

Three cases from *Jīng Fāng Shí Yàn Lù*, a book by Cao Ying-Fu and his students^a

Cao Ying-Fu uses Di Dang Tang



By Dan Bensky

ONCE (SAYS CAO YING-FU) treated a young girl of 18 or 19 named Zhou who lived by the smaller South Gate, and had had no period for three months. Her complexion was wan and her lower abdomen slightly bloated. The presentation appeared to be a beginning stage of dry blood consumption¹ so I told her to take three *qián* of *Da Huang Zhe Chong Wan* (Rhubarb and Ground Beetle Pill) three times a day and that she would be better by the end of the

1. 干血癆 (*gān xuè láo shāng*), dry blood consumption. Usually seen in females, its main symptoms are darkened complexion, dry thickening of the skin, emaciation, hot flushes, night sweats, dry mouth, flushed cheeks, jumpiness, headaches, scanty periods with poor flow or amenorrhea. The "dry blood" is due to blood stasis leading to heat on the one hand and preventing new blood from being generated on the other. The standard treatment is *Da Huang Zhe Chong Wan* (Rhubarb and Ground Beetle Pill).

a. *The Record of Experiences with Classical Formulas* (1937) is the source for all the Cao Ying-Fu cases in this issue. For a bit more information on this book, see the previous issue of *The Lantern*, Vol 11:2, p. 19.

month. After this she did not return and I assumed that she had gotten better.

Three months later unexpectedly a middle-aged woman brought along a girl seeking a consultation. Taking a look at the girl, she was so drawn from the face down that she did not look human. Her back was bent over and her hands pressed on a distended abdomen. As she continually groaned and moaned, I was taken aback and asked why the disease had been allowed to get to this point. Why had she not been treated earlier?

The mother shed tears and declared, "This is my daughter. Three months ago she came for a consultation with you, sir. You, sir, had her take some pills. Now her abdominal distention is increasing, her limbs are shriveling daily, and the bones of her spine are sticking out. Her period still has not come so she came for another consultation."

When I heard this I gasped with astonishment and regretted the mistake

with the previous medicine. As the disease had already gotten to the point of being so debilitating and depressing, I could not but exert myself to the utmost to again examine her condition.

She was only skin and bones and had a distended and firm abdomen with pain that became more intense with heavy pressure. This was clearly static blood clumping internally. Without attacking how can it be eliminated? On the other hand, there was the worry that her basal qi was already damaged and she could not endure an attacking treatment, so I thought about first tonifying her. Yet because tonification can cause the pathogen to adhere even more, I considered this to be unacceptable and so decided to give her *Dǐ Dàng Tāng* (Appropriate Decoction):

Méng Chóng	3g	Tabanus
Shu Zhì	3g	Hirudo
Dà Huáng	15g	Rhei Radix et Rhizoma
Táo Rén	50pc	Persicae Semen

The next day the mother and daughter returned and I learned that the daughter had passed a large number of black clots and the distention had lessened. As her pulse was exceedingly deficient it was not appropriate to purge her again, so I gave her *Shēng Dì Huáng* (*Rehmanniae Radix*), *Huáng Qí* (*Astragali Radix*), *Dāng Guī* (*Angelicae sinensis Radix*), *Dāng Shēn* (*Codonopsis Radix*), *Chuān Xiōng* (*Chuanxiong Rhizoma*), *Chén Pí* (*Citri reticulatae Pericarpium*), *Bái Sháo* (*Paeoniae Radix alba*), and *Chōng Wèi Zǐ* (*Leonuri Fructus*) to invigorate the blood and promote movement of the qi in order to lead out the accumulated stasis. After taking one packet she did not return. When I chanced upon her on the road six years later, she had given birth to a boy four or five years previously.²

Case two

The pattern of blood build-up is very commonly seen in women and quite

2. A comment in the original text says: The effectiveness of pills depends upon the quality of the original herbal constituents, the stringency of

its manufacture, and the care in its storage. Each is important, and thus the failure of *Da Huang Zhe Chong Wan* (Rhubarb and Ground Beetle Pill) to work in this case does not mean that this approach is ineffective.

rare in men. One year I saw a man from the Red Swastika Society with a painful and distended lower abdomen, clear and profuse urination, and also unable to recognise what he saw. Based on the presentation it certainly seemed to be blood build-up, but in my heart I was leery [about the diagnosis]. In the end I gave him *Tao He Cheng Qi Tang* (Peach Pit Decoction to Order the Qi) and he passed some black stool a short time later, but the symptoms of his illness remained the same. I then gave him two more packets, increasing the dosages of the ingredients, but again the disease remained unchanged. I was amazed.

