

After 20 years of lecturing TCM in the West, practitioners and students have often asked me about some difficult and knotty questions concerning TCM theory and acupuncture. Due to insufficient information on TCM theory and some misunderstanding in translations, many issues of acupuncture and TCM theory remain unclear.

In this series of columns, I will explain 81 difficult questions by using the classical texts of TCM and acupuncture to answer these questions to enhance the level of TCM theory of those who desire to explore the treasure of wisdom of Traditional Chinese Medicine.



Question: Why does the Zú Yángmíng Stomach meridian as only yáng meridian pass over the abdomen and chest?

All foot yīn meridians go along front of abdomen and spread over the chest. This is based on Huáng Dì Nèi Jīng Sùwèn chapter 4, which states that “The interior of human beings is considered to be yīn, the exterior to be yáng. The front of the body is yīn and the back of the body is yáng.”

But, why does the Zú Yángmíng Stomach meridian as only yáng meridian passes over abdomen and chest?

Unfortunately, in western TCM education and literature the why of this fact remains unclear.

This question can be explained by examining the classical TCM texts.

In Sùwèn chapter 74 Huáng Dì (Yellow Emperor) asks: “What is Yángmíng?” Qí Bó answers: “Where the two yáng Tàiyáng and Shàoyáng converge is called Yángmíng.”

In Língshū chapter 41, Yángmíng is defined as: “The two yáng (Tàiyáng and Shàoyáng) converge on the front, where it is called Yángmíng.”

Sùwèn chapter 6 states: “Yángmíng is the closing phase of the development of the three yáng qì and Tàiyīn is the opening

phase of development of the three yīn qì.” This indicates that Yángmíng and Tàiyīn together are the pivoting point of the transition from yáng to yīn.

According to the theory of yīn yáng movement and meridianology, yáng qì rises at back of the body and yīn qì descends along the front of the body. Yángmíng possesses the most abundant yáng qì. It is the beginning phase in which yīn qì descends to Tàiyīn. This corresponds with the nature of Yángmíng (Stomach and Large Intestine), which descends zàng-fǔ and meridian qì.

In Sùwèn chapter 6 it states that the location of the Yángmíng Stomach meridian is frontal to Tàiyīn. It starts from ST-45 Lìduì, so it is called yáng in yīn. This can be compared to the beginning of autumn, when yáng qì starts to descend to become yīn.

Referring to Dr. Li Jie’s We-Tube theory (figure 1) the Stomach and Large Intestine are the external layer of the inside of the body. Therefore, Yángmíng is yáng within yīn.

According to the distribution of the yīn and yáng meridians and their coupling relationships, it shows that the foot

Juéryin Liver meridian and the foot Shàoyáng Gallbladder meridian run next to each other. The foot Shàoyīn Kidney meridian runs through the spinal column in order to connect with the foot Tàiyáng Bladder meridian. Thus, the foot Yángmíng Stomach meridian passes over the front of the body and next to the foot Tàiyīn Spleen meridian.

Sùwèn chapter 29 states that the Stomach is the sea of the five zàng and the six fǔ. Together with the Spleen as the post-heaven root, they generate and transport qì and Blood. Additionally, the Stomach meridian is abundant in qì and Blood, it distributes on the front of the body and it is strongly associated with 'the four qì streets' as mentioned in Língshū chapter 62. Therefore, it plays an important role in nourishing all zàng-fǔ.

The above citations from classical TCM works demonstrate why the Foot Yángmíng Stomach meridian as yáng meridian passes over the abdomen and chest which is the domain of the yīn meridians.

Classical TCM and acupuncture theories have thorough and sound scientific foundations.

I strongly advice to study classical TCM texts broadly and deeply to become a good TCM practitioner and TCM teacher for the benefit of TCM education and the society.

Prof. dr. Li Jie

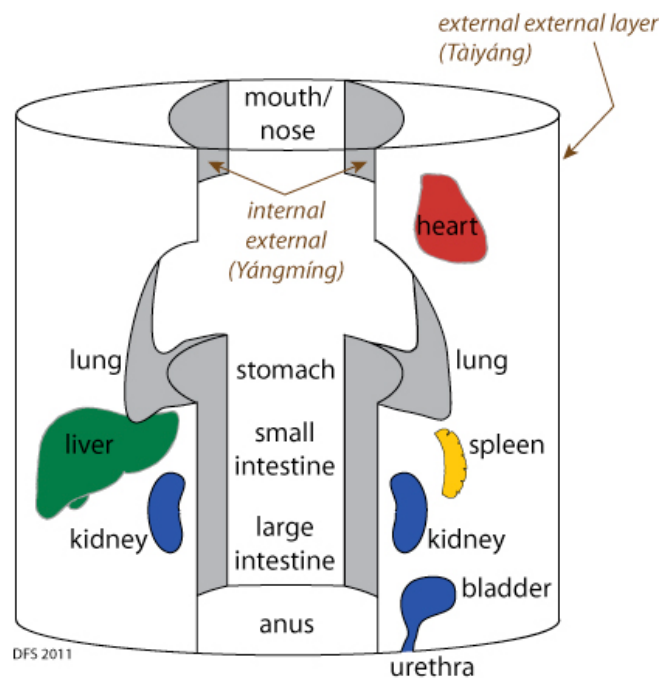


Figure 1. We-Tube illustration of prof. dr. Li Jie

Prof. dr. Li Jie is co-founder of the TCM Classics Research Institute, associate professor of the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, and lecturers all over the world. More information can be found at www.tcmcri.org.