

# Discussion on the Thought of “Preventive Treatment of Disease” in Traditional Chinese Medicine

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**Abstract:** *The theoretical thought of “preventive treatment of disease” in traditional Chinese medicine was first put forward in Huangdi’s Classic on Medicine-Lingshu-Nishun Chapter. It is also said that the treating disease before it is cured. It has a history of more than 2500 years. This preventive thought has a profound impact on the diagnosis and treatment of diseases in later generations. And this is also an important part of the theoretical basis of traditional Chinese medicine. This article focuses on the content of the idea of “preventive treatment of disease” and the health care in spring, summer, autumn and winter.*

**Keywords:** Preventive treatment of disease, Health, Preventive health care.

## 1. Introduction

*Huangdi’s Classic on Medicine* is the earliest extant classic work on traditional Chinese medicine in China [1]. It is also the crystallization of the wisdom of the ancient Chinese nation for thousands of years. Its specific content is involved in the knowledge of medicine, philosophy and health care [2]. Among them, the thought of “preventive treatment of disease” in traditional Chinese medicine is one of the most classic, distinctive, widely circulated and one of the theoretical essences respected and sought after by countless sages. There are three contents in the theory of “preventive treatment of disease” clearly put forward in *Huangdi’s Classic on Medicine*, which are “*Suwen-SiqiTiaoshenDalun*”, “*Suwen-Cire*” and “*Lingshu-Nishun*” [3]. Through the study of the relevant classic texts and the practice of medical activities and daily life, we can deeply aware of the great significance and great value of the thought of “preventive treatment of disease” in the occurrence, development, treatment and rehabilitation of disease [4].

## 2. The Main Content and Academic Origin of the Idea of “Preventive Treatment of Disease” in Chinese Medicine

The earliest record of “treating the untreated” in Chinese medicine can be traced back to the Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine - *Su Wen - Four Qi Tuning Shen Da Lun*, which says, “The sage treats diseases that have not yet occurred and deals with scourges that have not yet occurred.” Later, Zhang Zhongjing developed this theory in *Treatise on Cold-Attack*, “When we see the disease of the liver, we know that the liver transmits the spleen, so we should first strengthen the spleen.” Ding Jin of the Qing dynasty commented on Zhong Jing’s method as follows, “The so-called treatment of the undiseased, see the liver disease, the liver when the transmission of the spleen, so the first real spleen, so that no liver evil also. Therefore, it is said that the treatment of the undiseased.” In his “*Medical Remains*”, Wei Taiyi says, “Excellent prime ministers govern the chaos that

has not occurred, and good doctors cure the disease that has not yet occurred.” The development of the theory of “treating the untreated” has been complemented by successive generations of medical practitioners, making this theory even more perfect.

The word “cure” means treatment management, and the “undiseased” means that the disease has not yet occurred or the symptoms have not yet been perceived by the patient. The “preventive treatment of disease” means that treating diseases before they occur or when they first occur, physicians use active and effective means to prevent further development of the disease. The main idea of “preventive treatment of disease” includes the following four aspects.

### 2.1 Prevention Before Disease Onset

It refers to the active health care when the disease has not yet occurred. Before the evil has not invaded the human body, take active preventive health care means to enhance the body’s immunity and the ability to resist pathogens. So that “the righteousness exists within, the evil cannot dry”, to prevent the evil from taking advantage of the weakness and injuring people to cause the loss of the body suffering from disease [5]. As the saying goes, the dike of a thousand miles is destroyed by an anthill. The story of Bianque treating the untreated disease for the Cai Huangong and the controversy between the two brothers of Bianque over the superiority or inferiority of their medical skills, that all illustrate the importance and necessity of preventing the disease before it occurs. “Five-animal exercise” created by Hua Tuo, a famous doctor, can strengthen the body, treat the disease, and create a precedent for health care. It is the earliest traditional boxing method in Chinese history [6].

### 2.2 Treatment Before Illness

It refers to the time when the patient has no obvious symptoms of physical discomfort, but the disease has symptoms or the disease is in the bud [7]. For example, a sudden loss of weight at a certain time without any reason would indicate the

occurrence of hyperthyroidism. Or we should be alert when depressed patients show symptoms such as depressed mood or a lack of interest in anything in the early stages [8]. Furthermore, when appearance of non-frictional erythema on the skin reminds us that it may be a precursor of liver disease. In our daily life, if there are similar to the above prodromal symptoms, you should pay attention to it, it may be our body is asking you for help. Do early detection, early diagnosis and early treatment [9], the disease will be killed in the cradle, in order to reduce the damage to the body.

