

# Book Reviews

## Acupoint Dictionary

Second Edition  
David Hartmann  
Churchill Livingstone, 2009  
ISBN 9780729538831

David Hartmann's *Acupoint Dictionary* 2nd Edition was launched in May 2009 at the Melbourne AACMAC (Australasian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Annual Conference). Essentially the *Acupoint Dictionary* is a quick-reference guide to TCM acupuncture treatment for 1,000 signs/symptoms/diseases and 85 TCM patterns (principally Zang Fu and channel patterns). The text is accessible and the many tables which constitute the bulk of the text are well-designed and easy to read. The spiral-bound format falls open and lies flat on the desk which is a convenient feature for students or practitioners who wish to reference information in the clinical setting.

There are a number of levels on which this text can be utilised. Firstly it is a fairly comprehensive reference for recently-graduated practitioners who would find it very useful as a prompt for the treatment of familiar conditions, particularly while the new practitioner is still developing confidence. Secondly when confronted with an unfamiliar western diagnosis, or a condition not

previously encountered in practice, the *Acupoint Dictionary* can provide a starting point, an orientation, to provide an overview and also to direct the reader to further more detailed references. The in-text referencing to 158 references is one of this book's strongest and most useful features even for experienced practitioners. In a subject as vast as TCM the task of locating very specific information on a particular clinical problem can sometimes be daunting. An overview with sign-posts to more detailed and specialized information, such as *Acupoint Dictionary* provides, is a valuable addition to the TCM acupuncture literature.

Another outstanding feature of this book is the way it places TCM acupuncture in a modern medical context, seeing acupuncture as an integral part of the Australian health care system. The need to recognize the scope of acupuncture practice, and to refer to other sectors of the health care system when acupuncture is not the most appropriate treatment is emphasized in *Acupoint Dictionary* with advice

ranging from "Ambulance, DRABCD" to "refer to speech pathologist". It is refreshing to encounter such "common sense" in an acupuncture text. Whilst it is acknowledged that historical TCM writings may have recommended 200 to 300 moxa cones on a salt-filled navel for Yang Collapse, in a modern context "Ambulance, DRABCD" is undoubtedly more appropriate.

*Acupoint Dictionary* also includes some useful appendices and a set of fold-out acupuncture charts.

In short, *Acupoint Dictionary* is a book to leave open on the desk in the clinic, not to sit on a shelf in a library. It is a book designed to be used to assist acupuncture students and practitioners as either an aide-memoire to the familiar or an orientation to the unfamiliar in a clinical setting. Even veteran practitioners are likely to learn something from this first publication by David Hartmann, a promising new Australian TCM author.

*Reviewed by John McDonald*

## Chinese Herbal Medicine: Formulas & Strategies

Second Edition

Compiled and Translated by Volker Scheid, Dan Bensky, Andrew Ellis and Randy Barolet.

Eastland Press, 2009

ISBN 9780939616671

It has been 19 years between the publication of the first and second edition of *Formulas & Strategies*. As the authors note, the need to “contribute to a deeper understanding, utilization and investigation of China’s medical tradition in the West” prompted the development of the second edition. Two new members have been recruited to the project (Scheid and Ellis) and the number of pages has nearly doubled, from 562 to 1019 pages, despite minimal increase in the physical dimensions of the text due to the use of thinner quality paper.

The text format is similar to the first edition. Again formulas are separated into categories based on their therapeutic action. Three new categories have been added to the original number of 18, these being formulas that treat abscesses and sores, formulas that dispel summer heat and those that are used for external application. In total, 340 principal herbal formulas are discussed in detail, up from 254 in the first edition, with an additional 460 variations and associated formulas mentioned for a total of 800. Each principal formula is discussed in terms of:

- Name of the formula in both Chinese characters, English and *pinyin*;
- Textual source of the formula;
- Ingredients, both original formula measures as well as modern day dosages;
- Method of preparation describing the practical aspects of formula preparation;
- Actions which link the clinical indications to contemporary Chinese medicine;
- Indications which identify the pattern or symptoms that are indicated for use of the particular formula;
- Analysis of formula discusses the formulation of herbs that make up the formula;

- Cautions and contraindications gives cautionary advice concerning the use of the formula;
- Commentary which has been substantially expanded in this edition. This section deepens the knowledge and understanding of the formula and makes links to basic theory, material medica, diagnostics and treatment strategies;
- Comparisons, a completely new section which identifies and distinguishes similar contrasting formula;
- Biomedical indications notes the biomedical diseases that the formula may treat;
- Alternative names of the formula and their source text;
- Modifications that can be made to tailor the formula to a specific symptom or pattern;
- Variations where modifications can lead to a new or different formula name;
- Associated formulas that have a slightly different focus than the original principal formula.

