

Big-picture gynecology

CHANNELING THE MOON: A Translation and Discussion of Qi Zhongfu's Hundred Questions on Gynecology, by Sabine Wilms, Happy Goat Productions, 2019, paperback, 284 pages



Review: Naomi Jankowski

THE BEAUTIFULLY TITLED *Channeling the Moon* is a thorough translation of the first 14 questions of Qi Zhongfu's *Nu Ke Bai Wen* (Hundred Questions on Gynecology). The book is well laid out with a translation of each question, followed by a discussion by Wilms, and illustrated with black-and-white photography. There is a lengthy historical introduction of the origins of gynecology in China, and the book also has a preface and clinical notes written by Sharon Weizenbaum.

While this is not a clinical reference, its narrative alludes to some clinical gems for even the most pragmatic practitioner. It is a book to be enjoyed for its language and translations of large concepts.

Rather than listing groups of formulas to be used in clinic, the translation of the 14 questions, as well as their discussion, brings up ideas that are useful to expand fundamental knowledge of the menstrual cycle.

For instance, question five, *Why do we call it menstrual period?* references a link between the periodic arrival of menstruation and “the ebb and flow of the tides and the cycle of the moon”. An interpretation of menstruation and its punctual arrival, or lack of, demonstrates “the periodicity of yin and yang in the entire body”.

Weizenbaum adds a clinical commentary to this, drawing a link between the cyclical nature of the tide or moon and the rise and fall of hormones such as FSH, LH and

progesterone. While the menstruation itself is visible, behind the scenes the lining is thickening until the egg is released, causing a breakdown of the lining, and the eventual period. Wilms' text helps us understand that this invisible work to prompt the period is fundamental to gynecology. While focusing on the details of the period itself is crucial, we also need to see the bigger picture.

Questions six to 14 then become more practically applicable, with herbal formulas discussing various menstrual irregularities. Weizenbaum's additions to Wilms' discussions are invaluable, and prompt excellent thoughts to consider clinically. I particularly enjoyed her formula note regarding the principle of moving blood to stop bleeding. Weizenbaum brings to mind an example of babysitting her friend's son. The boy had a blood nose that would not stop after an impact to the area. Weizenbaum deduced the cause of bleeding was blood stasis. She asked the boy to blow his nose with some force into a wad of tissues. A big blood clot came out, and the bleeding stopped shortly after—a case that sticks in mind and can easily be extrapolated for gynecological cases in clinic.

Wilms excludes metric measurements of formulas to prevent her book appearing more of a clinical reference than intended. Rather, she encourages the reader to use the formulas listed to give an indication of proportions of herbs required. With this in mind, *Channeling the Moon* is for practitioners interested in gynecology and is a great resource to be enjoyed over a cup of tea after a long day with patients. The concepts invoked bring up questions and subtle wisdom to bring in to your daily clinical approach.