



# Emotions and Modern Psychology Studies: Development and Application of Traditional Chinese Medical Theories in Seven Emotions

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DOI: 10.32629/jcmr.v2i4.550

**Abstract:** Objective — To summarize the concept of the Seven Emotions Theory in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the characteristics of the disease, and the influence on the viscera, combined with the research results of modern psychology, this paper studies the etiology and pathogenesis of the Seven Emotions from the perspective of psychology to achieve the purpose of guiding clinical practice. Methods — Through consulting a large number of documents, analyze and understand the meaning of Seven Emotions Theory. By analyzing the emotion-related arguments of the mainstream schools of modern psychology, the basic emotion theory and the relationship between the Seven Emotions of TCM, the concept of TCM sentiment, and the relationship between TCM sentiment and basic emotions are explained. Through the systematic analysis of emotions, explore the relationship between the seven emotions of Chinese medicine. Results — Through research on the development of the Seven Emotions Theory and its etiology, pathogenesis, emotional disease syndromes, and emotional therapy in *Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine (Huangdi Neijing)* and other historical documents, we can discuss the significance of the Seven Emotions theory systematically comb the theory, and hope to guide clinical practice. Conclusion — In clinical diagnosis and treatment of diseases caused by emotions, it is advisable to consider the mutual influence of multi-emotional factors, whether it is a disease with other emotions, and whether multiple organs are injured, so as to better diagnose and treat disease syndromes.

**Keywords:** seven emotions, huangdi neijing, traditional chinese medicine, psychology

## 1. Introduction

*Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine (Huangdi Neijing)* marks the formation of the theoretical system of Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). As an important part of the theoretical system of TCM, the theory of Seven Emotions is scattered in *Huangdi Neijing*. As an attempt to combine the theory of Seven Emotions with psychological research, it is hoped that scholars will pay attention to this theory and carry out extensive and in-depth research on the theory of Seven Emotions.

## 2. The formation of the Seven Emotions Theory

### 2.1 The origin of the Seven Emotions Theory

Seven emotions, that is, joy, anger, worry, pensiveness, sadness, fear, and fright, seven emotional changes. The theory of Seven Emotions in TCM, based on the *Huangdi Neijing* as the starting point, can be seen from the "Nine Qi Theory" about the onset of the Nine Qi in *Plain Question (Suwen)* Chapter 39 Discourse on Pain and "Five Wills Theory" in *Plain Question (Suwen)* Chapter 5 *Comprehensive Discourse on Phenomena Cor-responding to Yin and Yang* that the theoretical system of the theory of sentiment has begun to take shape in *Huangdi Neijing*, which basically established the medical concept and theoretical content of "Emotions". From the cognitive category "Qi and the spirit of peace" and the emotional category "the leader, the shrewd mansion" to understand the concept of Seven Emotions, and then to understand it from multiple angles and levels.

The concept of Emotions in TCM was first seen in Zhang Jiebin's *Classified Canon (Lei Jing)*, and it has sprouted in *Huangdi Neijing*. Seven Emotions are seven different emotional reactions of the human body. The theory of Seven Emotions originated from *Huangdi Neijing*, such as *Comprehensive Discourse on Phenomena Cor-responding to Yin and Yang* which said "Man has the five depots; they transform the five Qi, thereby generating joy, anger, sadness, anxiety, and fear."

Seven emotions are emotional changes, that is, the seven emotional expressions of human beings. As one of the emotions, "pensiveness" has been discussed with emotional factors such as anger, joy, sadness, fear, fright, and worry as early as in *Huangdi Neijing*. In the Southern Song Dynasty, Yan Chen<sup>[1]</sup> "Sickness and Syndrome Recipe" even more put forward the concept of Seven Emotions, which was accepted by later generations of physicians "Seven emotions, joy, anger,

worry, pensiveness, sadness, fear, and fright." Since then, "pensiveness" is used as one. These kinds of pathogenic factors are widespread. For example, *Compendium of Materia Medica (Bencao Gangmu)* in Ming Dynasty said, "Faith, food, and clothing make the form happy while the outside is solid, while more thoughts lead to bitter aspirations but empty inside."<sup>[2]</sup>

