

# Application of *Ying Qi* and *Wei Qi* Theory in the Treatment of Multiple Sclerosis

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Both *ying qi* and *wei qi* play important roles in Chinese physiology, and correlate with the defensive and bio-clock systems. Drawing in large part upon classical citations from Chapter 18 of the *Ling Shu Jing*, this article will define *ying qi* and *wei qi*, and their relationship to the *shenhen*. Ultimately these concepts will be elevated from theoretical constructs to become practical tools to approach the treatment of multiple sclerosis.

## Theoretical Bases of *Ying Qi* and *Wei Qi*

In this discussion from *Ling Shu Jing*, Chapter 18, one observes that, both *ying qi* and *wei qi* derive from food *qi*. *Ying qi* is the nutritive part of food *qi* while *wei qi* is the active part of food *qi*:

*The refined energy of a man stems from the refined substance transformed by the cereals received, when the cereals enter into the stomach, the transformed refined substance will be transferred to the five yin organs and six yang organs. In the refined energy, the lucid part is called the ying qi, and the turbid part is called the wei qi, the ying qi flows within the blood vessels and the wei qi flows outside of the vessels, and they circulate in the whole body unceasingly.*<sup>(1)</sup>

## The Functions of *Ying Qi* and *Wei Qi*

*Wei qi* warms the body and fills the soft tissues with *qi*: it controls the opening and closing of the sweat pores. *Wei qi* also nourishes the couli, which includes the interstices, and connecting tissues between the skin, muscle, and organs. The *ying qi* nourishes the internal organs, the body tissues, and is an ingredient of the blood. In the *Precious Mirror of Hygiene*, (1343) Luo Tianyi states, the “*Wei qi* has functions of warming muscle, nourishing skin and hair, replenishing striae of skin, and controlling the opening and closing of sweating pores.”<sup>(2)</sup>

We gain further insights again from Chapter 18 of the *Ling Shu Jing*, regarding the issue of distribution and operation of *ying qi* and *wei qi*:

*“The energy in middle Jiao separates the clear from turbid and steams the body fluids and transforms them into refined energy. Then the refined energy is sent up to the lungs and is transformed into blood to*

*“Wei qi warms the body and fills the soft tissues with qi: it controls the opening and closing of the sweat pores. Wei qi also nourishes the couli, which includes the interstices, and connecting tissues between the skin, muscle, and organs. The ying qi nourishes the internal organs, the body tissues, and is an ingredient of the blood.”*

*nourish the whole body. Flowing inside the channels, this energy is the most precious to human body and therefore is called ying qi.”*<sup>(3)</sup> *The chapter 71 of Ling Shu Jing said, “the ying qi secretes body fluids and pours into the channels, it turns into blood to nourish the four extremities outside and pours into the solid and hollow organs inside.”*<sup>(4)</sup>

## The flow of *Ying Qi* and *Wei Qi*

The *ying qi* flows inside blood vessels, following the twelve primary channels, beginning with the lung channel, and ending with the liver channel. Chapter 16 of the *Ling Shu* describes this movement:

*The ying qi starts from the hand taiyin channel of Lung, it runs along the inner side of the arm, pours into the Hand yangming channel of large intestine, then ours into the foot yangming channel of stomach...then it ascends along the liver channel to teach the liver, pours into the lung from the liver, ascends along the rear of the throat to reach behind the inner orifices of the nose...another branch ascends to teach the forehead, runs along the centre of the top of head, descends to the neck, runs along the spinal column and enters into the sacral bone where the du channel passes, then it passed the ren channel, communicates with the external genitals, passes the pubic hair margin and enters into the navel, then ascends to enter the supraclavicular fossa, then, descends to pour into the lung, then it begins to circulate again from the hand taiyin channel of lung. This is the traveling route of the ying qi.*<sup>(5)</sup>

Returning to chapter 18 of the *Ling Shu Jing* we see that *wei qi* flows outside the blood vessels.” The *wei qi* runs twenty five cycles in the *yin* portion and twenty five cycles in the *yang* portion. Its circulation splits evenly between day and night. This circulation starts from the head which belongs to *yang* and terminates by the *yin* channels of hand and foot.”<sup>(6)</sup> Clearly *ying qi* and *wei qi* have differing functions, but later in chapter 18 of the *Ling Shu Jing*, we are told that, “Both *ying qi* and *wei qi* circulate in the body unceasingly,” circulate without stopping. Figure 1 shows the flow of *ying qi* through the primary channels along the organ clock system. It then enters the *du* and the *ren*.

