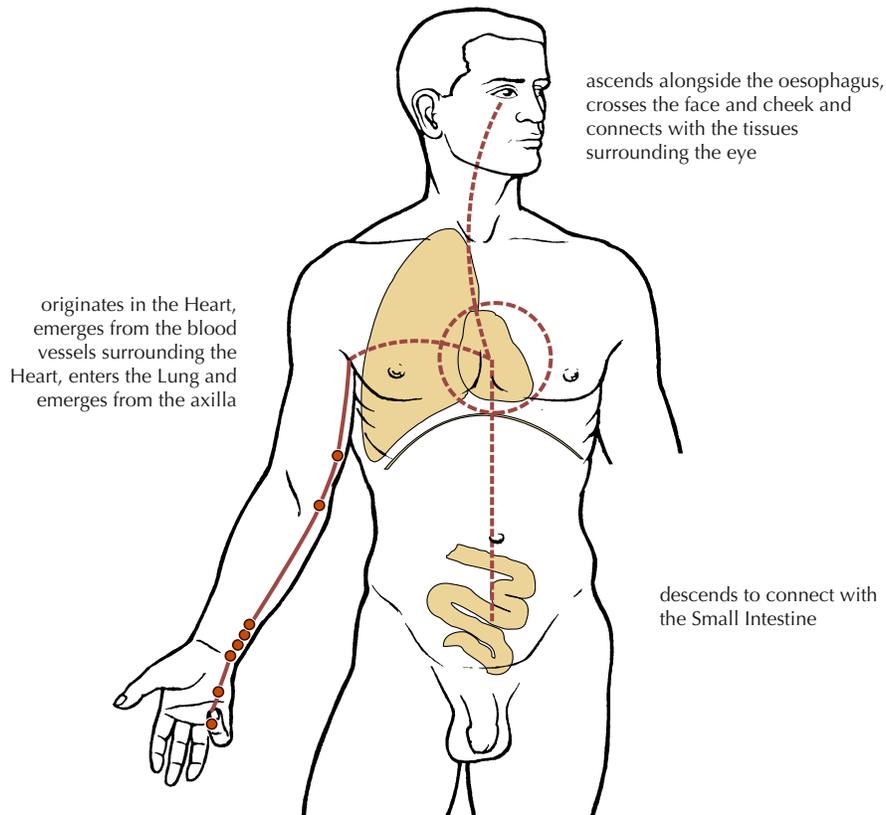

手少陰心經

THE HEART CHANNEL
OF HAND SHAOYIN

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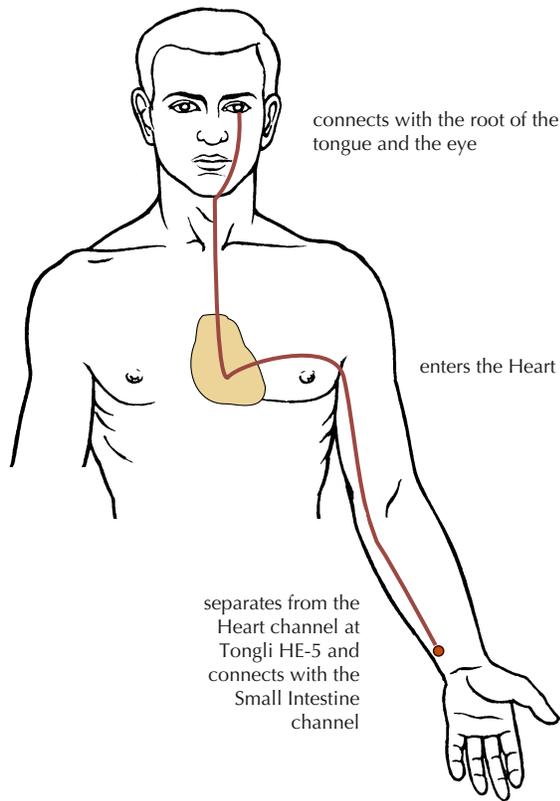
The Heart primary channel

