

# HOMESICKNESS

by Leon Hammer, MD

Several years ago I received an Email from a young man from British Columbia stating that he was an émigré from Thailand who had been in Canada about a year during which time he developed all of the symptoms of Chronic Fatigue shortly after arriving. These include extraordinary and easy fatigue making it impossible for him to function. Other symptoms were poor sleep, problems with memory, concentration and attention, muscle pain, migrating joint pain unrelated to weather, diet or stress, sore throats with no signs of infection, lymph node swelling unremarkable on biopsy and headaches.

Writing for advice after a year of every diagnostic exam and available allopathic and alternative therapy [including acupuncture] he found had no relief from his symptoms and somehow found my name. I replied that at such a distance I could not be of any help.

I cannot explain what made me ask if he had these symptoms in his home country, Thailand, and he replied, never. No one in his family in Canada suffered a similar condition.

A thought crossed my mind for no explainable reason that made me ask if he could safely return to his homeland for a few months. He replied that he could and I suggested that he go home for three months, return and contact me.

Several months later I heard from him saying that in Thailand all of his symptoms disappeared and on returning to Canada they resumed, however somewhat mitigated. I asked him if he could every few months return to Thailand for a month at a time and then come back to Canada and he said that he could.

Over the course of the next year he flew back to his homeland for shorter and shorter periods and staying in Canada for longer periods. Each time his symptoms diminished and at the end of a year they disappeared completely.

About a year later I heard in a similar fashion from a young woman from Iran with the same complaints and medical history. The thought occurred to me that we try having her going back and forth to Iran as we did with the young man from Thailand. The results after about a year were the same.

I call this illness 'homesickness' and conceive it as a condition of the Heart in which the spirit [shen] has retreated, perhaps into the Pericardium, associated perhaps with 'Fear of the Unknown' and Heart shock. While I never took the pulses of these two people or ever met them, I would guess that their Left Distal Positions would be either Flat and Muffled, signs that the Heart is 'closed' and qi severely stagnant. It has been my clinical experience that almost any medical condition is possible when the Heart cannot adequately nourish every cell of the body and have found as unlikely conditions as sinusitis respond favorably to treating the Heart and Circulation. Migrating joint pain is one of the important symptoms of Heart Qi deficiency [from stagnation as well as depletion].

Later I learned from a colleague that a Native American shaman had instructed her that when she moved far from her native place she should take that soil and while away dip her wet finger into it and put the soil in her mouth once a day; another cure for 'homesickness' that in my experience is as real as any identifiable illness.