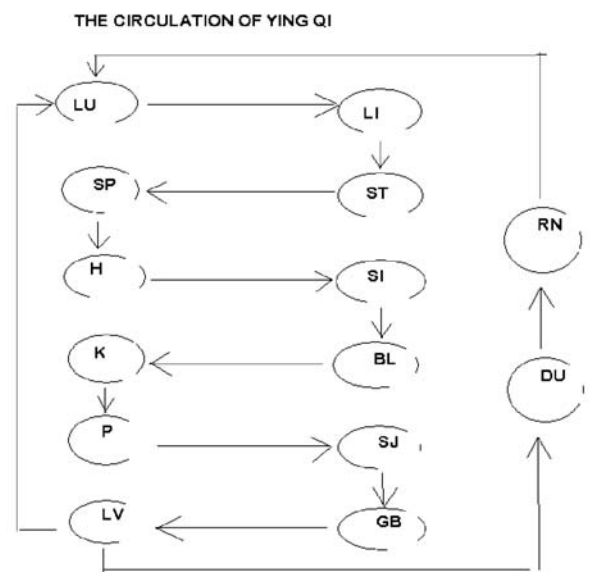


Figure 1

The *wei qi* flows from the eyes to the feet during the day along the *taiyang*, *shaoyang* and *yangming* returning through the *yin*. At night, the *wei qi* travels deeply to enter the kidney, Figure 2.

## Applications of *Ying Qi* and *Wei Qi*: Theory in the Treatment of Multiple Sclerosis

*Ying* and *wei qi* theory is commonly applied to explain the mechanism and treatment of many diseases such as: taiyang diseases, bio-clock disorders, induced insomnia, epilepsy, and migraine headaches. The primary focus of this article is the application of *ying*, and *wei qi* theory for the treatment of multiple sclerosis.

### Biomedical and Epidemiological Considerations

Multiple sclerosis is a progressive, degenerative disorder of the central nervous system (CNS) involving the optic nerve, brain, and spinal cord. There are between 250,000 and 350,000 cases in U.S. with 200 new cases diagnosed each month (recorded in 1995). The condition happens in populations between the ages of 20 and 40. Twice as many females as males have MS. Similarly twice as many Caucasians contract MS than minorities. Further, people in temperate climates are five times as likely to develop MS as people living in the tropics. Lastly, the incidence of MS appears higher in higher social classes. <sup>(13)</sup>

During an attack of MS, the inflammation occurs through myelin degeneration in the white matter of CNS with random patches called plaques. As a result, the neurological transmissions are slowed, or even completely blocked, resulting in diminished or lost body function.

The symptoms may include: blurred vision, weakness and heaviness of one or both legs, jerking of the legs, double vision, vertigo, vomiting, incoordination, a feeling in the arms and legs like suffering an electric shock, numbness or tingling of limbs, urgency or hesitancy of urination, and impotence.

It can be difficult to diagnose MS in the initial stage since the symptoms tend to be vague. Appropriate diagnosis requires a complete medical history and a neurological examination. Other relevant diagnostic studies include MRIs that demonstrate scarred lesions or lumbar puncture with elevated gamma globulin levels in the spinal fluid.

The symptoms of MS can be classified into five groups including sensation disorder, motor dysfunctions, psychosocial disorders, urinary, and reproductive tract conditions. Sensation disorders include optic neuritis, double vision, perception of a band in the abdomen, tingling, numbness