THE HEART PRIMARY CHANNEL

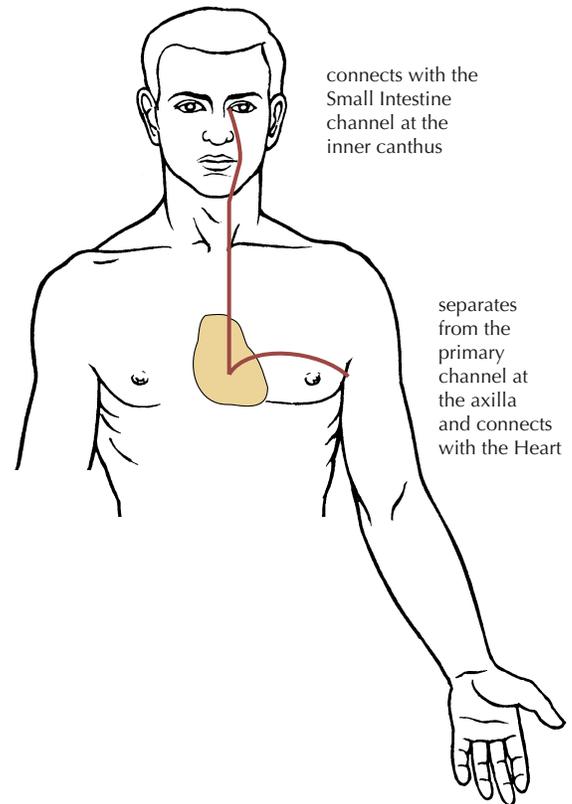
- originates in the Heart,
- emerges from the system of blood vessels surrounding the Heart and descends through the diaphragm to connect with the Small Intestine,
- a branch separates from the Heart, ascends alongside the oesophagus and then across the face and cheek to connect with the tissues surrounding the eye,
- another branch travels directly from the Heart to the Lung and descends to emerge from the axilla at Jiquan HE-1, then
- travels along the medial aspect of the upper arm (medial to the Lung and Pericardium channels) to the elbow at Shaohai HE-3,
- descends along the antero-medial aspect of the lower arm to the pisiform bone of the wrist at Shenmen HE-7,
- travels through the palm and along the radial side of the little finger to terminate at the radial corner of the nail at Shaochong HE-9.

The Heart primary channel connects with the following zangfu: Heart, Lung and Small Intestine.

The Heart primary channel meets with other channels at the following points: None.



The Heart luo-connecting channel



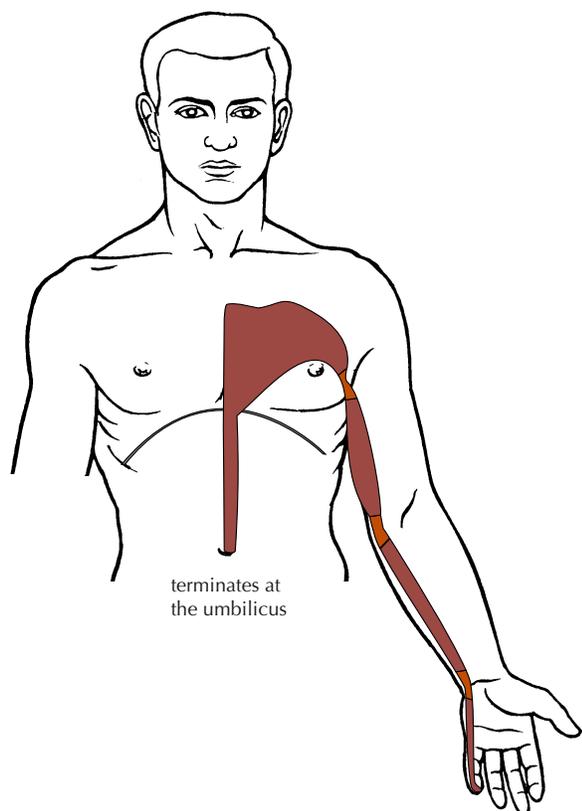
The Heart divergent channel

THE HEART LUO-CONNECTING CHANNEL

- separates from the Heart channel at Tongli HE-5 and connects with the Small Intestine channel,
- follows the Heart channel to the Heart zang then continues to the root of the tongue and the eye.

