Dysentery (Lì Jí)

Characterized by frequent diarrhea accompanied by tenesmus, abdominal pain, and stool mixed with mucus, pus and blood. Often occurs in the summer and fall. Contagious varieties in certain parts of the world account for epidemic outbreaks.

 Relevant Biomedical Diseases
- Bacillary dysentery
- Amoebic dysentery
- Viral dysentery
- Food poisoning
- IBD

TCM Etiology and Pathology
- Epidemic pestilential Toxin attacks the intestines -> impaired Qi and Blood flow and tissue destruction -> diarrhea with mucus/pus and blood, abdominal pain and tenesmus
- Exogenous Damp-Heat attacks intestines -> impaired Qi and Blood flow and tissue destruction -> diarrhea with mucus/pus and blood, abdominal pain and tenesmus
- Improper diet -> injury of the intestines by Damp-Heat or Cold and Damp -> impaired Qi and Blood flow and tissue destruction -> diarrhea with mucus/pus and blood, abdominal pain and tenesmus

Differential Diagnosis of Similar Disorders
Bloody Stool: Hematochezia is a common symptom of many disorders, including dysentery. However, in the case of dysentery, hematochezia will be accompanied by tenesmus and abdominal pain.

Warm-febrile disease: Loss of consciousness with convulsions can be caused by acute Heat Toxicity consuming the Yin and generating internal Wind in Epidemic Toxic Dysentery, or caused by Summer Heat harassing the Heart/Spirit in Warm-febrile disease. However, Summer Heat harassing the Heart/Spirit usually does not manifest with diarrhea.

Acupuncture for Dysentery
Primary Points: ST 25, ST 37
Supplementary Points:
Damp-Heat: LI 4, LI 11, SP 9
Epidemic Toxic: LI 4, GV 14, Shixuan (bleed)
Cold-Dampness: LI 4, SP 9, CV 12, CV 6
Yin vacuity: KI 6, SP 6
Vacuity Cold: CV 4, CV 8, BL 20, BL 23
Chronic Intermittent: CV 4, ST 36

Clinical Tips for Treating Dysentery
“Regulate the Qi to alleviate tenesmus; quicken the Blood to resolve pus.” Tenesmus is a subjective sensation of urgency, cramping and heaviness of the rectum. It is caused by Qi stagnation and Dampness accumulation. Therefore, by facilitating Qi flow, Dampness can be resolved and tenesmus will be alleviated. Generation of pus is a result of the decomposition of tissues due to Blood stasis and Heat accumulation. By quickening the Blood to restore proper circulation, damaged tissues can be healed.

Clinical Tips for Treating Dysentery

While antibiotics have greatly decreased the incidence and severity of dysentery, long-term usage or misapplication of antibiotics may induce an imbalance of normal bacterial flora in the intestines, complicating recovery. Therefore, for chronic, stubborn, drug-resistant or complicated dysentery, herbal therapy has considerable value.
TCM Pattern Differentiation

**Damp-Heat Dysentery**
- **Signs:** abdominal pain, tenesmus, stools mixed with mucus/pus and blood
- **Symptoms:** burning sensation around the anus, dark scanty urine, thirst, fever
- **Tongue:** yellow, greasy coat
- **Pulse:** slippery and rapid
- **Treatment Principle:** Clear Heat, transform Dampness,
- **Herbal Treatment:** Shao Yao Tang (Peony Decoction)
  
  [Bai Shao (15g), Dang Gui (6g), Mu Xiang (10g), Bing Lang (10g), Da Huang (10g), Huang Qin (15g), Huang Lian (6g), Rou Gui (4g), Gan Cao (6g)]

**Epidemic Toxic Dysentery**
- **Signs:** acute onset with severe abdominal pain and tenesmus, frequent diarrhea with more blood than mucus/pus
- **Symptoms:** high fever, significant thirst, severe headache, irritability, loss of consciousness with convulsions in severe cases
- **Tongue:** dark red with dry yellow coating
- **Pulse:** rapid, slippery
- **Treatment Principles:** Clear Heat, cool the Blood, resolve toxins
- **Herbal Treatment:** Bai Tou Weng Tang (Pulsatilla Decoction)
  
  [Bai Tou Weng (30g), Qin Pi (15g.), Huang Lian (15g.), Huang Bai (15g.)]

**Cold-Dampness Dysentery**
- **Signs:** diarrhea or sticky stools with mucus/pus and blood (mucus/pus more predominant than blood) abdominal pain, tenesmus
- **Symptoms:** poor appetite, abdominal and epigastric distention, heaviness in the head and body, fullness in abdomen
- **Tongue:** pale with white, greasy coating
- **Pulse:** soft and moderate
- **Treatment Principles:** Warm and dissipate Cold-Dampness, strengthen the Spleen, rectify Qi and Blood
- **Herbal Treatment:** Wei Ling Tang
  
  [Cang Zhu (10g.), Hou Po (15g.), Bai Zhu (10g.) Fu Ling (15g.), Zhu Ling (10g.), Chen Pi (10g.), Gui Zhi (10g.), Ze Xie (10g.), Zhi Gan Cao (4g.)]

**Yin Vacuity Dysentery**
- **Signs:** chronic diarrhea with thick mucus/pus and blood or diarrhea with only bright blood, burning pain around the umbilicus, straining to defecate with incomplete sensation after b.m.
- **Symptoms:** poor appetite, restlessness, dry mouth
- **Tongue:** red tongue with scanty or geographic coating
- **Pulse:** thin and rapid
- **Treatment Principles:** Nourish Yin and Clear Heat to relieve dysentery
- **Herbal Treatment:** Zhu Che Wan (Carriage-Halting Pill)
  
  [Huang Lian (9g.), Dang Gui (6g.), E Jiao (6g.), Pao Jiang (1.5g)]

**Vacuity Cold Dysentery**
- **Signs:** chronic, watery diarrhea mixed with mucus, fecal incontinence in severe cases, dull abdominal pain which can be relieved by pressure and warmth
- **Symptoms:** poor appetite, fatigue, cold extremities with overall sensation of cold, weakness in low back and knees
- **Tongue:** pale tongue with thin white coating
- **Pulse:** deep, thin and weak
- **Treatment Principles:** Warm and supplement the Spleen and Kidney to dispel Cold and resolve Dampness.
- **Herbal Treatment:** Fu Zi Li Zhong Wan (Aconite Center-Rectifying Decoction)
  
  [Fu Zi (10g.), Ren Shen (10g.), Bai Zhu (10g.), Gan Jiang (3g.), Zhi Ga Cao (6g.)]

**Chronic Intermittent Dysentery**
- **Signs:** recurrent, intermittent dysentery showing no improvement over an extended time, abdominal pain, tenesmus, stools mixed with pus and blood during flare ups
- **Symptoms:** tiredness, fatigue, lethargy and loss of appetite
- **Tongue:** pale tongue with greasy coating
- **Pulse:** thin, weak
- **Treatment Principles:** Warm and strengthen Spleen, clear Heat rectify Qi, remove stagnation
- **Herbal Treatment:** Lian Li Tang (Coptis Rectifying Decoction)
  
  [Ren Shen (12g.), Bai Zhu (9g.), Huang Lian (9g.), Fu Ling (9g.), Zhi Gan Cao (6g.)]