

**Part of the Chapter Understanding Disease in the Book  
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'Disease and Diagnosis for the Acupuncturist'**

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Chinese traditional medicine was influenced by the belief that man is a microcosm of the universe influenced by Tao, a principle operating through the two opposing forces yin and yang. In the universe the harmonious working of the two forces of yin and yang expressed itself in the rising and setting of the sun, the growing and ripening of crops, and in all natural phenomena. An imbalance of yin and yang led to droughts, floods and other natural disasters.

Similarly within man, it is believed that health depends on the harmonious balance of yin and yang. This belief in the yin yang harmony is further carried through to the functions within the body. That is, each yin function is believed to have a balancing yang function in order to maintain balance and harmony. For example:

Yin Function

Stomach makes energy go down  
Kidney stores energy  
Kidney 'grabs' the energy

Balancing Yang Function

Spleen makes energy go up  
Liver disperses  
Lung makes energy go down and circulate

Heart coordinates all these activities

The cause of this yin/yang imbalance can be as a result of such things as mental and emotional activity; natural climatic factors (heat, dampness, dryness, cold, wind); biological factors (pathogenic virus, bacteria, fungi); chemical factors (acids, alkalis, pharmaceuticals, toxins); physical factors (injuries, excess work); hereditary factors; diet and bad eating habits.

This causative factor or influence comes into conflict eventually with the primary Chi (energy) of the body and may result in

- The strong Chi overcoming the weaker influence usually producing acute symptoms while the body combats the potential disease
- The strong influence overcomes the weaker Chi of the body and the disease takes hold
- Neither the influence or the Chi is overcome and the conflict continues over a prolonged period resulting in a chronic disease

In order to understand and recognize disease the practitioner must thoroughly study the patient. By using such techniques as observation, listening, questioning and palpation the practitioner can obtain significant data, on the basis of which can be applied the theories of disease differentiation to arrive at a correct diagnosis.