

A Brief Survey of Pulse Qualities in the Pulse Positions

By James Ramholz

Left Distal

1. Left Distal Floating Pulse

When left Distal pulse is Floating, it could indicate wind stroke (*Zhongfeng*), perspiration, blockage of the nose, headache, or dizziness. When we hear the term Floating, we should consider what kind of a Floating pulse it is. No pulses have only a single quality; each is a composite. Is it tight, thin, big, rolling, etc.? Unless we consider what kind of a Floating pulse it is, the classical definition will be too generalized or ambiguous for clinical work. Jiang Jing said the reason why the classics were written as they were is because, for example, when the pulse has Floating qualities at the distal location of the left hand, it basically assumes or points to problems of the heart and blood. That is to say, the context (in this example, the location) is often implicit to both the reader and the author. So blood circulation, as well as arterial and cardiac areas, are being affected by wind (*feng*). This is the basic idea they illustrate in these general examples.

This is an old way of teaching about pulses; we will use it as background material and try expanding upon it to make it practical for contemporary clinical use. It would be impossible to reinvent pulse diagnosis, but we can draw upon this material and compare it to our contemporary clinical findings. The problem is that many people study this material literally and then go out and check the pulses; but it is impossible to figure the pulses out from only a literal understanding.

2. Left Distal Deep Pulse

A Deep pulse at the left Distal position can indicate dizziness, hardening of the muscles, stiff neck, and deep ache in the chest. When a heart-related pulse starts Sinking, it can indicate that blood circulation has slowed down, become cold, or is blocked, so basically it is not flowing rapidly or with enough strength due to absent yang qi.

Strangely enough, when the pulse at the heart position is deep, you have to start wondering whether or not the patient has high blood pressure. Even though it might seem that hypertension cases should have a strong stress pulse in the cardiac region, in actuality, the heart pulse will be Sinking and getting thinner while the liver pulse will be getting stronger at the same time. There is tension building up in the liver and the thrust

in the yang energy is strong toward the heart but, at the same time, the yin energy does not follow. When that is the situation between the liver and the heart, contractions start and the stress moving toward the arterial wall is stronger. Dizziness is likely to occur due to the contractions or lack of blood flow.

3. Left Distal Slow Pulse

When the pulse is slow, the heart is deficient and cold. One may ask, if it is slow at the heart location, why are not all the other pulses slow as well? Slow here means that it is a little bit retarded, so in comparison to others, this pulsation will seem like it is coming a little bit later.

4. Left Distal Slippery Pulse

Slippery pulse associated with the heart indicates that there is heat in the heart, so there is deep heat, possibly accompanied by nausea or vomiting.

5. Left Distal Sandy Pulse

When the pulse is Sandy at the heart position, it indicates that blood is deficient, so yin energy of the heart is deficient.

6. Left Distal Excessive Pulse

When there is heat building up in the Distal position, the heart has to work much harder. When the pulse is excessive at the heart position, it indicates that heat is locked in the chest. This may be due to a block, cold, or something to do with the spleen or the digestive system. Thus, when the heart pulse is excessive and carries heat, it could also indicate some deficiency of the spleen. Depletion of the spleen will accompany many heart cases.

When there is spleen depletion when observing the excessiveness of the heart position, there is obviously some missing communication between the liver, heart, and spleen. When there is a metabolic disorder and the patient has a digestive problem, he or she often cannot digest food fast enough and, instead of building energy, will accumulate water and fat tissue. Patients may eventually become obese and can become anemic. Basically in this case the blood is insufficient in comparison to body weight; patients do not have enough red blood cells. Anemia in this case is caused by the body carrying more fat and water; if they lose that water, they will not be anemic anymore.

7. Left Distal Wide Pulse

Being Wide here indicates being fat or voluminous. When the heart pulse is vast, it means there is heat or tightness in the chest. This tightness is not a type of contraction; rather, it can be tightness with a bloating of the chest, heaviness and aching of the head, *Zhongfeng*, or vomiting.

In order to clearly pick out chest heat building up, you have to verify a block on the diaphragm level and see that heat is going in only. The diaphragm is blocked and heat is coming in and at the same time it is unable to come out.

In order to verify heaviness of the head or tension headache building up, you have to verify a blockage in the upper part of the chest connecting two *Zhongfu* points, and then you know there is heat buildup. In order to do that on the pulse, the pulse movement has to extend beyond the Distal position. If the *Zhongfu* point is blocked and that tension is building further up toward the head, there is a heavy tension headache.

In order to verify bloating of the chest, you also have to verify a blockage on the diaphragm; but in this case it does not have to be heat and there has to be a strong tension building toward the lung position. It will be more on the right side Distal position and there should be some kind of a block. The respiratory and cardiac functions may still be coordinated.

