



# The Formation and Development of the School of Consolidating the Vital Base and Supplementing Primordial Qi in Xin'an Medicine

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## Abstract

The purpose of this article is to introduce the formation and development of the school of Consolidating the Vital Base and Supplementing Primordial Qi (CVBSPQ) in Xin'an medicine, as well as to elucidate its concepts, core, scope of application, and points of application.

**Keywords:** Traditional Chinese Medicine; Xin'an medicine; CVBSPQ

## Introduction

### The Concepts of the School of CVBSPQ

According to the theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), primordial qi is the most fundamental and important qi of the human body. It is the original substance and driving force that constitute the human body and maintain his life activities [1]. The meaning of Guben Peiyuan also has two different meanings. Guben is to consolidate the vital base of human body. Besides, the vital base has two types: the innate and the acquired, which primordial qi does have. Usually, the innate primordial qi refers to kidney qi, and the acquired primordial qi refers to spleen and stomach qi. Therefore, Peiyuan means to cultivate and replenish human primordial qi, healthy qi and spleen and stomach qi [2]. In short, from the perspective of medicine, the academic idea of CVBSPQ runs through the TCM treatment system, which is not only a preventing and treating principle, but also a treatment theory. That is, the core of the idea is to take care of the human body's the innate and the acquired vital base and primordial qi, including the tonifying of the innate vital base of kidney and the acquired vital base of spleen and stomach. The thought of CVBSPQ described a process of supporting

the healthy and dispelling the pathogenic factors, which the methods of tonifying the spleen and kidney, protecting the primordial qi and strengthening the vital base of human body, such as essence, qi and spirit [3]. The core of the thought was to supplement and protect the primordial qi of human body, to simulate of original power of human life activities and emphasizing the role of their own healthy qi.

### The Preliminary Formation of the School of CVBSPQ

The school of CVBSPQ rose in the middle of the Ming Dynasty in the 16th century to correct the treatment which mistakenly uses medicine of bitter and cold nature to treat diarrhoea. In the Wu and Zhejiang medical community in the south of the Yangtze River at the end of the Yuan Dynasty and the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Danxi's theory of Nourishing Yin and Lowering Fire was very popular. Doctors unduly used drugs with bitter and cold nature to nourish yin too much, which caused damage to the patient's primordial qi, but they did not realize the mistake of such treatment. At that time, Wang Ji and other doctors worshipped Zhu Danxi's medical skills and learned his ideas of treatment. But

they found that Zhu's medication method was wrong, and believed that yin deficiency was blood deficiency, and yang deficiency was primordial qi deficiency. They held the idea that tonifying yin to benefit blood, tonifying yang to nourish primordial qi, and if primordial qi and blood are harmonious, then people will be fine. Later, Wang Ji learnt many ideas from Huangdi's Inner Canon of Medicine and also assimilated Li Dongyuan's theory of supplementing Primordial Qi. Under his profound reflection, Wang reinterpreted Zhu Danxi's theory of Excessive of Yang and Deficiency of Yin and proposed the theory of Yingwei Yiqi. Wang believed that ying and Wei are the same origin, and the two are interdependent, either one's deficiency will affect the other. Compared with Wei qi, ying qi belongs to yin, and all kinds of diseases may hurt yin qi. Therefore, ying qi is often insufficient, and must be supplemented. However, the ying is not pure yin. It has both qi and blood, and can also be divided into yin and yang. Supplementing ying has the dual value of supplementing qi and blood, which is CVBSPQ [4]. What's more, in treatments? Wang made good use of ginseng and Astragalus membranaceus, which can not only tonify yang and yin, but replenish qi and generate blood. As a result, the characteristic treatment of adjusting and tonifying primordial qi and blood, consolidating the vital base and supplementing primordial qi was formed, which broke the excessive superstition of the society at that time on the theory of Nourishing Yin and the ideological confinement of nourishing yin in the medical field. It also set off ideological emancipation, and embarked a new way of clinical application.

### The Inheritance and Development of the School of CVBSPQ

After Wang Ji first proposed the method of CVBSPQ, his disciples continued to promote the development of this academic. At first, Xu Chunfu and Sun Yikui further improved the theory of CVBSPQ. Later, a large number of Xin'an medical doctors joined this research, resulting in the more and more perfect treatment concept of CVBSPQ. First, Xu Chunfu took stomach qi as one's primordial qi. And he believed that all diseases were formed by the prostration of the spleen and stomach. Later, he established the treatment idea of treating the spleen and stomach to nature the five viscera. He was good at using *Atractylodes macrocephala*, ginseng, tuckahoe, *Astragalus membranaceus*, and other drugs to cure patients [5]. Especially, he invented and made the pill to strength the spleen and nourishes the stomach by himself.

