

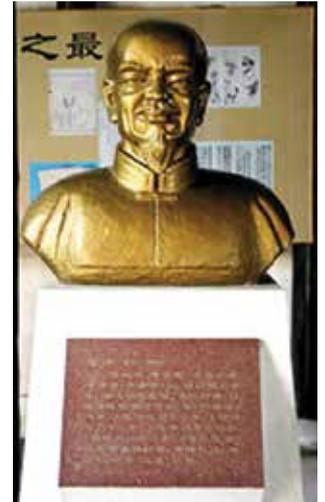
Lurking pathogens in springtime

Adventures in translation

By **Mary-Jo Bevin**

The *Shi Bing Lun* (A Discussion of Seasonal Diseases) is a classical Chinese medicine text written in the late Qing dynasty by Lei Feng and first published in 1882. My interest was sparked when I was prescribed a herbal formula from the *Shi Bing Lun* and my cold cleared up almost straight away – this formula clearly worked!

ADMIT TO SOME self-interest here – as practitioners it is inconvenient for us to get sick, and it does not convey the picture of good health that we like to present to our patients. At our clinic, at the first signs of a sniffle or the first threat of a cold trying to take hold, we dose ourselves up on a *Shi Bing Lun* formula¹ that contains light doses of acrid warming herbs to release the exterior but also helps vent any lurking pathogen. It is one of those decoctions that you can feel working – you feel better immediately, and, providing the diagnosis was correct and you catch it in time, you do not continue to get sick, but go back to normal. I have taken oth-



Bust of Lei Feng.

er formulae from this book to deal with other types of colds and flu with different patterns of symptoms, and they get results. Although, or perhaps because, they are typically small formulae with light doses, they are effective at targeting the pathogen, working with the body's own defence mechanisms.

While there are so many more Chinese medicine texts available in an English translation than there once were, many are still accessible only to those who can read Chinese. After years of Mandarin classes I am slowly joining this group, so I chose these pages of the *Shi Bing Lun* to practise and improve my translation skills with something interesting and useful that does not yet have an English translation,² and to add to my arsenal of formulae and treatment strategies.

I started at the beginning of chapter one of the *Shi Bing Lun*, and translated an excerpt on spring warmth (*chun wen*) and wind warmth (*feng wen*). I have changed the order slightly from the original so that treatment methods follow each symptom pattern directly. There are also some personal observations or clarifications along the way, in italics. The translation begins on the next page.

Damage by cold in winter leads to warm disease in spring

The classics say: “Cold damage (*shang han*) in winter will lead to warm disease (*wen bing*) in the spring.” This describes the general process by which a lurking pathogen results in illness.

When cold attacks in winter, if the pathogen is severe the person will get sick straight away – this is called cold damage.

If the attacking cold pathogen is subtle, the person will not get sick immediately, but instead this pathogenic cold will lurk hidden in the skin and muscle, or perhaps in the *shaoyin*. In spring, yang qi begins to grow, and an external pathogen can hijack this rising yang qi, stirring up the lurking pathogenic qi [from the cold attack in winter] and allowing it to come out and be expressed. There can also be the scenario where the lurking pathogen simply comes out and causes illness, even though it is not first stirred up by an exterior pathogen.

Cases where this pathogen [from cold attack in winter] is lurking hidden in the skin usually occur in people who do hard physical work in winter and it makes them sweat [so the pathogen can enter through the open pores and hide in the skin]. Cases where this pathogen is lurking hidden in the *shaoyin* are seen in the type of people who fail to conserve their essence in the winter, and so their Kidneys are depleted. The ancients called this Kidney depletion “the most empty of places”, and this is exactly the place where pathogens can lurk. [So, to find where a pathogen is lurking, look for the area of deficiency.]

Liu Song-Feng and Chen Ping-Bo both say that there is no such thing as a lurking pathogen. They are guilty of going against the classics. Can they avoid this accusation? According to Lei Feng’s discussion, there are five types of lurking pathogenic qi in springtime. They are: spring warmth (*chun wen* 春温), wind warmth (*feng wen* 风湿), warm disease (*wen bing* 温病), warm toxin (*wen du* 温毒) and late emergence (*wan fa* 晚发).