You have to verify *Zhongfeng* from the liver and the Sanjiao pulse involving the heart pulse.

In order to verify vomiting, you have to verify the stomach and Sanjiao pulse, and actually you have to verify the stomach pulse being reversed from the colon to the stomach, and stomach to the Sanjiao; there should be some reversing movement.

II. Left Middle Position

1. *Floating Pulse at the Left Middle position*

When the pulse is Floating at the Left Middle position, it could indicate edema of the abdomen. If the liver area shows a weakness without any solidness underneath, it could be stagnation in the upper abdominal area. It does not necessarily mean only the liver since it can involve the whole digestive area in the middle jiao. This Floating pulse can also indicate stomach deficiency; and in this case, it means that the deficiency of the liver could lead to stomach deficiency.

As a side note: If you clearly find liver energy entering into the stomach, it indicates contraction. It can be spasms with very sharp pain—a gallstone type of sharp pain. All you can say when the liver attacks the stomach is that the stomach is contracting, causing problems with digestion or spasms.

2. *Sinking Pulse in the Middle position*

If the liver pulse is Sinking, remember that it could be Sinking at many different depths; it basically means that it does not have enough yang energy. This could indicate that there is not enough blood circulation in or around the liver. It could mean lack of circulation around the stomach, so there is stomach pain because of cold stagnation in the middle jiao. If it is also Deep, check for cold hands and feet and swelling of the hypochondrium on both sides, especially around the liver and the spleen. Basically, it indicates yang energy deficiency around the liver; the whole digestive area or the

middle warmer area is lacking heat.

3. Slow Pulse in the Middle Position

Slow in this case means that the movement is coming a little slower than other positions, so it is Delayed and indicates that the qi is not reaching the area on time. The blood or yin arrives but the qi is not there. Basically this is a stagnation of qi, which will cause stagnation of blood in that area as well. This may indicate pain in the abdominal area and coldness in the chest.

4. Slippery Pulse in the Middle position

When the liver pulse is Slippery, it indicates heat in the liver. In turn, this could lead to heat around the scalp or the eye, so it could lead to different types of migraines if it is more of a Floating type of condition. It could also affect the gall bladder and the gall bladder channel to cause a migraine headache.

5. Sandy Pulse in the Middle position

A Sandy pulse basically indicates coldness, stasis of the energy flow, malnourishment because it does not have enough ying qi. If the pulse is Sandy in the liver position, it will indicate that the liver does not have enough ying qi or nutrition in the area. It could indicate blood deficiency due to liver involvement. In the case of females, it could indicate a problem with reproductive organs, menstrual irregularity, or hemorrhage. When it is Sandy, it can also lead to edema or coldness in the stomach and pain due to swelling.

6. Excessive Pulse in the Middle Position

The liver basically absorbs stress from the other organs to help support and detoxify them; it is responsible for the smooth flow of qi. When the liver is excessive, it will send its stress to other organs and parts of the body. It will first send out to the muscles, the eyes, and related body parts. Then, typically, when the muscles can no longer help buffer the stress, it will send that movement to the spleen along the control cycle (*Ke*) or to the kidney against the Creation (*Sheng*) cycle. If the liver is excessive, it could cause a lot of spasm or contraction-related syndromes. Thus, it could cause stomach pain, digestive problems, backache, or reproductive problems depending on its target.

If the stress goes to the abdomen, it could indicate something tightening, so it could be a hardening because of a strong contraction. It might feel like a mass, but it is actually tissue in spasm; you might feel some hardness in the abdominal area. It could be basically seen as a sustained contraction, but it does not always indicate an abnormal mass. This pulse could also indicate a very strong headache behind the eye, so it could easily lead to a migraine type of headache. When liver is excessive, you have to really pay attention to the route it is taking. Because it is always accumulating stress, you can

expect a lot of reversed stress movement in many conditions.

Keep in mind that just because the liver pulse is excessive that does not mean that it will necessarily tonify the next element, which is fire. Through the pericardium, the heart will protect itself, so the movement goes toward the kidney and the spleen instead of pushing toward the heart or the lung; it will actually start reversing. A similar kind of mechanism is found with other organs. When one organ is excessive, you have to pay attention to any reversed movement, because it too will start reversing the pulse along the *Sheng* and *Ke* cycles.

For example, when the gall bladder becomes excessive, it will affect the related channels as well. If the gall bladder is excessive, it will not necessarily cause a bad headache like a migraine; it may block somewhere on the gall bladder channel around the neck or the temporal region. If patients have any upper cervical blockages and the gall bladder starts sending its stress out to the channel, it will block even harder. This creates a stronger contrast between the temporal area of the gall bladder channel and the neck, so patients will start forming hardenings or lymphatic blocks behind the neck. At the same time, there will be a deficiency heat of the gall bladder channel and this will lead to a strong migraine headache. When any position is excessive, examine where the reverse movement is going, and determine if it is really pushing hard along the *Sheng* and *Ke* cycles in the normal direction as well.

