Environmental Toxins

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The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the increasingly important yet often overlooked impact that environmental toxicity has on health in the modern era.
The traditional Chinese concept of toxins (Du) has a few meanings, one of which is any substance which is harmful when ingested or entered into the body via the skin. The number of toxins which individuals are exposed to today greatly exceeds that of ancient times. An ongoing Centers for Disease Control study tracks chemicals in blood and urine samples for 116 contaminants. Of these chemicals 89 had never been systematically tested in the US population. Many of the substances were found in at least half of the people tested.[1]

Exposure to environmental chemicals produces a number of signs and symptoms which are commonly encountered in clinical practice. Through the medium of pulse diagnosis, a number of reliable findings associated with exposure to environmental toxins can be discovered.

Here are the clinical findings associated with exposure to environmental toxins:

Etiology:
Chemicals are ingested through food or water, inhaled or pass through the skin. Frequently toxicity is found in artists, researchers, or individuals who are exposed through their work in industry and agriculture. Exposure may be limited to small amounts over long periods or through massive amounts over a shorter time. Current research also implicates household products and cosmetics. Dental work can also be a source of toxicity.

Symptoms:
The most pronounced symptom is fatigue, frequently encountered even in young people. Joint pain and skin problems such as eczema and psoriasis are frequently found. Other serious heath conditions such as neoplastic processes and severe environmental sensitivity should be considered. We believe that further research will elucidate a more complete picture.

Signs:
Pulse: A Choppy quality as a first impression felt on the whole pulse, or in the left Middle position (Liver)[2]. A Slow rate, and the Blood Unclear quality which is felt as a barely perceptible increase, rather than a decrease as one's fingers are raised from the Organ depth to the Qi depth.[3] At a later stage the pulse becomes Deep.[4]

Tongue: The tongue may be slightly red with a moist, possibly yellow coating. A purple color with a withered appearance has been noted by some practitioners, especially in advanced pathology.

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[1] (Science News, February 22, 2003. Volume 163).
[2] Personal communication with Leon Hammer, MD
[3] Contemporary Chinese Pulse Diagnosis, Leon Hammer MD page 479
[4] Contemporary Chinese Pulse Diagnosis, Leon Hammer MD page 169

Eyes: The blood vessels on the mucosa inside the lower eyelids vary in width and color; some are thicker and more brown, some are thinner and more red. With greater toxicity there is more variation and the brown color is deeper.

Treatment:

Herbal medicine: A two-herb combination comprised of four grams Goldenseal and one gram Licorice (Sheng Gan Cao). A higher dosage may be used with the same ratio, but it is best to increase the dose gradually due to the cold nature of Goldenseal.

An alternate treatment is a formula developed by the late Dr. John HF Shen called Blood Unclear, which is used to take toxins out of the blood.

Blood Unclear

Dang Gui	6 grams
Sheng Di	9 grams
Chi Shao	9 grams
Gan Cao	4.5 grams
Xia Ku Cao	9 grams
Mu Dan Pi	6 grams
Luo Han Guo	9 grams
Ze Xie	9 grams
Yi Yi Ren	12 grams

Acupuncture: Spleen 10 (Xuehai) with moxa on the needle, 3 to 5 courses of moxa per treatment.

Toxins are discharged through the sweat, urine, bowels, and to a lesser extent the breath and menstrual blood. Any obstruction in these avenues may contribute to the accumulation of toxins. However, it may be deleterious to the patient's body condition (Zheng Qi) if sweating, purgation or other methods are employed too aggressively. Each patient must be evaluated for his or her overall strength, and the treatment tailored to the individual.

Conclusion

We hope that this article serves as a starting point for further clinical investigation. Undoubtedly time will raise awareness of this issue, given our ongoing participation in the modern industrial experiment.