

The Ying *Qi* Cycle

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Editor's note: This article is from an upcoming book, *Neoclassical Pulse Diagnosis*. It is the result of clinical application of classical passages.

"When one is joyous, then the *qi* is in harmony and the mind is unimpeded.

The nutritive *qi* and the protective *qi* pass freely," states Qi Bo in *The Yellow Emperor's Classic*. So also, when the nutritive and the protective pass freely, then joy can arrive.

This article examines a method of diagnosing and treating the flow of the nutritive *qi* that is commonly used in Europe and America. It continues the neoclassical method of pulse diagnosis that is a "whole system" view of the Five Phases, and the nutrient, defensive and essence forms of *qi*. As with all aspects of this system, the findings are verified clinically.

Ying *Qi*

Ying *qi* is translated as "construction *qi*" by Wiseman² and "camp *qi*" by Unschuld.¹ The definitions of nutrient *qi* and protective *qi* find root in military metaphors and could be likened to the U.S. Department of the Interior vs. the U.S. Department of Defense. In this article, I translate ying *qi* as "nutrient *qi*" to reflect clinical usage. Nutrient *qi* is the essence of water and grain: When it is harmoniously balanced in the five *zang* and dispersed through the six *fu*, it can enter the vessels. It is an aspect of blood that travels through the primary vessels providing nourishment.

The circulation of ying *qi* takes place throughout the day, remaining approximately two hours in each vessel. This movement corresponds to the tracking of the sun across the sky. For example, the sun at midday corresponds to the ying *qi* moving in the Heart vessel; at sunset, the ying *qi* moves within the Pericardium

vessel. This process correlation - the apparent motion of the sun in the sky and the ying *qi* in vessels - demonstrates the importance the ancients placed on the relationship of the inner world with the outer world and the significant emphasis placed on this set of correspondences.

The two fire radicals in the upper portion of the character ying suggest not only a campfire, but also the fire of the sun, with the line below suggesting a rooftop. As Walt Whitman once said, "Give me the splendid silent sun with all his beams full dazzling." The lower portion of the character suggests an encampment.

Therapeutic Implications of Nutrient *Qi* Flow

The *Spiritual Axis* states that if all pulse qualities are even, the patient will recover. This statement has also been conveyed by one of my teachers, John H.F. Shen. When patients have even pulses by the end of treatment, they often report the effects of treatment lasting longer or acting more deeply. Ying *qi* and wei *qi* imbalances are discussed in reference to causing impediment diseases or *bi* syndromes. Qi Bo states in chapter 43 on *bi* syndromes:³

The nutritive *qi* is the essential *qi* of water and grains. It harmonizes the five *zang* organs, spreads in the six *fu* organs, and then can enter the channels. Therefore the nutritive *qi* runs up and down along the channels, penetrates the five viscera and links the six *fu* bowels. The protective energy is the intrepid *qi* of water and grains. It is intrepid, swift and slippery in property, but it cannot enter the channels. Therefore, the protective *qi* runs within the skin and the muscles, steams the membranes, and spreads in the chest and the abdomen. If the nutritive *qi* and the protective *qi* become disordered, diseases will occur; if they are not disordered, the illness will be cured, and the wind cold, and damp will not assail, so impediment will not ensue.

Furthermore, chapter 31 of the *Su Wen*¹ states:

When the three yin and yang vessels and the viscera and bowels have all received disease then the nutrient and defensive *qi* no longer move, the *qi* cannot pass through the viscera - death results.

For a discussion on the flow of wei *qi* and its diagnosis, see my previous articles on *Acupuncture Today*.⁴⁻⁶

Detecting an Entry/Exit Block on the Pulse

The key to pulse diagnosis of the entry-exit (E/E) system is the two-depth system of the *Nan Jing* and the *Mai Jing*. This method places the yin vessel deep and the yang vessel superficial (see **Figure 1**).

		Position			
		Distal	Middle	Proximal	
Depth	Superficial	Large Intestine	Stomach	San Jiao	Right Wrist
	Deep	Lung	Spleen	Pericardium	
	Superficial	Small Intestine	Gall Bladder	Urinary Bladder	Left Wrist
	Deep	Heart	Liver	Kidney	

Figure 1: The Nan Jing pulse system.

The pulse of the channel where the obstruction is taking place will be inflated, larger, fuller or more forceful⁷ than the subsequent channel along the circuit of the flow of ying *qi*. The pulse that represents vessel ying *qi* content after the entry-exit blockage tends to be weak, feeble, or even absent. The most common stagnation of ying *qi* occurs between the Spleen and Heart vessels from Sp 21 to Ht 1; it also occurs between Liver and Lung at Lv 14 to Lu 1.

It should be noted that the evaluation of the ying cycle is only possible through the two-depth system of the *Nan Jing* and *Mai Jing*, wherein the right *chi* position is *san jiao* superficial and Pericardium deep.