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THE CIRCULATION OF WEI QI

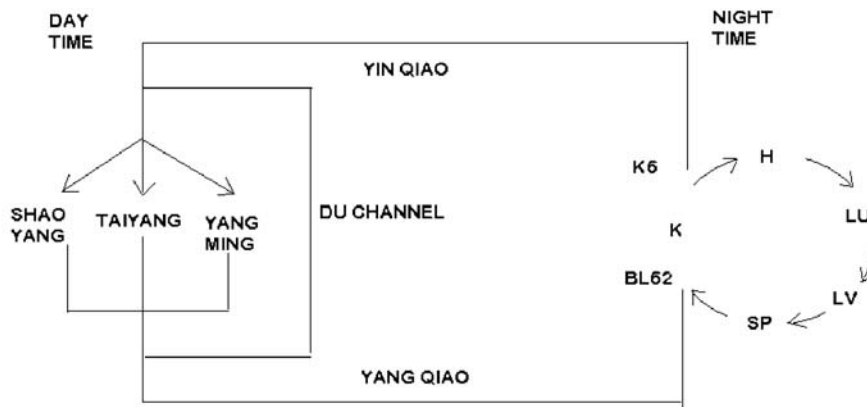


Figure 2

Figure 2 demonstrates the flow of *wei qi* during both the day and the night.

### *Ying* and *Wei Qi* as They Relate to the *Shen*, and the Extremities

In Chinese medicine, *shen* is connected with mental activity, involving concentration, thinking, and memory, and also the feeling, sensation, and movement of the extremities. Many question how the heart controls the *shen* because it is located deeply inside the chest. The simple answer is that the heart controls *shen* through channels and collaterals, which, in addition to their very practical functions, also act as passages for sensations and feeling.

The channels and collaterals can be viewed as inanimate anatomical structures, similar to water pipes or concrete roads that connect interior with exterior. These channels and collaterals don't cause movement, but much like electricity passing through electrical cords, facilitate the moving substances within them.

The tingling, numbness and dysfunction of extremities result from *ying qi* and *wei qi* disorders. In chapter 34 of *Plain Questions*, (On Maladjustments), The Yellow Emperor asks, "There are people whose muscles are numb and tough, they have no sensation even when their muscle touches clothes or cotton. What is this disease?" Qibo answers, "When one's *ying qi* is asthenic, his skin and muscle will become numb, when one's *wei qi* is asthenic, his limbs can hardly move; when both *ying qi* and *wei qi* are deficient and weak, numbness and debility occur and the muscle will be tough and numb all the more. If one's mind and body are separate, he will then die."

Similarly in chapter 43 of *Plain Questions*, titled, (On Bi disease), it is made clear, "If a patient has numbness but has no pain, it is due to the deep penetration of the evil when the disease is protracted which causes the obstruction of the circulations of the *ying qi* and *wei qi*." <sup>(11)</sup>

### The relationship between *Qi*, Blood, *Ying Qi* and *Wei Qi*

There are several relationships between *qi*, blood, *ying qi*, and *wei qi*. *Qi* and blood are the substantial foundations for *ying qi* and *wei qi*. *Wei qi* is the active part of the general *qi*. While *ying qi* is an ingredient of blood, both depend on the replenishing and nourishment of *yuan qi*, food, *qi* and blood. As fluid-like energy, *ying qi*, particularly blood, are substantial, visible entities.

*Ying qi* and *wei qi* are also the spiritual part of *qi* and blood, and as described previously, carry the *shen*. Through the unceasing flowing of *ying qi* and *wei qi*, the exterior and interior are connected, and all their information is sent to the heart. All relevant information is sent to the extremities from the heart.

Lastly, the *ying qi* and *wei qi* are the most genuine parts of *qi* and blood.

The *Su Wen*, (Plain Questions), chapter 43 states:

*Ying qi* is a refined *qi* which is transformed from water and cereals. It harmonizes the five solid organs and spread energy to six hollow organs; it can enter into the channels and can circulate through the whole body to connect five yin and six yang organs. The *wei qi* is a rough *qi* which is transformed from water and cereals, it's urgent and slippery, therefore it can not enter into the channels and can only move through soft tissues. <sup>(12)</sup>

### Diagnosis of *Qi*, Blood, *Ying Qi* and *Wei Qi*

The symptoms associated with disorders of *qi* and blood may include: bruises, masses, swelling, edema, pain and aversion to touch. Sensation and movement disorders involve symptoms such as: numbness, or diminished sensation, tingling and pain, any hot or cold sensation in local area, weakness of extremities, and dysfunction of limbs.

of extremities and heaviness of the extremities. Motor dysfunctions include tremors and spasms, ataxic gait, increased deep tendon reflexes, Babinski's sign, hemiplegia and paraplegia. Psychosocial dysfunctions include stress, forgetfulness, hysteria and mental confusion. Urinary problems may include frequent urination and incontinence. Reproductive weakness may include sexual dysfunction, impotence, decreased libido, infertility, and sterility.