I had thought that if this condition was not blood build-up, after taking three packets of purgatives the condition would change and turn into a worse disease. If it was in fact a blood build-up pattern, how was it that we had not seen at least a slight improvement? This must be a question of the herbs not being strong enough for the illness.

At the time my disciple Zhang Ci-Gong was by my side and said, “How about giving *Dǐ Dàng Tāng* (Appropriate Decoction)?” I agreed, saying “Based on the presentation, it does not look like he can recover with a mild formula.” Therefore we decided to purge him with *Di Dang Tang*.

After taking it, all this black stool laced with old blood came out. After another packet, the patient was able to calmly lie on a low couch; his abdomen had flattened out and the pain had also calmed down. As I knew that the medicine had already reached the disease, I decreased the dosage from that used in the earlier formula, which was:

Méng Chóng	6g	Tabanus
Shu Zhì	4.5g	Hirudo
Dà Huáng	15g	Rhei Radix et Rhizoma
Táo Rén	15g	Persicae Semen

Later I reduced it even further to:

Méng Chóng	1g	Tabanus
Shu Zhì	1g	Hirudo
Dà Huáng	4.5g	Rhei Radix et Rhizoma
Táo Rén	4.5g	Persicae Semen

After this, Zhang Ci-Gong [used herbs to] adjust and regulate and he got better. Later



A member of the Red Swastika Society, a Daoist charity.

when the patient was asked more about his various ailments, it turned out he had been performing heavy, taxing physical labour that led to congealing of blood, which then clumped to form blood build-up.

Case three

The teacher [Cao Ying-Fu] said that in early autumn of 1927 the mother of Hua Zong-Hai from Wuxi had had no period for 10 months. Her abdomen was not that large but felt distended. In the beginning after Ding [Gan-Ren] had used medicines to disperse the qi and promote proper movement of the blood, she was no longer uncomfortably distended and full. She ate and drank like a normal person. After undergoing some Western medical tests, she was told that there was a fetus in her abdomen that was being pressed upon by some decayed material so that it was unable to grow. If one was to attack this material [they said] in an attempt to eliminate it, it would certainly damage the fetus.

Zong-Hai requested that I go to Wuxi to see her. The pulse was choppy, not slippery, and was not like a pulse during pregnancy. That evening I consulted with Dr Ding and gave her *Táo Hé Chéng Qì Tāng* (Peach Pit Decoction to Order the Qi) and the next morning she passed some white matter that was like sticky phlegm. We then gave her *Dǐ Dàng Tāng* (Appropriate Decoction) and she passed even more white matter. As the distention and fullness was completely gone, her belly suddenly grew large. After more than a month, she gave birth to a girl and the mother and child were fine.

Is this not what [the military writer] Sun Zi meant when he wrote, “Put them in a situation with no escape and they will survive”?

Cao Ying-Fu comments

The *Jin Gui Yao Lue* (Essentials from the Golden Cabinet) chapter on pregnancy states, “If there is an immobile mass lodged in the abdomen, one should purge the immobile abdominal mass; *Guì Zhī Fú Líng Wán* (Cinnamon Twig and Poria Pill) masters it.”

In this formula, *Mu Dan Pi* (Moutan Cortex), *Tao Ren* (Persicae Semen), and *Shao Yao* (Paeoniae Radix) are exceedingly

effective at breaking up and attacking blood stasis. *Mu Dan Pi* and *Tao Ren* are harsh herbs that treat Intestinal abscess in the formula *Dà Huáng Mǔ Dān Tāng* (Rhubarb and Moutan Decoction) while *Shao Yao* (Paeoniae Radix) is a necessity for abscess toxicity and to unblock the collaterals. Nowadays people use “capital *Chi Shao*” [that grown around Beijing] to treat external medicine patterns [such as Intestinal abscesses] due to its marked efficacy. *Guì Zhī* with *Shao Yao* (Paeoniae Radix) is able to support and control the Spleen yang of the blood, while dispersing blood stasis and clumping. Look at *taiyang* disorders where we use *Guì Zhī* and *Shao Yao* (Paeoniae Radix) to release the muscular layer: is this not because Spleen controls the muscles and flesh? Using *Fu Ling* [in this formula] is for nothing more than getting rid of dampness and harmonising the Spleen.