## 2.2 Seven Emotions and Five Wills

The heart houses the spirit, dominates the spiritual thinking activities of people, and can react to external things. *Plain Question (Suwen) Chapter 5 Comprehensive Discourse on Phenomena Cor-responding to Yin and Yang* said: "Man has the five depots; they transform the five Qi, thereby generating joy, anger, sadness, anxiety, and fear." There are also sayings that "liver is in the will for anger", "heart is in the will for joy", "spleen is in the will for thought", "lung is in the will for sadness", and "kidney is in the will for fear". Anger, joy, pensiveness, sadness, and fear are the Five Wills.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 The dual connotations of Five Wills and Seven Emotions

Five Wills and Seven Emotions are collectively referred to as emotions. The law of overcoming aggression and overcoming replication constitutes the theory of emotions in TCM. "Emotion" and "Will" are based on the Qi and Blood of the organs and are produced by the process of the organs. They not only have the functions of reconciling Qi but are also affected by the Yin and Yang changes of the organs, the movement of the Qi, and external stimuli.

If "Five Wills" are defined as normal emotional activities, and the "Seven Emotions" are defined as emotional pathogenic factors or pathological emotional reactions, then "Emotions" should refer to all emotional activities in general, and have dual meanings of physiology and pathology. Correspondingly, the theory of studying the physiology of the Five Emotions is the "Zangxiang Five Wills Discourse", and the theory of studying the pathogenic factors of the Seven Emotions is the "Seven Emotions theory". These two are collectively referred to as the "emotional theory".

Through the application and development of the past dynasties, the concept of emotion has contained a wealth of content. However, medical scholars have different academic opinions and different understandings of emotions. "Basic Theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine" claims that emotion is the mental state of the body, which is the seven different emotional reflections of the human body to objective external things and phenomena. With the understanding of emotions and sentiments in modern western psychology, many scholars believe that the concept of emotion in TCM is equivalent to a person's emotional system or process. In the following, this paper refers to the interpretation of emotions and sentiments from various psychological schools and the research results of modern psychology to further discuss emotions.

### 3.2 Emotional factors closely related to the five internal organs

The formulation of Seven Emotions Theory was closely related to the five internal organs of the human body from the very beginning. Because people's emotional activities are based on the Qi, Blood, Yin, and Yang in organs. The modern medical model has been continuously changing to the biological-psychological-social medical model<sup>[3]</sup>, the status of the theory of Seven Emotions in TCM has become more and more prominent. Seven Emotions Theory is an important part of the etiology in TCM. The general term for seven emotional reactions, worry, pensiveness, sorrow, fear, and fright<sup>[4]</sup>. Seven Emotions Theory, as a concept of TCM, has become synonymous with TCM for human emotions. Happiness, anger, worry, pensiveness, sadness, fear, and fright are not the extension of emotions, but incomplete examples of things within the concept, which do not cover and cannot cover all emotions.

### 3.3 Outward ways of emotional expression

The expression of Seven Emotions refers to people's thinking activities, any of the emotional factors is not a complete expression of emotions, but belongs to one of the Seven Emotions. The reason is that in the process of thinking activities, people have more or less emotional colors that accompany anger, joy, sadness, fear, fright, and worry. Lisheng Jiang<sup>[5]</sup> believes that from the perspective of language and writing, "pensiveness" has ancient meanings such as sadness, sorrow, mourning, depression and resentment. This view coincides with the view of this paper. A simple emotional factor generally does not cause disease, but complex emotions accompanied by other six emotions can become a pathogenic factor.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Seven Emotions cause diseases

Seven Emotions are the normal mental state of the body, and generally do not cause diseases, but if the Seven Emotions exceed a certain limit, it will lead to the occurrence of diseases. If the seven emotional activities are too intense and long-

lasting in intensity and time and exceed the body's adjustment ability, it will have the ability to cause disease. Traditional Chinese Medicine has to been used to treat schizophrenia-like illness for over 2000 years.<sup>[6]</sup> The size of the pathogenic ability is related to the person's innate endowment, temperament type and the person's acquired experience and experience, especially it has a direct causal relationship with major life changes.

*Plain Question (Suwen) Chapter 72 Discourse on the Piercing* said, "The uprightness exists in your body, so the pathogenic Qi won't affect you", which emphasizes the human body's ability to resist diseases. The cause of the disease in the human body must be based on the internal cause of the human body, and the cause of the disease is only the predisposing factor. Some earlier reports have suggested that TCM herbal medicine is effective for psychosis and that combination treatments are useful to enhance antipsychotic efficacy or reduce the period of recovery and adverse effects<sup>[7][8]</sup>.

