

Bi Syndrome

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1) BI SYNDROME INTRODUCTION

“Painful obstruction (*Bi*) Syndrome” indicates pain, soreness or numbness of muscles, tendons and joints from invasion of external Wind, Cold or Dampness.

“*Bi*” (ch#) evokes the idea of “obstruction”. In Chinese medicine it means pain, soreness or numbness due to obstruction in the circulation of Qi and Blood in the channels caused by invasion of exterior Wind, Cold or Dampness.

The invasion of external climatic factors is due to a pre-existing and temporary deficiency of the body's Qi and Blood which allows the Wind, Cold and Dampness to penetrate.

It is probably the most universal of all diseases affecting practically everyone at some time or another of one's life in all parts of the globe. Due to exposure to climatic factors, it is probably also one of the oldest afflictions of mankind.

"Bi Syndrome is due to the combined invasion of Wind, Cold and Dampness, causing swelling and pain. It is due to a weak body condition and the space between skin and muscles [Cou Li] being open, which allows the Wind to penetrate".

"Bi Syndrome is due to deficiency of Qi and Blood which allows Wind to penetrate."

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Bi Syndrome is an affliction of the channels alone, not the Internal Organs. The pain and soreness are caused by obstruction in the circulation of Qi and Blood in the channels by exterior Wind, Cold or Dampness.

The "Origin of Complicated Diseases" (1773) says:

"Bi means obstruction. The three evils [Wind, Cold and Dampness] invade the body, obstruct the channels, Qi and Blood cannot circulate...[so that] after some time Bi Syndrome develops."

The invasion of external climatic factors is due to a pre-existing and temporary deficiency of the body's Qi and Blood which allows the Wind, Cold and Dampness to penetrate.

The "Treatment Strategies for Assorted Syndromes" (1839) says:

"Bi Syndrome...is due to deficiency of Ying and Wei Qi and to the space between skin and muscles being open, thus allowing Wind-Cold-Dampness to ride the deficiency. Qi becomes obstructed by the pathogenic factors, it cannot circulate, it stagnates, Qi and Blood congeal, and in time Bi Syndrome develops."

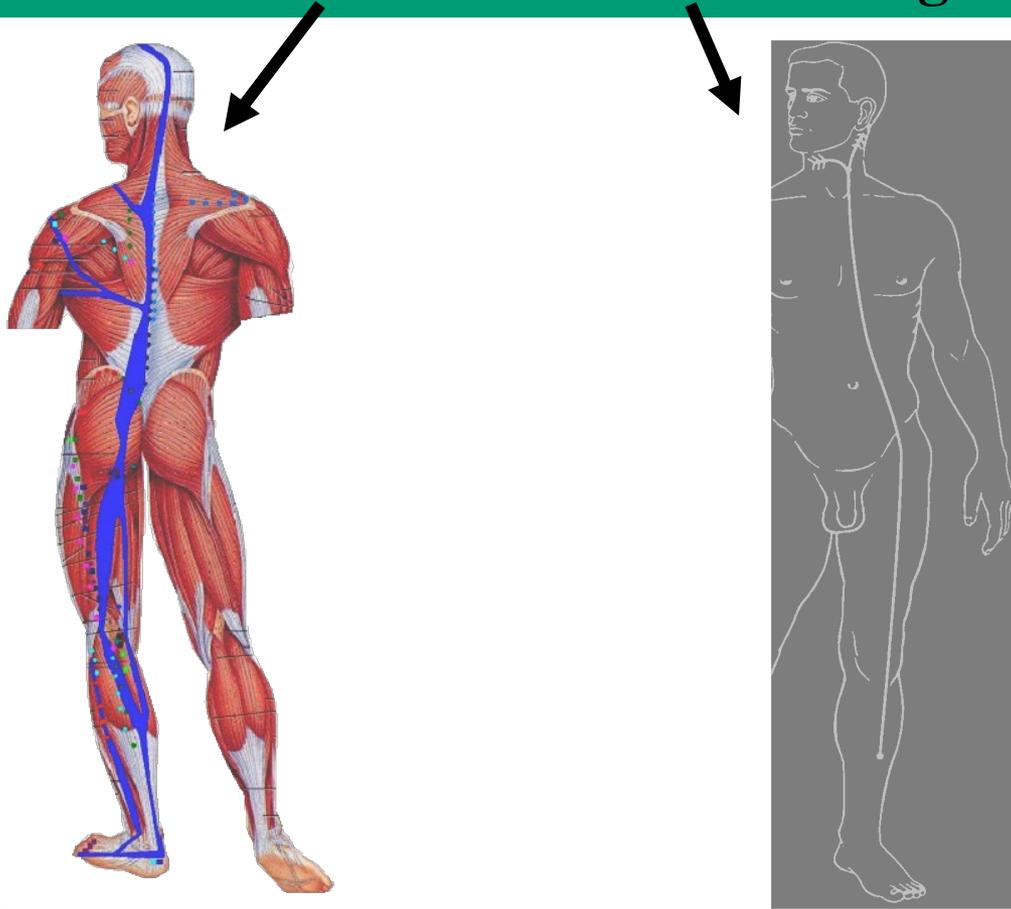
Thus, the relative strength of the climatic pathogenic factors and the body's Qi at any given time is crucial to the development of Bi Syndrome. This explains why we can be exposed to climatic factors every day for long periods without developing Bi Syndrome. It is only when the climatic factors are temporarily and relatively stronger than our body's Qi, that they become pathogenic and cause Bi Syndrome.