If the liver is excessive and going to the heart position, you will want to clarify if there is involvement with body fat, which is associated with spleen water or spleen dampness. See if dampness enters into the heart position. If there is any spleen damp wave entering into the cardiac area and liver movement is contracting, it will most likely indicate high cholesterol, hardening of the arteries, or other cardiac problems.

7. Vast or Wide pulse in the Middle position

If the pulse is Vast in the liver position, it basically indicates excessiveness of the liver. Whether it is false fire or actual fire, it means that there is strong yang qi expansion; it could easily mean that the liver itself is swelling up. The liver may be sending heat to another organ, or it could be reacting to stress coming from another organ, depending on the interaction with the other pulses. When it is like that it can cause aching of the muscles or it could lead toward abdominal pain, but you will have to see how the other organs are reacting to it.

8. Delicate pulse in the left Middle position

When the left Middle pulse is Delicate, it indicates extreme depletion. The liver is exhausted, but you do not know the cause behind it. It could happen two ways: first, it might indicate that the function has been declining and now is very deficient; or it could mean that it has been very excessive and suddenly has become weakened.

When the liver energy is drained that way, there is no thrust or growth, so the

patient is usually very frustrated. If the liver is depleted, check the Sanjiao pulse. If the Sanjiao is still active but the liver is not really getting any energy out of the exchange, then the person will be extremely frustrated. Everything will be active internally, but they will not be able to express themselves because they cannot activate the wood element and they cannot recycle the qi that has been stored into crystalized jing. A feeling of extreme frustration is a typical symptom when the liver pulse is delicate in that way.

When the liver is depleted it can also affect the eye structure, so if patients have had eye trouble before, or if there is any stress going toward the eye, they might develop visual difficulties. They might start developing cataracts or have actual visual difficulties caused by structural problems. You want to verify if there is any stress coming in relation with the kidney, and see if there is any vision-related kidney energy hitting and crossing with such a liver condition. It does not have to occur, but with this kind of pulse it is highly possible that the eye is having actual problems.

9. Wiry (String) pulse at the left Middle position

A Wiry pulse indicates that there is tension in the middle jiao. If it is detected in the organ depth, then there is a spastic condition created by the liver. It could be pain around the liver area or it could be a sharp pain right under and blocking at the diaphragm. It could also involve the back and leg muscles, the stomach, etc.; the one thing that you know for sure is that it involves spastic pain.

10. Green Onion or Hollow pulse in the liver position

Whenever you check the liver pulse, one of the things that you have to keep in mind is that the liver stores blood, especially when the body is in parasympathetic mode and blood returns from the periphery. If the liver is showing this type of pulse, it definitely indicates a loss of blood. If you see this pulse, you can say that the patient is anemic.

Hollowness of the liver pulse indicates that the patient has already lost blood. If that hollowness is progressively getting larger, it indicates that he or she is continuing to lose blood. It could also indicate an internal hemorrhage, so at times there could be a big hematoma. Due to this kind of depletion, the patient might have nausea accompanied by a bad headache or blurring of the eyesight.

11. Tense pulse at the left Middle position

This pulse indicates stress associated with liver energy. It could indicate spasms, headache and muscle ache. When it is associated with muscle ache, the muscle is hard or tight. The muscles where the stomach, liver, and gall bladder channels cross on the sides of the face are affected first. This kind of stress is often observed in the jaw first. Before the tension becomes strong and goes to the back and shoulder muscles, tension slowly builds up on the jaw under the mandibular joint as well as the fingers, toes, and facial

muscles, but patients will feel it most on the TMJ area because it will become very sore.

It will be hard for the patient to tell if it is only emotional stress when the pulse has not really settled into the middle depth. When it starts Sinking into the middle or organic depth of the liver pulse, then the pulse indicates that this tension is going into the larger muscles. Only when it is sufficiently strong will tension immediately go to the back and shoulder muscles.

This kind of muscle pain can be involved with insulin problems also. When the pancreas become very excessive and patients have a deep spleen pulse, this pancreatic excessiveness can counterflow against the control cycle (*Ke*), to the liver. The liver, in turn, will throw out the tension to the muscles. Nine out of ten times, people having blood glucose problems, especially low blood sugar, will also have TMJ problems.

