

Editorial

Daniel Maxwell



I heard the news today, oh boy.

Pandemic, climate emergency, war, populist demagogues, Islamic death cults, police brutality, cost of living, 'stagflation' ... need I go on? It's tough out there. In our clinics, we witness our patients struggling with the grim onslaught.

In some ways, of course, such suffering can force us to cut through the noise and consciously focus on what is important, good, true and beautiful - the simple feeling of being alive, the sap-green of the leaves outside the window, the smell of my dog's paws, my son's tiny freckles, the warm goodness of a cup of tea as it enlivens the mouth and stomach ... So recently, after a particularly long day of fairly heavy conversations with patients, I looked to gladden my heart by reminding myself of what I appreciate about my job as a Chinese medicine physician.

Earlier in the day I had seen a young woman who came with nine months of right-sided neck and shoulder pain, that had stubbornly resisted massage, osteopathy and physiotherapy. She was thin, nervous and brittle, with icy hands and feet, dry skin and a minute pulse. She wanted to know what I perceived about her condition and what might be done about it. A *Dang Gui Si Ni Tang* pattern I thought, for sure; this patient was living with dry ice in her veins. I was reminded of a David Attenborough documentary in which time-lapse photography captured the moment when water returned to the parched, dusty depths of the dry season of a great African plain; a trickle at first, but soon an unrestrained flood, from which the grass and other plants began to sprout. The green shoots brought back the hungry wildebeest, which in turn gave a lifeline to a shrivelled and desperate pride of lions. Before long the whole ecosystem was flourishing. Back to the icy-dry patient - I could see



what the return of liquid-warm lifeblood would mean for this woman - not just for her neck and shoulder pain, but for her whole experience of her body and her being.

Many transformations of this kind happen daily in our acupuncture and Chinese medicine clinics - indeed, many are recorded in these pages. In one sense they are as ordinary and natural as a change of season, but to the person experiencing them they can be profound and life-changing. The thawing of life held in permafrost. A shaft of Heart-shen sunlight piercing a glowering cloud canopy of depression. A cool mist of moisture quenching a blazing forest fire of agitation. How lucky we are to be able to provide such transformative experiences for others. 