

4 QI IMBALANCES and 5 ELEMENTS

A New System for Diagnosis and Treatment

by Jeremy Ross

Part I: Introduction to 4QI + 5E

COMPLEX PATIENTS

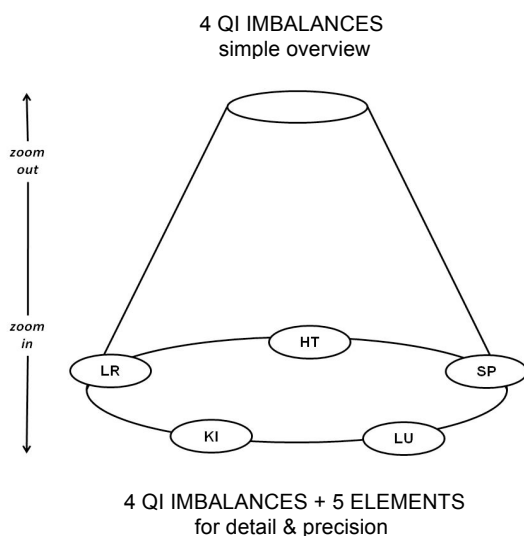
Modern chronic patients are rarely simple. Many have about ten different Chinese syndromes at the same time, and sometimes as many as twenty. This makes two problems for the beginner, or even for the experienced practitioner.

First problem After the consultation, the practitioner is buried in data, and may lose sight of a *clear overall picture* of the patient's needs.

Second problem The practitioner does not know where to focus their attention, so that differential diagnosis lacks *precision of the details*.

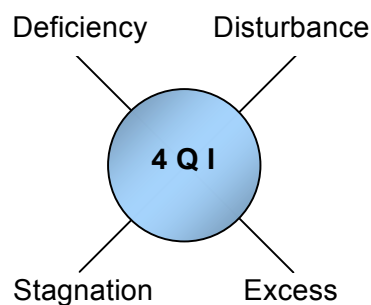
It was to solve these two related problems that I developed the system of *4 Qi Imbalances and 5 Elements*.

This system provides a system that can be focused up, to view the big picture, and focused down, to view parts of the picture in precise detail.



CONCEPT OF 4 QI IMBALANCES

To get a clear, simple overview of a patient, an acupoint, or a herb, we can say that there are four main Qi pathologies:



DEFICIENCY

This means that the patient is exhausted, due to not enough Qi, Yang, Yin, Fluid, Blood, or Jing.

For example:

- **Deficient Yang** with exhaustion and sensations of cold
- **Deficient Yin** with exhaustion, restlessness, insomnia, and signs of Heat
- **Deficient Blood** with exhaustion, anemia, faintness on standing, and blurred vision
- **Deficient Jing** with exhaustion, retardation of physical growth, or retardation of mental and behavioural development

Principle of treatment: tonify

EXCESS

This refers to a pathological excess that may only last for a relatively short time. For example:

- **Exterior Wind** invasion of Excess type as in influenza with no sweating
- **Excess Interior Heat** as in high fever
- **Excess Liver Heat** as in violent anger with shouting, whole face red, and sensations of heat
- **Food Stagnation** of Excess type with epigastric distension, discomfort, and nausea due to massive overeating of rich food

Principle of treatment: drain

STAGNATION

This means that there is a blockage in the flow of Qi, so that Qi is there, but it is not moving.

This may result in distension, discomfort, pain, or depression, until the Qi moves again.

For example:

- **Stagnation of Lung Qi** as can happen in grief following bereavement, with sensation of blockage and fullness in the chest
- **Stagnation of Heart Blood** with sensation of discomfort or pain in the heart area
- **Stagnation of Fluids** as can happen in edema following trauma
- **Stagnation of Qi in the channels** with discomfort, pain, stiffness, or immobility of joints or extremities

Principle of treatment: move

DISTURBANCE

This means a disturbance or irregularity in the flow of Qi, including Qi moving in the wrong direction or with the wrong rhythm.

This may result in physical disturbance such as coughing, vomiting, or borborygmus, or in emotional and mental disturbance.

