

## MODULE 2:

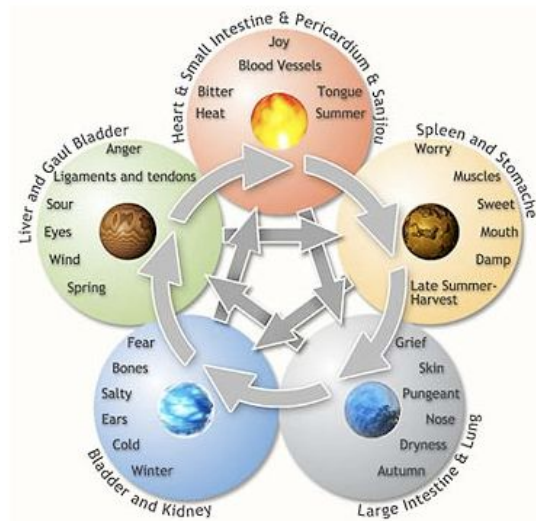
# Understanding True Holistic Immunity

Modern Research & Chinese Medicine Parallels

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The 5 elements work by feeding and controlling each other. It is a system based on intimate relationships. All 5 organs systems/elements play an important role in our immune function. Modern research is showing that the microbes of the gut impact our physiological function, our metabolism, local mucosal homeostasis, inflammation, and interactions between *multiple body systems*. Any imbalances in the micro flora or microbiota has a systemic effect and can stunt our healthy immune reactivity. (1)

Here is the cycle again, a review from last week:



There is one all important relationship that we will focus on today: the Earth-Metal. In this cycle, earth is the mother of metal, or nourishment/digestive processes give birth to the aspects of metal function: the lung and large intestine organ functions and accompanying related tissues and aspects: nose, throat, sinuses, skin/pores, breath, letting go and bowel movements as well as a our immune system.

Earth-Metal (digestion & lungs)= Gut - Immune Homeostasis!

This is paralleled in functional medicine cutting edge research which is demonstrating that the health of our gut microbiota has a direct impact on diseases from asthma and pneumonia, to cancer. “Gut dysbiosis enhances the aggressiveness of viral lung disease. This is well known for the influenza virus and could be the same for coronavirus.” (1)

Some schools of Chinese medicine even state that all diseases begin with “stomach and spleen deficiency” (which is our digestive function).

More details on Chinese Medicine and our holistic Immune Function

In Chinese medicine , the “Zheng qi” is the most often cited parallel to the western term “immune system”. We know from modern research that the immune system is impacted by other physiological functions or pathologies (like the one above) including all of the organs.

What is Zheng qi? It is actually a conglomeration of many different types of qi plus the composite function of all the organ systems. So, a similar idea. The Zheng qi has yuan qi which is our inherited or the source qi we were born with. It also contains the wei qi known as defensive qi, which is the energy that circulates on the surface of the body and can be likened to our shield. It has zong qi which is our chest qi created from both food and air. And it has ying qi which is an energetic nutritive qi that flows in the blood as well as in the energy channels of the body.

Side note on ying qi:

“The circulation of ying qi takes place throughout the day, remaining approximately two hours in each vessel (energy channel). This movement corresponds to the tracking of the sun across the sky. For example, the sun at midday corresponds to the ying qi moving in the Heart vessel; at sunset, the ying qi moves within the Pericardium vessel. This process correlation - the apparent motion of the sun in the sky and the ying qi in vessels - demonstrates the importance the ancients placed on the relationship of the inner world with the outer world and the significant emphasis placed on this set of correspondences.” (2)

There is a famous passage of the Su Wen ( Plain Questions ), a chinese medicine book written 2,000 years ago, that states: "If zheng qi remains strong, xie qi (pathogens, viruses, etc) cannot invade the body." And this akin to the modern term of “terrain theory.” When the qi of our body is strong then the pathogens cannot enter.

Relationships include:

## Gut-brain-hormones Axis & the Immune System Earth & Water Elements

70-80% of the body's immune cells are in the gut! It is also known that upwards of 90% of the body's serotonin is produced in the gut. Modern research has doctors understanding the intestines as a sensory organ - it has neurons, endocrine cells and immune cell responses. The lining of the g.i. Tract has the largest vulnerable surface that faces the external environment.

"The concept that the gut microbiota serves as a virtual endocrine organ arises from a number of important observations. Evidence for a direct role arises from its metabolic capacity to produce and regulate multiple compounds that reach the circulation and act to influence the function of distal organs and systems." (4).

## HPA Axis & the Immune System Water & Fire elements

Lastly, emerging evidence shows that the body's main way it adapts and regulates stress, called the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis is affected by the gut microbiota. "The HPA axis... modulates the immune response, with high levels of cortisol resulting in a suppression of immune and inflammatory reactions."(5) This is a very complicated system, and really a fancy way of saying how stress decreases our immune function. More on that in Module 3!

## Gut-lung Axis & the Immune System Earth & Metal Elements

Science is showing parallels in gut microbiota and lung microbiota and that one effects the other. (3) Lung diseases can be reflective of gut health.

## Gut-liver Axis & the Immune System Earth & Wood Elements

In addition to finding parallels in liver disease to health of gut microbiota, we know that if we are having to spend lots of our energy on detoxifying our body all the time, it would make sense that there would be less energy available for a health immune defense.

Take Home Messages:

All of our organ systems, both Eastern and Western, support truly holistic immunity.

A healthy digestive system and gut will support a healthy immune system in a major way!

Generally, these are some things that can create imbalance in the digestive system:

“Junky diet”

Eating allergens

Medication overuse

Overindulgence in one thing

Infections

Antibiotics

Constitutional weak digestive system

Eating too much cold, cooling, hot, warming, drying or damp causing foods.

Letting the “digestive fire” to wane

Toxic overload and/or lack of detox digestion system rest/reset

Inadequate digestive enzymes, pre and probiotics

Stress, trauma, lack of sleep

Steps to heal the gut to strengthen the immune system:

Eliminate harmful bugs, toxicity, and allergens

Replace nutrients, enzymes, fiber, probiotics

Heal gut lining with omega 3 fatty acids, zinc, glutamine and other nutrients + bone broth and gelatin

Tonify organ system function with herbs, acupuncture and energy work

Tonify organ system by adjusting diet to external environment - ie.e eating with the seasons

Avoid too much medications, antibiotics and overindulgence

Relieve stress!

Works Cited

- (1) <https://www.ifm.org/news-insights/gut-health-immune-response/>
- (2) <https://www.acupuncturetoday.com/mpacms/at/article.php?id=28351>
- (3) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7042389/>
- (4) <https://academic.oup.com/mend/article/28/8/1221/2623221>
- (5) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal\\_axis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal_axis)