

# Understanding and Treating Long COVID: Successful Chinese Medicine Strategies

MARCH.09.2026

**Dr. Brendan Kelly, L. Ac., DAOM, Herbalist**

Osher Whole Health Connect | University of Vermont

*From the article titled*

# “Long COVID Response to Classical Chinese Medicine”

Journal of Integrative Medicine | April 2025

# Realities of Long COVID

**32,000**  
in VT with  
Long COVID\*

**18-20**  
**MILLION**  
in US with  
Long COVID\*

**\$175-200**  
**BILLION**  
in US lost wages  
> 1% of GDP\*

**3-4**  
**MILLION**  
in US applying  
for disability\*

And **NO** effective **conventional** treatment to date.

\* ESTIMATED

# Long COVID » Over 200 Symptoms

## INCLUDING:

- Fatigue
- Cognitive deficits:  
attention/memory (“brain fog”)
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath, cough
- Heart palpitations
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Aches: head/muscle/body
- Digestive issues
- *New* loss of taste/smell
- Post-exertion malaise:  
physical or mental



To **effectively** treat a global, multi-organ, multi-system condition we need a **holistic** view.

# How do we begin?

*Do we **standardize** or **customize** treatment?*

*Do we treat the **branch** or the **root**?*

# We begin with understanding.

We can begin by  
**understanding** the nature of COVID  
from a Chinese medicine **perspective**.

# Traditions »« Treatment

Chinese medicine **encompasses**  
a **diversity of traditions**.

These diverse traditions can **treat**  
a **diversity of conditions**.

# Understanding COVID:

COVID often starts with chills,  
then shifts to alternating chills and fever:

*Cold transforming into heat.*

INDICATES:

**School of Cold**/*Shang Han Lun*

# Shang Han Lun: School of Cold

{ Original text over 1,800 years old }

## PERSPECTIVE:

*Viral infections are often cold / Cold transforms into heat*

## CHINESE MEDICINE DIAGNOSIS:

*External Wind Cold Pernicious Influence*

# Understanding the Conditions

Treating COVID and Long COVID based on a Chinese medicine also includes an understanding of the **conditions**.

# What are the Conditions?

**PERSONAL:**  
We are **HOT**

**SOCIAL:**  
Culture = **HOT**

**ECOLOGICAL:**  
Planet = **HOT**

## **HEAT**

143° India  
April 2022

## **FLOODING**

Vermont: 2022, 2023  
Florida and Appalachia:  
2022, 2023, 2024

## **DROUGHT/FIRE**

California: Increasing  
intensity since 2020

***Heat** creates more intense and **destructive weather.***

***Heat** makes us susceptible to **epidemics/pandemics.***

# Sickness in a Hot World

**COVID** = epidemic/pandemic

**Epidemic/Pandemic** = systemic sickness from **Heat**

INDICATES:

**School of Heat**/*Wen Bing Xue*

# Wen Bing Xue: **School of Heat**

## **PERSPECTIVE:**

*Epidemic = widespread, fast-moving sickness from **Heat***

*Epidemic = due to large-scale, macro **imbalance***

# Blending Traditions: **Cold** to **Heat**



*Treating **cold** in a **hot** world  
requires blending perspectives.*

ADDITIONAL PERSPECTIVE

## Wai Ke: Neurology Tradition

**Signs of Internal Wind:**

*tremors, twitches, migraines, seizures*

**Wind and Heat Connection:**

*Both conditions are forms of overstimulation.*

**Wai Ke can address overstimulation by Wind.**

## IMPORTANCE of DIET and LIFESTYLE

# What to EMPHASIZE:

### FOOD

- Animal Protein:  
*beef, pork, eggs*
- Root Vegetables
- Soups/Stews
- Local, seasonal,  
natural, organic food

### LIFESTYLE

- *Sleep enough:*  
9 to 12 hours nightly
- *Live a YIN life:*  
Embrace relaxation

## IMPORTANCE of DIET and LIFESTYLE

# What to AVOID:

### FOOD

- Coffee
- Onion/Garlic
- Ginger
- Cayenne
- Turmeric
- Nutmeg
- Chicken/Turkey
- Dairy
- Gluten
- Tropical Fruit:  
*oranges, mango,  
papaya, coconut*
- White Sugar

### LIFESTYLE

*Limit or Eliminate:*

- Stress, Stimulation
- Exercise, Exertion
- Screen Time



# **The Opportunity of Long COVID:** **Personal and Cultural Transformation**