Causes of Blocks

Physical injury to a region may result in an entry-exit block, particularly if scarring is involved, which restricts the flow of *qi*. A channel injured by a surgical scar, for instance, may often show signs of either a local excess or deficiency. In a relatively strong person, traumatic injury will often generate inflated qualities on the pulse that correspond to the organ or region injured. These qualities indicate either trapped *qi*, heat, or blood. A weaker individual may exhibit a flat quality on the pulse after the same injury. An appropriate strategy, in either case, may be to treat the entry-exit points before and/or after the affected channel, according to the pulse.

Internal causes of entry-exit blocks include constitutional predisposition, the seven affectations and lifestyle. This could be due to intense emotional experiences that impede the smooth flow of *qi* along the vessels. Another example is an individual sitting at a desk for extended periods of time for over 15 to 20 years. This can cause the *qi* to bind in the middle burner and not distribute freely into the upper burner, and could involve impediment of the *qi* movement from the Liver to the Lung, or from the Spleen to the Heart. The processes may appear as *qi* depression-stagnation; blood stasis dampness and heat dampness or food accumulation.

Entry-Exit Principles

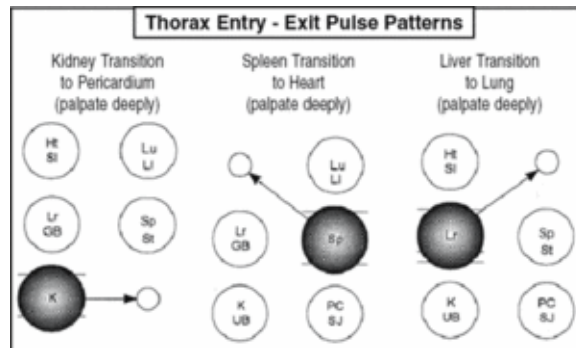
1. Entry-exit blocks are more likely to occur between elements, rather than within the same element.
2. Interelemental blocks in the head are among the yang channels.
3. Interelemental blocks on the chest are among the yin channels.

The Organ Clock - Ying Cycle

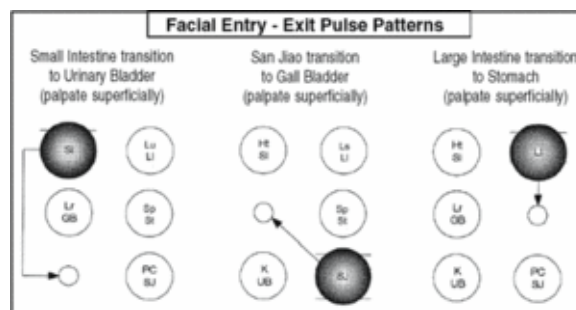
Table #1: The organ clock and the entry-exit points of the 12 channels.	
Sequence of entry point-exit point <i>qi</i> circulation	Time
Ht 1 - Ht 9	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
SI 1 - SI 19	1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
UB 1 - Bl 67	3 p.m. - 5 p.m.
KI 1 - Ki 22	5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
PC 1 - PC 8	7 p.m. - 9 p.m.
SJ 1 - SJ 22	9 p.m. - 11 p.m.
GB 1 - GB 41	11 p.m. - 1 a.m.
Li 1 - Li 14	1 a.m. - 3 a.m.
Lu 1 - Lu 7	3 a.m. - 5 a.m.
LI 4 - LI 20	5 a.m. - 7 a.m.
St 1 - St 42	7 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Sp 1 - Sp 21	9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Case Study

Sam came to my office originally for Lyme's disease in 1991. The successful management of his condition with acupuncture and herbs led to a clinical relationship lasting 12 years for the management of occasional sports-related injuries. More recently, Sam had difficulties with depression and unemployment; he regularly made business decisions that interfered with his ability to make a decent living in his profession.



Upon taking his pulse, I discovered that the left Kidney position (left proximal or *chi*) was full, and the right Pericardium position (right proximal or *chi*) was weak. This could be interpreted as an entry-exit block between the kidney and pericardium. The focus of the treatment was Ki 22 and PC 1. According to the organ clock system, this is the time of sunset, and it is the transition from daytime to nighttime.



This point combination, as the focus of treatment, changed Sam's life. He began selecting better employment opportunities, and his progressive, self-consuming depression broke as he found new relationships and rewarding work. It is entirely reasonable to state the diagnosis as an entry-exit block between the kidney and pericardium vessels, giving a higher definition than the statement "*qi* stagnation," because the location has been defined.

This is the completion of an article sequence on the circulation of *ying qi* and *wei qi*. Professor J.R. Worsley taught this particular method of pulse diagnosis, and I am submitting it in his honor. Although I am fundamentally TCM-trained and I never met him, his work influenced my work (and myself), and for that I am grateful.

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