

HERBAL CROSSROADS

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Notable Clinical Uses of Sage Solutions

By

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In the 1980s, the Chinese herb astragalus-huang qi (radix astragalus membranaceus) became famous in the West. This followed publication of the results of a small study undertaken at the MD Anderson Cancer Center that used astragalus as a treatment for rescuing patients whose immune function had become weakened during chemotherapy due to a precipitous decline in the number of white blood cells (WBC). Concentrated water decoctions of astragalus appeared to boost WBC production and restore normal numbers and activities of macrophages and natural killer cells.

Not long after this news, research in China and Japan demonstrated that certain medicinal fungi, namely reishi (sclerotium ganoderma lucidum) and shiitake (sclerotium lentinus edodes) exerted potent anti-cancer and immune modulating properties in vitro and in vivo. Since then, many species of medicinal fungi have been shown to have such properties, including ganoderma (ling zhi), polyporous (zhu ling), tremella (bai mu erh) and grifola (maitake). Various combinations of astragalus and medicinal fungi comprise an important class of herbal remedies in the field of Fu Zheng therapies for the support of immune compromised patients. However, it's important not to lose sight of the fact that, in addition to their role in protecting the immune system, these particular herbs have a broad spectrum of medicinal properties and have long been considered valuable tonics for building health and strength, as well as an antidote to disease.

Clinical Tale #1

Twelve years ago, Lorraine was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor called a glioblastoma multiforme (GBM). GBM is one of the most

aggressive forms of brain cancer and the prognosis is very poor: usually patients do not survive more than a year after diagnosis, even after aggressive treatment with surgery, chemotherapy and radiation, and only 3% survive 5 years. Lorraine began to receive weekly acupuncture along with Chinese herbs while she was still undergoing chemotherapy. Resilience (4 squirts three times per day) was a principal formula in her regimen for bolstering her immune system during chemotherapy and helping to maintain and improve her overall health. Lorraine is one of those miracles in medicine: she has never had a recurrence. Not only has she survived, she has flourished. Who is to say what is responsible for her extraordinary recovery? She believes that Resilience, which she continues on an ongoing basis at 4 squirts two times per day, has been a crucial support that she would never consider relinquishing.

Clinical Tale #2

Two acupuncturists in Copenhagen this year reported stories about the healing power of Resilience. They had been treating several women who conceived with the help of in vitro fertilization (IVF). Two of these babies had arrested growth in utero. The mothers were given Resilience, 2 squirts three times per day, and normal growth resumed. We might speculate as to why this combination of herbs exerted such a powerful and profound effect: astragalus tonifies the Qi of the Spleen, Lung and Kidney networks (the three primary sources of Qi) as do tremella (Lung), polyporous (Spleen and Kidney), and grifola (Spleen and Kidney); while ganoderma strengthens the Qi of all five

July
2007

July 2007

viscera (the alternative to ginseng in the kingdom of fungi). Clearly, the properties of Resilience were delivered in an ideal way to the babies.

It is not always evident in the beginning what the full range of effects of a new formulation might be. Even classical formulas that have been used for centuries demonstrate novel properties when employed to solve new problems.

Bug Beating: Quick Recoveries from Viral Illnesses

Viral illnesses are ubiquitous, ever-present and represent one of the most common reasons for visiting a medical doctor. When patients don't recover quickly despite the use of OTC remedies or prescription antibiotics (for a secondary bacterial infection in the form of a sinusitis or otitis), in desperation, they may seek our help. Patients who are already familiar with the benefits of Chinese medicine are more likely to seek help sooner, in the early stages of a swollen sore throat or "flu" with chills, fever and muscle aches. In either case, herbal formulas that purge Wind, Heat, Phlegm and Toxins from the Wei and Qi levels can, according to Warm Disease theories, readily resolve the matter.

Clinical Tale #3

A 45 year old woman came in two days after developing an acute sore throat with swollen lymph nodes, chills, high fever (102° F), lethargy, painful skin and muscles. After a brief treatment with gua sha on the neck and upper back (the skin turned red with many small, red-purple patches) she was sent home with the following prescription:

Bug Beater 10 ml
Chill Chaser 10 ml
Phlogisticlean 10 ml

4 squirts to be taken with ½ cup hot water every two hours until the fever subsided, then to continue taking 4 squirts every four hours. Within 24 hours, the body aches were gone, her temperature was normal, and within 48 hours, her sore throat and swollen glands were better.

