

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What are some of the most common ailments that patients seek help with?

A: The most common problems that patients seek for help in my clinic are various pains, although TCM (traditional Chinese medicine) treats most commonly the common cold and flu in China.

In fact, TCM doctors have accumulated tremendous experience in fighting the common cold and flu in the practice over thousands of years. One good example is a book named "Shang Han Lun," also known as the "Treatise on Cold Damage Disorders" or the "Treatise on Cold Injury," which was written by Zhang Zhongjing approximately 1800 years ago. It described in detail the etiology, pathogenesis, and treatments for diseases caused by the common cold and flu. It is the oldest clinical textbook in the world, yet remains one of four canonical works that guide TCM doctors nowadays.

Of course, TCM is quite experienced and effective, if used properly, in treating various medical problems, such as indigestion, abdominal pains and diarrhea, cough and asthma, cardiovascular disorders, irregular menstruation, menopausal syndrome, and even psychiatric problems like anxiety and depression, etc.

In the US, the knowledge of most people regarding TCM began with, and is still limited to, pain relieve by acupuncture, which is why the various pains are the most common ailments that patients seek for help from TCM.

2. How do Chinese herbs help cure these ailments?

A: The TCM herbology uses thousands (a few hundreds of common ones) of natural products, primarily herbs, to compose different formulas or remedies to treat different diseases. Yet composing herbal formulas or remedies by TCM doctors is solely established on the basis of clear and accurate diagnosis.

With muscular and joint pain as an example, TCM calls it Bi Zheng. According to different symptoms, tongue diagnosis, and pulse, Bi Zheng is further classified into cold Bi, wind Bi, damp Bi, hot Bi, wind-cold Bi, wind-damp Bi, cold-damp Bi, hot-damp Bi, and etc. Most of patients with Bi Zheng often accompany internal organ problems, such as kidney (this kidney is not the kidney in Western medicine) deficiency, blood deficiency,

Qi blockade and blood stasis. Although they are pains, each of the above pain or Bi Zheng will need different herbs. For example, if use herbs for cold Bi to treat hot Bi, it may worsen the pain or lead to severe side effects. This is what TCM calls treatment based on syndrome differentiation, which emphasizes that all herbs must be given on the basis of accurate diagnosis.

3. What specific products do you suggest for each common ailment? (For example, if someone has headaches, which herb do you suggest?)

A: On the basis of accurate diagnosis, TCM often uses following herbs for pain management: Notopterygii, Pubescent Angelica Root, Radix Gentianae Macrophyllae, Chinese Clematis Root, Fourstamen Stephania Root, Mulberry Twig, Chinese Quince Fruit, Cinnamon Twig, White Peony Root, Fourstamen Stephania Root, Seeds of Job's Tears, Chinese Foxglove Root, Angelica Sinensis Root, Salvia Root, Anemarrhena Rhizome, and etc.

4. How do Chinese herbs work together with acupuncture and other processes to heal problems?

A: Acupuncture and Chinese herbs complement each other in healing. With pain management as an example, acupuncture is better on alleviating the pain and opening the channels, while Chinese herbs are very more effective in supplementing Qi and blood, and strengthening the organs so as to prevent the relapse. Therefore, the combined therapy with acupuncture and Chinese herbs is always better than each alone.

5. What else is important to know about Chinese herbs?

A: Chinese herbs are characterized with four properties (cold, hot, warm and cool), five flavors (pungent, sweet, sour, bitter and salty), and by their actions (lifting, lowering, floating and sinking), as well as their channel tropism (heart channel, bladder channel, lung channel...). Composing (mixing) different herbs has to follow complicated rules to achieve the effectiveness and to avoid producing toxic combinations. Of course, beyond the herbological skills, the diagnosis has to be accurate. For example, many people may have heard of Ginseng, and thought it is energetic for everyone. Well, if used properly, it is energetic and health improving. However, for patients who have Qi blockade or hyperactive Yang, Ginseng can produce severe adverse effects, such as inability to sleep, headache, chest pain, or psychological symptoms. Therefore, it is strongly advised to consult with a TCM doctor or a Chinese herbologist before use any Chinese herbs.