conductive tissue, the flow diverts around the blockage. Scar tissue, with its rubber-like mass of short, crisscrossing fibers, is an example of non-conductive tissue. When the path of a channel is blocked by a bit of scar tissue, the Qi is diverted around the scar. The channel Qi resumes its usual pathway a short distance downstream from the scar tissue. The Qi diversion can be felt by a trained hand.

The absence of channel Qi in the scar tissue means that the cells of the scar tissue do not receive electrical instructions on what kind of cells to be. In the absence of instructions, cells become non-functional, adhesion-type cells. In most cases, scar tissue, left to its own devices, does not grow back into healthy skin. Also, scar tissue and its immediate surroundings often feel numb to the touch: nerve conduction, an electrical phenomenon, is also blocked by non-conductive tissue. The numbness usually corresponds to the Qi-free zones that are created as Qi skirts the blocked area and resumes flow somewhere downstream.²

¹ The Chinese maxim for stating this is “No go through: pain. Go through: no pain.” Although my professors stated this maxim to me nearly every time I asked a question about theory, I had no idea what they were talking about. Not until nearly a decade after graduating from Asian medical school did I realize what this statement actually meant: if Qi is flowing correctly, the body will manifest health. If Qi flow is inhibited, obstructed, or flowing in any direction that is not consistent with the vibratory pattern (the thought wave and electromagnetic wave determined by that thought) that provided the original pattern for the creation of that body, the result will be “pain”: sickness, poor health, pain, moodiness, wrong thinking, shortened lifespan.

I think the reason that it took me so long to understand this maxim is that any discussion of channel theory was not acceptable during the years when I was in school. Because, as a westerner, I only heard the words of the maxim and had nothing to connect it to, it was meaningless. Nevertheless, I heard it a *lot*. It wasn't until I understood channel theory that I began to suspect the significance of this maxim.

² Acupuncture needles can be used to reintroduce electrical flow through scar tissue. When correctly needled a few times, scar tissue slowly reverts back to healthy tissue and the numbness usually goes away.

Sometimes, if the scar traverses a wide area, the Qi gets shunted into the path of a nearby channel. In this case, if the nearby channel is flowing the same direction as the blocked channel, the displaced Qi may or may not resume flow in its own, correct channel after it gets past the blockage. If the Qi does not, at some point, flow back into its own channel, significant weakness, numbness, or pathologies may develop along the portion of the channel that is “downstream” from the blockage, which has minimal or no Qi flowing in it.

Even if Qi is diverted into the path of another channel, the flow pattern often self-corrects somewhere downstream of the blockage. Remember, Qi is not brainless electricity; Qi flow patterns are stabilized by the body’s chemistry and structure and by the mind’s brain waves. These forces can help Qi to resume its correct pattern after getting past the trouble spots. Also, throughout the system, smaller “connecting channels” link the main channels. These connectors can bypass or help correct small Qi glitches. The diverted Qi can resume running correctly somewhere further downstream of the blockage, or it may remain in a neighboring channel into which it was diverted. In the latter case, the amount of Qi in the original channel is reduced, and the amount of Qi in the neighboring channel is increased – and possibly confused: each channel’s electrical vibratory patterns are specific for one of the five electron movement variations.

If a channel is blocked and the nearby channel into which it flows is running the *opposite* direction of the diverted channel, the diverted current changes its direction, and flows along with the nearby channel’s current. (Actually, the neighbor current will be somewhat modified by this addition, but for now I’m introducing general principles, not the fine details.) In this case, the *diverted* channel is not able to resume its correct path farther downstream, but becomes caught up in the flow of Qi running in the opposite direction.

In some cases, some portion of the diverted Qi may run deeper into the body via a “connecting” channel rather than running laterally into a nearby primary channel. This submerged Qi is often able to resurface near the skin farther downstream into the original channel. In this case, the Qi may continue to flow correctly for the rest of the length of the channel, but the amount of Qi flow may be diminished in the area immediately downstream from the blockage.

Utter blockage in a channel

When channel blockers such as scar tissue, muscle tension, bone displacement, excess fat, mucus or other diversions, including the electromagnetic disruptions of mental blockages (unhealthy brainwave patterns), occur at the very end of a channel, the channel is not able to divert around the problem area and regroup farther downstream. A channel blockage at a channel terminus is therefore particularly problematic. The Qi flow pattern may become distorted in the vicinity of the blockage. Over time, the distortions themselves can contribute to a form of electromagnetic blockage. At some point, as the Qi flow at the terminus becomes increasingly stymied, the electrical resistance in the channel begins to build. Qi, like electricity and water, will flow in the path of least resistance. If the resistance at a channel terminus becomes too large, the Qi in the channel will begin flowing in whatever direction offers the least resistance – even flowing backwards.

Although the standard terminology is “backwards,” the actual movement of “backwards” Qi can be a back and forth, rapidly alternating movement. However, in a backwards-flow situation, if Qi distribution higher up the channel becomes diverted into another channel,

movement can become predominantly backwards (instead of back and forth). However, some amount of back and forth electrical movement might still occur in the area closest to the actual blockage.

When electrical currents run backwards, they are said to be running rebelliously. The idea that currents can run backwards is presented in the oldest book of Asian Medicine, the hoary Nei Jing.