### Chinese Medical Treatment of MS Using the with *Ying Qi* and *Wei Qi* Theory

MS falls into a class of diseases that are described in the Chinese literature as *wei* syndrome. *Wei* syndrome is often translated as flaccidity syndrome. MS is a typical example of *ying* and *wei qi* disorder, resulting in motor and sensory disorder of the extremities. All of the symptoms of MS can be explained through *ying* and *wei qi* theory and circulation.

When inflammation occurs in the white matter of the CNS, plaque, and myelin damage occurs. Under these circumstances, neurological transmissions are slowed, or even completely blocked. This can result in diminished or lost body function. The result is flaccidity syndrome with numbness and dysfunction of extremities. This is consistent with a blockage of the pathway of *ying qi* and *wei qi*.

Through the flow of *ying qi* and *wei qi*, the head, brain, and kidney, urine bladder and uterus are all connected together. Many symptoms, such as sensory and motor disorders, directly reflect disorders of *ying qi* and *wei qi*. These relationships are highlighted in, Figure 3.

### The Interrelationship of Symptoms

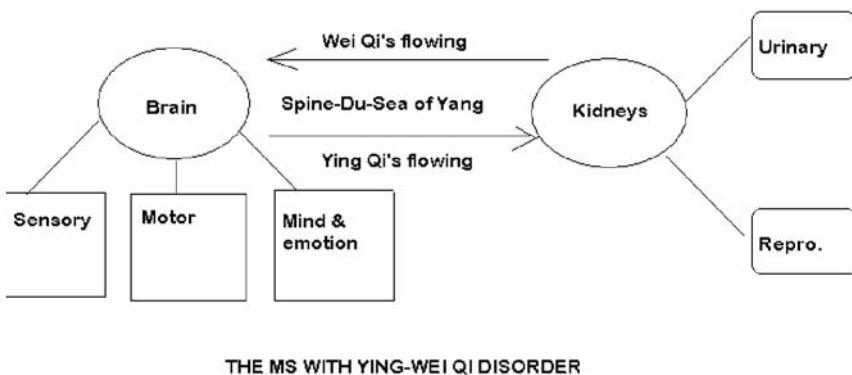


Figure 3

### The Application of Needling Techniques

One can achieve great clinical efficacy using techniques and skills based on *ying* and *wei qi* theory. Various manifestations of MS can be treated with these acupuncture techniques. Based on relevant chapters from the *Neijing*, the flow of *ying qi* and *wei qi* can be used to explain the application of needling techniques in clinical practice. We begin with a global representation of the depths as they relate to *wei qi*, *ying qi*, and *yuan qi*, and then give specific needling techniques. As we can see in Figure 1, *wei qi* is in the first layer, while *ying qi* and *yuan qi* are located at progressively deeper layers, Figure 4. One should feel the difference at the *wei qi*, *ying qi* and *yuan qi* when performing acupuncture.

Figure 4

#### FLOW OF YING-WEI QI IN CHANNELS & COLLATERALS

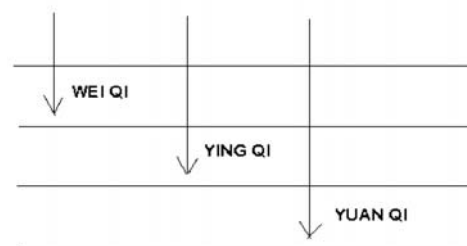


Figure 4 demonstrates the flow of *ying qi*, *wei qi* and *yuan qi* at the various depths. Appropriate needling technique involves needling to the corresponding depth.

### Treatment Methods Using the Spine Dragon Insertion for Regulating *Ying* and *Wei Qi*

Here we will examine spine dragon insertion for regulating *ying* and *wei qi*. The points include: dragon's eyes, (GB 20), dragon's mouth, (DU 14), dragon's body, (Located .5 cun lateral to the depression below the spinous process of T 1 - L 5) and dragon's tail (DU 3 & DU 4).

