

HERBAL CROSSROADS

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January
2008

Chinese Modular Solutions:

Formula Combinations Illustrated with Cases

By

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Chinese Modular Solutions fills a need for a ready-made foundation pharmacy--one that permits the practitioner to create individualized prescriptions using a repertoire of 30 basic formulas for conditions ranging from simple to complex. Over the last 16 years, the hundreds of acupuncturists, herbalists and physicians who have used these formulas have discovered that certain combinations produce remarkable results.

Familiar combinations of formulas are recurring themes in the treatment of many of our patients. We will highlight what have been some effective prescriptions and the patients that they have helped. Some of these have become as useful and ubiquitous as the acupuncture point prescriptions that we employ in daily practice: for example, Pericardium 6 and Stomach 36 for nausea and morning sickness, Large Intestine 4, Large Intestine 11, and Stomach 36 for gastrointestinal weakness and indigestion, Kidney 3, Heart 7, and Yin Tang for anxiety and insomnia, Large Intestine 4, Stomach 36, and Lung 7 for frequent colds due to low resistance, and Spleen 6, Spleen 9, and Kidney 7 for water retention due to weakness of the Kidney and Spleen. In fact, many of the remedies illustrated below are parallel and quite complementary to acupuncture treatments.

Familiar combinations of formulas are recurring themes in the treatment of many of our patients.

Purge External Wind and Purge Phlegm

A stuffy nose, sneezing, a frontal or occipital headache, and excess phlegm collecting in the back of the throat and larynx may resemble the signs of a cold or allergies, but are actually neither. Sometimes exposure to damp, windy and cold weather will, by itself, induce acute symptoms that are not caused by an infectious agent or allergen.

A person may be caught unprepared for a sudden change in the weather, catch a chill when moving quickly from a hot shower

or vigorous workout to the outdoors, or be momentarily weakened by fatigue due to overwork or lack of sleep. In these cases the pulse may be slightly floating and slippery and the tongue fur slightly thicker and stickier than normal, but not necessarily so. Distinct, localized symptoms and a recent history of exposure can make the therapeutic decision unambiguous.

For example, a 55-year-old woman arrived home from a holiday in Hawaii. Within the span of an airplane flight she transitioned from a balmy, warm climate to the windy, cold fog of

San Francisco. She reported driving home from the airport, the evening before, with the window open in order to clear her head after a long stuffy flight and she felt fine when she went to bed. But by the afternoon of the next day she felt chilled, with a headache over her left eye, and sinus drainage down the back of her throat that made her feel as if she had the early signs of laryngitis. But her throat was not sore, she had no fever, nor did she really feel sick in any other way. Her pulse was somewhat floating and slippery at the right cun-inch position and her tongue had a healthy pink color with normal moisture but with thickened white fur at the front (Lung and Upper Burner). She took home the following prescription:

Purge External Wind (40ml)
Purge Phlegm (20ml),
4 squirts to be taken with hot water every 4 hours

In a telephone call two days later, she claimed that all the symptoms were gone by the morning of the second day and she was feeling completely well.

Purge External Wind with Strengthen Spleen and Strengthen Lung

Unlike the person with an acute condition above, some people are internally weak and therefore susceptible not only to the weather, but to viral infections and environmental allergies as well. In fact, for these individuals there seems to be a repeating cycle of contracting mild, acute illnesses or experiencing recurrent allergies, both of which are followed by long periods of recovery. Illnesses arise when the seasons change, when there is prolonged mental or physical stress, and sometimes after a series of missed meals followed by overindulgence.

Persistent fatigue due to too much work or exercise coupled with inadequate or irregular nutrition weakens the Spleen Qi which, in turn, weakens the Lung. The Defensive Qi (*wei*) is a product of the surplus Nutritive Qi (*ying*) produced by the Spleen and Stomach that circulates under the dominion of the Lung in the *luo* vessels spreading through the outer layers of muscle and skin. In order for the Defensive Qi to circulate at the surface of the body and protect us from external invasion, and for the Lung Qi to effectively regulate the opening and closing of the pores (the respiratory function of the skin), the Righteous or Correct Qi of the body (*zhenq*) must be strong and vigorous.

