

Common Digestive Disorders and their etiology

(the cause, set of causes, or manner of causation of a disease or condition)

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- Gastritis, gastric ulcer; duodenal ulcer
 - Etiology—infections, such as *H. pylori* imbalance, excessive alcohol use, NSAIDs, pernicious anemia, bile reflux (sometimes coupled with excessive worry)
 - Symptoms—nausea, upset stomach, vomiting, indigestion, burning or gnawing sensation in the stomach, loss of appetite
 - TCM patterns
 - stagnant stomach Qi = stomach fire (red tongue middle, thick greasy coating, yellow coatings towards middle and back)
 - liver attacking stomach (middle tongue peeled or cracked and/or red, liver areas purple or red; pulse wiry)
 - deficient stomach yin (middle tongue peeled; entire tongue peeled, elderly, other signs of yin deficiency such as ringing in the ears); usually chronic
 - Suggested treatments
 - Branch: licorice, DGL, plantain leaf tea ad lib, chamomile tea, marshmallow root tea
 - For clearing heat: *Coptis chinensis* (or huang lian su, berberine sulfate)—or other berberine-containing herbs (*H.pylori*), *Scutellaria baicalensis* (huang qin)
 - Liver-regulating herbs (bupleurum, peony, bitter orange; dandelion root, yellow dock, etc.)
 - Contra: usually gentian or bitters, depending on constitution

- Food allergies, lactose intolerance; gluten intolerance (celiac disease) vs. Food Intolerance (related—ulcerative colitis)
 - Definition, “abnormal immune response to foods”
 - Allergy—clinically-confirmed allergy where IgE binds to food molecules—food molecule becomes antigen, our response, antibody→mast cell activation→histamine, inflammation
 - Most commonly-reported allergens—Cow’s milk, eggs, fish, peanuts, shellfish, soy, tree nuts, wheat; 3-5% in children and teens
 - public perception of food intolerance, which is often called allergy
 - Etiology—Differentiate food intolerance vs. allergy
 - genetic influence for lactose intolerance and likely other foods
 - Vitamin D deficiency; other nutritional deficiencies
 - highly processed foods with altered proteins*, carbs, fats
 - stress; food proteins become altered through processing, heat
 - altered immune function
 - Symptoms—diarrhea, loose stools, excessive gas, borborygmus, dyspepsia, mood changes, hives, headache, fatigue, possibly symptoms of chronic allergic rhinitis, asthma, etc.; in serious cases, anaphylaxis
 - TCM patterns
 - Spleen Qi deficiency (tooth marks, swollen, shakey)
 - liver attacking Spleen (liver symptoms, red sides to tongue, etc.)
 - Lung Qi or lung yin deficiency (yin deficient signs, symptoms)
 - Western medical treatments—medical history, elimination diet, skin prick test, blood tests for food-specific IgE antibodies, or oral food challenge
 - Suggested treatments—first, food dairy;
 - Medicinal mushrooms like shitake or reishi to modulate immune response; angelica to ease IgE; anti-inflammatory herbs like bromelain, hops, turmeric, ginger; prebiotics, probiotics, biofilm management with lauric acid (coconut milk); berberine-containing herbs (coptis, barberry, Oregon grape root, etc.)
 - Mast cell-stabilizing and antihistamine-stabilizing herbs (berberine, emodin, Wang *et al.*, 2012); aloe (glycoproteins, etc.-see slides)
 - Bitter tonics—gentian, skullcap, dandelion, green citrus fruit, etc.
 - Spleen Qi tonics, Regulate liver herbs
 - Food allergy hygiene:
 - Chew food thoroughly
 - really focus on the meal
 - turn off the TV or other distraction

- avoid eating on the go or while driving or doing other tasks
 - eat in smaller portions throughout the day
 - Book: Ehrlich—*Food Allergies: TCM, Western Science.....*
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- Diverticulosis

