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Ministerial fire and its clinical applications

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The term “ministerial fire” originates from Neijing Suwan where it was used in the context of climatology. It became widely used in Zangfu theories in later eras, but with no consensus on its definition. Jing-Yuan master Zhu Danxi was the only one in TCM history who had presented a complete, systematic, and well-founded theory on ministerial fire. Zhu’s theory, as recorded in his text *Gezhiyulun* can be summarized as follows. First, ministerial fire is the “fire of thunder and dragon”. Since “thunder” and “dragon” are related to two different symbols of the Bagua (eight trigrams) which correspond to wood and water respectively, ministerial fire is the fire of liver and kidney. Zhu also theorized that there is ministerial fire in the gall bladder, urinary bladder, pericardium, and San Jiao because of their pairing relationships to the liver and kidney. Second, Zhu described the ministerial fire as the “fire of heaven”, as compared to sovereign fire being the “fire of human”. It indicates the prenatal nature of the ministerial fire versus the postnatal nature of the sovereign fire. Third, ministerial fire is both a physiological and pathological fire; it turns from normal to pathological after being stirred up by Jue Yang Fire and as a result, depletes yin. Forth, the aberrant movement of the ministerial fire is mainly caused by overindulgences in sexual activities and eating which lead to yin depletion and therefore, self-restraint is recommended. In terms of clinical applications, Zhu Danxi’s most significant treatment principle “nourish yin to sedate fire” led to the development of Da Bu Yin Wan, which is regarded by many as a stronger formula than Lui Wei Di Huang Wan in treating yin deficiency with deficiency heat. Today, according to many clinical studies in China, Da Bu Yin Wan is proven to be effective in treating conditions such as hyperthyroidism, diabetes, tuberculosis, urinary tract infection, nephritis, impotence, and menopause symptoms.

Biography

Rebecca Fung is a licensed Acupuncturist and Herbalist in California and a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine at the University of East-West Medicine. She holds a Master of Science degree in Traditional Chinese Medicine (American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine), a Master of Business Administration degree (California State University), and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography (University of London). Her primary interests are in the fields of anti-aging and allergies.

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