Strengthen Spleen together with Strengthen Lung supplements and invigorates the Nutritive and Defensive Qi and, when coupled with Purge External Wind, restores our resistance to the assault of external pathogenic influence.

For example, a 36-year-old man who worked long hours wheeling and dealing in Silicon Valley often skipped lunch, and stayed up late wining and dining his business clients. As if that weren't enough to deplete his Qi, he often had trouble sleeping, or sleeping enough, because he was quite sensitive to light, noise, and over-stimulation. The results were recurrent attacks of allergic rhinitis and sinusitis, constant indigestion with abdominal bloating and constipation, and frequent colds. As a consequence of his life style, his Spleen and Lung Qi became congested and depleted. And for someone who had difficulty sleeping, chronic sinus congestion made it even more challenging to get a good night's sleep. Chronic fatigue (not Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) due to lack of rest also made him intolerant of cold.

An examination of his pulse revealed a deep thin pulse at both chi-cubit positions, fluctuating intensity of the pulse at the left guan-bar and cun-inch positions and a thin floating pulse at the right cun-inch and quan-bar positions. His tongue appeared somewhat flabby (loss of muscle tone), slightly scalloped at the edges, a little pale and red at the tip with yellow, greasy fur, especially in the Stomach and Spleen zone. In synthesizing the history, current complaints, pulse and tongue observations, a reasonable conclusion was that the weakening of the Central Qi (*zhong qi*) had led to a general depletion of the Spleen, Lung and Kidney as well as a destabilization of the Qi of the Liver and Heart. Mental and emotional stresses are, of course, always a factor and it is the Liver and Heart that bear the brunt. Replenishing the Spleen Qi and Lung Qi should begin to resolve the general weaknesses as well as the imbalances of the Liver and Heart. It is interesting to note also that when the Spleen Qi is deficient, not only can Wind easily penetrate the surface of the body, it can also find its way into the interior and manifest as intestinal gas. This phenomenon, called Spleen Wind (*pi feng*), is not always recognized. Herbs that expel External Wind (*wai feng*) can dispel air trapped in the intestines when combined with herbs to strengthen the Spleen. Trapped gas can also be a cause of constipation by blocking the passage of stool through the colon.

The prescription for his condition was:

**Strengthen Spleen (60ml) +
Strengthen Lung (40ml) +
Purge External Wind (20ml)**

**4 squirts to be taken in hot water three times per day
before meals**

After one week, he reported an improvement in his digestion with less gas, bloating and constipation. After one month, he had not caught any colds and his nasal and sinus congestion had improved considerably (less mucus and reduced post-nasal drainage). In general, he had more stamina and was able to sleep better and longer, feeling more rested and energetic during the day.

Comfort Shen with Harmonize Heart-Lung and Harmonize Lung-Liver

Within the paradigm of Five Phase Theory, the Lung, Liver, and Heart have a dynamic relationship that parallels that of the other four Organ Network triads: Spleen-Kidney-Liver; Kidney-Heart-Spleen; Liver-Spleen-Lung; and Heart-Lung-Kidney.

In the case of the Lung-Liver-Heart triad, the Lung is like the pivot between complementary and harmonizing functions of the Heart and Liver: Heart (Fire) restrains Lung (Metal), Lung (Metal) restrains Liver (Wood) and Liver (Wood) nourishes Heart (Fire). But, because both Liver and Heart Yang are relatively hot compared to the cool moistness of the Lung Yin, there is always a potential for an excess of Liver and Heart Yang to overwhelm Lung Yin.