Lurking pathogenic qi in springtime
Spring warmth (*chun wen*) comes from exposure to slight cold in winter, then once spring arrives and the person catches cold,

the lurking winter cold pathogen is triggered.

Wind warmth (*feng wen*) also follows from exposure to slight cold in winter, and then with the arrival of spring the person is affected by wind and the lurking winter cold is triggered.

Warm disease (*wen bing*) is also from exposure to slight cold in winter, and this cold ferments for a long time and becomes heat. When spring arrives the following year, when the yang qi begins to grow and is released outward [after its wintertime “hibernation”], the lurking pathogenic qi does not need to be triggered by cold or wind but comes out all on its own [by following the natural springtime yang qi expansion].

Warm toxin (*wen du*) comes from exposure to “perverse qi” [unseasonal weather] in winter, then when the season changes from spring to summer [right at the intersection of spring and summer] there is exposure to warm heat (*wen re*) and then that lurking toxin can come out from the interior.

Late emergence (*wan fa*) is also from receiving slight cold in winter that is not expressed at that time. It will come out later, any time after *Qing Ming* [Pure Brightness, the seasonal node from April 5 in China].³ Compared to the other warm diseases, this type is later by two weeks, that is by one seasonal node.

These five types are all from receiving slight cold in winter, which lurks hidden and does not come out until spring arrives, when that lurking pathogen can become all these types of warm diseases. They should be differentiated and treated separately.

There follows in-depth discussion of two different doctors’ opinions on the existence of lurking pathogenic qi, reference to classical texts, and debate of who had the right idea, and on the various theories of springtime warmth. One section discusses the misquoting of a Daoist text on which both doctors based their theories, but neither the text nor the two doctors are familiar to most Western practitioners today. Lei Feng spends some time justifying why they are wrong, before summarising:

In summary, springtime warmth (*chun wen*) diseases are caused by receiving slight cold in winter, which either lurks in the surface tissues and is not immediately expressed or,



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Lu Gen ... is truly a cool but not sticky or cloying marvellous herb, much better than the average cooling herbs.

in those that fail to store essence in winter, the slight cold can lurk in the *shaoyin* and is not immediately expressed. In both of these instances, the lurking pathogenic qi waits till the arrival of spring, when a further exposure to cold stirs it up, and only then does the lurking pathogenic qi come out. That is what the classics call “winter damage by cold, springtime must have warm disease” and “winter fail to store essence, springtime must have warm disease” (*dong shang yu han, chun bi bing wen, dong bu cang jing, chun bi bing wen*⁴).

Spring warmth symptoms & treatment

The initially arising symptoms of springtime warmth are: aching pain in head and body, chills and fever without sweating, cough, thirst, floating white tongue coating, and a pulse that feels like it just keeps coming up on palpation as you lift fingers from deep to superficial; or it may be wiry or tight, then upon closer examination by rolling fingers over the pulse side to side it could be rolling or rapid. The first thing to do is to use acrid warm herbs to release the exterior.

Xin wen jie biao fa

(acrid warm release exterior method)

Treatment for the first signs of spring warmth. This method can also treat other patterns such as wind cold epidemic, yin summerheat, and autumn coolness.

Fang Feng	4.5g	Saposhnikoviae Radix
Jie Geng	4.5g	Platycodi Radix
Xing Ren	4.5g	Armenicae Semen Amarum (peel and tips removed ⁵ , grind)
Chen Pi	3g	Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium
Dan Dou Chi	9g	Sojae Semen Prep.

Add three **Cong Bai** (spring onions) while decocting.

This method uses *Fang Feng* and *Jie Geng* to expel cold pathogen from the surface. *Xing Ren* and *Chen Pi* open the qi level of the upper and middle jiao. *Dan Dou Chi* and *Cong Bai* together make up *Cong Chi Tang* (Scallion and Prepared Soybean Decoction) a really useful formula from a book called *Zhou Hou Liang Fang* (Formulae to Keep Up Your Sleeve).⁶ It is used instead of *Ma Huang* (Ephedrae Herba), which is well known to treat all cold attacks of the exterior. The surface pathogen

must be released even if there is also lurking pathogen, and when the surface pathogen is released you can look forward to the lurking pathogen following it out.

