

# *Carotid-Radial Pulse Ratio Method*

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The *Spiritual Axis (Ling Shu)* begins with an admonition that has been repeated by practitioners throughout the millennia. An acupuncturist must check the patient's pulse before needling in order to know the condition of the patient and develop the diagnosis, treatment plan and treatment.

This paper discusses the application of carotid-radial pulse ratios to clinical practice. The method is often called “*jingei*” in Japanese and “*renying-cunkuo*” in Chinese. The premodern world of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) is the timeframe where this medical knowledge was placed into textual form within *The Yellow Emperor's Classic (Huang Di Nei Jing)*, *Spiritual Axis (Ling Shu)*, and the *Difficult Classic (Nan Jing)*.

## *Brief History*

Early Han Dynasty literature attributed to the Han Dynasty such as the Yellow Emperor's Canon (*Huang Di Nei Jing*) discusses these practices. The *renying* (carotid artery) and *cunkou* (radial artery) pulses are discussed in *Simple Questions (Su Wen)* Chapter 9 and *Spiritual Axis (Ling Shu)* Chapters 9, 19, 48 (1-3).

Chapter 48 of the *Spiritual Axis (Ling Shu)* extends the concept of *yin* and *yang* into the channel systems. The radial pulses represent the *yin* channels and the carotid pulses represent the *yang* channels. Breaking this down into the six divisions, the radial pulse correlates with the three *yin* channels (*taiyin*, *shaoyin*, and *jueyin*) while the carotid pulse correlates with the three *yang* channels (*taiyang*, *shaoyang*, and *yangming*). The radial and carotid pulses are also called *yin/yang* pulses.

## *Rationale*

Providing a 10,000 foot view upon the human condition, the carotic-radial pulse is the largest and most summative perspective upon *yin* and *yang* conditions within the human body. All other methods parse at levels of the nine palaces, 8 extraordinary vessels, visceral and bowels and three treasures. Having said this, the radial and carotid artery pulse method is a useful perspective on physiology. The Koreans have contributed a notion of cerebral blood flow. The authors of the *Yellow Emperor's Classic (Huang Di Nei Jing)* suggested that the six channels and the corresponding viscera and bowels as well as prognostics can be evaluated using the carotid and radial arteries pulse assessment.

All phenomena including disease can be analyzed using the dialectics of *yin* and *yang* theory. *Yin* and *yang* theory form an important foundation for building knowledge in Traditional Chinese Medicine, and it is extended to the practice of pulse diagnosis. *Ling Shu* Chapters 19 suggests that the *cunkou* pulse represents *yin* and the carotid pulse

### *Interpretation*

The ideal carotid and radial pulse should have three features. First, the carotid and radial pulses should have even ratio force and volume. Second, they should correlate with the seasons as conveyed in Chapter 48 of the *Spiritual Axis (Ling Shu)*. During spring and summer the carotid pulse is slightly larger as it is located in the *yang* aspect of the body. During fall and winter, the radial should be slightly larger than the carotid. Third, there should be no irregular shifts in force, volume or rate of arrival between the carotid and radial pulses.

Chapter 9 in both the *Simple Questions (Su Wen)* and the *Spiritual Axis (Ling Shu)* discuss pathology relative to the carotid-radial pulse method. Relative excess conditions of the channels can be assessed using the radial and carotid pulses.(8). The yin viscera are evaluated using the radial artery. The yang bowels are evaluated using the carotid artery. It is the force rather than size of the pulse that is used to assess the involved channel.

The disordered channel is:

1. *Shaoyang* if the carotid pulse is two times stronger than radial;
2. *Taiyang* if the carotid pulse is three times stronger than radial;
3. *Yangming* if the carotid pulse is four times stronger than the radial;
4. *Yang* is extremely strong that it can not communicate with *yin* if the carotid pulse is five times stronger than radial.

The disordered channel is:

1. *Jueyin* if the radial pulse is two times stronger than carotid;
2. *Shaoyin* if the radial pulse is three times stronger than carotid;
3. *Taiyin* if the radial pulse is four times stronger than carotid;
4. *Yin* is extremely strong that it can not communicate with *yang* if the radial pulse is five times stronger than carotid.

If both radial and carotid pulse are 5 times stronger than normal, it means that death is imminent. If it is the carotid which is five times larger, "yang is being rejected." If it is the radial which is five times greater force, "yin is being closed." (3, p 63) If both the radial and carotid arteries are four or more times forceful than normal, it is called "*guan ke*," heaven and earth are obstructed, the pre-and post-natal jing qi are seriously damaged and there is risk of death. The qualities are also used for purposes of prognosis. If both pulses are firm and slippery, the disease will remain chronic and difficult to resolve. If the pulse is soft in coming, the disease will resolve soon.

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