These are the techniques for the spine dragon insertion for regulating *ying* and *wei qi*. Needle obliquely towards the spine using 1 to 1.5 cun needles at a depth of 0.5 to 1 inches. Begin from the left, then the right on the next vertebra, 7 on each side. The next treatment may start from right, then the left on the next vertebra. GB 20, BL 14, DU 3 and DU 4 should be chosen each time.

### Explanation

The intention of these points is to stimulate the appropriate spinal nerves. It's said that stimulating the *du* is to work on the central nervous system. The *du* channel is the sea of *yang* and the pathway for flow of *wei qi* and *ying qi*. Stimulating the *du* channel can treat the sensation and motor dysfunctions of extremities, while also adjusting internal organ function.

Alternately, puncturing points on the 12 regular channels, works on the peripheral nervous system.

### Duration and Frequency

Sustain the needles in the points for 20-30 minutes each time, 1-3 times a week. Base this on the symptoms and signs. Ten treatments is one course of treatment, take 1-3 days off before starting the next course of treatment.

### Auxiliary Methods

There are auxiliary techniques for the treatment of the *ying qi* and *wei qi*. If there is more *wei qi* deficiency, then moxibustion can be added. Usually moxa is applied, up and down the spine 9 times. If there is a *ying qi* disorder then slide-cupping technique along the spine is applied, up and down for 9 times.

### Endnotes:

- (1) Wu, N.L., & Wu, A.Q., (1997), ch. 18 of *Ling Shu Jing*, The issue of distribution and operation of *Ying Qi* and *Wei Li*, p. 600, *Yellow Emperor's Canon Internal Medicine*, China Science & Technology Press
- (2) Zhu, C. (1987), *Precious Mirror of Hygiene* by Luo Tianyi (1343), p. 1767, *The Chinese English Medical Dictionary*, People's Hygiene Press



(3) Wu, N.L. & Wu, A.Q., (1997), ch.18 of *Ling Shu Jing*, The issue of distribution and operation of *Ying Qi* and *Wei Li*, p. 600, *Yellow Emperor's Canon Internal Medicine*, China Science & Technology Press

(4) Wu, N.L. & Wu, A.Q., (1997), ch. 71 of *Ling Shu Jing*, Retention of the Evil, p. 770, *Yellow Emperor's Canon Internal Medicine*, China Science & Technology Press

(5) Wu, N.L. & Wu, A.Q., (1997), ch.16 of *Ling Shu Jing*, *Ying Qi*, p.595, *Yellow Emperor's Canon Internal Medicine*, China Science & Technology Press

(6) Wu, N.L. & Wu, A.Q., (1997), ch. 8 of *Ling Shu Jing*, The issue of distribution and operation of *Ying Qi* and *Wei Li*, p. 600, *Yellow Emperor's Canon Internal Medicine*, China Science & Technology Press

(7) Wu, Q. (1986), Discussion on *Ying-Wei Qi* controlling the *Shen*, *Liao Ning*, *TCM Journal*, pp. 21-23

(8) Wu, N.L. & Wu, A.Q., (1997), ch.18 of *Ling Shu Jing*, The issue of distribution and operation of *Ying Qi* and *Wei Li*, p.600, *Yellow Emperor's Canon Internal Medicine*, China Science & Technology Press

(9) Zhu, C. (1987), The Complete Effective Prescriptions for Women by *Ziming Chen*, (1237). p. 1606, *The Chinese English Medical Dictionary*, People's Hygiene Press

(10) Wu, N.L. & Wu, A.Q., (1997), ch. 34 of Plain Question, On Maladjustments, p.172, *Yellow Emperor's Canon Internal Medicine*, China Science & Technology Press

(11) Wu, N.L. & Wu, A.Q., (1997), ch. 43 of Plain Question, On Bi Disease, p.210, *Yellow Emperor's Canon Internal Medicine*, China Science & Technology Press

(12) Wu, N.L. & Wu, A.Q., (1997), ch. 43 of Plain Question, On Bi Disease, p.211, *Yellow Emperor's Canon Internal Medicine*, China Science & Technology Press

(13) National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Compendium of MS information, New York, NY: 1996

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