[*Lei Feng* does not specify decoction time, but as they are small doses of light herbs for exterior release, similarly – in our clinic – we use a short boiling time of 10-15 minutes to preserve that light exterior action. This treatment method is the formula I mentioned in the introduction, the one that can be taken at the first sign of a cold or flu, in most seasons.]

If the tongue coat becomes parched and dry, or yellow or scorched (grey-black), this is warm heat that has already reached the Stomach. At once use cool herbs to release internal heat.

Liang jie li re fa

(cool to release internal heat method)

Treatment for warm heat (*wen re*) in the interior. There are no external symptoms of wind-cold, summer heat (*shu wen*) or winter warmth (*dong wen*).

Xian Lu Gen	15g	Phragmitis Rhizoma, fresh
Da Dou Juan	15g	Glycinis Testa (sprouted <i>Hei Dou</i>)
Tian Hua Fen	6g	Trichosanthis Radix
Sheng Shi Gao	12g	Gypsum Fibrosum, unprepared
Sheng Gan Cao	1.8g	Glycyrrhizae Radix, unprepared

Decoct with fresh water.

When a warm heat (*wen re*) pathogen first enters the Stomach, you should use this method. This is because Stomach is the yang earth; it must be cooled to be peaceful. For this reason use *Lu Gen* as the main herb.⁷ Because of its sweet taste, cool nature and hollowness, not only can it get rid of heat in the centre, it can also completely vent pathogens from the surface tissues. It is truly a cool but not sticky or cloying marvellous herb, much better than the average cooling herbs.

Accompanied by sweet, neutral *Dou Juan* (sprouted beans) and sweet cooling *Tian Hua Fen*, it can also clear and eliminate Stomach heat, and one can even further assist this with *Shi Gao*, which is cool but not bitter. *Gan Cao* drains and moreover can harmonise. Zhang Jing-Yue [author of the *Lei Jing* in the 1400s] called the combination of

Gan Cao and *Shi Gao* “*Yu Quan Yin*” (Jade Spring Drink).⁸ Together, these five herbs treat *yangming* Stomach heat, which is an accomplishment as most typical cooling herbs will ruin the Stomach. Only this method (ie the cool to release internal heat method) does not do this.

If the tongue is crimson (deep red), teeth are dry, there is incoherent speech and consciousness is muddled, this is warm heat (*wen re*) deeply occupying the *yangming ying*-nutritive level. Then you should use herbs to clear heat and release toxin, so as to protect body fluids.

Qing re jie du fa (cool heat release toxin method)

Treatment of warm toxin (*wen du*) deeply entering *yangming* to plunder and injure body-fluids, with crimson tongue and dry teeth [*i.e. intense heat damaging fluids*].

Xi Yang Shen	9g	<i>Panacis quinquefolii Radix</i>
Da Mai Dong	9g	<i>Ophiopogonis Radix</i> (centre removed)
Xi Sheng Di	9g	<i>Rhemanniae Radix</i> (sliced <i>Sheng Di</i>)
Xuan Shen ⁹	4.5g	<i>Scrophulariae Radix</i>
Jin Yin Hua	6g	<i>Lonicerae Flos</i>
Lian Qiao	6g	<i>Forsythiae Fructus</i> (centre removed)
Lu Dou	9g	<i>Phaseoli radiati Semen</i>

This method treats warm heat (*wen re*) turning into warm toxin (*wen du*). Toxin (*du*) is pathogenic fire; warm heat (*wen re*) has already changed into fire. Fire will always damage the *jin ye* body fluids. For this reason use *Jin Yin Hua*, *Lian Qiao* and *Lu Dou* to clear fire and moreover resolve toxin. *Xi Yang Shen* and *Mai Dong* are used to preserve the *jin* body-fluids, while *Xuan Shen* and *Sheng Di* protect the *ye* body-fluids.

