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TCM perspective on PCOS: A fluid condition requires flexible treatment

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The search for an effective treatment protocol for patients with PCOS provides us with the opportunity to integrate Eastern and Western medicine. Western medicine offers us diagnostic tools and technologies, allowing us to see the structures of the body from the organ systems all the way down to cells and molecules. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is based on a holistic view of healthcare, which takes into account a person's mind, emotions, habits and diet, all of which affect the energetic function of the body. Acupuncture modality focuses on the improvement of this function by improving the flow of Qi, blood and fluid, while herbal formulae and nutrition help to strengthen the structure. PCOS has been recognized and treated by TCM for thousands of years. It falls under the Zheng Jia category of disorder, which pertains to "masses created by stagnation of fluid, blood, and/or Qi". Depending on the individual's constitution and her environment, she may present with different symptoms. For example, one patient may have blood stagnation, manifesting as endometriosis, while another may have fluid stagnation, manifesting as cysts. Hormone therapies might provide a temporary boost, but they do not correct the problem at its source. TCM treatment is infinitely flexible: the meridian points and herbs chosen will vary day to day, based on changes in the menstrual cycle, life events, and physical environment. The goal is not only to manage symptoms, but to also correct the imbalances on a deeper level, and to prevent the problem.

Biography

Xiaomei Cai has practiced and taught at Chengdu University's TCM Hospital, a major teaching hospital in China that specializes in integrating Eastern and Western Medicine. She has first worked there as a Gynecologist and then as a Senior Chief Physician. In her more than 25 years of practice as a Doctor of TCM, she has published numerous papers, and her research with a former colleague in China is still relied on as a remedy for treating uterine fibroid tumors.

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