Chinese disease does occur in China. However, I have yet to read any reports about the Chinese treatment of this condition in a Chinese medical journal. Nevertheless, many American practitioners of Chinese medicine have treated this condition with acupuncture and/or Chinese herbal medicine. Therefore, the following discussion of the Chinese medical treatment of Lyme disease is based on an analysis of the clinical manifestations of this disease and American experience in treating it.

Clinical manifestations:

There are five groups of symptoms in Lyme disease. The hallmark and best clinical indicator of this disease is erythema migrans, which develops in at least 75% of patients. This begins as a red macule or papule between the third and 32nd day after being bit by the tick. The erythematous area expands, often with central clearing, up to a diameter of 50 cm. Soon thereafter, 50% of untreated patients develop multiple, smaller lesions without indurated centers. The second group of symptoms are flu-like. These include malaise, fatigue, chills, fever, headache, stiff neck, and muscle-joint pain. These symptoms are characteristically intermittent and changing, and malaise and fatigue may linger for weeks. The third group of symptoms are neurological abnormalities, such as lymphocytic meningitis, meningoencephalitis, and cranial neuritis. These only affect 15% of patients. The fourth group of symptoms are myocardial abnormalities, such as A-V block. These only affect eight percent of patients. And the fifth group of symptoms all have to do with arthritis. Sixty percent of Lyme disease sufferers develop intermittent swelling and pain of the large joints, especially the knees, within weeks to months of onset. Affected joints are painful, swollen, hot, but rarely red. Baker's cysts may form and rupture. About ten percent of patients develop chronic knee involvement.

Chinese disease categorization: The erythema migrans of Lyme's disease is categorized as huo dan, fire cinnabar, or dan du, cinnabar toxins. The flu-like symptoms fall under the category of gan mao, i.e., common cold and flu. The joint pain of Lyme's disease is categorized as bi zheng, impediment condition. Facial neuritis comes under the category of mian tong, face pain, and mian tan, facial palsy.

Disease causes: External contraction of wind, damp, heat evils

Disease mechanisms: Wind, damp, heat evils enter the exterior causing disharmony between the defensive and constructive. This results in headache, fever, aversion to chills, malaise, and muscle-joint pain and soreness. When heat evils enter the blood division, they cause erythema. When heat evils flow to and lodge in the channels and vessels of joints, they cause pain, heat, swelling, and, occasionally, redness. Because damp heat easily damages the spleen, there is marked fatigue. If the condition persists, there will be liver depression due to frustration and inactivity. If impediment endures, it will eventually give rise to blood stasis. In addition to damaging the spleen, enduring heat evils may also consume yin fluids, in which case there is typically a qi and yin vacuity with lingering heat evils.

Treatment based on pattern discrimination:

1. Wind damp heat & evil toxins pattern

Main symptoms: Erythematous skin rash, fever, chills, aversion to wind, muscle-joint pain and soreness, oral dryness with a liking for chilled drinks, a red tongue with slimy, yellow fur, and a possibly floating, bowstring, slippery, rapid pulse

Note: This pattern corresponds to the initial stage of rash and flu-like symptoms.

Treatment principles: Clear heat and resolve toxins, cool and quicken the blood

Rx: Wu Wei Xiao Du Yin (Five Flavors Disperse Toxins Drink) & Wu Shen Tang (Five Spirits Decoction)

Ingredients: Herba Taraxaci (Pu Gong Ying), Flos Lonicerae (Jin Yin Hua), and Herba Violae (Zi Hua Di Ding), 30g each; Poria (Fu Ling) and Semen Plantaginis (Che Qian Zi), 24g each; Flos Chrysanthemi Indici (Ye Ju Hua), 15g; Radix Achyranthis Bidentatae (Niu Xi), 12g; and Tuber Semiaquilegiae (Tian Kui Zi), 9g
Additions & subtractions: If there is marked fatigue, add 15g of Radix Astragali (Huang Qi), nine grams of Radix Angelicae Sinensis (Dang Gui), and 6g of mix-fried Radix Glycyrrhizae (Gan Cao). If a red rash is pronounced, add Zu San Li (Dang Gui), and 6g of mix-fried Radix Angelicae Sinensis (Dang Gui).

Acupuncture & moxibustion: For Baker’s or popliteal cysts, add 9g each of Radix Angelicae Dahuricae (Bai Zhong), Spina Gleditsiae (Zao Jiao Ci), and Squama Manitis (Chuan Shan Jiao) to out-thrust pus. If there is constipation, add 9g of Lignum Sappan (Mao Yao) and 9g of Lignum Sappan (Mao Yao).

