

Preface

Placenta Therapy

In my practice I employ placenta therapy for various diseases. I first learned of it in 2001 when I worked at the Teppozu Clinic in Hacchobori, Tokyo.

The placenta is an organ temporarily created during pregnancy to protect and support a fetus in the mother's body. Placenta therapy refers to treatments using placenta essence extracted from human and animal placentas.

I had completed clinical resident training in both Western and Eastern medicine when I began working at the Teppozu Clinic. I was attracted by a clinic that employed both.

I remember that the doctor who introduced me to the clinic said it was engaged in placenta therapy, something not yet familiar. "You'd better stay away from that," she said.

During my work there, however, I saw patients undergoing placenta therapy and getting better. I came to see that the placenta is effective on various diseases that barely respond to modern medicines. I believe *seeing is believing*. I also believe that if the benefit to the patient is clear, and if a treatment is safe, then it should be used even if "scientific evidence" cannot yet fully explain it. I started using placenta therapy on my own patients and saw the same results.

At present, placenta therapy is as much a part of my practice as are Western and Eastern medicines. When I see my patients getting better, I am thankful to have come to know of it.

I hope readers of this may benefit from the same realization.

What is the Placenta?

Connects the Developing Fetus to the Mother

- A temporary organ during pregnancy

The word placenta comes from the Latin word for cake. It is said that the disk-shaped human placenta looks like a pancake. The name arose from that.

A placenta is an organ temporarily created during pregnancy to protect and support a fetus. Its role ends as soon as the baby is born, and it is expelled from the mother's body.

In humans, beginning from a fertilized egg 0.1 millimeters in diameter, a fetus grows to weigh three or four kilograms and measure about 40 centimeters long at the time of delivery, some 280 days after the egg and sperm join. The placenta grows to a diameter of 15 – 20 centimeters, 1.5 – 3 centimeters thick, weighing about 500 grams.

- Supports development of the fetus

The placenta is connected to the fetus by the umbilical cord. Through a network of blood vessels, the placenta serves to join the fetus and the mother – supplying oxygen and nutrients to the fetus, and managing digestion and excretion.

It also performs various functions, including secreting hormones and conferring immunity to disease, protecting the fetus as it grows within mother's body.

In the next section, we will look at the indispensable placenta more closely.

The Ultimate Organ

- Complete in 13 Weeks

How is the placenta created in the mother's body?

About a week after fertilization, small projections called villi begin growing from the membrane known as the chorion on the surface of the fertilized egg that has become implanted on the uterine wall. Soon, only the villi on the attached side continue to grow, connecting with the wall and developing into the placenta. By about thirteen weeks after fertilization, the placenta is complete and has grown to the size described in the previous section.

- Does the work of multiple organs

While the fetus has not yet developed organs such as lungs and a liver, the placenta acts in their place, performing the following functions:

- Respiration (lungs)
- Metabolism and detoxification (liver)
- Excretion (kidneys)
- Internal secretion (pituitary gland, ovaries)
- Immunity (spleen)
- Digestion (small intestine)

In this sense, the placenta can be thought of as the "ultimate" organ.

- No mixing of blood

In the placenta, oxygen and nutrients carried in the maternal blood are transferred to the fetal blood, and carbon dioxide and bodily waste pass in the opposite direction.

Maternal blood does not, however, come into direct contact with fetal blood. Maternal blood occupies only the space between the villi. Fetal blood circulates

within the villi. Accordingly, there is no chance of rejection of different blood types, and the fetus is shielded from many conditions that may exist in the mother.

Placenta Used as Medicine Since Before Christ

- Hippocrates

Dried and powdered placentas have been used medicinally around the world since ancient times. The great Greek physician Hippocrates (460 – 377 BC), deemed the “Father of Western Medicine,” used it to treat patients, while [Egyptian queen] Cleopatra (69 – 30 BC) and Marie Antoinette (1755 – 1793) [, a wife of French King Louis XVI,] are said to have taken it as a beauty supplement.

- Appears in Chinese and Korean documents

In China, Qin Shi Huang (259 – 210 BC) and successive emperors are said to have seen the placenta as the secret to eternal youth and longevity.

In the *Ben Cao Gang Mu*, (“The Compendium of Materia Medica”), a book on Chinese pharmaceuticals written by Li Shizhen and published in 1596 during the Ming Dynasty, the placenta appears as *Ren Bao*. The medicine *He Che Da Zao Wan*, containing *Zi He Che*, was regarded as an analeptic, a restorative drug, for the elderly and infirm.

In the Korean medical book *Dongui Bogam*, compiled by the royal physician Heo Jun (1539 – 1615) and published first in 1613, the placenta is called *Zi He Che* or *Zi He Che Wan*. It was mainly used as a treatment for mental conditions.

Medicinal placenta was first brought into Japan from China as a crude drug. In the Edo period, *Kongentan* was an analeptic containing *Zi He Che*, and was

known as one of the three “secret medicines” of the Kaga Domain.

- In Western Medicine

The placenta has been used as an herbal medicine for much of recorded history. Dr. Vladimir Petrovich Filatov (1875 – 1956) of the Odessa National Medical University in the former Soviet Union was the first to use it in Western-style treatment. In the 1930s he developed a method of placental implantation (histotherapy), in which healthy tissue (skin and placenta) is, after being sterilized, implanted under the skin.

- Injection agents developed in Japan

Placental implantation drew attention in Japan after the Second World War. The diversity of potential uses and long-lasting effectiveness were welcomed, and it was used in various therapies. Nevertheless, development of techniques and safety protocols was a challenge, and actual cases of implantation were limited.

Independently of this, placental use in internal medicine was born out of post-war research in Japan and continues to this day.

From implantation methods, injection agents made of placenta essence were developed in the 1950s. They provided a vastly better experience for the patient and were a great blessing for many as the benefits of placenta use became more readily available.

Thereafter, placenta essence was applied to cosmetics in the 1970s and to oral supplements in the latter half of the 1980s.

Placenta use in medical fields has continued to attract attention in recent years.