- Definition—sacs that can bulge outwards through the colon; about 200,000 cases/year in the U.S.; progressively common above 40 years of age; could be >50% occurrence over 60; diverticulitis is infection of a diverticula is called diverticulitis (10-25% develop diverticulitis)
- Etiology—major hypothesis is a low fiber diet; the colon has to work harder without the fiber to move the fecal mass, so pressure can cause weak spots along the lower colon to bulge out; with imbalanced microflora, immune dysfunction too, inflammation and infection can result in the diverticuli, can be serious
- Symptoms—most people don't have symptoms; abdominal pain, cramping; fever, nausea, loss of appetite; changes in bowel habits, stool consistency;
- TCM patterns—various, could be spleen Qi deficiency, but the cause is often dietary; however, inflammation, infection can be related to damp heat conditions
- Western medical treatments—increasing fiber, antibiotics, severe-surgery
- Suggested treatments—recommend medical dx; increase fiber, both soluble and insoluble, herbs
 - Increase physical activity
 - For acute symptoms, start with liquids, broths, teas, and then mostly whole grains (millet, brown rice, polenta, kasha); when symptoms ease, then add cooked beans of all kinds and even some raw foods
 - Beans, mushrooms, juice veggies with coarse screen, drink slurry; smoothies with added fiber, plus whole fruits; avoid processed foods, add aloe juice
 - Herbal remedies
 - Bowel stimulants—cascara, yellow dock
 - Allantoin sources—comfrey mature leaves (not during pregnancy)

- Check tongue—with heat signs, add berberine source
 - DGL (licorice); slippery elm, marshmallow root
 - Hygiene—provide bowel rest (fasting and/or liquids only); pre-, and probiotics; resolve any nutritional, immune, or metabolic deficiencies or imbalances; regular detoxification (i.e. bowel cleansing, liver herbs, bile stimulants); emotional factors; resolve any constipation (<1 bowel movement/day); regular massage of the bowel (clockwise) with St. John’s wort oil (find tender spots, work them out); use the bridge pose to release muscles for deeper massage
 - Suggested reading—see program, info at <https://draxe.com/diverticulitis-diet/>
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- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) [not an inflammatory disease]
 - Definition—a functional intestinal disorder (no identifiable lesions) typified by diarrhea, constipation, both or neither, abdominal cramping and pain
 - Etiology—can last for years or be lifelong; more than 200,000 cases in the U.S. annually; causes not well-understood; perhaps neurological, hormonal (gut-brain axis problems); microbiota imbalances in small gut; food sensitivity; many can manage their symptoms with diet, lifestyle factors, stress management, mindfulness, etc.; most prevalent ages 14-60;
 - Symptoms—chronic changes in bowel habit, abdominal pain, cramping in the absence of any clear lesions; 4 types typified by diarrhea, constipation, both, or neither; psychological and emotional issues are often present too—depression, anxiety, and chronic fatigue syndrome
 - TCM patterns—various; likely Spleen Qi deficiency, dampness, heat; liver attacking spleen, also heart conditions like heart fire, shen disturbance, etc.
 - Western medical treatments—counseling; probiotics; increase soluble fiber; diet low in fermentable oligosaccharides (many FODMAP diets on the web); OTC laxatives, antidiarrheals, antidepressants, anxiolytics, etc.
 - Suggested treatments—treat the branch/treat the root; branch—herbs to alleviate symptoms of constipation, diarrhea, cramping, abdominal discomfort, emotional and psychological symptoms; while helping the patient discover their

constitutional patterns and patterns of imbalance (liver excess, spleen deficiency, which are both very common

- Examples of herb action categories
 - Antispasmodics, nervines (calmatives, etc.), demulcents, anti-diarrheals, emodin-containing herbs (rhubarb, etc.), anti-inflammatories (pineapple stem, berberine-containing herbs, etc.)—see herb action types handout on my website
 - Hygiene—follow dietary patterns that are arrived at based on personal empirical data from trial and error; diet diary useful; many ways to go—vegan diet, avoid common allergenic foods; raw, lightly cooked; many small meals; fasting; cleansing; don't eat too late at night, etc.
 - Suggested reading—Herbal Action Categories handout
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- Crohn's disease (CD), ulcerative colitis (UC); autoimmune-oriented chronic bowel inflammation)
 - Definition—a type of autoimmune inflammatory bowel disease but affecting any part of the digestive tract; both CD and UC share some susceptibility genes; respond to different antigenic stimuli and initiation events; similar mechanisms of tissue damage; immune system mistakes food and bacteria for foreign invaders and initiates inflammation with collateral damage of tissue destruction; different dx measures for each, but holistic treatment and thinking similar
 - Crohn's—can affect any part of the GI tract; healthy parts of bowel between affected areas; affects all layers of the intestine
 - UC—affects only the colon; all parts affected with inflamed areas, but usually only the inner most lining of the colon; tiny open sores producing pus and mucus
 - Etiology—genetic or epigenetic susceptibility (genes have been identified); defective down-regulation of inflammation has been demonstrated (Sartor, 1995)
 - Also important—ethnic origin; presence of susceptibility regions on at least 12 chromosomes; geographical factors; lifestyle (Baumgart, 2009)