Additions & subtractions:

2. Heat toxins with righteous qi vacuity pattern

Main symptoms: Swelling, heat, and pain in the joints with possible redness, oral dryness and thirst, marked fatigue, a tender, swollen, light red tongue with yellow, slimy fur, and a surging, rapid pulse

Treatment principles: Clear heat and resolve toxins, and a surging, rapid pulse

Rx: Tuo Li San Jia Man (Out-thrust the Interior Powder with Additions & Subtractions)

Ingredients: Uncooked Radix Rehmanniae (Shu Di), 30g; Radix Astragali (Huang Qi), 18g; Flos Lonicerae (Shu Di), 15g; Radix Ophiopogonis (Maigrong), 12g each; Radix et Rhizoma Notopterygii (Qiang Huo), Radix Saposhnikoviae (Fang Feng), Radix Stephaniae (Han Fang Ji), Radix Angelicae Sinensis (Dang Gui), Radix Scutellariae (Huang Qin), Radix Codonopsis (Dang Shen), Polyhposus (Zhu Ling), Fructus Chaenomelis (Mu Gua), Radix Achyranthis Bidentatae (Niu Xi), Cortex Phellodendri (Huang Bai), and Fructus Gardeniae (Zhi Zi), 9g each; Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae (Zhong Pi) and mix-fried Radix Glycyrrhizae (Gan Cao), 6g each; and Rhizoma Coptidis (Huang Lian), 3g

Additions & subtractions: For upper extremity phalangeal and metacarpal impediment, add Bai Xie (M-UE-22), He Gu (LI 4), and Hou Xi (SI 3). For sacroiliac impediment, add Guan Yuan Shu (BL 25), Zhi Bian (SI 11), and Ji Quan (HT 1). For elbow impediment, add Qu Chi (LI 11), Xiao Hai (SI 8), Zhou Liao (LI 12), and Shou San Li (LI 10). For wrist impediment, add Wai Guan (TB 5), Yang Chi (TB 4), and Wan Gu (SI 4). For upper extremity phalangeal and metacarpal impediment, add Du Bi (ST 35), Xi Yan (M-LE-16a), Quan Quan (Liv 8), and Wei Zhong (BL 40). For ankle impediment, choose between Jie Xi (ST 41), Shang Qu (Sp 5), Qiu Xu (GB 40), Kun Lun (BL 60), Tai Xi (KI 3), Shen Mai (Bl 62), and Zhao Hai (Ki 6). For metatarsal and lower extremity phalangeal impediment, add Jie Xi (ST 41), Gong Sun (Sp 4), Tai Chong (Liv 3), Zuz Lin Qi (GB 41), and Ba Feng (M-LE-8).

3. Qi & yin vacuity with lingering damp heat evils pattern

Main symptoms: Fatigue, lassitude of the spirit, lack of strength, diziness, tinnitus, low back and knee soreness and limping, swelling, heat, and pain, dry mouth and throat, afternoon tidal heat, malar flushing, vexatious heat in the five hearts,
a swollen, enlarged, red tongue with scanty fur and/or fluids, and a borawing, fine, rapid pulse

**Note:** The difference between this pattern and preceding one is the reversal of the proportions between evil heat and righteous vacuity. Further, in this pattern, there is not just qi and blood vacuity but qi and yin vacuity.

**Treatment principles:** Supplement the qi and enrich yin, clear heat and eliminate dampness

**Rx:** *Dang Gui Nian Tong Tang* (Dang Gui Assuage Pain Decoction) & *San Miao San* (Three Wonders Powder) with additions and subtractions:

**Ingredients:** Cooked Radix Rehmanniae (*Shu Di*) and Radix Astragali (*Huang Qi*), 18g each; Radix Puerariae (*Ge Gen*), 15g; Radix Codonopsis (*Dang Shen*), Radix Angelicae Sinensis (*Dang Gui*), Rhizoma Anemarrhenae (*Zhi Mu*), Cortex Phellodendri (*Huang Bai*), Radix Sophorae (*Ku Shen*), Herba Artemisiae Scopariae (*Yin Chen Hao*), Radix et Rhizoma Notopterygi (*Qiang Huo*), Radix Saposhnikoviae (*Fang Feng*), Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae (*Bai Zhu*), Rhizoma Atractylodis (*Cang Zhu*), Fructus Chaenomelis (*Mu Gua*), and Poria (*Fu Ling*), 9g each; Rhizoma Alismatis (*Ze Xie*) and mix-fried Radix Glycyrrhizae (*Gan Cao*), 6g each; and Rhizoma Cimicifugae (*Sheng Ma*), 3g

**Additions & subtractions:**  
For concomitant blood stasis, add 9g each of Cortex Moutan (*Dan Pi*) and Radix Rubra Paeonieae (*Chi Shao*). For afternoon tidal fever and vexatious heat, add 15g each of Cortex Lycii (*Di Gu Po*) and Cortex Moutan (*Dan Pi*).

**Acupuncture & moxibustion:**  
*Ge Shu* (BI 17), *Gan Shu* (BI 18), *Pi Shu* (BI 20), *Wei Shu* (BI 21), *Shen Shu* (BI 23)

**Additions & subtractions:** See pattern #2 above.

**Remarks**

Because the standard Western treatment of Lyme disease is a relatively strong and relatively prolonged course of antibiotics and antibiotics run the risk of damaging the spleen, Chinese medicinals may either be used to prevent or remedy such damage. It is my clinical experience that combined Western-Chinese medicine for Lyme disease achieves a quicker and better effect than Western medicine alone. In addition, the symptoms of Lyme disease often continue long after antibiotic therapy has been discontinued. During this stage, Western medicine can typically only offer symptomatic relief with nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), whereas Chinese medicine has been successfully addressing such conditions as fatigue and impediment for hundreds of years. As in all cases of spleen vacuity and damp heat, a clear, bland diet is of paramount importance.

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