12. Soft pulse in the left Middle position

Soft pulse in the liver position basically shows that there is not enough activity, or yang qi, or expansion. It is a mushy type of sensation with little flexibility. It could also be a problem associated with yin qi, but there is still more yin than yang. There could be dizziness because qi is not providing enough thrust to the blood flow. This dizziness is caused by cerebral anemia, low blood pressure, or anemia.

This pulse can also indicate aching of the muscles because the circulation is retarded. This pain is more a neuralgia-type condition. It will tend toward a rheumatism or neuralgia type of ache rather than muscle ache from spasm or tension.

13. Hiding pulse at the left Middle position.

If you find a Hiding pulse in the liver position, it can be associated with dizziness due to fatigue, not enough qi movement, not enough contraction, or not enough expansion of the wood element. We have two concepts of the Hiding pulse in the Dong Han system. One type of Hiding pulse is buried deep at bone level; the other one is a small wave behind the main wave. The first type of Hiding pulse indicates severe depletion—something disappearing very fast. This kind of categorization is close to the Delicate pulse. The other type of Hiding pulse behind the main wave indicates that some other energy is attached to it.

14. Moist pulse in the left Middle position.

This pulse indicates deficiency of blood, deficiency of qi thrust, and related conditions. Basically, it will suggest deficiency of qi and blood. The book also suggests that it could be weakness of nerves, hysteria, or a phobia-type situation.

15. Weak pulse in the left Middle position

It indicates atrophy of muscles, blurry eyes, and weakness of vitality of both blood and qi.

III. Left Proximal Pulse

1. *Floating pulse in the left qi position*

If the pulse of the left Proximal is Floating, it indicates a wind-heat-type condition of the kidney. It could indicate very frequent urination. If it is Floating and very Tense at the same time, it could be some kind of a chronic inflammation involving the bladder and kidney.

2. *Sinking pulse in the left Proximal position*

If the pulse is Sinking, it indicates coldness in the kidney area, so it is a deficiency type of lower backache. It can also indicate coldness in the bladder, so the color of the urine is very clear.

3. *Slow pulse in the left Proximal position*

It also indicates the coldness of the kidney and the bladder area. Urine will be abundant and clear. In this case, cold is taking over the lower back and abdomen.

4. *Slippery pulse in the left Proximal position*

In this case, urine becomes yellowish-red color. In a female, it could indicate a pregnancy. In various books it is stated that if the left side is Slippery it could be a boy, and if the right side is Slippery it could be a girl. In my own and my teacher's experience, it is the other way around: The boy is found on the right side and the girl on the left side. An article by Unschuld explains why this confusion occurs—the left and right were made in reference to the doctor's hands and not the patient's wrists.

5. *Sandy pulse in the left Proximal position*

It basically indicates a cold syndrome again. When the pulse is like that, patients are lacking yin energy, blood, and especially jing in the case of the kidneys. It could be spermatorrhea and other problems involved with the loss of jing as well as cold abdomen and weak abdomen.

6. *Excessive pulse in the left Proximal position*

There is no such thing as pure excessive kidney energy. Being a yang organ, its function is to store, and the kidney can store an indefinite amount of energy. Basically, when excessive pulse movements show in this position, there is something wrong with the kidney. For example, if there is a Wiry movement going from the liver superficially, and the kidney is accepting it in the superficial layer, then you know that muscles in the lower back around the kidney are painful.

When the left proximal pulse is excessive, it indicates that there is too much expansion; the back muscles will tighten. When the bladder is also affected, the patient will run to the bathroom but not be able to release the bladder.

7. Vast pulse in the left Proximal position.

The kidney is a strange organ—it is a yin organ and water element, while at the same time it is holding all the yang energy in crystalized form; it is the source of vitality of the wei qi. This pulse indicates yang energy expansion of the kidneys, so it is similiar to the excessive condition. It can indicate an excessive condition of the bladder, lower back pain, or sciatic nerve condition. When the kidney pulse is vast, nine out of ten times there will be no density in it, so it will show a diluted expansion, which indicates that the jing of kidney is lacking. When the kidney is expanding in such an empty fashion, volume-wise, it indicates that the jing is insufficient. From the kidney jing point of view, this Vast pulse can also indicate a deficient condition. In either case, when you look at this yang expansion in the kidney you have to look at the jing condition and remember that usually there is not enough of it.

Many times, the pulse in the kidney location can be felt a little on the thin or tight side, and that is usually fine. A Thin pulse in the kidney is actually more normal than a Wide or a Soft pulse. A Wide and Soft pulse indicates more of a kidney deficiency than a Thin pulse. If the kidney pulse is Thin and Tight, functionally it is normal; the patient might just be tired at the time you are taking his or her pulse. If you compare Vast and Thin, chances are that the Thin pulse has more of a chance to be normal in the kidney position than the Vast pulse.