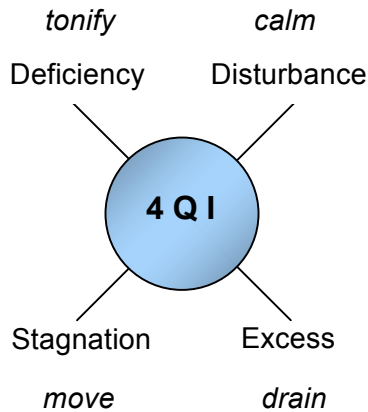
For example:

- **Heart Spirit Disturbance** with disturbance of sleep, mind, emotions, or behaviour
- **Liver Hyperactive Yang** with irritability, restlessness, impatience, anger, dizziness or headache
- **Rebellious Stomach Qi** with hiccups, belching, nausea, or vomiting
- **Rebellious Lung Qi** with cough, expectoration, wheezing, or dyspnea

Principle of treatment: calm

PRINCIPLES OF TREATMENT

The principles of treatment for each of the 4 Qi Imbalances can be summarized as follows:



- **Tonify**
This means to add energy to the system, or to help the body to strengthen itself, by nutrition, herbs, moxa, or acupuncture.
- **Drain**
This means to drain energy from the system by bleeding, purging, sweating, or other treatment, or by reducing the level of function of one or more organ systems.
- **Move**
This means to move obstruction to the flow of Qi, Blood, or Fluids, for example by exercise, massage, cupping, acupuncture, or herbs.
- **Calm**
This means to calm disturbance, for example with herbs, acupuncture, or relaxation exercises.

Then the person feels more calm and stable, less tense and restless, and less angry, or fearful.

This may reduce nausea, vomiting, borborygmus, or colic, and reduce coughing or tightness of breathing.

4 QI IMBALANCES + DISEASE FACTORS

Disease factors, such as Heat, Cold, Damp, Phlegm, and Exterior Wind, can be associated with one or more of the 4 Imbalances.

For example, Phlegm can be associated with Deficiency, Excess, Stagnation or Disturbance.

- **Deficiency + Phlegm**
Spleen Deficient Qi can lead to formation of Phlegm due to reduced transformation of Fluids, and Lung Deficient Qi can result in reduced clearance of Phlegm
- **Excess + Phlegm**
Lung Phlegm of Excess type can be associated with feeling of fullness in the chest, with profuse sputum, and full slippery pulse
- **Stagnation + Phlegm**
Phlegm can obstruct the flow of Qi in the channels, with sensations of heaviness and dullness, discomfort or restricted mobility in joints and limbs
- **Disturbance + Phlegm**
Heart Phlegm or Liver Wind with Phlegm, can be associated with mental or behavioural disturbance due to Phlegm causing irregularities in the flow of Qi

COMBINATIONS OF 2 IMBALANCES

Obviously, a patient may have more than one of the 4 Qi imbalances at the same time.

For example, Disturbance can be associated with Deficiency, Excess or Stagnation.

- **Disturbance + Deficiency**

In this case, the Disturbance of Qi is associated with Deficiency and exhaustion.

If there is not enough Qi, Blood, or Yin to hold down and to hold stable light and moving energies such as Heart Spirit or Liver Yang, these energies may rise up the body in an irregular manner.

This may cause physical symptoms such as palpitations, headache, or dizziness, or disturbance of emotions, mind, and behaviour.

POT: calm + tonify

- **Disturbance + Excess**

Excess Heat, for example, may give rise to disturbance such as Liver Hyperactive Yang, Liver Wind, or Heart Spirit Disturbance by increasing agitated and irregular upward movement.

POT: calm + drain

- **Disturbance + Stagnation**

Obstruction in the flow of a river, such as a boulder, can cause turbulence in the flow. Similarly Stagnation of Qi in the body may be accompanied by Disturbance.

For example, in pre-menstruation, Stagnation of Liver Qi is often accompanied by Liver Hyperactive Qi, with headache and irritability.

POT: calm + move

COMBINATIONS OF 3 or 4 IMBALANCES

Patients with complex conditions often have three or four Qi Imbalances simultaneously.

Here are two examples.

- **Deficiency + Stagnation + Disturbance**

The patient has three main complaints:

- exhaustion due to Spleen Deficient Qi
- abdominal distension due to Liver Stagnant Qi
- headache due to Liver Hyperactive Yang

POT: tonify + move + calm

- **Excess + Stagnation + Disturbance + Deficiency**

The patient has four main complaints:

- severe sensations of heat from Liver Excess Heat
- depression from Liver Stagnant Qi
- anger from Liver Hyperactive Yang
- tiredness with restlessness from Liver Deficient Yin