The Pericardium (*xin bao*), carries out the active, Yang functions of the Heart (*xin*) in governing circulation and sustaining mental attention; and because it is also part of the jue yin channel system, it partners with the Liver as well. One of our responses to insult or stress is to mobilize the Yang of the Liver and Heart, which often generates excess Heat as a consequence. If the mobilization persists for a long time, as it often does in our society because of the continuous pressures of daily life, the build-up of Yang-Heat will begin to undermine the Lung by drying up the Yin Blood (*xue*) and Moisture (*jin-ye*). The consequences of this appear in a variety of complaints including dry skin, dry eyes, dry mucus membranes, urinary tract irritation, rashes, sticky mucus in the upper respiratory tract, constipation, intolerance of heat and cold, emotional sensitivity and reactivity. Sometimes the Heat will be apparent on the pulse

(tense or inflated and pounding) and tongue (redness at the front and sides) and sometimes it will not, being manifest more as nervousness, irritability, lability, and inflammation of the skin, mucus membranes and upper respiratory organs. In these cases, the pulse will have qualities such as rapidly changing intensity or force, thinness alternating with tightness, and a feeling of vibration that comes and goes, especially in the cun-inch and left guan-bar positions. The tongue may be pale rather than red, the fur thin and dry, and the tongue body trembling or quivering, which indicates chronic nervous tension and anxiety.

An example is a 40-year-old man who complained of chronic rashes—he called it eczema—on his chest, neck, face and head. He led an extremely active life as a professional software educator and semi-professional performer. His work required a lot of travel and this interfered with his sleep and digestion. Otherwise he felt healthy and robust. His skin, however, reacted adversely to the stresses of travel and of performing: the rashes got more inflamed and itchy when he did either or both. In fact, the redness of his skin was his barometer of how much stress he was under. When he was home, sleeping and eating regularly, his symptoms quieted down but did not entirely disappear.

His pulse was somewhat thin, without tension, and had fluctuating intensity, especially at the cun-inch positions. Occasionally, there was a quality of inflation at the right cun-inch and guan-bar positions and a subtle vibration that came and went over the entire pulse. The body of his tongue was pale and slightly orange at the tip while the fur was thin, dry and white. Together these qualities suggest Blood deficiency. Also his tongue began to quiver when held out for more than a moment. Other features included very red skin on the neck, face and head, and upper back as well as frequent flushing of the chest and face while speaking. He also perspired easily when at all excited, even though his skin was quite dry. Unquestionably there was Heat, on the skin and in the nervous system, and it was of the deficiency type (insufficiency of Blood and Moisture). His problems were a result of hyperactivity of the Liver and Heart Yang.

His prescription was:

Comfort Shen (40ml)

Harmonize Heart-Lung (40ml)

Harmonize Lung-Liver (40ml)

4 squirts taken three times per day—once in the morning, once in the afternoon and once at bedtime

In addition he received instructions to dilute and steep the herbs in boiling water, allowing them to cool to room temperature (this drives off most of the alcohol in the solution). In this instance, it was important to eliminate any heating effects of the alcohol. At this time Comfort Shen was chosen instead of a formula like Purge Heat because of his Yin deficiencies and, in addition, the herbs in Comfort Shen will quiet the hyperactive Yang of the Liver and Heart. After one month, his symptoms had cleared about 50% and he was having fewer exacerbations. Also, he was sleeping better and no longer complained of constipation. His second prescription included Tonify Blood to treat the Yin deficiency.

Comfort Shen (30ml)

Harmonize Heart-Lung (30ml)

Harmonize Lung-Liver (30ml)

Tonify Blood (30ml)

4 squirts to be taken three times per day in the same manner as the first prescription

Three months later he returned for a follow-up and his skin had cleared nearly 100% and he was feeling really good. He continued to use the second prescription as needed.