- Symptoms—“the most common presentation of perianal CD is abscess and fistula. However, patients with CD are frequently affected by other perianal pathologies including hemorrhoids, fissures, skin tags, ulcers, and strictures” (Sordo-Mejia and Gaertner, 2014)
 - Diarrhea or bloody diarrhea; rectal bleeding; urgent need to move bowels; abdominal cramps and pain; sensation of incomplete evacuation; constipation (can lead to bowel obstruction)
 - extra-intestinal manifestations (musculoskeletal (arthritis), skin (dermatoses), eyes (scleritis), hepatobiliary system-sclerosing cholangitis (some or all of these sometimes presenting first) (Ardizzone et al., 2008)
- TCM patterns—Spleen Qi deficiency; liver attacking Spleen; *Damp Heat in the Spleen* (yellow coating on tongue, especially at the back—signs of excess heat, dampness)

Western medical treatments-- rapid induction of a steroid-free remission and the prevention of complications of the disease itself and its treatment; early aggressive therapy is still debated (steroids, recent immune modulators); “treatment with immune modulators and biologics confers a cumulative risk of infections, lymphoma, and other types of malignancy, particularly in adolescents” (Bongartz et al., 2006)

- Suggested treatments—antiinflammatories, immunomodulators (medicinal mushrooms—empirical application), demulcents, calmatives, anxiolytics, herbs to clear heat and dampness from lower body (especially berberine-containing herbs like berberine sulfate; gardenia fruit, *Scutellaria baicalensis* etc.)
- Hygiene—smoking; drugs, toxicity; chronic inflammatory conditions—see the handout “Inflammation and Health” on my website (Library, Class Handouts”
- Suggested reading—see (Baumgart, 2009)

- Infections of the bowel (typically from disordered microflora due to ingestion of pathogenic organisms; immune deficiency) [Note: see separate handout, “Herbs for Digestive Infections.”
 - Definition--viral, bacterial or parasitic (such as giardia) infections possibly leading to gastroenteritis, an inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract involving both the stomach and the small intestine

- Etiology—exposure to pathogen
 - Symptoms—often diarrhea (sometimes bloody or with mucus, abdominal pain)
 - TCM patterns—damp heat in the lower abdominal area (yellow, greasy coating)
 - Western medical treatments—antimicrobials
 - Suggested treatments—detoxification programs, bowel cleansing, immunomodulators, antimicrobial herbs (see separate handout)
 - Hygiene—avoid contaminated water, foods
 - Suggested reading—Herbs for Digestive Infections
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- Teeth and Gum Problems

- Gums (gingivitis)
- Etiology—refined food diet, not enough probiotics, fiber in the diet; lack of brushing, flossing, irrigation with active agents
- Symptoms—bleeding upon brushing, flossing; sore to pressure; red, inflamed gums, receding gums; foul breath (not the only origin though)
- TCM patterns—stomach heat (gum disease); kidney yin deficiency (carries)
- Suggested treatments—
 - Astringents to tighten gums; antibacterial
 - Krameria, myrrh, oak twigs
 - Antibacterial herbs to reduce *Streptococcus mutans* activity
 - Bloodroot, propolis, oak twigs, tea; salt; for biofilm reduction (dental plaque, use coconut oil—about 50% lauric acid, monolaurin, InterFase (Klaire Labs), xylitol, turmeric)
 - Antiinflammatory herbs
 - Calendula, plantain, aloe (also has allantoin), comfrey (allantoin)
 - Wound-healing herbs (allantoin)
 - Daily irrigation with added: 1 drop of bloodroot, salt, essential oils, berberine sulfate (or source herb)
- Teeth (weak enamel, frequent cavities, even with a good diet)
- Etiology—stress, poor hygiene, poor diet, genetic factors
- Symptoms—dental carries; teen fracture and break
- TCM patterns—Kidney Qi, Kidney Yin deficiency

- Kidney tonic herbs—rehmannia (rehmannia 6 or 8 is popular patent medicine), ligustrum, American ginseng, biofilm solvers—monolaurin, lauric acid (coconut oil), xylitol; essential oils in irrigator; dental hygiene

References

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