If there is trembling of the hands and feet, and pulse is rapid and wiry, this is extreme heat generating wind, then one should eliminate heat and extinguish wind.

Que re xi feng fa (eliminate heat extinguish wind method)

Treatment of warm heat (*wen re*) that has not been released and so generates wind with tremor of hands and feet.

Da Mai Dong	15g	<i>Ophiopogonis Radix</i> (centre removed)
Xi Sheng Di	12g	<i>Rhemanniae Radix</i>
Gan Ju Hua	3g	<i>Chrysanthemi Flos</i> (sweet)
Ling Yang Jiao	6g	<i>Sagiae tataricae Cornu</i>
Gou Teng Gou	15g	<i>Uncariae Ramulus cum Uncis</i> (hooks)

Firstly take the *Ling Yang Jiao* and decoct it alone for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Then add in the rest of the herbs and decoct.

Any time there is warm heat disease and that has stirred up Liver wind, this method alone is the most appropriate. Primarily use *Mai Men Dong* and *Xi Sheng Di* to clear the heat and in order to moisten body fluids. *Ju Hua* and *Ling Yang Jiao* settle internal wind and calm spasm, and are accompanied by *Gou Teng* because of its effectiveness at relaxing muscles and tendons.

If the person is a bit muddled and has trouble recognising people, cannot speak, almost like they are a dead person [*i.e. impaired consciousness*] then this is the pathogen burrowing into the Pericardium. Then you should use the dispel heat unblock orifices method.

Qu re xuan qiao fa (dispel heat unblock orifice [of Heart] method)

Treatment for warm heat (*wen re*), damp warmth (*shi wen*), or winter warmth (*dong wen*) pathogens that have burrowed into the Pericardium, with symptoms of loss of consciousness, delirious speech or inability to speak, a scorched and blackened tongue coating, with possible mania or convulsions.

Lian Qiao	9g	<i>Forsythiae Fructus</i> (centre removed)
Xi Jiao	3g	<i>Rhinocerotis Cornu</i>
Chuan Bei Mu	9g	<i>Fritillariae cirrhosae Bulbus</i> (centre removed)
Xian Shi Chang Pu	3g	<i>Acori tatarinowii Rhizoma</i>

Add one pill of *Niu Huang Zhi Bao Dan* (Precious Pill with Cattle Gallstone) with wax coating removed, dissolve it into the decoction and drink.

This method treats the symptoms of pathogens (*xie*) entering the Pericardium. *Lian Qiao* is bitter and cold. Bitter enters the Heart, while cold defeats heat; for this

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reason it can drain the Heart channels of fire pathogen. The classics say: “fire damaging in the interior, treat with salty and cold” (*huo yin yu nei, zhi yi xian han*),¹⁰ therefore this formula is accompanied by a salty cold substance like *Xi Jiao*, which can also drain fire pathogen from the Heart channel.

In patients where pathogens are entering the Pericardium, it is not just fire, in addition there is phlegm following the rising fire, and blocking the clear orifice. For this reason use *Chuan Bei Mu* to clear the Heart and reduce phlegm. *Shi Chang Pu* enters the Heart to open and unblock. Furthermore using the great strength of *Niu Huang Zhi Bao Dan* helps save a critical situation, quickly supporting the person who is at risk of dying.

Springtime warmth (*chun wen*) can fluctuate and change, and there is not one isolated method to use. One must alter treatment in response to the changes.

Theory of wind warmth

Wind warmth (*feng wen*) disease comes out in the spring, when *jueyin* wind-wood is in command, just when the season is starting to turn into *shaoyin* monarch fire. Chen Ping-Bo said that wind warmth disease is mainly seen in the spring months and winter season when wind is in majority. In the spring months, pathogenic wind is in power, and in early winter the weather is warm and there is a lot of wind.

Actually, to a great extent this is not so. He did not realise that symptoms such as heat, thirst and cough in the winter months are due to winter warmth (*dong wen*). How can one call this wind warmth? If this is discussed in reference to the six external pathogenic qi (*liu qi*) then if the winter weather is said to have wind warmth, this is during the seasonal division of *Da Han* [*Great Cold, the seasonal node from 20th January in China*]. His real error is in the two words “early winter”.