Comfort Shen with Harmonize Kidney-Heart and Replenish Essence

Many patients have a history of harrowing or hurtful experiences that may lie at the root of a wide range of disorders from headaches, rheumatic joint disease, irritable bowels, menstrual irregularities, infertility, or anywhere from ulcers to asthma. Without a doubt, trauma can pull the rug out and destabilize people with even the most robust of constitutions. One patient developed acute rheumatoid arthritis after escaping from an apartment that had caught fire while she was sleeping. It was as if the heat of the fire that burned her home invaded her, leaving her whole body inflamed.

Shock, pain and terror can jar and rip the inner core of our being the way a sprinter or high jumper can tear an Achilles tendon. What is this inner core? It is the primary and primal integrity of Essence and Mind (*jing-shen*) that sustains our capacity to adapt, mature and evolve for a lifetime. When this core function is threatened or damaged, we can quickly lose the secure sense of our own identity and purpose for living: our will (*zhi*) becomes disconnected

from our consciousness (*shen*).

The root of the Mind-Essence is the Kidney, and its flowering is the Heart. The coordination, integration and harmony of Fire and Water function as our gravitational center—the North and South poles—around which we orient ourselves. When this integral relationship is disorganized, disturbances of both the Kidney and the Heart arise, manifesting as lumbago and dizziness, physical weakness and mental confusion, extreme fatigue coupled with insomnia, irregular periods and episodes of panic, hypoglycemia and manic depression, migraine headaches and infertility. Regardless of one's individual constitution, the integrity of the Kidney-Heart relationship—the union of *jing-shen*—is absolutely fundamental to the healthy function of all other organ networks.

For example, a 35-year-old woman complained of chronic insomnia, an irritable bowel, and amenorrhea. She was a physician who worked hard in an outpatient facility that served a medically underserved population. She felt socially isolated, lived alone, and had not had a romantic friendship in several years. She had frequent bouts of anxiety verging on panic, trouble falling and staying asleep, and hadn't had a period in three years. She had never been pregnant, did not use birth control pills, nor had she used medications for anxiety or insomnia. She had trouble digesting a variety of foods and often got lower abdominal bloating with flatulence after eating. Her bowel movements were irregular and unsatisfying although she was not constipated.



This young woman appeared quite nervous, spoke rapidly, and confessed a lot of trepidation and skepticism about acupuncture and herbal medicine, not because she was a doctor, but because she was fearful of trying something new and worried that it might not help or that it might even make her worse. She had a family history of mental illness and was concerned that she had inherited her family's problems. One of her parents became flagrantly unstable when she was a teenager and she had never overcome the upset that it caused her. As a result of her poor digestion and erratic appetite, she was also quite thin. She enjoyed eating and denied any problems like anorexia or bulimia. Being a health care professional, she understood that all of her problems were probably interrelated and was hopeful that Chinese medicine could rescue her. She also reported having low blood pressure, a very slow pulse, and intolerance of heat and cold—that is, she overheated easily when excited or in a warm room, but also was easily chilled in cold weather.

Examination of her tongue revealed a thin tongue body with dry, light yellow fur and a red tip. Her pulse was deep and slow (about 50-55 beats per minute) overall, but there was a pounding quality in the cun-inch positions and a thin, tight quality in the right guan-bar position. The right and left chi-cubit positions were thin and small with an intermittent vibration bordering on a rough quality (this indicates Blood stagnation in the Lower Burner). There were also frequent changes in the intensity or force of the pulse in all positions, signifying great nervous tension and strain. Taken together, the findings indicated general depletion of Yin and Blood, chronic deficiency of Kidney Qi and Essence, instability of the Shen-Mind, plus Qi and Yin deficiency of the Stomach and Spleen. Her presentation was that of a woman who had struggled since adolescence with tremendous fearfulness and anxiety about all aspects of her life, leading to social isolation, cessation of a sexual life, suppression of fertility, and a generalized dread that eclipsed optimism about her future. This alone was enough to focus the initial treatment on harmonizing and supplementing the Kidney and Heart, reinforcing the unity of Jing and Shen. It is likely that the emotional trauma of mental illness in her family that occurred when she was a teenager had de-stabilized her core, fracturing her jing-shen. When the Kidney and Heart lose their ability to coordinate functions, the Middle Burner (Spleen and Stomach) also becomes disturbed: Earth is caught in the middle as a result of the disconnection between Water and Fire.