At the end of each section they have retained the comparative tables that differentiate several formulas that have similar symptoms or usage.

The text has a lengthy introduction that gives a historical perspective on the development of the formula as well as outlining general associated treatment strategies. Preparation, dosing and administration methods are also covered as is an overview of both Japanese (*kampo*) and Korea herbal medicine including its historical development and clinical practice. Several timelines have been added to this section which position important herbal texts or physicians within Chinese historical dynasties.

The book has several appendices including a guide to *pinyin* pronunciation, a *pinyin*-English formula cross reference, a list of cited text sources and a bibliography of modern sources. Retained are the basic formulary for symptoms and disorders and the formula index for ease of use.

This text is very clinically focussed and considerably more information has been included in the commentary section. Historical debates and discussions concerning the use of the formula are documented in this section which deepen the clinician’s knowledge and contextualise the formula’s clinical use. The inclusion of comments, often by the formula’s developer, or a snippet from a classic medical text, brings the formula to life for the reader giving them an insight into the clinical reasoning associated with the formulas use by Chinese physicians and scholars over time.

The depth and breadth of the knowledge presented is impressive and is drawn from a variety of Chinese texts yet brought together seamlessly to produce a comprehensive and useful book that the authors state is ‘faithful both to the spirit of the medicine and the realities of the clinic’.

The print text is well presented using two tone print (green and black) for contrast and the hard cover book is strongly bound for heavy use. This text will continue to be the primary clinical text on herbal formula for students and clinicians alike and leaves very little room for improvement in future editions if ever there was to be one.

*Reviewed by Chris Zaslawski*

## What is medicine?

Paul Unschuld (Translated by Karen Reimers).  
University of California Press, 2009  
ISBN 9780520257665

We are often advised not to judge a book by its cover. On reading the title, 'What is medicine?' my first thoughts were: another one! In this instance, Paul Unschuld's, *What is medicine?* Western and Chinese approaches to healing, the adage's injunction remains intact.

Paul Unschuld, a historian with a keen interest in medicine and healing offers an interpretation that is too often ignored or just not offered to proponents of medicine, Western or Eastern. Rather than offer the reader a chronological account of events on the development of medicine in the West and China, Unschuld turns the question around. He does not seek to explore a history of ideas in medicine but about ideas in history. A thesis of this kind seeks to contextualize the idea of what medicine is and what medicine is like in different places in different times. By making this clear from the outset, one gets the view that the author is not concerned with the morphology of medicine. He wants to know about medicine as a human production, which he relates to social, political and philosophical ideas circulating at the time. He asks a simple question and not unlike the text, we know as the *Su Wen*, the response is a complex one. Thus, he asks such questions as, why has different kinds of medicine existed over the centuries in different cultures. Are there parallels between the different kinds of medicine? Another way of saying this is to ask, why these ideas in this place or culture at this time? In approaching his task in this manner, we are then left wondering what we mean by alternative and complementary medicine.

Here is one example how Unschuld situates a simple idea in history. It comes from antiquity and forms part of the network of assumptions that guides what he calls our model image for

understanding the body. In exploring medical ideas from Greek antiquity, he identifies a notion with which we are familiar: self-healing. This is not to say that the Chinese were not aware that some illnesses get better without medical intervention. Rather, Unschuld is more concerned with apprehending the significance and meaning of such an idea as to why it has persisted for so long. Unschuld notes that the Greeks endlessly debated the reasons for self-healing. Offering an understanding of the times, Unschuld cogently argues that the idea of self-healing represents the view that the body has a self-interest, an innate capacity to pull itself out of a crisis and move towards harmony. The organism single-mindedly strives for its own well-being. As an organism the body has an interest to self regulate, an idea based on the model image of a self-regulating autonomous political structure. There is no need for a ruler or a monarch, since the individual retains the necessary structures and resources to get better, without external intervention.

In China, the model image of a self-regulating self-governing individual is missing, since such an idea gives express power and influence to the individual self. China has never known a trust in the self-regulating organism. Never, having had a political structure whereby its citizens discuss conflicting interests, Chinese medicine, Unschuld argues, faithfully reflected the authoritarian structures bounded by Confucian ethics, which did its best to maintain order because chaos, read political unrest, was to be prevented. The memory of constantly feuding political states was too close for the Chinese. In the case of sickness, the human organism can never be trusted to find the path to health all on its own. Because illness stems from conflict among various parties within the organism, what is required is that

of a wise physician, read also wise ruler, who understands nature's complexities. The ruler knew how to intervene in order to bring about change and more importantly before the sickness could take hold. Self-healing powers were not an issue. But then the Greeks had no idea of circulation. There are numerous examples provided throughout the book.