Clinical Tale #4

A 10 year old boy had been sick with flu-like symptoms for five days. He was feverish (100° F) and lethargic, his muscles were sensitive and sore, he felt irritable and had a headache and cough. He received very gentle gua sha on the upper back but could not tolerate it for more than a minute. He was sent home with the following prescription:

Bug Beater 40 ml
Chest Relief 20 ml

2 squirts to be taken every two hours with warm water until the fever subsided, then continue taking 2 squirts every four hours until feeling well. His fever subsided within 24 hours, but he did not feel well until three days later, when he was able to return to school. The cough persisted so his mother was advised to refill the prescription and continue giving give him 4 squirts three times per day. After four more days, his cough cleared up as well.

Marrow Matters: Bones of Contention

As the Baby Boom generation ripens into their elder years, more and more women—and men—are facing the prospect of age-related osteopenia and osteoporosis: gradual loss of both cortical bone (the portion made up of calcium) and trabecular bone (the collagenous scaffold of the bony matrix). Studies show that the probability of having fragile bones after the age of 50 is determined by the amount of bone laid down by age 35. In other words, the more bone you make by the time you reach the beginning of your middle years, the less likely you will lose enough bone to place you at risk for a fracture when the elder years descend. So, as the ancient texts caution, it's prudent to treat problems before they become a disaster, after which it may be too late.

Marrow Matters is based on formulas developed in China that demonstrate potent bone building and bone repairing properties. Part of what makes an osteoporotic fracture so serious is the inability of the body to heal the break once it's occurred. The ingredients in Marrow Matters not only strengthen the Kidney network but actually improve the body's capacity to repair bone.

Clinical Tale #5

A 35 year old man was referred by the medical director of the Stanford Metabolic Bone Disease Clinic for recurring fractures of unknown etiology. At least once a year, sometimes twice, he had suffered fractures of his arms and legs and no medical solution was working. He received weekly acupuncture and a 4 ounce bottle (120 ml) of Marrow Matters, taking 4 squirts (4 ml) three times per day. During the first year of treatment and continuous administration of Marrow Matters, he experienced no fractures. He has never again experienced a bone fracture, many years later.

Clinical Tale #6

A 49 year old woman complained of peri-menopausal symptoms: hot flashes, insomnia, fatigue, and thinning hair. Of greater concern to her were the results of a recent bone density scan that indicated osteopenia. Although osteopenia is neither a disease or dangerous condition in itself, it is considered a precursor to

osteoporosis. As a result, many physicians are now recommending that women begin taking bone-building drugs (biophosphanates) to prevent the bone loss that occurs after menopause. This patient did not want to take Fosamax, the most popular of the biophosphanates, because of potential side effects. Marrow Matters was prescribed at 6 squirts (6 ml) two times per day, morning and evening. She returned for a follow-up visit one month later, reporting that her hot flashes and insomnia had completely abated and that her hair had stopped falling out. She was advised to continue the same dosage of Marrow Matters for three more months at which point it was suggested that she get another bone density scan. Six months later, she returned to the clinic pleased to report that she had remained free of hot flashes, insomnia, and thinning hair and no longer suffered from fatigue. The six month follow-up bone density scan not only showed no further bone loss, but actually a slight improvement. She was advised to continue taking Marrow Matters at the same dose for another year, when she would have a repeat scan.

Enviroshield: Prickly Winds of Spring

As the cold and flu season of winter and early spring subsides, the allergy season picks up steam. The winds of spring scatter the budding flowers and trees, spreading peak levels of pollen far and wide. Many people experience hay fever, even those who may not have had it before: itchy and teary eyes, itchy and runny nose, itchy and scratchy throat, itchy and stuffy ears, headache, dizziness, and vertigo are all common symptoms of allergic rhinitis and sinusitis. Wind and Heat, Wind and Cold, Wind and Damp are all considered pathogenic factors in the development of what is termed bi yang bing (itchy nose disorder) or bi yuan bing (nasal congestion disorder).