Rebellious Qi was translated as “Retrograde” (backwards) Qi in the first English translations. Now, “Retrograde Qi” is the common translation in England. In the U.S., “Rebellious Qi” is the more common (and more metaphorically correct) translation.

What’s in a word?

The word “rebellious” is significant. Rebellion, in China, is considered the most dangerous of political situations. In rebellious times, the political system is overthrown. Chaos and death ensue. No good can come of rebellion.

I had learned about Rebellious Qi in my Asian medicine classes. I had been taught mild examples of systems running backwards: a cough is a spasm of backwards-moving muscles in the lungs. Burping is backwards-movement from the stomach.

Never was I taught that an entire channel might run backwards. And yet, the very name “Rebellious Qi” suggests that Qi moving backwards might be more dangerous than a mere cough or a burp.

When I noticed backwards-running Qi in my PD patients and then discovered all the pathologies that derived from it, I began to understand the power and danger of Rebellious Qi. A channel running backwards can destroy the very underpinnings of the parent organism. Rebellion indeed!

A few acupuncturists have questioned my understanding of Rebellious Qi. They too were taught in school that Rebellious Qi refers only to vomiting or other short-term manifestations of systems running in reverse. I like to recall the following: several times during the last two centuries, Asian medicine was forbidden in China. These restrictions were political. In every instance, the government was trying to rid itself of the embarrassment of a medical system that, seen by western eyes, was superstitious and archaic.

After the revolution, the Chinese government re-embraced Asian medicine with pride primarily for economic reasons: it worked and it was cheap.

However, conflicts arose. The essence of Asian medicine is philosophical, even spiritual. Religion was anathema to the revolutionaries. To make Asian medicine politically safe, the more spiritual teachings of the ancient medical texts were stripped from the books. A sanitized version was produced.

One of the principles of Asian medicine that was relegated to the retired list was Channel theory. Channel theory, for reasons too long to go into here, is closely tied to the spiritual underpinnings of Asian medicine. Also, western researchers had long mocked the idea of unseeable forces flowing in channels. The Chinese scientists, sensitive to western criticism and determined to weed out discussions of Spirit and philosophy, denied the existence of channels. The medical books were altered accordingly.

Because, for political reasons, channels no longer exist, the theory of Rebellious Qi could no longer apply to Rebellious Channel Qi. Instead, “Rebellious Qi” now refers to hiccups and

sneezing: situations that might better merit the title Pesky Blurps of Backwards Qi, but certainly not the terrifying title of Rebellious Qi.

It was not until I stumbled across backwards flowing Qi in an entire electrical channel and saw the deadly repercussions of this phenomenon that I came to appreciate the wisdom of the ancients. When they named the phenomenon of backward-running channel Qi “Rebellious Qi,” they knew what they were talking about.¹

This has not been a complete discussion of what can go wrong with channels, by any means. But it’s enough to be getting along with.



¹ To suggest another reason why channel theory has been discarded by the Chinese government, and to show that Asian medicine was, originally, inseparable from a profound understanding of spiritual philosophy, I will return to the earlier discussion of the famous “medical” principle, the Qi is the leader of the Blood and the Blood is the Mother of the Qi: the *power* of Love (the source of Qi in its largest sense) is the leader, the director, the force behind the physical existence of the universe (Blood); the physical universe (Blood) is a growing, ever-changing, formed *substrate* that allows an increase in the *manifestations* of Love (Qi). In other words, Infinite Love, by creating – via thought waves that condense into light waves or electromagnetic waves, and then into photons or electrical phenomena – *physical* manifestations of its thoughts, its consciousness, can increase the amount of *Manifested* Love. Infinite Love can create manifested things. These things, especially living things, can, by loving, increase the amount of Manifested Love in the universe. Love directs the universe to create feeling, aware manifestations of itself; the created things of the universe create more love. Qi is the leader of the Blood; Blood is the Mother of the Qi.

As with most great poetry, the word Qi, in this medical principle, has two meanings. The first use of the word Qi refers to the power *inherent* in Infinite Love. The second time the word Qi is used, it refers to the energy, the wave patterns, generated by *manifestations* of Love. This interpretation is consistent with Asian medical appreciation that Qi (as the word is first used) can exist even where Blood does not exist. In terms of energetic creation, Qi must always precede the existence of Blood. Blood may provide a substrate for increased *manifestations* of Qi, but without Qi, there can be no Blood. In western spiritual philosophy, this might be translated as Love exists first: even the “mother” aspect of creation is an outgrowth of infinite, eternal, genderless and formless Love.

Bringing it back to channels, the channels are manifestations of (electromagnetic) *vibrations*. As such, they are closer to the purer manifestations of energy and the thought *waves* of individual or Divine consciousness than are the chemistry and organs, which are “cruder,” more temporal, more subject to change and the delusion of duality. The energy in the channels, on the other hand, is a representation of the more lasting vibrations, even pre- and post life vibrations, of consciousness.

While this understanding might be scorned by the current political leaders of China, this ancient understanding in which medicine is understood as an extension of physics is increasingly compatible with the findings of quantum theory, string theory, and modern philosophy.

This footnote may appear to have little to do with Parkinson’s. I have included it to explain why the channel theory that is so crucial to understanding Asian medicine in general and certain diseases such as Parkinson’s in particular has been officially rejected by the anti-religion leaders of the 20th century Chinese government. Today, most acupuncturists who received their training in China have little or no background in or respect for channel theory.