Guì Zhī Fú Líng Wán (Cinnamon Twig and Poria Pill) is for treating mild low-level problems and has nowhere near the strength of *Táo Hé Chéng Qì Tāng* (Peach Pit Decoction to Order the Qi) or *Dǐ Dàng Tāng* (Appropriate Decoction). If they had not done the Western medical tests [that showed pregnancy and revealed the problem with the fetus], and if Dr Ding’s herbs to break up blood stasis had not already demonstrated results, we categorically would not have dared utilise this approach here. In the end it was successful in this case. Is this not what was meant by the saying “there will be neither injury nor death?”³

■ Cao on throat conditions: P. 10

■ Ge Gen Huang Qin Huang Lian Tang: P. 13

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3. In chapter 71 of the *Su Wen* (Basic Questions) Huang Di asks: When a woman is pregnant, can you use harsh herbs? Qi Bo replies: If there is a reason [to use harsh medicines], no harm will come [to the mother] nor will [the fetus] perish.

Cao Ying-Fu on throat conditions



Translated by Nick Dent

Cao Ying-Fu was the foremost master of the classical formula current in Shanghai during the 1920s and 1930s, and advocated the use of relatively large doses, compared to the popular “light dosage” prescriptions common locally. Cao was not coy about his opinions, even criticising his good friend Ding Gan-Ren for this tendency in the foreword Cao wrote for Ding’s own book of collected case records. In the comments to the case history below he also weighs in on the issue of warm disease treatments based on the *Shang Han Lun* (Discussion of Cold Damage) methods. Qin Bo-Wei was one of the many students strongly influenced by Cao, who was the Director of Studies at the Shanghai Technical College of Chinese Medicine from 1919. “Qin later recalled with affection how he and his classmates frequently visited Cao Yingfu after school to continue their studies or write poetry, showing both the closeness and the emotional affection of many teacher/student relationships.”^a Another case history, together with a little more about the life and dramatic death of Cao Ying-Fu, was published in the previous issue of *The Lantern*, entitled White Tiger with Gui Zhi Decoction pattern.

Acrid cool sweet and moistening herb method

A case history from Cao Ying-Fu’s student Jiang Zuo-Jing, with follow-up comments by Cao.

Ms Wang. Acute tonsillitis bilaterally; red, swollen and painful, making her reluctant to swallow. There is also fever, very slight aversion to wind, no trouble with stool or urine, somewhat scarlet tongue and slightly rapid pulse. Use acrid cool sweet and moistening method.

Bo He	3g	Menthae haplocalycis Herba, add last
Xing Ren	9g	Armeniaca Semen
Lian Qiao	6g	Forsythiae Fructus
Zhe Bei Mu	9g	Fritillariae thunbergii Bulbus
Sang Ye	6g	Mori Folium
Sheng Gan Cao	5g	Glycyrrhizae Radix, unprepared
Chi Shao	6g	Paeoniae Radix rubra
Chan Tui	3g	Cicadae Periostracum
Zhi Jiang Can	9g	Bombyx Batryticatus, prepared
Jie Geng	3g	Platycodi Radix
Ma Bo	2g	Lasiosphaera/Calvatia
Niu Bang Zi	6g	Arctii Fructus
fresh Lu Gen		Phragmitis Rhizoma, a foot long section without the joints

Also use **Yu Yao Shi** (Jade Key) to spray into throat.¹

1. Yu Yao Shi (Jade Key) contains Mang Xiao (Natrii Sulfas) 45g, Peng Sha (Borax) 15g, Bai Jiang Can (Bombyx batryticatus) 7.5g, Bing Pian (Borneolum) 0.15g. The commonly available “Watermelon Frost” can be used instead.

a. Scheid, V. (2007) *Currents of Tradition in Chinese Medicine*, Eastland Press. p. 329.

Comments by Cao Ying-Fu

When the drying qi of September and October is in force, throat conditions are often frequent. Mild ones might involve just a feeling of hardness that makes one reluctant to swallow, but as it gets worse it can develop into what we call in Chinese medicine “milk moth” (*ru e*), both sides reddening and as swollen as peach pits. Western medicine calls it tonsillitis, and all you need to do is use the above formula with slight variations according to need. In one bag they will feel the difference, and in two bags it will be fixed. Once the disorder has retreated, everything will have returned to normal.

If however it has gradually progressed from swollen redness and developed white spots or tofu-like coating, just add the single herb *Xuan Shen* (*Scrophulariae Radix*) and the effects are remarkable.

If it has gone further and developed pus, then you can use puncturing to allow the pus to be expelled; this will cure it as well.