Adult Dosage and Administration Guidelines

2 to 3 squirts, 2 - 4x per day

1 squirt = 1/2 dropperful = 30 drops = approximately 1 milliliter (ml)

Liquid herbal extracts are concentrated, potent, and easy to drink. An average daily dose is 2 - 3 milliliters taken two to four times per day. When the rubber bulb of the glass dropper is firmly squeezed, approximately 1 ml is drawn into the dropper (1 squirt), equal to about 1/2 dropperful in a one ounce bottle.

Simply put, *one squeeze equals one squirt*. One dose consists of 2 - 3 squirts of herbal extract taken in water. The herbs can be steeped in 1/4 to 1/2 cup of boiling water until warm. Alternately, it may be more convenient to take the herbs with water at room temperature.

She had the following prescription:

Comfort Shen (40ml)

Harmonize Kidney-Heart (40ml)

Replenish Essence (40ml)

Because of her worries about taking any form of medicine, she was advised to begin with a dose of 1 squirt (about 30 drops) three times per day diluted in boiling water taken at room temperature. She was also concerned that the herbs might worsen her indigestion, so she was told to experiment: try taking the herbs between meals, before meals, with meals or after meals, whichever method felt the most comfortable. Because she had such a sensitive body—and psyche—we thought that she might experience a noticeable effect even from a small dose. In fact, she did. At her next appointment, one week later, she reported that she was sleeping somewhat better—not waking as often or for as long during the night—and she was experiencing fewer episodes of anxiety. She noted that she hadn't noticed any signs of an impending period (no PMS), but she wasn't surprised. When asked about her digestion, she said that she had not had any cramping or bloating, but that she still had a lot of gas and irregular bowel movements with thin stool.

She was encouraged to continue with the same formula (there was a lot left) and agreed to gradually increase the dose to 2 squirts 3 times per day. The thought of this made

her nervous, but she said that she would try. One week later, she said that she hadn't been able to increase the dose of herbs, but that her symptoms were still better and she hoped it would be okay to stick with 1 squirt 3 times per day. This is what she did for two months, after which she was able to increase to 2 squirts 3 times per day. After another three months at the new dose, she felt much better: much less anxiety, more nights of sleeping well (but not consistently), increasing interest in expanding her social life and meeting new people, but still no period. She occasionally experienced fleeting signs and symptoms of PMS (tender breasts, mild sensations in her ovaries or uterus) but no period, at least not yet. And her poor digestion and elimination continued to vex her.

So, after five months her prescription was modified:

Comfort Shen (30ml)

Harmonize Kidney-Heart (30ml)

Harmonize Spleen-Kidney (30ml)

Replenish Essence (30ml)

Two squirts taken three times per day, the timing to be determined by her on a daily basis

Adding Harmonize Spleen-Kidney helps to improve the function of the Stomach and Spleen which, in turn, will help to support and stabilize the Heart and Kidney.

Two weeks after the new prescription, she reported that her digestion had definitely improved and she was having healthier looking bowel movements. Sleep continued to gradually improve, her anxiety was tolerable (no panic attacks), but still no periods. She was advised to stick with the formula and to begin increasing the dose gradually to three squirts, three times daily. She continued to receive treatment and was making steady, slow, gradual progress.

This case illustrates how trauma early in life can upset the balance of the entire organism and, if unresolved, results in a complex of chronic maladies. Many young women wind up being managed with anti-depressant and anti-anxiety medications as well as birth control pills and fertility drugs. These medicines, as we know, can have serious long term side effects, all of which can be obviated by the eminently safer methods of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine. However, the more natural and less aggressive therapies that we employ may, in many instances, take considerably more time to achieve their desired effects; so, optimism, determination, and confidence in the efficacy of our methods may be required.

