

## Guest Editorial

# “De” 德

## The *Xin* of TCVM Practice with an Emphasis on *Tui-na*

In the primordial Chinese classic, *Dao De Ching*, opposites are a consistent and universal theme – *Yin* and *Yang* permeate the Cosmos. Even the title exemplifies this – in the word “De” 德. As Western acculturated individuals our experience with “de” comes from the French word for “of”... A little word with a little meaning. In contrast, one little word in Chinese has one big meaning – the illusionary and polar state of nature summed up in the word “De”. For the Chinese, “De” connotes a profound concept, the concept of Virtue. *Dao De Ching* literally means “The Way (or Path) of Virtue Classic”. “De” is the embodiment of Virtue in the individual. Virtue includes both the values of honest living and the resulting power derived from it – particularly the power of healing. The character, or pictogram (德), representing “De” is composed of three parts. On the left is a person walking (progress or action), on the top right is a symbol meaning “something observed from all angles or directions shows no deviation” (being perfectly right), and a symbol on the bottom right representing the character for “*Xin*” (the Heart). The imagery can be interpreted as a virtuous person’s behavior perfectly reflects their heart. For the practitioner the incorporation of “*Xin*” underscores the importance of utilizing both the heart and mind in daily practice. The ability to combine one’s mind (thoughts) with one’s heart (intuition) will refine one’s being as a healer. Further, it implies “the ability to directly bypass one’s mind and know spontaneously with one’s heart, the heart of all things.”<sup>1</sup>

There are several factors critical to the success of the practitioner in employing traditional Chinese veterinary medicine (TCVM), and in particular *Tui-na* in veterinary medicine. First and foremost is the ascertainment of the most accurate Pattern Diagnosis, the *Bian Zheng*. The core essentials of *Yin* and *Yang*, Six Roots, and *Zang-fu* Patterns must always be systematically explored. Second, this exploration requires the practitioner to understand and apply “*Ting*”, translated as “Listening”, to their exam. It can be likened to a heightened state of awareness – of giving your undivided attention. It includes the employment of all your senses in both the diagnostic and therapeutic phases of the treatment strategy – and this, critically, includes employing your “*Xin*” (Heart-Mind) to understanding the Pattern. It is inciteful that the Chinese view the Heart and Mind as inseparable, as alluded to above.

Third, the concept of “*Song*” or “letting go”, of releasing the tension in both your energetic and physical body, must be routinely adopted to your practice. Leave your personal baggage behind when you begin to engage the patient. This is a conscious choice and is a component of the essential Daoist concept of *Wu Wei*, simply translated as “effortless action” or, in modern terminology, “getting in the zone”.

The fourth factor critical to your success is engaging “*Yi*”. *Yi* is the Earth Element’s spirit, known in the West as cognition (reasoning/thinking) with INTENTION. It’s importance in TCVM cannot be overstated, and because it involves cognition, it can be refined and improved with study and practice. The Daoist masters of old famously gave us the apt sayings: “Where the *Yi* goes, the *Qi* follows” and “The *Yi* leads, the movement follows”. *Yi* will not only enhance the techniques chosen in a case, but this focus will cause adjustments on the physical level in the practitioner – consummating in improved quality of techniques for the practitioner and efficacious treatment for the patient. Always remember to ask permission of your patient. A thoughtful and kind engagement is essential for both of you. Of course, this can be nonverbal!

The practitioner must recognize and enhance the flow of *Qi* within themselves to be at the top of their healing ability, and this involves both mental and physical components.<sup>2,3</sup> Physically, by cultivating *Qi* through any “energy” exercise such as *Qi-gong*, *Tai Chi*, or Yoga will make your *Qi* more accessible, resulting in a healthier and more effective healer. Mentally, the philosophical study of the Chinese Classical texts (e.g. The *Dao De Ching*, *I Ching*, *Huang Di Nei Jing*, *Nan Jing*, and *Luo Shu*) will illuminate your mind. This is mirroring the Fire Element (Emperor) within you, as Fire has both physical (heat) and mental (illumination) components. In fact, many schools of thought view traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) healing modalities (acupuncture and *Tui-na*) as an extension of *Qi-gong* between you and your patient. Practice and study daily – wherever you can, whenever you can, for as long as you can – even two minutes! In time, you will note the difference in your overall wellbeing...