Because the Thin and Tight pulse is more related to contraction of energy, it is more of a normal pulse for the kidney since the water element is related to contraction, storage, and absorption. Yin and the yang meet in the kidney and it is the storehouse for jing, which is the source of fire. When you look at kidney conditions where there is not enough water, you have to remember that down the line there will not be enough fire either.

8. Delicate pulse in the left Proximal position.

It indicates some kind of internal hemorrhage around the bladder or kidney. In a woman's case, it suggests some type of body fluid loss from the uterus or vaginal hemorrhage. Basically, all of these symptoms indicate that the kidney is weakening, and since it is weakening it cannot hold on to the jing. So jing is being lost and blood is being lost; consequently, the patient will feel weak.

9. Wiry pulse in the left Proximal position

A Wiry pulse in the kidney position indicates that there is tension in the lower jiao, which suggests that the water element is retained; there might be edema in the kidney area, lower abdomen, or legs. As far as water retention is concerned in this case, the pulse would be tense and this tension would be going toward the liver, indicating water retention influence toward the muscular area. It does not necessarily have to be a Stony

pulse going toward the liver, but some kind of water influence toward the wood element would be observed, and the liver should show some movement backward to the lower part of the kidney again. When pulse is like that—the kidney shooting to the liver, the liver accepting it at the organic depth then dropping it down and, on the lower level, sending it back to the kidney—you will definitely expect water retention in the leg. Also, if you see edema of the legs and pick out this type of movement in the pulsation, you definitely know that the water retention is caused by the kidney.

10. Green Onion pulse in the left Proximal position

Green Onion pulse in the kidney position indicates infection. Bladder infection is indicated in this case because the Green Onion pulse is basically yang being a little excessive, but in actuality it has no energy inside. So the kidney is carrying some heat, but is deficient. It is a kidney/ bladder infection type, but it could also indicate vaginal infection or any other urogenital system infection due to deficiency, depending on what sector it is found in.ⁱ

11. Urgent pulse at the left Proximal position

This pulse can suggest pain in the lower abdomen, pain in the lower sides of the body, backache, sciatica, and abdominal cramps. It is similar to Wiry pulse, indicating high tension of the yang energy in the kidney element.

12. Slow or mild pulse at the left Proximal position

This pulse indicates a certain amount of kidney jing loss, leading to jing-involved weakness. There could be ringing in the ears, eyesight problems, or a feeling of coldness. When there is a retarded type of Slow pulse coming behind the rhythm, it could definitely cause bad tinnitus.

13. Hiding pulse in the left Proximal position

A Hiding pulse often suggests cramps.ⁱⁱ When the kidney is deficient, a patient could feel either hot or cold. Simple thinking would indicate that because the water element is down the patient might feel hot, but in cases of chronic kidney deficiency they actually have a tendency to feel cold easier because they cannot create enough wei qi. Since the kidney supports the lung and the lung does not function, patients will become sensitive to any kind of weather change.

When kidney energy is so weak, you need to concern yourself with many things. The problem is that kidney energy is always weak, so how you will interpret what the patient is feeling internally at the moment? You have to compare its relationship to other organs and to how it is responding. When the kidney is lacking any real capacity, you will see that it might become either a yin or a yang energy problem. When patients feel a hot flash, it is only because the organ is very sensitive, so when they feel hot they are

really not hot. Right after they have a hot flash they experience a chill; they also get a chill before the hot flash. Thus, the interpretation of kidney deficiency is very flexible.

In this case, when we say that a Hiding pulse could be causing cramps in the abdominal area, it is because there is not enough true vital or Sanjiao heat that turns though the kidney and jing into Sanjiao. While there is a hot flash going to the upper warmer, there is no real heat circulating through the body, particularly the legs, feet, and lower abdomen. They will be cold, the back will be tight and cold, and the patient can also have cramps. In cases of female patients showing this pulsation, you might want to consider very bad cramps with a period—especially when they are losing more *hsueh*, they will have a jing loss of the kidney and they may have more cramps.

14. Soft pulse in the Proximal position

If the kidney pulse is soft, it suggests that there is deficiency of blood and body fluids accompanied by chills and temperature. Being soft here means being very weak; this softness is an ashy type of softness.

15. Weak pulse in the Proximal position

If the kidney pulse is weak and does not show any pressure on the pulse wave, it indicates that patients lack blood and qi and have aches in the bones and joints.

IV. Right Distal Position

1. Floating pulse on the right Distal position

Basically we know that when a pulse is Floating there is not enough yin energy, and somehow it is carrying more yang energy ascending, so there will be movement going up. If a Floating pulse is found in the lung position, it indicates that the lung is being injured by cold and wind. The patient might show coughing, headache, sinus block, perspiration, *zhong feng*, or dry throat.