Moving closer to the contemporary times, the same question is asked again. What re-imaginings are occurring now in the West and China that may influence our model image of the world and in what ways will medicine change? As a way of answering this question he imagines our world one hundred years or so from now whereby one is writing about the HIV/AIDS crisis of the late twentieth century. Considering another example, what we understand as the Enlightenment Project, that science would show us the way to a bright, more rational, secularised world, has in a strong sense failed us. Science and medicine we note seem to have contributed to our illnesses, we are polluting ourselves and it seems, worse still, our very home. Our earth is sick. What kind of impact, if any, will this kind of model image have on how we re-imagine science, medicine, philosophy or social relationships in a globalizing world? What will happen to Western medicine and Chinese medicine? Will Chinese medicine survive? Unschuld offers a response while providing a solid context of meaning.

This book is a must read for all primary health care practitioners. The book asks and seeks to answer a simple question, 'What is medicine?', not from a scientific perspective but from a human one, clearly showing us that medical knowledge is a cultural construct and that knowledge is not something to be bargained for.

*Reviewed by Peter Ferrigno*

## Qian Bo-xuan Case Studies in Gynaecology

Compiled by the Xi Yuan Hospital, Beijing, China  
People's Medical Publishing House, 2006  
ISBN 7117080311

Chinese medicine is an empirical science. Case studies, along with studying the four main classics and being an apprentice to established practitioners, have always been considered an important form of learning. Many experienced Chinese medicine practitioners also testify to the importance of reading and analysing case studies.

A large proportion of the classic texts in Chinese medicine are case studies written by famous practitioners or their students. Although the importance of these texts cannot be ignored, it is important to realise that language and diseases change over time. As a result, cases written hundreds of years ago may become incomprehensible to contemporary clinicians and require further interpretation and translation. As well, the need of learning from contemporary practitioners arises.

Unfortunately, many recently published case studies are very brief, and patients are commonly successfully treated at the first attempt. The reader fails to understand why a particular formula was used, often marvelling at the skill of the practitioner, and left feeling as though their clinical knowledge base is inadequate. In other cases, the English translation is so poor that the essence is lost.

This text by the People's Medical Publishing House is an exception. The book was firstly published in 1978 and edited by staff at the Department of Gynecology at the Xi Yuan Hospital

of the Chinese Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences. The English version was subsequently published only recently in 2006. It provides gynaecological cases from the hospital records.

This is a book that one needs to read in a quiet time and with some reflection upon one's own patient experiences. The reader will find many familiar cases in the book and smile at how Dr Qian resolved the medical problems.

The excellence of the book lies in four aspects: the doctor, Qian Bo-Xuan; the completeness of the case histories; the conclusion section at the end of each case and the quality of the English translation.

Dr Qian, who would have been over 110 years old if he were still alive today, was a famous gynaecologist in Chinese medicine. He saw the incursion of western medicine in early 20th century China and realised the need to use knowledge from both Chinese medicine and the western medical sciences. As the foreword states he served 'as a link between the past and the future in the modern development of Chinese medicine'. Such a link is particularly relevant to practitioners in countries outside of China.

What I find the most helpful is to see how the cases evolved and were treated by Dr Qian. The majority of the cases had three visits, while in some cases six to nine visits were recorded. At the initial visit, a concise case history was

presented then followed by diagnosis and detailed treatment. In the following visits, any changes to the previous signs and symptoms, and new symptoms were noted. By examining the changes in the formulae, the reader can appreciate the path of Dr Qian's thoughts and understand how he analysed the case. For instance, most clinicians would know that changing the direction of treatment is a difficult decision. Dr Qian, however, had no hesitation in changing the formula or the direction of treatment at each visit to more suitably address the emerging signs and symptoms, truly reflecting the spirit of Chinese medicine, that is, treating the disease according to syndrome differentiation. This demonstrates more adequately the way an experienced clinician deals with complex and changing gynaecological problems.

At the end of each case, a conclusion is stated and the essence of the case is discussed. The reader will find their learning raised to another level.

Finally, the English translation is fluent making the cases easy to read and clearly understood.

The People's Medical Publishing House must be congratulated on publishing this book. The value of the book definitely exceeds its price. Indeed, what price should one pay for having a quiet, continuing dialogue with experienced practitioners?

*Reviewed by Zhen Zheng*