Seminar in The Netherlands



**From Symptoms to Satori:
the Dao of
Chinese Modular Solutions**

**Harriet Beinfield
& Efrem Korngold**

**Saturday 26th &
Sunday 27th of April 2008**



Academy Qing-Bai

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Quick Reference Guide to Chinese Modular Solutions Formulas

TONIFY

Tonify Qi	• Low resistance • Tiredness, weakness • Pale complexion and sensitive to chill
Tonify Moisture	• Thirst, hot flashes • Dry skin, mouth, or throat • Scanty, concentrated urine
Tonify Blood	• Dry, brittle hair and nails • Restless fatigue, irritability • Poor sleep

CONSOLIDATE

Consolidate Qi	• Persistent diarrhea • Sudden weakness, perspires easily • Lax muscles or prolapse
Consolidate Moisture	• Excessive secretions • Frequent and profuse urination • Excessive perspiration
Consolidate Blood	• Sudden or excessive bleeding • Bruises easily or wounds slow to heal

COMFORT

Comfort Shen	• Insomnia, restless sleep • Anxiety, agitation, fright • Emotional distress
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DISPERSE

Disperse Qi	• Fullness in chest, abdomen, head • Gas pains, flatulence, belching, hiccups
Disperse Moisture	• Nausea or indigestion • Puffy face, hands, ankles • Swollen breasts
Disperse Blood	• Localized or persistent pain • Numbness • Painful menstruation

REPLENISH

Replenish Essence	• Infertility • Extreme weakness and emaciation • Signs of aging
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PURGE

Purge Qi	• Severe bloating, gas • Acute indigestion • Chronic or stubborn constipation
Purge Moisture	• Decreased urination • Swollen joints or organs • Severe swelling or edema
Purge Blood	• Severe pain • Delayed or painful menstruation • Traumatic injury, bruising

PURGE

Purge Cold	• Coldness of limbs or body • Profound weakness with pale, cold, clammy skin
Purge Heat	• Pain or swelling with redness, heat, or burning • Hot flashes, fever, or agitation
Purge Damp-Heat	• Purulent discharge • Inflamed blisters or pimples • Acute diarrhea with fever
Purge Phlegm	• Profuse mucus • Enlarged lymph nodes, glands • Nasal or sinus congestion
Purge External Wind	• Dizziness, vertigo, tremors • Migraines • Hypertension • Rheumatic pains
Purge Internal Wind	• Allergy, cold, flu: sore muscles, mild fever, chills, runny nose, congestion, itchy eyes

HARMONIZE

Harmonize Kidney & Heart	• Panic, depression, shock • Diminished libido • Generalized instability
Harmonize Heart & Lung	• Skin prone to rashes • Dry cough, sore throat • Anxiety triggers difficult breathing
Harmonize Lung & Liver	• Tense neck, shoulders • Headache or sciatica • Tight cough, inflamed sinuses
Harmonize Liver & Spleen	• Indigestion, bloating, or nausea • PMS-like tension, moody, cramps
Harmonize Spleen & Kidney	• Water retention • Sore or weak low back or legs • Feeling heavy and weary

STRENGTHEN

Strengthen Kidney	• Weak, sore low back, hips • Diminished libido • Prone to apathy, withdrawal
Strengthen Liver	• Erratic appetite, elimination, menstruation • Easily irritated, frustrated
Strengthen Lung	• Chest weakness, shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing • Susceptible to colds
Strengthen Spleen	• Lethargy, indigestion • Sore, tender muscles; easy bruising, bleeding
Strengthen Heart	• Abnormal heart rhythms • Easily overheated, sweating • Prone to anxiety