2. Deep pulse in the right Distal position

A Sinking pulse on the lung position indicates a chronic coughing problem or asthma. In the case of chronic asthma, it should be Sinking but Thin at the same time; there should also be stress coming from Sanjiao toward the lung position that may bypass the spleen, since these patients do not necessarily show a lot of mucus blocks.

3. Slow or Retarded pulse in the right Distal position

A Slow pulse in general indicates that the energy flow is mild, with energy delaying a little. There may be cold energy retention in the chest.

4. Slippery pulse in the right Distal position

If the lung shows a slippery pulse, it indicates vomiting or throat infection. If the

spleen is sending mucus to the lung, then you know it is an immune condition, most likely an allergy. But if the lung has a Slippery quality, indicating mucus on its own, and the spleen is not supporting it, then it indicates that the lung has some kind of water retention, since the lungs have problems expelling the mucus.

5. Sandy pulse in the right Distal position

The classics suggest yang energy deficiency as well as deficiency of blood in the chest for this quality. But when the lung pulse is Sandy, it actually indicates lung depletion without the presence of any mucus—the lung is being exposed and the mucus membrane is drying up with a sensation of burning. There can be a very sharp burning sensation in the lung. When the pulse feels Sandy think of very dry rubber; it is a kind of scaly sensation without any moisture.

6. Excessive pulse in the right Distal position

It indicates that there is heat in the upper warmer, but all it indicates is that there is heat present. Check to see what other qualities it is mixed with and at which depth it is found.

7. Overflowing pulse in the right Distal position

If the lung pulse is overflowing, it indicates dryness of the throat with very high fever.

8. Delicate pulse in the right Distal position

If the lung shows a delicate pulse, it indicates cold in the upper warmer.

9. Wiry pulse in the right Distal position

It suggests contraction and pain in the chest. If it is at the organ depth, then it can be the bronchial spasm of asthma.

10. Green Onion pulse in the right Distal position

It can indicate coughing blood with mucus. A Green Onion pulse basically indicates that there is no yin, but there is still some yang remaining; on its own there is false fire within it, and there is yin still being lost. Thus, Green Onion means that the current activity is losing yin and building yang. Keep in mind that the lung is a yin organ that attracts yang energy, so when it does not have enough yin and is losing it, it cannot attract yang.

11. Tight or Urgent pulse in the right Distal position

This indicates that the lung energy is becoming excessive and the body is aching; it could also indicate a headache with chills.

12. Retarded pulse in the right Distal position

A Retarded pulse is a process of accumulating stress and building blockages. This indicates that cold energy is going upward; consequently, patients can have strong aching in the shoulder and neck areas.

13. Hiding pulse in the right Distal position

Hiding pulse indicates mucus, retention of qi in the chest, and it can indicate retention of some kind of fluid, mucus, or abnormal growth.

14. Soft pulse in the right Distal position

If the lung pulse is Soft, it indicates a lack of yang energy. It feels as though it is there, but every time you try to approach, it is not really there. This Soft pulse feels like moxa ash. It appears solid before you approach it, but it does not give any sensation or resistance; it just gives way. There is no yang energy in the organ, and at the same time there is no jing or blood there to support the yang energy. While it initially seems to take a shape, the condition cannot hold any energy. If it is found in the lung it indicates the pores are constantly open and heat is lost continuously; it is presently losing yang energy.

15. Weak pulse in the right Distal position

If the pulse of the lung is weak, it indicates yang energy is weak in the lung.

V. Right Middle Position

1. Floating pulse on the right Middle position

When the pulse is Floating in the right Middle position, the classics suggest spleen deficiency, expansion of the stomach, indigestion, and tightening of the stomach. Basically, the stomach is having digestive problems. Many times you will feel the pulse reversing from the colon to the stomach and it will hit the stomach like hitting a brick wall—the large intestine is trying to go to the stomach but it does not go in. This indicates a tight and cramping situation accompanied by bloating and gas. These are the three ways in which you could pick up indigestion.

In the first case, we can see where it is blocked because we see where energy is coming from and where it is not being received. In this case, the stomach is not receiving the qi movement from the spleen or the liver—the spleen has to send the enzymes, and the liver, the bile, to the stomach. Because neither is doing it, the stomach pulse is tight and shaking; it is spastic, bloated, and tense. Actually, all you can say about a Floating stomach pulse is that it is always weak.

2. Deep pulse at the right Middle position

If the pulse is Deep at the spleen position, it indicates chest distension and pain around the chest and abdomen. In reality, although not always, when a patient is diabetic, the pulses at the spleen location are Deep and Thin. When you see an extremely Deep pulse, the first thing you suspect is a problem with the pancreas. Since it is Deep, it is already at the pancreatic level; and if it is Thin, it means that it is not responding to other organs, especially the adrenals, so there will be some imbalance between the adrenals and insulin.