POT: drain + move + calm + tonify

PRIORITIZATION

Relative importance of each Imbalance

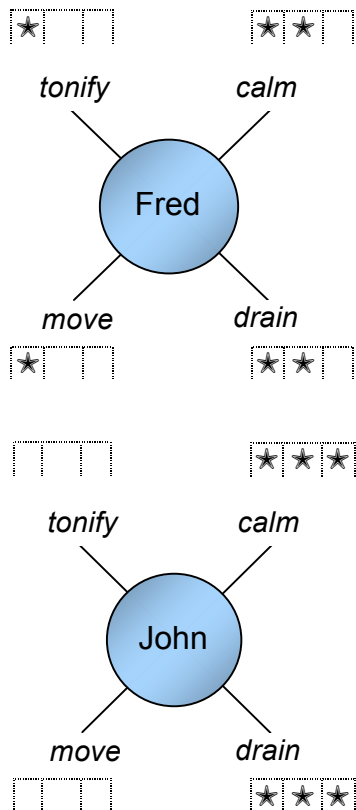
The practitioner must decide *the relative importance of each Imbalance* for a particular patient, so that they know how many acupoints or how many herbs to use for each Imbalance.

THE STAR RATING SYSTEM

The star system awards 0-3 stars for each of the 4 Imbalances, according to the relative importance of each Imbalance for the patient at a particular time.

The star rating therefore indicates *the relative number* of acupoints or herbs needed for each of the 4 Imbalances in a point or herb combination for a particular patient.

Example Let us compare two different patients, Fred and John, using 4 Qi Imbalance diagrams and the star rating system.



If the practitioner wanted to use a 6-herb combination for either of these patients, the table shows the number of herbs required in the prescription for each Imbalance.

Herbs	Fred	John
to tonify	1	0
to calm	2	3
to move	1	0
to drain	2	3

4 Qi IMBALANCES + 5 ELEMENTS

4 Qi Imbalances: simplicity

The concept of the 4 Qi Imbalances is only half the new system.

It is to give a broad overview, and it is not meant for detail.

4 Qi Imbalances + 5 Elements: precision and detail

The second half of the system provides the precise detail required for clinical efficiency and safety.

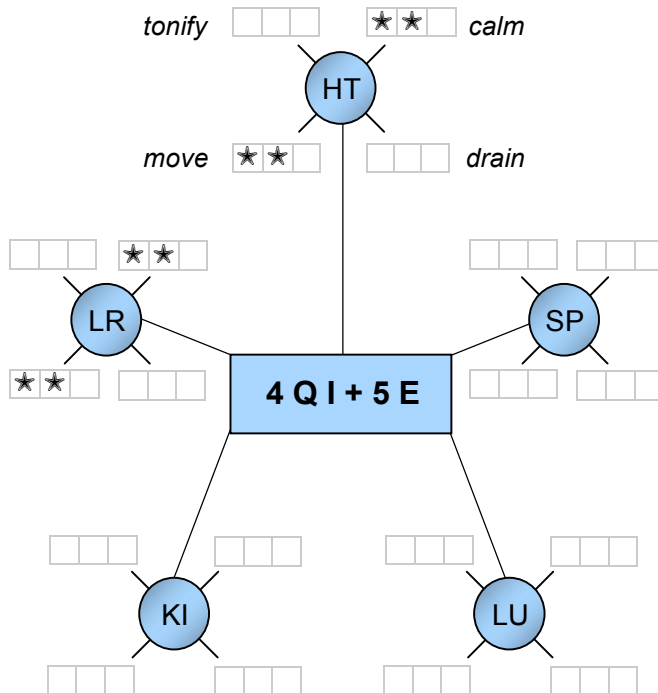
- this includes the Five Elements and the syndromes of the organ systems of Chinese medicine
- each of the Five Elements and the five main organ systems, Heart, Spleen, Lung, Kidney, and Liver, are organized in terms of the 4 Qi Imbalances
- star ratings for each organ system can indicate the relative number of herbs required in the prescription to tonify, move, drain, or calm that organ

Example The diagram below represents a patient with Stagnation and Disturbance in both Heart and Liver.

Probable signs and symptoms would be depression, anxiety, and maybe headache and irritability.

In an eight-herb prescription, this patient would require, approximately:

- 2 herbs to calm Liver Yang
- 2 herbs to calm Heart Spirit
- 2 herbs to move Liver Qi
- 2 herbs to move Heart Qi



FURTHER READING

This is the first of a series of 3 articles, which can be downloaded from Jeremy's website www.jeremyross.com

- Part II: Patient example with herbs
- Part III: How to compare different herbs