### 2.3 Preventing Disease from Changing

It means that in the case of confirming that the body has already suffered from the disease, effective treatment should be taken as soon as possible to intervene in the early stage of the disease to prevent the spread and deterioration of the disease, induce more serious and difficult complications, and cause more serious damage to the function of the viscera, which is not conducive to the later recovery and the cure of the disease. Because the early stage of the disease is generally lighter than the later stage, the disease location is also relatively shallow, the evil Qi is relatively less prevalent, and the positive Qi is not yet weakened [10], so in the early stage of the disease, we should seize the opportunity to identify and treat the symptoms. As stated in the *Theory of Medical Sources*, "The beginning of the disease is shallow, it is easy to treat; long and deep, it is difficult to treat [11]." The medical sage Zhang Zhongjing also said in the *Treatise on Cold-Attack*, "When we see the disease of the liver, we know that the liver transmits the spleen, so we should first strengthen the spleen." Clinicians should treat diseases with a developmental perspective, always pay attention to the patient's condition, understand the direction and trend of disease development, and be responsible for the patient.

### 2.4 Post-disease Prevention and Recovery

It refers to the adjustment of the body after the disease to prevent the recurrence of the disease. When recovering from a serious illness, the evil Qi has not completely faded away, and the positive Qi has not yet regained its strength after the "great battle". Although the symptoms have disappeared at this time, Yin-Yang are not balanced, the body's immunity is under the body's immunity, the resistance is insufficient, and the evil is easy to fight back to cause the disease to go and return to invade the human body again. At this time, the positive energy is weak and unable to resist the evil, which will inevitably lead to a recurrence of the disease is rampant, more serious and difficult to cure. Therefore, we should pay special attention to the rehabilitation after the disease, to take good care of the body, so that the body to restore the balance of yin and Yang state, to completely cure the disease to restore health. For example, in the *New Compilation of Experimental Formula*, it is said that for those who have heavy boils, they are good and recur, because the root of the boil has not yet come out. If it is not treated urgently, the root will become deeper and more difficult to treat.

## 3. The Application of 'Preventive Treatment of Disease' in Daily Life and Clinical Medicine

In the *Neijing*, there is a statement, "The four times of yin and

yang, the root of all things." The alternation of the four seasons of yin and yang is the root of all things in heaven and earth [12]. In accordance with the natural law of balance between yin and yang in the four seasons of nature [13], armed with the theory of "preventive treatment of disease", theory combined with practice, to achieve the ultimate goal of preventive health care and prolonging life. People eat grains and cereals, there is no one who does not get sick! Thousands of disasters, due to individual differences, the etiology of each patient's disease is different. In general, the occurrence of disease is mostly due to the invasion of external evils such as wind, cold, heat, dampness, dryness, fire, or due to internal injuries such as anger, joy, thought, sadness, fear, worry, and shock. After understanding the cause of the disease, we should take active and effective methods to prevent the development of the disease and follow the natural course of nature, do not go backwards. Adjust the mood to balance mind and do not make the five excessive emotional and disorder of gas-blood, in order to cure disease, health care and longevity.

### 3.1 The Way of Health Preservation in Spring

Spring is the season of innovation and the recovery of all things [14]. As the old saying goes, "The Year's at the Spring". And it is time to make a good start and lay a solid foundation for the health of the body in the spring. Spring is the yang within yin. The five elements of wood correspond to the liver, and the liver prefers to be organized but not depressed. In the spring, when the grass is growing and the birds are flying, you can spread your hair, massage your scalp and open up your meridians, standing in a wide open courtyard and letting the spring breeze caress every inch of your body. The liver can be strengthened by relaxing and releasing stress in the vibrant nature of the countryside. "When a person lies down, the blood returns to the liver." Therefore, in the spring, we should get up early to promote Yang energy, sleep early to nourish the liver. In accordance with the laws of nature, so that the Yin and Yang regulation in line with the degree, all diseases are not born. Do not let the liver-energy damage, depression and not relieved.

### 3.2 The Way to Nurture Longevity in Summer

Summer is the season when everything flourishes and life is at its most vigorous. In summer, yin and yang compete with each other, with yang moving up and yin pressing down. Therefore, the summer temperature rises and the body sweats smoothly, which can speed up the metabolism, better and faster discharge of metabolic waste and accumulated toxins in the body, reducing the metabolic burden on the heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys and other organs. But sweating too much sweat evaporation will make the body lose a lot of water dehydration heat stroke coma, so the hot summer must be timely replenishment of water. With the development of technology, the air-conditioning has been basically popular to every household, more and more people stay in the air-conditioned room for a long time in the summer, so that sweat holes can not fully open to excrete sweat, toxins and metabolic waste accumulate in the body for a long time, increasing the metabolic burden on the internal organs, to some chronic diseases such as skin diseases to take advantage of the opportunity. Malaria can occur in the fall when the body is injured by the intense heat in the summer. The summer heat