The differences between the common cold and allergic rhinitis/sinusitis are not great according to Chinese medicine descriptions of their etiology. And, in fact, some of the same formulas can be used to treat both syndromes, the primary distinguishing characteristic being fever in the case of a cold or flu. But even hayfever can produce chills and feverish sensations, whether or not the temperature is actually elevated. Furthermore, unlike in pre-modern China, now there are other noxious influences in the environment that can trigger many of the same symptoms: fumes from petroleum fuels, paints and building materials; odors from perfumes and cosmetics; vapors from soaps and cleaning agents. Enviroshield tackles the external pathogenic factors (environmental allergens) that engender rhinitis and sinusitis, as well those that may affect the digestive tract and induce upper respiratory symptoms (allergic reactions to foods or medicines).

Clinical Tale #7

Gerry, a 45 year old graphic designer, had been suffering from debilitating hay fever for years. He dreaded spring, looking forward to the fog of summer when the pollen count would drop. Even the latest generation of antihistamines (Claritin, Allegra, Zyrtec) were no longer effective, and he often developed a secondary sinus infection that required antibiotics. He arrived in the clinic at the peak of the pollen season with terrible sinus pain and congestion, thick yellow mucus, itchy red eyes, and a prescription for antibiotics which he had not yet filled. He received gua sha on the neck and upper back followed by acupuncture and was sent home with the following prescription:

Enviroshield 40 ml
Head Clear 20 ml

4 squirts to be taken every two hours in ½ cup hot water. He returned two days later and expressed that his sinus pain had subsided and the discharge had become thin and white-- he had not needed antibiotics. He was still quite congested, his eyes were still itchy, he was sneezing a lot and his nose was constantly running. But, he was better. He went home for the weekend with the same formula but this time in a 4 ounce bottle, 4 squirts to be taken every two hours until he stopped sneezing; then every four hours. He returned after five days and most of his symptoms had abated. He remained slightly congested but he was not sneezing, his nose wasn't running and his eyes weren't itching or red. He was now able to sleep at night lying flat, whereas previously he could not breathe normally lying down due to the congestion. This time he went home with only Enviroshield in a 4 ounce bottle, 4 squirts to be taken three times per day. He came back for his final visit of the season one week later feeling completely clear. This was the first time in years that he had weathered the storm of hay fever without antihistamines or antibiotics.

Clinical Tale #8

Sam, an 11 year old boy, had a difficult winter. He was frequently sick with colds that turned into coughs which turned into asthma. Now it was March and he hadn't been sick since the end of January, but he was having "allergies". He was taking an antihistamine (Allegra) and a nasal steroid (Flonase) but, in spite of the medication, he was still congested, his eyes, nose and ears were very itchy, his skin and mouth were dry and he was beginning to wheeze when he coughed.

Sam looked worn out and tired (pasty complexion, dark circles under his eyes, and a tendency to slouch). His mother reported that he hadn't been sleeping well and would get

asthmatic when fatigued, especially after exercise or playing outside. He had never had acupuncture and wasn't particularly interested in trying it just yet. So he was treated with a little gua sha and went home with the following prescription:

Enviroshield 40 ml
Deep Breath 20 ml

3 squirts to be taken every four hours—he would have to dose himself while he was at school. He returned four days later somewhat improved - he was more lively, coughing and wheezing less; and although still congested, he was not as itchy. He had not been able to keep up the regimen of 4 squirts every four hours while at school. So his mother was advised to give him two doses in the morning: one right after he got up and again just before leaving for school, and 2-3 doses in the evening: one upon returning from school, one after dinner and one before bed. He returned a week later much improved, with no more coughing or wheezing, no itching, and he shared that he had been sleeping better and felt much less fatigued. At this point he was given two formulas, 4 ounces of Enviroshield and 2 ounces of Deep Breath. He was to continue taking 4 squirts of Enviroshield three times per day and 4 squirts of Deep Breath as needed for coughing or wheezing. Because of his improvement, he was able to discontinue using Flonase, but wanted to stick with the Allegra (a small dose once a day) for security.

Max Lax and Lax Lite: A Duet in Two Movements

Constipation is a ubiquitous complaint, remedies for which take up significant shelf space in super markets and drug stores. It can be an occasional nuisance—the result of over-indulgence or an acute illness—or a life-long woe. Most often its causes originate in childhood and adolescence due to inappropriate diet and poor eating habits; but there are also constitutional and congenital influences like infantile malnutrition, familial hypothyroidism, and developmental anomalies of the G.I. tract.