THE HEART DIVERGENT CHANNEL

- separates from the primary channel at the axillary fossa,
- enters the chest and connects with the Heart,
- ascends along the throat and emerges on the face, connecting with the Small Intestine channel at the inner canthus.



The Heart sinew channel

THE HEART SINEW CHANNEL

- originates at the radial aspect of the little finger and binds at the pisiform bone of the wrist,
- ascends to bind first at the medial aspect of the elbow and then at the axilla,
- enters the axilla, intersects the Lung sinew channel and travels medially across the breast region to the centre of the chest,
- descends across the diaphragm to terminate at the umbilicus.

Pathological symptoms of the Heart sinew channel

Internal tension, accumulation below the Heart, pain, cramping and strain along the course of the channel.

DISCUSSION

The Heart channel of hand shaoyin is interiorly-exteriorly coupled with the Small Intestine channel, and paired with the Kidney channel of foot shaoyin according to six channel theory. The Heart-Small Intestine relationship is further strengthened by the fact that:

- the Heart primary channel connects with the Small Intestine fu.
- the Heart divergent channel connects with the Small Intestine channel at the inner canthus.
- the Heart luo-connecting channel meets with the Small Intestine primary channel.

In addition, it is important to note that:

- a branch of the Heart primary channel ascends alongside the oesophagus.
- a branch of the Heart primary channel connects with the tissues surrounding the eye, the Heart divergent channel ascends to the inner canthus, and the Heart luo-connecting channel ascends to the eye.
- the Heart divergent channel emerges on the face.
- the Heart luo-connecting channel ascends to the root of the tongue.

The Heart has five principal functions:

- governing the blood and blood vessels
- housing the spirit
- opening into the tongue
- governing sweating
- manifesting in the complexion

It is by virtue of these functions, and the channel pathways listed above, that many of the actions and indications of the points of the Heart channel can be explained. These can be summarised as:

- Treating pain of the chest and Heart and disorders of Heart rhythm. According to the *Essential Questions* "All blood pertains to the Heart"¹ and "The Heart dominates the blood vessels of the body"². The qi of the Heart and Lung (with which the Heart channel connects) dominate the gathering qi and thus the circulation of the blood through the chest as well as the rhythmical beating of the heart. All the points of the Heart channel (with the exception of Qingling HE-2) therefore treat either pain of the Heart and chest, or palpitations and other disorders of heart rhythm. Acute pain of the Heart and chest may radiate along the Heart channel in the left arm, down to the abdomen (Heart primary and sinew channels) or up to the throat (Heart primary and divergent channels). In current clinical practice, points of the Pericardium channel are mostly favoured for pain of the chest and Heart, whilst disorders of Heart rhythm are treated by selecting points from both channels.

- Regulating and calming the spirit. According to the *Spiritual Pivot*³ “The Heart controls the vessels; the vessels are the residence of the spirit”, whilst the *Essential Questions*⁴ says “The Heart stores the spirit”. Points of the Heart channel, especially Tongli HE-5 and Shenmen HE-7, are among the most important of the acupuncture points to harmonise and calm the spirit, whether it loses its harmony due to deficiency and consequent lack of nourishment, to agitation by heat and fire, or to being obscured by phlegm.
- Treating disorders of the tongue and speech, including loss of voice, stiffness of the tongue, and painful and swollen tongue.
- Treating disorders of the throat such as pain, swelling and congestion.
- Treating disorders of the eyes. In addition to the Heart channel connections to the eyes, this may be explained by the fact that the Heart belongs to sovereign fire and the points of the Heart channel may be used to clear heat from any part of the body, in the case of the eyes manifesting as redness, swelling and pain.
- Treating various disorders of the face and complexion, thus for example Ma Dan-yang says of Shenmen HE-7 “when excess ... the head, cheeks and face are red, when deficient there is ... an expressionless face”.