Thus Xu Chunfu's treatment concept of nourishing spleen and stomach and harmonizing their primordial qi is more superb than Wang Ji's medical skills. Xu studied diligently all his life and wrote a lot books. Among them, *Ancient and Modern Medicine* had the greatest influence, which is a rich medical book, discussing various medical editing, pulse

method, health care and so on, still has high reference value to clinic application and theoretical research. Then, Sun Yikui opposed the disconnection between clinical application and medical theory, and emphasized the importance of theoretical research. Under the guidance of his academic attitude, Sun had unique research on TCM theories such as life gate, triple energizers and ministerial fire. He extended Zhou Dunyi's Tai Chi Diagram theory to the field of medicine and interpreted it, finally establishing the theories of Mingmen Dongqi and Sanjiao Xianghuo [6]. Mingmen Dongqi is the essence of his lifelong theory and clinical practice. Mingmen, the life gate, is the endless flow of air between the two kidneys, which has the name but is invisible. Mingmen Dongqi controls the growth, development and functional coordination of the viscera and bowels, which is the primordial qi of human beings. One moving side of primordial qi is the movement of qi between the kidneys, which provides the fundamental driving force for life activities. The static side of the primordial qi is transformed into the two kidneys. But Sun emphasized the factor of movement of qi, so he regarded the primordial qi as the Dongqi. Sun believed that patients who suffer diseases are mostly due to the lack of primordial qi of life gate, and the decline of the triple energizers and ministerial fire. What's more, he insisted that supporting yang and suppressing yin is the principle of treatment, and warming and tonifying kidney is the main treatment method. When in the treatment of dispelling prescription, ginseng, *Astragalus membranaceus* and aconite, cinnamon and dried ginger are used. Sun organically combined Wang Ji's theory of CVBSPQ with Xue Ji's theory Warming and Tonifying Kidney, treating spleen and kidney at the same time. What's more, Xu Chunfu's idea of CVBSPQ emphasized more on the nourishment of the sleep and stomach, while Sun emphasized the importance of warming and nourishing the kidney, and treated both the innate and the acquired primordial qi [4]. Sun also expanded the strengthening of the spleen and stomach to the primordial qi of life gate. Sun enriched and improved the treatment method and opening up a new field of the school of CVBSPQ, which completes the gradual transformation of the school from consolidating the kidney, sleep and stomach to consolidating the primordial qi of kidney and sleep. It gave important enlightenment to later doctors and was a great innovation in the history of TCM. Besides Xu Chunfu and Sun Yikui, many other Xin'an medical doctors have inherited and developed the method of CVBSPQ. Luo Zhouyan pioneered the theory of Yuanyin Yuanyang, which is one of the most important theoretical innovations of the school of CVBSPQ after Sun Yikui. This theory transcends the conclusion that primordial qi belongs to yang, which once again breaks the boundary of the treatment of school of CVBSPQ [4]. Another Xin'an medical doctor Wu Chu made some innovations after learning Li Dongyuan's skills. He believed that Li's Spleen and Stomach theory was very detailed about the treatment of the spleen, but the treatment of the stomach was very sketchy.

Thus he put forward the theory of differently treatment of spleen and stomach based on the functions of spleen ascending and stomach descending. He was also unique in the application of warming-natured medicinal herbs such as aconite and cinnamon. In his book, there is a record of using aconite, cinnamon and dried ginger to treat typhoid fever in summer, which breaks the taboo that hot nature drugs cannot be used in summer. It also breaks through the saying that ginseng is rarely used to treat swelling and any swelling can't be nourished [7]. Wu's method of treatment of CVBSPQ can be said to be handy and used freely, which offers a lot clinical experience for future generations. From the end of the Ming Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, when treating the prolonged recovery of internal diseases and the delayed treatment of severe diseases and typhoid fever, Xin'an medical doctors attached great importance to warming, tonifying and supplementing primordial qi. They followed the medication methods of ginseng, *Atractylodis macrocephala*, *Astragalus membranaceus* with dried ginger and aconite. Its academic trend is from focusing on the method of the treatment of spleen's primordial qi to kidney's primordial qi. More and more Xin'an medical doctors consolidate, develop and create the method of CVBSPQ, resulting in the school of CVBSPQ in Xin'an medicine showing a prosperous scene of diversified development.

### Conclusion

With its long history and far-reaching historical influence, in the context of today's society, the school of CVBSPQ is in line with dialectical materialism and historical materialism, and is responsive to the needs of the times in all generations and dynasties. The strong line-up of Xin'an CVBSPQ School, which has survived for 400 years, is proof of its vitality and strength. Thus, fully excavating and studying

the connotation of CVBSPQ has important theoretical value and practical significance.

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