Max Lax and Lax Lite are two laxative formulas that address acute and chronic constipation. Acute constipation is essentially a condition of Qi stagnation due to Food Accumulation, Heat, Wind and Damp Heat, whereas chronic constipation, regardless of its origins, is usually due to long term deficiencies of Qi, Blood and Moisture. Of course, excesses and deficiencies can occur together and sequentially in both acute and chronic patterns. Max Lax, which addresses acute constipation, focuses on activating Qi and clearing Heat, Damp Heat and Wind; and Lax Lite emphasizes supplementing Blood and Moisture, to assist chronic constipation.

Clinical Tale #9

Emily, a 30 year old woman, initially came for help with PMS and menstrual cramps, not even mentioning constipation because she considered it a non-problem. It was only inadvertently that she realized she was having more frequent bowel movements, as a "side effect" of treatment.

Her history revealed she had been constipated as far back as she could remember - since age 5 or 6. It seemed to run in her family, and for most of her life she thought that having a bowel movement every few days or once a week was normal. In addition, her doctor had prescribed a diuretic for suspected hypertension, although she had only had one episode of slightly elevated blood pressure during a physical exam. The diuretic had aggravated her constipation due to its drying effect. On her first visit, her tongue appeared pale, scalloped and flabby. She was advised to discontinue the diuretic, monitor her blood pressure and use the following formula:

Got Rhythm 60 ml
Lax Lite 60 ml

3 squirts three times per day in hot water. After two weeks, she had a period without cramps. After her period ended, to her surprise and delight, she began having daily bowel movements. Then she traveled for seven days and the discontinuity in her eating and sleeping triggered a return to her previous pattern of constipation. At her second visit, her tongue continued to be scalloped and flabby though less pale. This time she was sent home with a prescription containing:

Lax Lite 80 ml
Harmonize Liver-Spleen 20 ml
Harmonize Spleen-Kidney 20 ml

3 squirts three times per day in hot water. She returned again after another two weeks reporting that her frequency of bowel movements had again increased though they were not daily like before her trip. Since she was getting close to her period she was given the following prescription:

Got Rhythm 30 ml
Harmonize Liver-Spleen 15 ml
Harmonize Spleen-Kidney 15 ml

3 squirts three times per day and a bottle of Lax Lite tablets, 3 tablets to be taken three times per day between meals, morning, afternoon and at bedtime. She returned for a fourth visit three weeks later: her period went very well and she was now having a bowel movement almost daily.

July
2007

Clinical Tale #10

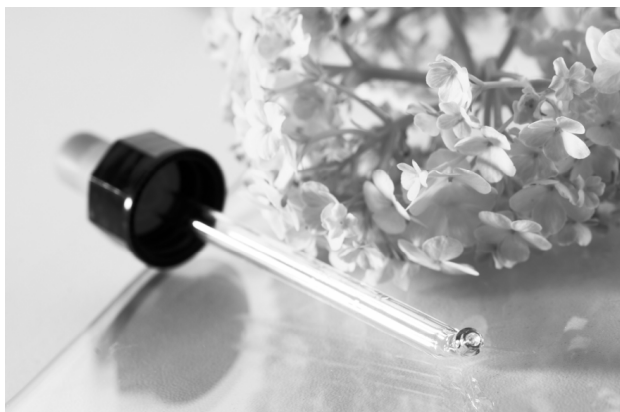
Jacob, a 35 year old Silicon Valley executive, had been receiving regular acupuncture and herbal medicine for chronic digestive problems: bloating, heartburn, "liver pain", fluctuating energy, and a pattern of getting run down and sick with colds. He was doing quite well: he'd changed his diet (more fruits, vegetables, lean protein, fresh juices, less alcohol and less sugar) and was regularly using the following formula:

Digest Aid 40 ml
Harmonize Liver-Spleen 40 ml
Harmonize Lung-Liver 40 ml

4 squirts three times per day in hot water, before or between meals. He came in recently suffering from food poisoning after eating a meal of bad fish. He felt terribly sick and nauseous, but couldn't vomit, with cramps in his belly but no diarrhea; in fact, he seemed to be constipated. He went home with a formula containing:

Max Lax 40ml
Purge Damp Heat 20ml

2 squirts to be taken every two hours until he had a bowel movement. After that he was to reduce the frequency to 2 squirts every four hours until he felt recovered. A follow-up phone call 48 hours later found him to be completely recovered.



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