Be cognizant of the absolute fact that everything depends on the tension and balance of *Yin* and *Yang* in the universe – for example, the application of *Tui-na* techniques on a horse. The horse is the 7<sup>th</sup> animal in the

12-year Chinese Zodiac Calendar, and numerology is critical to Chinese Philosophy and Medicine. So why is the number 7 important to equine veterinarians? Because the number 7 is the *Yang* component of the Fire Element. In approaching such a *Yang* species, it is best to do so with *Yin*. Cultivate a *Yin* approach to the equine patient (be flexible, breath slowly and deeply from your abdomen, move slowly, be grounded – feel the earth’s *Qi* enter you through KID-1) and start with techniques such as *Mo-fa* or *Rou-fa* which are gentler and *Yin* in nature, rather than, say, *Pai-fa*, or *Dian-fa*, which are more *Yang*.

This considerate approach can be used for all species. Armed with the knowledge of your patient’s Five-Element Constitution, their local milieu, and your *Bian Zheng*, a tailored and nuanced approach will assure your success. In addition, avail yourself of the human literature on *Tui-na* to gain a One-Health perspective. This will enrich your entire therapeutic approach.<sup>4-6</sup>

In a world fraught with turmoil, it is easy to feel powerless, meaningless, and despondent. The practice of *Qi* Cultivation, and the path of Virtue (*De*) will transform these feelings into hope, empowerment, and compassion. We are taught in TCVM that *Qi* abounds everywhere. In the individual, it courses through the Channels progressing from the Lung (*Tai-yin*) at 3 a.m. and traveling throughout the body on its 24-hour circadian rhythm ending in the Liver (*Jue-yin*) Channel at 1 a.m. This creates a continuous repeating cycle of predictable *Qi* flow in the individual.

What, however, is the connection of the personal circadian *Qi* flow with universal *Qi*? Step back for a moment and ask yourself the question: Why of all vertebrates are humans the only species that walks upright on two legs? The ancient Sages ascertained that we, the human species, are the conduit between Heavenly *Qi* (*Yang*) and Earthly *Qi* (*Yin*).<sup>7</sup> Essentially, we are the “warp” in the “warp and woof” of the cosmic energetic field. We are essential, yes critical, to the flow of Universal *Qi* in the cosmos between heaven and earth. No small part. This is evident in the flow of *Qi* through the twelve Channels. Consider standing erect with feet planted squarely on the earth and hands extended towards the sky. Now, think about the flow of *Qi* through the twelve Channels. All arm *Yang* Channels start from the fingertips gathering *Qing Qi*, and course in a downward direction, meeting their energetic equivalent of the *Yang* leg

Channels in the head; they travel on to the feet and the earth below. Concomitantly and in contrast (a *Dao* trait) all leg *Yin* Channels start from the feet gathering earthly *Qi*, and course in an upward direction from the feet to the chest meeting their energetic equivalent of the arm *Yin* Channels; they travel on to the hands and the heavens above. *Yang* of Heaven traveling to Earth, *Yin* of Earth traveling to Heaven, and we, the conduit. We are living breathing *Tai-ji-tu* (the ‘Supreme Ultimate’, the *Yin-Yang* Symbol).

If you wish to heal yourself, your patients, your clients, friends, humanity and the planet – close your eyes, stand erect, plant your feet (preferably barefoot), extend your arms skyward and breathe deeply from your *Dan-tian*. You will experience the power of healing contained within that little word “*De*” as universal *Qi*, and all sentient beings will receive the balm so sorely needed in the world.

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