The pancreas and the adrenal gland are two important landmarks in the pulses. When you examine them you can infer many things about the endocrine glands and the other organs.

3. Slow pulse at the right Middle position

This movement indicates cold congestion in the stomach, so the patient has no appetite. Sometimes it can also indicate a contraction of the stomach, and thus it can indicate spasms, lack of appetite, stomach pains, and things of that nature.

4. Slippery pulse at the right Middle position

This pulse indicates heat in the spleen. It means that patients will have problems with digestion. In this case, the heat will affect the upper warmer and the patient will feel nausea. It indicates acute indigestion with the patient feeling nauseated.

Indigestion is often an acute inflammation of the spleen. Since the stomach and spleen both have to work hard to digest many kinds of ingredients, they can become congested. This congested energy causes heat leading to inflammation. Light cases of indigestion are usually caused by insufficient production of enzymes and/or too much acid that causes digestion to slow down.

5. Sandy pulse on the right Middle position

This movement indicates stomach ache with indigestion, lack of appetite, the stomach being cold or crampy, vomiting, nausea, lacking blood, or some anemic condition. When the spleen pulse is Sandy, it indicates that the spleen does not have sufficient dampness. Basically, the body lacks fluids, fat, and lubricants. When it is Sandy, expect some problems related to skin and weight. If you see a Sandy, Deep, and Thin pulse you should check the Sanjiao and kidney pulses to see if you find some kind of related thyroid activity.

6. Excessive pulse on the right Middle position

If the spleen pulse is Excessive, it indicates lack of appetite, dryness of the mouth, heat retention in the chest, and diarrhea. What is most significant here are the symptoms of dry mouth and heat in the chest. When the spleen pulse is Excessive, especially when

accompanied by dryness, check to determine if it indicates a diabetic condition.

7. Vast pulse in the right Middle position

This movement indicates some kind of hardening in the stomach and nausea and dry mouth. When the spleen pulse is expanding in that way, it indicates some kind of retention, bloating, and expansion in the stomach and spleen area. It could be just empty tension and bloating, but it sometimes could be an actual mass forming. If the stomach pulse is definitely that way, patients will not have any appetite. A healthy hunger pulse with hunger pain is indicated by the stomach pulse shrinking; while it is doing that it will be tightening while the spleen pulse is getting stronger and rising.

8. Delicate pulse in the right Middle position

This movement indicates cold in and around the stomach, having digestive problems because metabolism is slow, and some cramping. But the most important thing here is that the metabolism is slow; patients might need to work on their weight control.

9. Wiry pulse on the right Middle position

This movement indicates that patients have a cramp, usually caused by coldness. It could also be indigestion, but all you know is that there is tension in and around the stomach.

10. Green Onion pulse on the right Middle position

This movement could indicate loss of blood through the digestive tract, or a deep hematoma around the stomach and spleen.

11. Tight or Urgent pulse around the right Middle position

This movement indicates that there is a strong contraction. When it is tense in the spleen position, it could also indicate some kind of excessiveness. If this movement is Tight and Thin, it is more likely to be hypoglycemia than diabetes.

12. Slow pulse in the right Middle position

When this movement is Slow, it indicates that some perverse energy is moving into the connective tissue, or some cold condition of the stomach. When it reaches a Retarded mode, there will be some kind of deep aching around the middle jiao. Until we compare it to other positions, we do not know what it is going to represent.

13. Soft pulse in the right Middle position

This movement indicates that patients lack vital body fluid and jing. Basically they are drying up because they are losing moisture.

14. Hiding pulse in the right Middle position

This movement suggests that there is some material stuck in the stomach that causes indigestion because the stomach does not move. Another indication could be diarrhea with deficient syndromes like cold sweats and cold hands and feet. Basically, there is an extreme coldness and the stomach is not warm, so the patient cannot digest very much. Whatever you put in them will make them feel disquieted. In this case, the stomach is not cramping simply because it does not have enough action.

15. Weak pulse in the right Middle position

This movement simply indicates the weakness of the stomach and spleen.

VI. Right Proximal Position

There are many classical interpretations as to what Sanjiaoⁱⁱⁱ and Mingmen are. Basically, we see the Sanjiao as the nervous system and the Mingmen as the endocrine system. Sanjiao is the overall organization in the body, associated with the three jiaos and fluid control. The other way to divide Sanjiao and Mingmen is into systems: cardio-respiratory, digestive and urogenital, basically heavy water-type element, earth-type element, and fire element. In order to understand the Sanjiao, we have to make very general divisions.