Through better analysis of emotional pathogenic factors, it is of great significance to theory or clinical practice. As a pathogenic factor, Seven Emotions must also be based on the internal causes of the human body as the basis for disease and disease, that is, the human body's innate endowment quality, emotional tendency, and sensitivity.

As a pathogenic factor, Seven Emotions are often associated with other emotions. Therefore, the disease does not damage an organ such as the spleen alone, but may also damage the liver, the heart, the lungs, and the kidneys. For example, *Plain Question (Suwen) Chapter 10 The Generation and Completion of the Five Depots* talked about the disease of Heart-Bi, and said it is caused by the weakness of heart Qi caused by excessive thinking, and pathogenic Qi enters accordingly, that is, pensiveness may become an internal factor of suffering from Heart-Bi. Therefore, in the clinical diagnosis and treatment of diseases caused by "pensiveness", it should be handled flexibly, and should not be confined to the theory of "pensiveness to hurt the spleen" in *Huangdi Neijing*.

## 4.2 Seven Emotions Theory in TCM and Modern Psychology

In the concept of "Emotion", the duality of physiology and pathology has rich and profound connotations. If sentiments are used to define "will" without mentioning emotions, then in modern psychology, emotions and sentiments are not the same. Generally speaking, emotions are inner experiences that are biased and connected with physiological needs, and sentiments are often associated with inner feelings connected with social needs are complex psychological experiences unique to human beings. Sentiment is a mental movement with a certain direction, or the belief that "will" has a direction, is the psychological process of establishing a goal through motivational struggle. Will refers to a person's mental process of consciously determining the purpose, controlling and adjusting his actions according to the purpose, overcoming various difficulties, and achieving the purpose. It has a clearer aspiration, but emotions are not like this.

Psychology believes that emotions are always determined by the situation at the time, change rapidly with the situation, are less stable, stronger than sentiments, have more impulsivity and obvious external manifestations, and can be called "expanded sentiments." Sentiment is not only situational but also stable and long-term. It emphasizes the feeling aspect of the emotional process, that is, the subjective experience aspect of the sentimental process. Yuedong Huang<sup>[9]</sup> believe that the differences between Emotion and Will is that emotion is more important than functional consciousness and is closely related to the brain, while Will is more material and has a direct relationship with the five internal organs; emotion is external but aspiration resides within; the five aspirations are emotions. Seven Emotions are the different emotional responses of the brain to external stimuli and are the external manifestations of thinking activities. Haiyan Mao<sup>[10]</sup> studied the concept of Five Wills and Seven Emotions Theory and believed that the Five Wills, including happiness, anger, pensiveness, worry (sorrow), and fear, are based on the Qi and Blood of the five internal organs and are produced in the process of gasification of the five internal organs. Purposeful movement of Qi is the instinct of the five internal organs. It is a manifestation of the normal physiological functions of the five internal organs and has the effect of reconciling the Qi. Seven Emotions refer to the seven different emotions that the body expresses after receiving internal and external stimuli. It is an abnormal emotional state evolved from the Five Wills and is one of the causes. The concept of emotions has a dual meaning.

## 5. Conclusion

Traditional Chinese medicine has long known the theory of Seven Emotions, and its origin can be traced back to the *Huangdi Neijing*. According to the theory of TCM, the Seven Emotions include happiness, anger, worry, pensiveness, sadness, fear, and fright. The Seven Emotion factors have common characteristics, but they do not deviate from the category of emotions. As a pathogenic factor, Seven Emotions are often intertwined and inseparable from other emotions when they cause disease. This particularity of emotional factors determines the diversity of treatment methods for diseases caused by emotions—or the need to treat diseases to seek the cost and remove the emotional factors that cause diseases, such as the medical record mentioned earlier. Or if it is urgent, treat the symptoms, start with other organs such as the liver to relieve the pain, or need to combine with other emotional factors such as fear to relieve the patient's doubts.

The understanding of the concept of Emotion in the field of TCM has gone through a process from proposing to arguing, and gradually reaching a consensus. There are two different viewpoints: the theory of Emotion collectively and the theory of Emotion as one. Combined with the research results of contemporary emotional psychology, Emotions should be regarded as an independent concept, which refers to the psychological and physiological changes of the internal and external environment based on the individual's psychological and physiological state, through the induction, cognition, and regulation of the mind (brain) to get complex response. The Seven Emotions Theory of TCM has a unique subjective experience of emotions, emotional expressions, and corresponding physiological and behavioral changes. It is a complex, adaptive, dynamic, and systematic psychological phenomenon that can help individuals adapt to complex and changeable environments.

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