is intense and failure to dissipate heat in a timely manner can lead to heat stroke. Excessive Yang energy in summer can easily lead to excessive fire in the heart, resulting in irritability and irritability, short urine and other symptoms [15]. Therefore, do not be angry in summer, keep a happy mood, avoid eating too much cold products to avoid abdominal pain and diarrhea, sleep late and get up early. In summer, you can appropriately take classical formulas such as Wang's qingshuyiqi Tang and DaoChi San to prevent excessive yang energy from injuring yin and fluids. Summer illnesses are more unique and complex than the other three seasons, and because of the rapid changes and changes in the disease, the evil of fire and heat can easily move the wind and blood, so you should be more vigilant.

### 3.3 The Way to Nurture Longevity in Autumn

Autumn is the season of fruitfulness and harvest, and it is also the driest season of the year. In autumn, the yang energy is gradually collected, the yin energy grows, the climate is dry, the most important thing is to nourish the yin and moisten the lungs to prevent dryness. In autumn, you should go to bed early and get up early, so that your daily life is healthy and regular, so that your mind is peaceful and calm, in order to slow down the autumn punishment. The lungs are delicate organs, and dryness can easily attack the body and injure the lungs [16]. This leads to the loss of body fluids, causing various clinical manifestations of dryness throughout the body, such as dry cough, dry and chapped skin, dry mouth, dry nose and throat, and a series of other symptoms. At this time, you should use more lung moistening and nourishing, clearing dryness and nourishing yin products such as lily tremella porridge porridge, Chuanbei loquat paste, autumn pear paste, etc. And eat more acidic food to astringent qi to make the lung qi clear function normally [17].

### 3.4 The Way to Nourish and Nurture Longevity in Winter

Winter is the season when the yang energy lies within the body, the yin energy is outside, and everything is hidden and cultivated [18]. In winter, Yang energy is hidden, the weather is cold, the natural climate is cold and harsh, and the human body is relatively short of Yang energy, so do not make delusional movement to hurt Yang. Follow the nature of the day, sleep early and get up late to maintain sufficient sleep, so that Yang Qi can be fully recuperated. The classics warn us that it is best to get up after the sun rises, work at sunrise and rest at sunset, and cultivate our bodies to warm and protect the yang of the body. In winter, as far as possible in a warm and suitable place, away from the cold, pay attention to the body to keep warm, but also to avoid a long time in too hot and too warm places, if the winter sweat hole is wide open will make the qi drain depletion of Yang Qi. In winter, the Yang energy is relatively weak and the Yin and cold energy is strong, so once the voodoo infected in spring, summer and autumn has a chance to take advantage of the opportunity to take advantage of the disease. Therefore, we should pay extra attention to health care in winter to prevent colds and cardiovascular diseases. Some scholars have found that whenever the cold winter comes, the incidence and death rate of cardiovascular system diseases will soar, especially hypertension, coronary heart disease, myocardial infarction and so on [19]. Winter is the best time to take tonic products to nourish the body,

strengthen the body and repair the damage. There is a folk saying that graphically expresses the importance of winter health, "If you take tonic in winter, you can fight the tiger on the mountain in the coming year [20]." The winter tonic formula is especially typical of Mr. Zhongjing's warm tonic meal of angelica lamb and ginger soup, which is actually a good product to nourish blood and replenish qi, dispel cold and warm yang.

### 3.5 Women's Health Regulation

In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), women are considered to be "rooted in the liver", with liver blood often insufficient. Therefore, nourishing the liver and replenishing blood is fundamental for women. A diet rich in blood-nourishing foods ensures sufficient blood and qi, which promotes radiant skin and normal physiological functions. The liver's role in regulating qi flow is closely tied to emotional health. Emotional disturbances disrupt qi and blood circulation, making it critical for women to maintain a positive, optimistic mindset to support liver blood nourishment [21].

In cold weather, women should avoid wearing clothing that exposes the abdomen to protect the lower abdomen and waist. The Chong, Ren, and Du meridians all originate from the uterus [22], which resides in the lower abdomen. The Dai meridian encircles the waist. These extraordinary meridians govern menstruation, fertility, pregnancy, and lactation. Prolonged exposure to cold in the waist or abdomen may lead to pathologies such as uterine cold, infertility, dysmenorrhea, or irregular menstrual cycles. Additionally, Huangfu Mi's "The Systematic Classic of Acupuncture and Moxibustion" highlights the "Gate of Life" f this "primordial fire" results in cold intolerance and cold extremities.

During the postpartum period requires strict precautions: avoiding excessive consumption of cold/raw or overly spicy/hot foods [23], refraining from physical or mental overexertion (to prevent qi and blood exhaustion), and prioritizing mental health to avert postpartum depression. Neglecting recuperation may lead to chronic "postpartum disorders", which are challenging to treat and may persist lifelong. Breast health must also be monitored to prevent infections caused by milk stasis.

