

*Kath Bartlett, MS, LAc*

Asheville Center for Chinese Medicine

70 Woodfin Place Suite West Wing Two

Asheville, North Carolina 28801 828 258-2777

[Office@AcupunctureAsheville.com](mailto:Office@AcupunctureAsheville.com)

[www.AcupunctureAsheville.com](http://www.AcupunctureAsheville.com)



*Acupuncture  
Chinese Herbology  
Nutritional & Lifestyle Counseling*

## CHINESE MEDICINE IS EFFECTIVE IN TREATING CHRONIC DISEASE

---

Kath Bartlett, MS, LAc

Living with chronic disease is frustrating on many levels. Not the least of which is finding a clinical diagnosis and treatment for the cause and symptoms. Some chronic disease sufferers have disorders diagnosed by western medicine, but for which western medicine has frustratingly few treatment options. Examples include fibromyalgia, HIV, Epstein Barr, hepatitis, herpes, autoimmune disorders, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis (MS), Parkinson's disease: the list goes on and on.

Others have conditions that include the general symptoms of fatigue and chronic pain, but for which western medicine cannot find a clinical cause of the syndrome and therefore cannot offer much in the way of treatment excepting some symptomatic relief. In contrast, the Chinese Medical model<sup>1</sup> provides a system to diagnose and treat many of these disorders.

From the point of view of western medical science, there are two types of viruses that cause many chronic diseases. 'Temperate' viruses live within but do not kill the host cells, causing chronic illness. An example of a temperate virus is herpes simplex I & II. Herpes lives in the body, flaring up periodically causing sores (usually when the body's immune system is weakened by stress, overwork or fatigue). 'Virulent' viruses kill the host cell, and then moves on to infect and destroy neighboring cells. When it moves to new cells, it exposes itself to immune system antibodies. An example of a virulent virus is the common cold or flu. As long as we rest during the infection, our immune system will fight the viral disease.

Examples of other temperate viruses are HIV, Hepatitis B&C: diseases that are resistant to western medical cures. Western medicine cannot 'cure' diseases caused by temperate viruses. In order to do that you would have to selectively kill the infected host cells, and western medicine does not have a way to do that. Western medicine only knows how to kill all the cells as in chemo and radiation treatment. To treat hepatitis, gastrologists administer weekly interferon and ribavirin injections for a year. Ribavirin is a type of chemotherapy and is used to kill off the viral infected cells. As you can imagine, a year of weekly chemotherapy does a great deal of damage to the body. Chinese medicine is used as supportive care to mitigate the damage and rebuild the qi (energy) and blood for these patients, who become anemic with low white blood cell counts due to the toxic therapies assaulting the body.

Our immune system does, in fact, know how to selectively kill the infected cells (using activated T lymphocytes, called cytotoxic cells, or T killer cells). In his landmark book, *Quantum Healing*, Deepak Chopra eloquently describes how the body is able to selectively target cells with the correct timing. Western medicine has learned how to activate these cells in a general manner by giving people vaccines to activate their immunity. Unfortunately, there are many diseases for which no vaccines have been developed, such as HIV and hepatitis B&C and herpes. Drugs do not have the body's innate intelligence to allow them to turn on and off at the proper time and regulate the correct dosage as the body's immune system is able to do.

Chinese medicine is able to enhance our body's immune function by activating the T killer cells that selectively identify and destroy infected host cells. TCM utilizes a comprehensive pattern diagnosis to diagnose and treat disease. Rather than looking at cells, viruses and bacteria, Chinese medicine looks closely at the symptoms the disease produces to diagnose a cause, from which we base the treatment strategy. We observe the relative amounts of heat – signs include dark urine, yellow or green phlegm, red, inflamed joints- cold - feels cold easily, white or clear phlegm, pale face – deficiency - feels weak or tired – dampness, or excess fluid accumulation - bloating, edema, phlegm, heavy limbs, and worse with damp weather. If there's too much heat, seen in infectious processes, we clear heat. Many heat clearing herbs contain anti-viral and anti-bacterial properties. When there's too much cold, we warm with herbs such as cinnamon, nutmeg and cardamom. Deficient patients are tonified to build up immune function. Ginseng and astragalus are well-known tonic herbs that enhance immune function. We treat damp conditions by draining dampness. Barley drains damp well in blistering skin conditions like herpes. TCM theory recognizes that the processes of heat, cold, damp and deficiency interrupt the normal, smooth function of body's immune system, thereby causing disease symptoms: yellow or white phlegm, bloating, edema, weakness, etc.

Many chronic diseases that are untreatable by western medicine respond well to TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine). An excellent example is fibromyalgia and other fatigue and chronic pain related disorders. In some cases, such as fibromyalgia, Chinese medicine is able to eradicate the symptoms. For other diseases, such as MS, Parkinson's and auto immune disorders, Chinese medicine is able to minimize symptoms and slow the progression of the disease, thus dramatically increasing the quality of life for sufferers. For these patients, we generally begin with weekly acupuncture treatments until improvement plateaus. Then we decrease to a maintenance schedule, generally a 2-3 week interval to maintain the improvement. When the patient is under stress or the condition begins to decline, we step up the frequency of visits. Herbal therapy is an important component of the treatment plan. I recommend customized formulas for these complex conditions.

<sup>1</sup> Traditional Chinese Medicine is an umbrella term that describes a comprehensive medical modal that includes a number of different modalities such as acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine and dietary therapy, Tui Na massage and Tai Qi exercises. Depending upon the presenting symptoms, the TCM practitioner (Acupuncturist) will develop a treatment plan by combining several of these modalities to work together synergistically to treat the condition at hand.

---

**Kath Bartlett, MS, LAc** is the owner of the Asheville Center for Chinese Medicine. Bartlett practices in a traditional Chinese style incorporating Dr. Richard Tan's Balance Method of acupuncture (<http://www.acupunctureasheville.com>), Chinese herbal medicine, dietary and lifestyle counseling to treat a wide variety of health issues. She has especially effective results treating all kinds of chronic diseases such as allergies and sinusitis, MS, Parkinson's disease, fibromyalgia, herpes, managing hepatitis, auto immune disorders and providing supportive care for cancer treatment.

Bartlett has been a monthly columnist for Rapid River Magazine and a contributing writer for Whole Health News and New Life Journal magazines, The Pulse of Oriental Medicine.com and AllThingsHealing.com. She has lectured about Chinese medicine at various colleges and civic organizations, including the MAHEC Residency Program, A&B Technical College, Wofford College and UNCA's College for Seniors. Bartlett has appeared as a featured guest on the "Health Watch" segment of KUSI News in San Diego.

Bartlett earned her Master's of Science degree in Traditional Oriental Medicine from Pacific College of Oriental Medicine, San Diego. She is board certified in Oriental Medicine by the National Certification Commission of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM). She received her bachelor's degree from UCLA. Bartlett is the founder of the WNC Acupuncture Society. [www.AcupunctureAsheville.com](http://www.AcupunctureAsheville.com) Blog: <http://acukath.blogspot.com/>