Now the cause of illness in wind warmth resembles that of spring warmth (*chun wen*) – both are due to catching cold in winter, but the cold does not come out immediately. If the body’s Kidneys are weak, the pathogenic qi [from the winter cold] is lurking hidden in the *shaoyin*. In those who have exerted themselves so they sweat, the pathogenic qi will lurk hidden in the flesh and interstitial spaces (*cou li*). The pathogenic qi lurks

waiting for the coming spring, when attack by wind touches and stirs up the lurking qi so that it is expressed.

Wind warmth symptoms & treatment

Wind warmth (*feng wen*) illness has headache, aversion to wind, fever, spontaneous sweating, cough, thirst, thin white tongue coating, and a pulse that is floating and rapid. The treatment for this is acrid cooling to release the exterior.

Xin liang jie biao fa

(*acrid cooling to release exterior method*)

Treatment of the initial symptoms of wind warmth, newly caught wind heat (*feng re*) or winter warmth (*dong wen*) binding the Lungs, causing cough.

Bo He	4.5g	Menthae haplocalycis Herba
Chan Tui	3g	Cicadae Periostracum (remove feet and wings)
Qian Hu	4.5g	Peucedani Radix
Dan Dou Chi	12g	Sojae Semen preparatum
Gua Lou Pi	6g	Trichosanthis pericarpium
Niu Bang Zi	4.5g	Arctii Fructus

If there is thirst, also add *Tian Hua Fen* (Trichosanthis Radix).

This method employs acrid cooling to treat the early onset of wind warmth. No matter if there is lurking pathogenic qi or not, in each and every case of wind warmth use this first.

Bo He and *Chan Tui* are light for venting the exterior. *Qian Hu* and *Dan Dou Chi* disseminate and release the wind. Ye Tian-Shi says that when a heat pathogen is suffered in the upper body, it first affects the Lungs. For this reason, we assist with *Gua Lou Pi* and *Niu Bang Zi* to open up the Lung qi, which allows the qi level to have free and unobstructed flow. Then no matter whether it is a newly caught pathogen or lurking pathogenic qi, all can be vented out.

If the tongue is crimson with yellow coating, and there is a loss of consciousness with delirious speech, and trembling of the hands and feet, then the pattern has changed. All these transformations can be treated in the same way as for the changing patterns under spring warmth [these patterns and treatment methods are described in the previous section, eg. using the “dispel heat unblock orifices

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(of Heart) method” or the “eliminate heat extinguish wind method”.]

Further questions on wind warmth

Some might ask: when **cold** triggers the lurking qi resulting in spring warmth (*chun wen*), in the initial stages there are symptoms of cold aversion and no sweating. When **wind** triggers the lurking qi it causes wind warmth (*feng wen*), with initial symptoms of aversion to wind and sweating. These two different illnesses naturally have two different pathways. How is it possible to use the same treatment methods in both cases?

The answer is: although the newly caught pathogen is different [ie the cold or wind or whatever pathogen it is that stirs up the lurking qi], the lurking pathogenic qi itself is one and the same. Therefore all the different patterns of change described above can have the same treatment. But the most important thing is to differentiate whether it was due to physical overwork with sweating, or due to failing to conserve essence in winter. In those patients whose illness simply increases gradually, the reason can be deduced to be overwork. But in those whose body fluids are injured as soon as they start to get sick, and get all sorts of changeable symptoms, this is due to failing to conserve essence in the winter.

Generally any time there is a warm heat (*wen re*) illness, one must always keep in mind the body fluids. In those that have yin deficiency, it is even more important to accompany their treatment by nourishing fluids.

It can be asked: regarding wind warmth (*feng wen*) illness, why not follow Zhang Zhong-Jing’s example and standard [set out in the *Shang Han Lun* section on *wen bing*]? On reading this treatise, it does not list the symptoms [described in the *Shang Han Lun* as indicating wind warmth, which are] “pulse with yin and yang floating on the surface”, “spontaneous sweating”, “heavy body”, “sleepiness”, “snoring breath”, and “difficult speech”. Is that not going against Zhang Zhong-Jing’s guiding theory on how to be a doctor?