Men are "rooted in the kidneys", as robust kidney essence ensures physical strength and bone health. Excessive sexual activity, frequent masturbation, or uncontrolled indulgence depletes congenital essence, leading to symptoms such as spermatorrhea, impotence, premature ejaculation, infertility, and general weakness. Men should prioritize kidney preservation by consuming kidney tonifying and yang-strengthening foods (e.g., walnuts, deer antler, and cordyceps) and practicing moderation in all activities.

### 3.6 The Guiding Significance of "Treating the future Disease" on Visceral Diseases

The theory of "treating the future disease" centers on "preventing the disease before it occurs, preventing the change of the existing disease, and preventing the recurrence of the disease after it occurs", and it has an important clinical

value in the prevention and treatment of visceral diseases. It has important clinical value in the prevention and treatment of visceral diseases. Take liver disease as an example: the liver is the main detoxifier and blood collector, and its dysfunction is closely related to factors such as emotional and emotional depression, dietary disorders, and invasion by external evils. Combined with modern medical research, the concept of “treating the future disease” in Chinese medicine can be used throughout the entire management of liver disease, from prevention in high-risk groups to control of disease progression and prevention of relapse during the remission period, forming a multi-dimensional intervention system. Preventing the disease before it starts: Early intervention for high-risk groups, including long-term alcohol drinkers, fatty liver patients, hepatitis B virus carriers and people with depressed mood. According to traditional Chinese medicine, “the liver likes to be organized, but hates to be depressed”, and long-term emotional upset can cause liver qi stagnation, which in turn generates phlegm and induces hepatitis, cirrhosis and other diseases. For such people, the following measures can be taken: regulate emotions through the five sound therapy to ease the liver and relieve emotional stress. Intervention diet advocates less fat, sweet and thick flavors, more green fruits and vegetables (such as spinach, celery) to nourish the liver, supplemented by medicinal diet. Adjust lifestyle and regular work and rest to comply with the law of “Zi Shi Nourishing Liver”, and moderate exercise (such as tai chi, Ba Duan Jin) to promote the operation of liver meridian qi and blood to prevent fatty liver. Existing disease prevention: For patients who have been diagnosed with hepatitis and fatty liver, Chinese medicine emphasizes “dynamic regulation” to slow down the progress of the disease, and the theory of “state-targeted identification and treatment” put forward by academician Xiaolin Tong, combined with the indicators of modern medicine, can accurately regulate the process of the disease, for example, Xiao Chaihu Tang can slow down the progress of the disease by For example, Xiaochaihu Tang can delay cirrhosis by regulating immunity and inhibiting viral replication [24]. Prevention of relapse after remission: during the remission period of liver disease, it is necessary to consolidate the therapeutic effect and prevent relapse: consolidation of treatment and physical conditioning: nourishing yin and softening the liver (Consistent Decoction), strengthening the spleen and benefiting the qi (Sijunzi Soup) are the mainstays of the treatment, supplemented by activating the blood and opening up the collaterals (Salviae Miltiorrhizae and Panax Ginseng), and preventing the relapse of liver fibrosis. The “treatment of liver disease” is based on the holistic view and dynamic diagnosis, through multi-dimensional intervention to reduce the incidence rate, slow down the progress and minimize the recurrence of liver fibrosis.

#### 4. Summary

*Huangdi's Classic on Medicine-Baoming Quanxing Theory* mentioned, “People are born with the qi of heaven and earth, and the four seasons are formed.” Follow the rules of the four seasons, warm up Yang in spring and summer, and nourish Yin in autumn and winter to better provide energy for life activities in the coming year. Emphasis on health, health care, prevention of the treatment of the disease thought, so that the body is alive and well, the spirit of the dragon and horse, the

body is healthy and long-lived, not suffering from the invasion of disease. The obedient is alive, the contrary is also dead.

To sum up, the idea of “preventive treatment of disease” in traditional Chinese medicine has been clearly put forward from the *Huangdi's Classic on Medicine* to the present. After thousands of years of inheritance and development of traditional Chinese medicine doctors such as Zhang Zhongjing, Sun Simiao, Ye Tianshi and Liu Duzhou, a set of very distinctive and effective ideological system combining theory and practice has been formed in the theoretical system of traditional Chinese medicine. With the development of society, the progress of technology and the deterioration of the environment, the population of sub-healthy people has become increasingly large, and the idea of “preventive treatment of disease” in Chinese medicine continues to guide us on how to effectively improve the quality of life, give full play to the unique advantages of Chinese medicine, and contribute more to the health of all mankind[25].

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