

Panel 16: Tibetan Medicine Panel – Diagnosis, Treatment and the Practitioner’s Experience

(This Panel held in the Tibetan language)

Panel organiser: Dr. Mingyi Cuomo, Humboldt University, Berlin

One of the main differences between Western biomedical and Tibetan medical diagnosis and treatment is, that while biomedicine relies on technology, Tibetan medicine largely depends on individual skills and practical knowledge of the doctor. These are built upon the basis of medical theory and practice, whereas in biomedicine, they are based on laboratory tests and clinical trials. Patients in remote areas of Tibet often have few options of health care available, and although biomedicines are available and used for minor complaints, people often rely on local Tibetan medical doctors, in particular for chronic diseases. Many rural doctors therefore deal with all kinds of diseases over a long period of time and are able to gain a great deal of good expertise for treating different chronic diseases. However, Tibetan medical treatments are not limited to chronic diseases.

In addition over time, different medical traditions have developed in different parts of Tibet and have their own specialities. In terms of medicinal ingredients, there are also regional differences in the occurrence and identification of plants and *materia medica*, as well as the prevalence of certain diseases. This gave rise to diverse ways of practices.

For Tibetan medical practitioners, it is essential to have an opportunity where they can share their experiences and discuss specific diseases. So far, there have been very few international conferences where doctors of *Sowa Rigpa* can get together and share their knowledge. By organizing this specific panel I would like to create such an opportunity for these discussions to take place. The practitioners who will participate in this panel, will come from different regions and countries with their own local medicinal plant and medical heritage, and will get a unique chance to exchange their experiences through their presentations and in discussions.

Participants and abstracts

16.01 Tibetan Medical Diagnosis and Treatment for Diabetes

Dr. Mingji Cuomo
Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany

According to Tibetan medicine, diabetes is one of the six chronic *bad kan* (phlegm) disorders. Over the last decades there has been an increased trend in diabetes all over the world. This is due to the changing living standards and lifestyles, such as less physical exercise. This can cause interruptions to the natural balance, and can be expressed through hypertension, diabetes, rheumatism, and obesity etc.

In this paper I would like to share my understanding of diabetes in terms of Tibetan medical practice, how it corresponds to the western biomedical diagnosis, and the underlying causes rooted in today’s way of life. Pulse and urine diagnosis can reveal symptoms relating to the heart, blood pressure, eye diseases as well as kidney and liver problems. I will explain different ways of treatment through diet, behaviour (including exercise), medication and external treatments, which include massage, moxibustion, blood letting etc. In addition, I shall discuss methods to prevent these complications. With my presentation I wish to stimulate an exchange among doctors from different Tibetan medical traditions, leading us to verify different ways of diagnosis and individual experiences, as well as enabling comparisons of different concepts and ideas.

16.02 Treatments with Mantras and Prayers (*sngags*)

Dr. Akong Trulku Rinpoche, President of Rokpa Trust, Head of Samye Ling, Scotland

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Treatments with mantras and prayers (*sngags*) have served the Tibetans for several thousands of years. The powers from certain deities who reside in different spheres are channelled and can bring about profound healing. I will explain this treatment from a medico-religious point of view, which is what makes them suspicious in a modern medical paradigm. The latter has been the reason why this aspect of Tibetan culture did not develop as much as other aspects of Tibetan Medicine. Nevertheless, I have

performed the treatment with mantras and will analyse the reason how mantras can be beneficial and explain the basic concepts and categories which I will illustrate with some clinical cases.

16.03 Hepatitis B and a Tibetan medical clinical trial of Da'ö 8, Da'ö 13 and Da'ö16

Sonam Thobgyal, Research Department of the Tibetan Medical Hospital, Shigatse,

I will present the findings of a clinical trial we are performing from 2003 to date with 100 patients on the effectiveness of the three Tibetan medical preparations of Da'ö 8, Da'ö 13 and Da'ö16.

16.04 Tibetan Medical Treatment of the Eye – Theoretical and Practical Considerations

Dr. Tseten Yangkyi, Director of the Department of Eye diseases in the Lhasa Mentzikhang, TAR

I will present my practical experience and theoretical background to the treatment of *sha mdzer* – eye disease (Pterygium). This disease is quite common in my clinical practice in Tibet where there are many eye conditions caused by the strong sunlight and wind and dust etc. According to western medicine, surgery has to be performed on the eye when the condition of *sha mdzer* is severe. However, there is an oral medical treatment from Tibetan *Sowa Rigpa*, which I will present along with some clinical cases, concluding on the treatment's effectiveness.

16.05 The Characteristics of *rtza sbyong* treatment

Tensun Trakpa, Director of the Sog Mentzikhang, Nagchu Prefecture, Tibet Autonomous Region

I will give a presentation on the unique characteristics and the execution of *rtza sbyong* (vessel – cleansing) treatment, of which very few people remain who know how to perform it. This treatment is very effective for skin diseases and otherwise incurable different kinds of rheumatisms. Although the medicines used are commonly available and mentioned in the *Gyu shi*, this treatment has to be performed very carefully since side-effects can be very severe. I will talk on the proper execution of this treatment and on how to avoid the side effects based on 20 years of experience.