It is important to stress however, that the deficiency of body's Qi necessary for the development of Bi Syndrome is only relative, i.e. in relation to the strength of climatic pathogenic factors. It is not an absolute deficiency, otherwise that would mean that anyone who develops Bi Syndrome suffers from deficiency of Qi or Blood which is not the case. Thus, Bi Syndrome is an affliction of the channels alone, not the internal organs.

However, in chronic Bi Syndrome and in the elderly, internal factors (deficiency of Qi and Blood) are important contributory factors to the development of the disease as will be explained shortly.

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The two classes of channels that are most involved in Bi Syndrome are the Muscle and the Connecting channels.



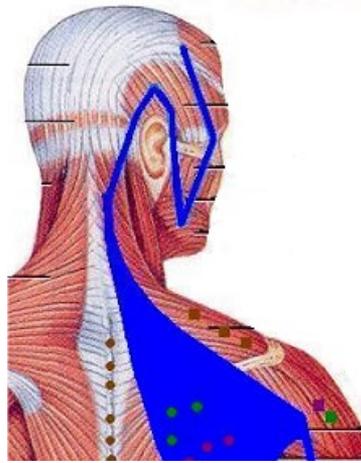
It may be useful here to revise the structure of main and secondary channels and the energetic role of the Five Transporting points on the limbs as this will be relevant when we discuss the treatment of Bi Syndrome.

To each main channel corresponds a network of secondary channels formed by Connecting channels, Muscle channels and Cutaneous Regions.



The *Muscle channels* integrate muscles and sinews within the channel system. They are more superficial than the Main channels and run alongside muscles.

They are involved in any muscular pathology such as muscular weakness or stiffness that may appear in Bi Syndrome.

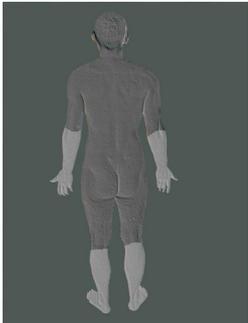


The Muscle channels are always involved in the pathology of Bi Syndrome and other musculo-skeletal syndromes as the pathogenic factors and Qi stagnation affect the muscles. The main symptoms of a Muscle-channel pathology are a muscle ache, a feeling of heaviness of the muscles, numbness, spasm and stiffness.

The Muscle channels basically integrate muscles and sinews within the channel system. They are also more superficial than the main channels and run alongside muscles. They are involved in any muscular pathology such as muscular weakness or stiffness that may appear in Bi Syndrome.

The Cutaneous regions represent twelve areas of the skin under the influence of the twelve channels. They are the most superficial areas of the channels and the zones through which pathogenic factors penetrate the body to cause Bi Syndrome.

They are, of course, also the areas through which therapy is effected by inserting the acupuncture needles.



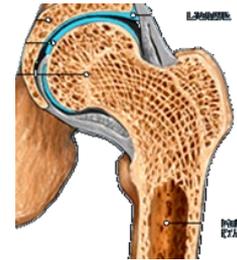
Of the Transporting points along the channels below elbows and knees, three are particularly important in the pathogenesis and treatment of Bi Syndrome.

The Stream (*Shu*) point is the point at which external pathogenic factors such as Cold, Dampness and Wind penetrate the channel. It is also the point of concentration of the Wei Qi.

The River (*Jing*) point is the point from which pathogenic factors are deviated to joints and sinews where they settle. This is why pathogenic factors can settle in a joint for a long time without penetrating deeper and affecting the internal organs.

The Connecting (*Luo*) point is the starting point of the Connecting channel. Since these channels flow in the surface affecting muscles and sinews, the Connecting point has an important application in the treatment of Bi Syndrome.

Within the flow of Qi dynamics, joints are important areas of convergence of Qi and Blood.



Through joints, Yin- and Yang-Qi meet, Exterior and Interior converge and Qi and Blood enter and exit. Joints are also the places where pathogenic factors converge after penetrating the channels, causing obstruction to the flow of Qi and hence local stagnation of Qi and Blood. This stagnation accounts for the pain caused by external pathogenic factors in Bi Syndrome.

Invasion of pathogenic factors is made easier if the body condition is weak leading to malnourishment of the joints. It is also made easier if the joints are weakened by over-use through work or certain sports. In these cases, the external pathogenic factors penetrate the body and settle in the joints more easily due to the pre-existing condition of deficiency of Qi and Blood.

Finally, the anatomical entity *Cou Li* described in ancient texts should be mentioned. The term *Cou Li* indicates on the one hand the striae of skin, muscles and internal organs, and on the other hand, the "space between the skin and muscles". It is with this last meaning that the term is used in the context of Bi Syndrome. The "space between skin and muscles" is the space where body fluids circulate (giving rise to sweat) and where Defensive Qi moves, protecting the body from external pathogenic factors. When the Defensive Qi is deficient and the body condition is weak, the space between skin and muscles is said to be "open" and thus prone to invasion of Wind, Cold and Dampness.



The Connecting channels (*Luo* channels) connect the Yin and Yang paired channels at the level of the limbs. For example, the Lung and Large Intestine channels are connected in the forearm via their respective Connecting points, LU-7 Lieque and L.I.-6 Pianli respectively.



More important than this, in the context of Bi Syndrome, the Connecting channels represent a network which distributes Qi to more superficial parts of the body, not covered by the main channels. For this reason the Connecting channels are called *Luo Mai* as opposed to *Jing Mai* which are the main channels.