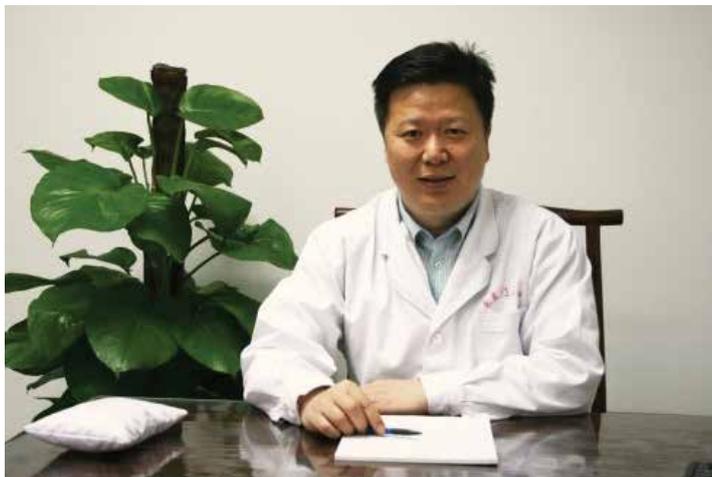


# Cancer is a state

An innovative approach  
to treatment



By Dr Greta Young Jie De (Ph.D)

Throughout history malignant tumours have posed a serious threat to human health. Over the centuries Chinese medicine practitioners have accumulated a wealth of experience in the treatment of cancer. Although a great deal has been learned about the properties of herbal medicines, the approaches in treatment have thus far deviated little from the traditional methods. Regrettably, using this system practitioners have been able to treat cancer with only limited success. A fresh approach is warranted in the quest for a breakthrough in the field of Chinese medicine cancer management.

**A**FTER DECADES OF laborious research and clinical practice, Professor Li Zhong has come up with his own innovative and effective approach to cancer treatment, having identified valuable aspects of traditional theories and taken into account the insights of modern medicine. When tackling cancer, Chinese medicine has adopted a core strategy of “supporting the *zheng qi* and dispelling the pathogen”. Professor Li, however, regards this traditional approach as too simplistic. He regards cancer as being not malignant cells, nor phlegm or blood stasis as conventionally interpreted; rather he sees it as a clinical condition that he terms the “cancer state”. In other words, cancer *per se* is a state in which disharmonies

are possible between the *zangfu* organs as well as between man and nature.

“This interpretation is analogous to the relationship between seeds and soil,” he says. “Different types of seeds require different types of soil to mature into plants. The same seeds grown in different types of soil may grow into different types of plants.” This thinking echoes the observation of the renowned scholar Yan Zhi, of the Pre-Qin dynasty: “Mandarin grown in southern China is known as tangerine (橘, *ju*), which tastes fragrant and sweet, while mandarin grown in northern China is known as trifoliate orange (枳, *zhi*), which is bitter and astringent, although their leaves appear similar. That the same seeds produce different fruits is due to the different environments and compositions of soil and water.”<sup>a</sup>

Professor Li says: “The human body is made up of cells that can be compared to seeds. If our body is in a balanced and harmonious state, we have perfect health. This is tantamount to an environment of fertile soil, good nutrients and water, where seeds will thrive and result in the yield of good fruit. But the best seeds will fail to thrive if the soil condition is poor. If the human body’s internal environment is in an unhealthy state, its cells are more prone to mutate into malignancy, just as poor soils produce inferior fruits.”

a. Yan Zi Chun Qiu (晏子春秋·杂下之十).

### Astringing for cancer

Professor Li believes that viewing cancer from this different perspective leads to the insight that the pathogenesis of cancer is attributable to a failure of yin and yang to interact, resulting in the exhaustion of *zheng qi*. This is the root of the pathogenesis, and leads to qi stagnation, blood stasis and phlegm. Accordingly, Professor Li advocates a new treatment principle of the “astringent method”, which has two mechanisms of action. The first is to astringe the *zheng qi* to prevent further depletion, thus correcting the body’s state of unconsolidated *zheng qi*. The second is to astringe the cancer toxin, preventing or minimising its metastasis and proliferation. Professor Li says that *zheng qi* can be regarded as anti-cancer because it astringes and constrains the cancer toxin. When the body is deficient in *zheng qi*, the tendency of the cancer toxin to proliferate and metastasize surpasses its ability to astringe and constrain, so the disease will progress. Once astringed, the elevated *zheng qi* leads to a strengthened ability to combat cancer by first preventing its proliferation.

Professor Li draws parallels between targeted Western cancer treatment and the TCM theory of channel tropism of herbs, proposing a new approach also to prescribing for cancer. He suggests “targeting the core characteristic symptoms of the cancer to determine the types of herbs for treatment”, and also regularly “identifying the variation of symptoms due to the kinetic changes of the state of the disease so as to modify the use of herbal medicines according to pattern changes”. He emphasises combining pattern and disease identification, together with the careful use of certain toxic herbs.

Professor Li has developed a series of “astringent, *zheng qi* supporting and toxicity expelling” formulas for internal administration, and analgesic herbal plasters for external applications. These formulas and plasters have been demonstrated to improve the quality of life of cancer patients, prolonging their lives, and reducing the toxic effects of chemo- and radio-therapy.

### Three-step approach to treatment

Professor Li advocates a treatment strategy he calls the “Targeted Three Steps Approach to Cancer”. This takes into account conventional

systemic and also individualised cancer treatments in the design of a three-part strategy, which he describes as the “Balanced anti-cancer”, the “Relieving toxicity and enhancing anti-cancer” and the “Transdermal anti-cancer”.

The “Balanced anti-cancer” formula aims to alter the micro-environment of cancer to restore the body’s internal balance; the “Relieving toxicity and enhancing anti-cancer” formula is to reduce the toxicity of chemo- and radio-therapy, and the “Transdermal anti-cancer” formula is the application of topical herbs to extract and/or restrain the cancer toxin.

Professor Li stresses the advantage of the multi-pronged approach, particularly combining internal and external treatments, with the external method addressing the limitations of internal treatment. Just as the renowned Qing dynasty practitioner Xu Ling-Tai said: “Disease is transmitted from external to the internal environment and spreads in the channels and collaterals and *zang fu* organs. In such a situation, internal herbal treatment is appropriate. If, on the other hand, the disease is lodged between the skin and sinews, external topical treatment is also indicated.”<sup>b</sup> This way the herbs can permeate into the sinews and push the toxins internally into the channels and collaterals and the *zang fu* organs where the orally administered herbal medicines act well, or can purge and extract the toxin through the skin. Thus, a combined strategy is more effective than internal treatment alone. Cancer patients in terminal stages are deficient and unable to tolerate harsh purging, therefore internal treatment with mild herbs alone is inadequate, but external treatment can be an effective supplement.

Professor Li Zhong’s breakthrough approach to cancer treatment is the culmination of having dedicated decades of his life to the pursuit of effective treatment. He says: “I am determined to find an optimum cure for cancer in spite of the heavy burden and the long and difficult course ahead.”

b. Xu Da-Chun: *Yi Xue Yuan Liu Lun* (医学源流论 Treatise on the Origin & Development of Medicine), Qing dynasty.

■ Professor Li Zhong will be presenting a three-day Cancer Workshop in the Netherlands from 4–6 October 2018. Details: Loed Rachels, loed@centrumvoorchinesegeneeswijzen.nl