There is a school of throat physicians who like to use bitter-cold medicinals like *Ban Lan Gen* (*Isatidis/Baphicacanthis Radix*), *Huang Lian* (*Coptidis Rhizoma*), *Zi Hua Di Ding* (*Violae Herba*) and *Ren Zhong Huang* (*Rulvis Glycyrrhizae Extractionis Sedilis*). After taking these, although it does temporarily turn back the pathogenic qi, it almost always causes constraint that prevents its dissipation and delays the resolution of the condition for days, sometimes making it more serious or even dangerous. Patients who have already taken bitter-cold medicinals without success always take longer to see results when subsequently using the acrid cool sweet and moistening herb method; sometimes there is no perceptible response at all to the first two bags of herbs. I have seen this happen a number of times.

There is another school of physicians who, when treating the throat, like to use heavy greasy yin tonics such as *Sheng Di* (*Rehmanniae Radix*), *Mai*

Men Dong (*Ophiopogonis Radix*), *Shi Hu* (*Dendrobii Herba*) and *Sha Shen* (*Glehniae/Adenophorae Radix*), even surprisingly using up to 24 or 30g. Treating the condition this way will not get results in a hurry. A friend of mine, Mr Xie Jun-Wei from Kangwu County, had what was really a minor sore throat. He consulted a famous doctor who gave him a big prescription full of yin nourishing herbs; he paid a lot of money for little effect. I gave him a light prescription of acrid cooling herbs which improved him in one bag and completely cured him in two.

This acrid cool sweet and moistening herb method is really valuable. And it is in fact a major technique learned from the *Shang Han Lun* (*Discussion of Cold Damage*) itself. The experts in warm and febrile diseases have simply adopted it.

Ye Tian-Shi in his *You Ke Yi An* (*Paediatric Case Histories*) says:

When the weather during springtime is suddenly hot followed by a cold snap, patients first suffer a warm pathogen which is then bound in by cold; coughs with phlegm and wheezing are very widespread ... when mild it is a cough, when severe it is wheezing, and when really acute the wheezing causes the nostrils to flare and the chest to protrude.

This is in fact the pattern for *Ma Xing Shi Gan Tang* (*Ephedra, Apricot Kernel, Gypsum, and Licorice Decoction*). If you can give, in time, a heavy dose of *Ma Xing Shi Gan Tang*, as soon as they take the herbs the illness will go; there would be no worry about a “rebellious transmission into Pericardium”.²

According to the clinical experience of my student Jiang Zuo-Jing, the *Ma Xing Shi Gan Tang* (*Ephedra, Apricot Kernel, Gypsum, and Licorice Decoction*) pattern occurs very commonly in children, and usually

appears at the interval between winter and spring. This can be compared to my description of the pattern for *Bai Hu jia Gui Zhi Tang* (*White Tiger plus Cinnamon Twig Decoction*)³ which is totally opposite: this pattern occurs mainly in summer and mainly in adults. This is congruent with Ye Tian-Shi's theories; Ye is very clear on when to use *Ma Xing Shi Gan Tang*.

Mr Wu Ju-Tong also knows, even though his *Wen Bing Tiao Bian* (*Systematic Differentiation of Warm Disease*) does not discuss it in the sections applying to the upper *jiao* and the middle *jiao*. It is only in the lower *jiao* section, in clause 48, that he reveals it. This clause says: “Wheezing, cough, rough breathing, spitting up of watery saliva, pulse tidal, rapid and larger on the right than the left, with hoarseness: this is hot thin mucous. *Ma Xing Shi Gan Tang* (*Ephedra, Apricot Kernel, Gypsum, and Licorice Decoction*) masters it.”

So the warm and febrile disease masters know how to recognise and use the acrid cool sweet and moistening herb method that is the *Ma Xing Shi Gan Tang* pattern, and can go beyond, use it as a basis, alter it and extend it. They call this “a broadly defined warm disease theory” but the only pity is that they do not come clean and reveal the origin of the method.

Well, I am going to be fair here and state: there is nothing wrong with warm disease experts setting up theories, and far be it from me to say that “seasonal formulas” or “light formulas” are absolutely not to be used. It is just that one should be clear about their relationship with *Shang Han Lun* formulas and the Cold Damage lineage. Then, imitating the methods of classical formulas, there is no harm in using seasonal formula-type herbs, as [with this understanding gained from classical formula methods] they will then be even more miraculously effective.

2. In his *You Ke Yi An* (*Paediatric Case Histories*), Ye Tian-Shi had stated “When Lung disorders are mistreated, there will be rebellious transmission into the Pericardium.”

3. See last issue, Vol 11:2 of *The Lantern* in the article “White Tiger with Gui Zhi Decoction pattern.”