Our mind is connected to the brain function and the continuous transmissions to and from the spinal cord and all branches of the nervous system. Sanjiao is not limited to the nervous system, but we take advantage of the Sanjiao action and we often look at the nervous system activity. In the old times, when they did not talk about nerves, they would just call it Sanjiao and discuss how heat and qi distribution were behaving. Because we understand the nervous system, this is the part of the pulse we can best relate to the nerves and nerve conditions. For example when the Sanjiao is very Wiry, it could mean that the heat is so strong; it could also mean that patients are very hot nerve-wise. When Sanjiao is active, it indicates that patients' mental activity is very high; and when the Sanjiao is down it indicates that they are mentally tired. Sanjiao can also indicate the amount of heat present.

In order to make it more specific, when we are looking at the Sanjiao as the central nervous system, we are looking at the patients' brain activity, their mind related to the nervous system, how much emotional stress the mind is adding to the central nervous

system, and what kind of burden the nervous system is under. This is how to conceptualize the Sanjiao as the central nervous system.

We use it as a mirror. Sanjiao is in the perfect position to be used as a reflector for the upper, middle, and lower jiao activity; heat distribution; and how the central nervous system influences the body from the Chinese perspective.

Looking at Sanjiao as yang and Mingmen as yin, we have a functional pair. The endocrine glands are involved more with hormones (yin/substances), while the nervous system is the communicative organ that uses electrical activity (yang/function). But when we talk about the Mingmen in pulse diagnosis, it is more related to the classical Mingmen located between the kidneys being activated by Sanjiao function or mental activity. When you look at the adrenal glands in the pulse, you must also check hypothalamic, pancreatic, and thyroid activity.^{iv}

Thus, Mingmen is basically a mirror reflecting the overall balance of the endocrine system. Therefore, these two organs are broad qi and jing indicators that we use as the mirrors of the nervous and endocrine systems. The Mingmen looks at the whole system, as does the Sanjiao. You cannot pinpoint what kind of mentality a patient has—rather, you are looking at the mentality as a whole, and then you must compare other pulse positions to pinpoint what is happening. For example, if the liver is sending a strong signal to the Sanjiao, and the Sanjiao is accepting it, the patients are angry, and they know that they are angry. If the spleen is sending energy to the Sanjiao, they are most likely missing something or someone, or they can be in love. (If you know someone who is in love, check his or her pulses and verify it. If it is so, the spleen has to be sending out to the Sanjiao. If it is opposite—from the Sanjiao to the spleen, at the Sanjiao level—the person is intentionally trying to be in love. He or she is “calling out” the emotion, but the emotion is not ruling the intelligence as it does in real love.)

If you use this interrelationship between Sanjiao and the organs, you can see if the nerves are ruling an organ or the organ is ruling the nerve. If the Mingmen is balanced with the Sanjiao that is good, but the Mingmen can be totally separate, and as soon as the Mingmen has a different pulsation from the Sanjiao, you immediately know that there is something wrong with the endocrine system.

See my article, “Organs and Their Associated Pulses,” for more details of this position.

Endnotes

i. Jiang Jing commented that infection is only one of the possibilities that can accompany this pulse, but one thing that you must clearly understand is that the energy is formed the way you feel it. Even though we repeat this idea over and over, it is necessary to fully understand it in order to have a clear understanding of pulse diagnosis. In terms of energy we are performing *Neiguan*, which means that we are looking inward inside the body, so when we are checking the kidney position, what we are feeling from it is what the kidney is feeling right now. Put yourself in the kidney position and analyze these accordingly from that perspective. Kidney, for instance, is a water organ with a Shaoyin meridian as its branch. Performing such-and-such a job, when it feels like this, what kind of problem can it represent? What you are feeling is the energy stress that the organ is getting. Try to look at it that way and interpret what it means. This is the most basic and clear way to understand pulse reading—it is not as if a certain wave form means this and only this; the meaning and the interpretation of the wave forms changes, depending on the position in which it is found.

ii. Jiang Jing commented that this example is interesting because kidney is a water element and this case refers to the kidney as a yang organ lacking yang energy. When the pulse is so weak, the water element yin is deficient; but it simultaneously indicates yang deficiency because when the kidney does not show a pulse there is no yang energy—yin creates yang in the Taichi diagram. That is why the term False Fire is so funny—when the kidney is deficient and the patient starts feeling hot, it is not really heat; it is false heat that is kind of splitting and floating up because the bottom part is so empty. It works as perverse heat, but it is not a real heat, it is contracted by lacking something.

iii. See Stephen Birch's article, "What is the Sanjiao, Triple Burner? An Exploration," in the Winter 2003 issue of *The European Journal of Oriental Medicine*, 49–56.

iv. See my article, "Organs and Their Associated Pulses in the Dong Han System."