The answer: this is Zhang Zhong-Jing discussing the case where symptoms of wind warmth have changed following mistaken treatment. The symptoms listed are not the usual symptoms of wind warmth. Question: what are the usual symptoms, then? Answer:

the usual pattern of symptoms is “*taiyang* illness with fever and thirst, and without severe aversion to cold, this is warm disease (*wen bing*).”

Another question: In Chen Ping-Bo’s 12 line discussion of wind warmth (*feng wen*) he says it is a sudden-exposure type of seasonal qi [“*bao gan*”: an externally contracted illness that comes on immediately rather than lingering] and says that it affects the Lungs and Stomach. Wu Ju-Tong¹¹ discusses wind warmth mixed in with all the other various types of warm diseases and describes separate treatments according to the *San Jiao*. The question is whether Chen Ping-Bo’s description is correct, or Wu Ju-Tong’s description is correct?

The answer is: respect the classics, which say that “Cold damage (*shang han*) in winter will lead to warm disease (*wen bing*) in the spring.” One can say this is almost always true. If there are symptoms of Lung and Stomach, the illness will be of the Lung and Stomach. If the symptoms are in the *San Jiao*, the illness will be of the *San Jiao*. Do not be too inflexible about this.

It can also be asked: spring warmth (*chun wen*) and wind warmth (*feng wen*) illnesses are both caused by lurking pathogenic qi. Is it correct that when doctors in springtime see aversion to cold, fever and cough, even if there is no thirst present, they still call it wind warmth (*feng wen*)?

The answer is: it is all right. In springtime the wind is from the east, it is a warm wind (*wen feng*) that melts anything frozen. For this reason calling it wind warmth (*feng wen*), regardless of whether it is actually *chun wen* or *feng wen*, is not problematic. The treatment in the initial stages will still be acrid cooling to release the exterior method (*xin liang jie biao fa*).

ⁿ My first attempt at translation was an exercise that would have been much harder without the language apps on my smartphone, saving me hours of wrangling with the radicals index of a Chinese dictionary, but more importantly the encouragement and assistance of Steven Clavey, who guided me through this expedition, and helped make sense of some seemingly nonsensical translated phrases from classical Chinese.

Endnotes

1. First mentioned in the editorial of *The Lantern* (Vol 10:1).
2. Steven Clavey is working on a full translation of the *Shi Bing Lun*.
3. The Chinese calendar is divided into 24 seasonal nodes or *jie* per year, each lasting two weeks.
4. 冬伤于寒，春必病温，冬不藏精，春必病温 (*dong shang yu han, chun bi bing wen, dong bu cang jing, chun bi bing wen*).
5. In Australia, *Xing Ren* comes with the skin already removed. The text requires removal of tips as in bitter *Xing Ren* the tips are most toxic, but the sweet type is more commonly used in Australia at the moment and the tips need not be taken off.
6. *Dan Dou Chi* is black, fermented, and enters the Kidney channel, making it perfect to expel from *shaoyin* the deep-lying lingering pathogens that sit deep in that channel and ferment. (cf the commentary in Bensky, D. et al, 2004).
7. Unless your dispensary is truly remarkable, you will have to use dried *Lu Gen* rather than fresh.
8. This formula appears in *Jing Yue Quan Shu* (Complete Works of Zhang Jing-Yue, Chapter 51).
9. In the text it is called *Yuan Shen* so as to avoid using the word *Xuan*, taboo due to its identity with the name of the Qing emperor, Xuan Ye (Bensky, D. et al, 2004).
10. 火淫于内，治以咸寒 (*huo yin yu nei, zhi yi xian han*).
11. Knowing the names of the doctors is very important when translating, and saves one from a lot of confusion. For example, it made much more sense when I realised “*ju tong*” did not mean “bring up and clear out” but rather referred to Wu Ju-Tong, the creator of *Sang Ju Yin* and *Yin Qiao San*!