16.06 On the differences between Tibetan Medicine and Chinese medicine

By Nyima Tsering

Many people believe that Tibetan medicine is similar to or part of traditional Chinese medicine, as both systems hold a holistic view and use natural herbal ingredients. However, there are fundamental differences between these two systems, For instance, Tibetan medicine is based on the understanding the movement of the element according the characteristic of each element. It has its unique anatomy, physiology, and pharmacology, contained in a similar structure as western medicine and science whereas Chinese medicine based on a universal law or understanding to explain human beings, for instance the female aspect and male aspect, in another word solar energy or lunar energy, and understanding the human body in different level of gas. Within this article I would like to analyze the similarities and differences with respect to different topics such as physiology, diagnosis and the way of treatment and so on.

16.07 Skin disorders, Diabetes and a clinical trial at Lhasa's Mentsikhang

Dr. Dawa Norbu

In my paper will discuss a clinical research I carried out in collaboration with the Bone Department of the Mentsikhang in Lhasa. I will highlight the complexities of treating a kind of skin disorder that results from Diabetes and for which we developed a new remedy. I will present the results of this trial.

16.08 The Efficacy of Two Tibetan Medicines in the Treatment of Hypertension

Xining Tibetan Medicine Hospital
Vice Professor Namlha Kar

Hypertension is very common in all over the world, especially in the high plateau, almost half percent of its total population suffered from this disease. Over the past five years, a small range of clinic trial has been conducted in Eastern-part of Tibet- Xining Tibetan Hospital, in which using two different Tibetan medicines (*Kobyi 13 and kyuru 25*) to see the efficacy of treating hypertension. So far 50 cases have analyzed its final result. there have analyzed

16.09 Regarding the Problem Exit with the Identical Few Medicinal Plants and Its Impact to Clinic Treatment

Dr. Gawo Dorje, Director of practice of the Medicinal Plants Department, and the Practical Training Department of the Tibetan Medical College, Lhasa.

There has been an exiting debate about the differences for identifying medicinal plants in the eastern and central part of Tibet; which has been influenced the using of medicinal plants in some specific cases. Within this paper I would like to analyze the historical reason and some probable solutions through going into the theoretical concept and combine these ideas with the clinical side of medicine to come to a deeper analysis in order to have a more standardization in the near future.

16.10 Tibetan Medical Treatment of various kinds of Poisoning

Dr. Argya, Vice Professor of the Nagchu Mentsikhang, TAR

There is special remedy of poison has been used in Nyikhri, this poison can take people's life. In this place local people put the poison to some wealthy people by any chance just for sake of religion. In that place, the local people practice a type of primitive religion, which is totally different from Buddhism. The idea of this religion is get somebody's good fortune by poisoning that person. Many people have killed while they go for a pilgrimage to a holy mountain around this area. Since twenty years I could relieve many patients who suffering from this disease. At times I have been able to summarise a series of remedies which shows an effective clinical result. In this article I would like to introduce my experience with this disease such the symptom, the pathology, and which remedy do I use to treat this disease.

16. 11 Clinical Research on *Honlok* Disease (Dementia)

By Renchen Dhondrup, Qinghai University Tibetan Medical College

The *Honlok* disease is a kind of illness that prevalent among Tibetan old people, it has more than hundred years of epidemic history. Most Tibetan people has thought that " the person be old, senile person" be a very normal affair and usually will be neglect to this. That publicly known has discouraged Tibetan healing science to recognize the *Honlok* disease. Even some Tibetan physicians thought that was not a kind of disease, it is a senile manifestations. There has a wide spectrum of opinions on this problem, for this reason I dedicated myself to research on the *Honlok* disease. I adopted the modern clinical observation research method, and based on the Tibetan medical three diagnostic methods (look, touch, and question) to make a survey for 143(70s≤) old people in seven Tibetan farming villages in Changmu township, has selected more than 30 suspicious patients to investigate comprehensively. I identified about 12 patients, and the incidence of the disease close to 8.4%. After further Tibetan clinical observation on the 12 cases, I analyzed and concluded the all symptoms, by using this important information I created the diagnostic criteria for *Honlok* disease, and drew the direct and indirect causes, as well as summarized the classification. Meanwhile, I concluded the prevention of *Honlok* disease, and paved the way for further treatment research on this illness.

My purpose for research on *Honlok* disease is to make more widespread Tibetan medical rejuvenation, help Tibetan community to realize this chronic illness, and encourage the junior Tibetan medical doctors to pay more attention on *Honlok* disease. Particularly, that will make a great contribution to more and more Tibetan health workers involved in the field of *Honlok* disease research. It will improve the senile people's life quality.

Key words: Honlok etiology classification diagnostic criteria prevention