

Prenatal and Postnatal Jing – Chinese Insights on DNA and the Genetics of Cancer

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When Oriental Medicine came into existence some three thousand years ago, the forefathers of our medicine obviously didn't know of the existence of DNA. Still, they clearly understood the nature of genetics and its effect on the body.

The *Nan Ching (Classic of Difficult Issues)*, stipulates that if one's prenatal jing (*essence*) is damaged, then that person's body is more likely to develop disease. Western science would call this prenatal jing deficiency a congenital abnormality, constitutional weakness, or genetic predisposition to a particular disease such as hyperlipidemia, coronary artery disease, cancer, diabetes, or even ulcerative colitis. According to Chinese medical theory, the patient with a weak constitution would catch colds more easily, would require more sleep to feel rested, and would be appear physically less "substantial." As we know, however, Chinese medical theory specifies that even when one has a weak constitution, taking care of one's postnatal jing can offset disease.

This can be accomplished by taking care of one's Gu Qi and Da Qi to create stronger Zhong Qi, and thus manifest stronger Ying and Wei Qi. Western medicine would refer to this as a process of reducing "environmental stressors." Indeed, some three thousand years after the advent of Chinese medicine, we are now proving scientifically what the Chinese have known to be true for centuries – that environmental stressors can, in fact, contribute to the disease process. In a landmark study done at UCSF in 1988, Dr. Dean Ornish demonstrated that heart disease could be prevented and even reversed in patients with a familial (i.e. genetic) history of heart disease by following a program that reduced environmental stress. He is now applying that data to cancer studies.

It seems then, that the Chinese understood the concept of genetics long before Watson and Crick discovered the existence of Deoxyribonucleic Acid.

Today, research at some of the most prestigious institutions in the world such as Johns Hopkins, Harvard University, UCLA, UCSF, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, and Indiana University, suggests a direct correlation between the onset of cancer and existence of identifiable mutations in a person's DNA. In other words, the likelihood that a person will develop cancer is tied directly to that person's genetic makeup. More importantly, however, research funded by other renowned institutions such as the National Brain Tumor Foundation and the National Institutes of Health demonstrates that diet, complementary medicine modalities, and lifestyle changes contribute directly to the likelihood that one can and will survive cancer, as well as prevent recurrence of the disease.

Since it will be many years before we will be able to adequately test for predispositions to the wide range of cancers that exist, it seems a good idea to use the knowledge of the Ancients to insure a healthy life by learning to identify patient's prenatal jing deficiencies and teaching them how to offset their deficiencies by taking care of their postnatal jing.

These prenatal jing deficiencies can be likened to minefields imbedded within one's DNA. The weaker one's constitution, the more "bombs" there are, and larger they are likely to be. Thus, the more time we spend "playing in the minefield," the more likely we are to set off a bomb. How do we "play" in the minefield? By eating food that isn't good for us, breathing air that isn't clean, maintaining relationships that aren't healthy, refusing to set boundaries with other people at our own expense, continuing to do things even though they don't make us happy, we tax our Ying Qi and our Wei Qi. Then, by not taking appropriate care of our Gu Qi and Da Qi, the body goes into overload and begins to break down – in other words, environmental stressors bring about the disease process.

Sometimes, if we're paying close attention, we can see a mine as we're

approaching it in the field, and can change paths to avoid it, but this requires careful attention to one's inner voice, and a willingness to swiftly make changes in one's life. The Spiritually cultivated individual is able to behave in this manner – for he or she is mindful enough to hear the voice of Spirit, which is pure and always has our best interest at heart, and avoid the mine. Other times, we may see it coming, but it's too late, as our Kidneys have already been exhausted and simply can't muster the Zhi to make the changes we need to. Still other times, we may be so preoccupied and oblivious that we simply never see it coming.

Consider the following two examples:

Example #1: Identical twins, obviously with the identical DNA, journey off on their separate ways after college. One begins work at a job he hates, has a relationship that causes him stress, eats poorly, and drinks heavily. After a few years of living in this manner, he awakens one night at 3AM with a cardiac arrhythmia. He meditates, and in doing so realizes that he is unhappy. The following day, he sets about finding another job, decides to leave the relationship, alters his diet, and stops drinking. The arrhythmia disappears. His brother is also in a situation that causes him immense stress, and he too experiences an arrhythmia that night. Meditating, he comes to the same realization, but changes only his diet. He struggles for many years and eventually develops hypertension, which leads to arteriosclerosis, and ultimately requires western medical intervention. There is no constitutional difference between these two brothers. The difference lies in how each one chooses to change as a result of the "warning shot" fired across their bow.

Example #2: Consider another set of identical twins. This set of young ladies both test positive for the BRAC gene. At age 35, one twin takes very good care of herself, is involved in a loving relationship, gets plenty of rest, enjoys her

work, and has a positive outlook on life. The other overindulges in food and sexual activity, stays up late dating men who treat her poorly, and harbors a general sense of anger and bitterness toward life. The first patient develops breast cancer at age 50 and successfully beats it using a combination of conventional and complementary medicine treatments. The first, unfortunately, succumbs to breast cancer at age 40. Once again, there is no constitutional difference between these sisters. The only thing that differs is how each one chooses to care for, or not care for, her postnatal jing.

When treating the patient with cancer in the integrative setting, it is important to help the patient understand that it is not their treatment that will cure them. Rather, it is their approach to their illness which will allow their body to heal. We cannot fix the congenital weaknesses, deficiencies, and abnormalities that reside within the code of our prenatal jing. We can, however, make choices about how to take care of our postnatal jing, which can in many cases mean the difference between life and death, whether dealing with cancer or other chronic degenerative diseases.

Autumn is the season of letting go. Thus, I implore each and every one of us to take stock of the choices we make, and to release those choices which we find to be counterproductive to the conservation and promotion of our own prenatal jing. It could very well change not only our own destiny, but the destiny of all humankind. For if we restore ourselves to a state of health, we restore order to the chaos that emanates from within us and our patients into all eternity.

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