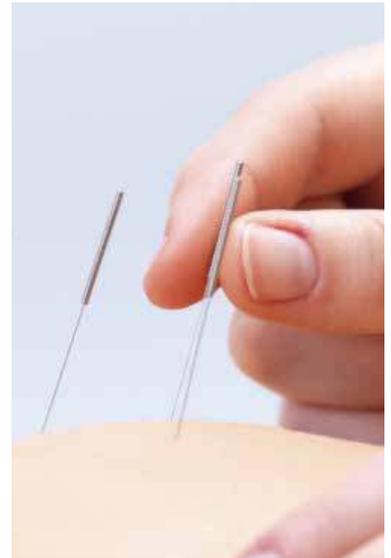


# Chinese medicine in the management of **cancer**



Thanks to technological advances in medicine, bacterial, viral and parasitic infections are on the decline. However, there is an increase in contemporary diseases associated with environmental pollution, irregular diet and lifestyle. Chronic ailments such as hypertension, diabetes and cerebro-cardiovascular disease are managed, at best, only by ongoing medication. In the developed world, an increasing number of patients suffer from malignant disease with treatment focused not only on prolonging life but also on quality of life.

**By Professor Li Pei-Wen**

*Translated by Greta Young Jie De*

**T**HESE ARE THE BENEFITS of using Chinese medicine in the management of cancer patients.

**Safety:** Most Chinese herbs are non-toxic with the exception of a small number used to target particular toxic agents. Animal studies in laboratory tests have shown that many of the herbal preparations with a toxicity margin far exceeding the recommended dosage cannot be detected in animals using the LD<sub>50</sub> criteria. There is no evidence to suggest that prolonged use of Chinese medicine will cause bone marrow suppression or damage to liver or kidney function.

**Flexibility:** Traditionally, herbal formulas are modified according to individual requirements: the patterns and any subsequent changes.

**Delivery:** The traditional preparations of herbal pastes, elixirs, pills and powders are now being replaced by intramuscular injection, capsule, drip and oral medication.

The disease process from the perspective of Chinese medical theory and the therapeutic actions of Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture differ significantly from the Western options of surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and palliative care. The key treatment philosophy is not to replace the physiological functions of the body but to support the body's natural physiology and help the immune system to fight cancer.

The advantages of Chinese herbs lie in their capacity for multi-level targeting, thus addressing different aspects of treatment. For example, *Ren Shen* (Ginseng Radix), apart from augmenting qi and generating fluid, contains more than 30 types of triterpenes, organic acids, amino acids, polypeptide alkaloids and numerous micro elements. Recent research has shown that *Ren Shen* glucoside has an anti-cancerous and anti-oxidation function with a wide range of clinical applications. *Shen Qi Tang – Ren Shen* (Ginseng Radix) and *Huang Qi* (Astragalus Radix) – has been widely used in China in the treatment of cancer as an intramuscular injection.

Chinese herbs have a two-way regulatory effect.

## Case study: rectal cancer

### Male, 46 years old

In June 1996 the patient was diagnosed with cancer of the rectum and underwent surgery, which was followed by a course of chemotherapy (six treatments).

In 2004, he detected a lump in his neck, measuring 2.7 x 1.6cm. It was thought that the cancer had metastasised.

He consulted Professor Li regarding the lump in his neck. Examination showed the lump to be fixed, with no swelling or pain. The patient was very thin, his appetite was poor and he suffered from constipation. His pulse was submerged and his tongue purplish and dull.

Blood tests showed CEA (carcino-embryonic antigen) 16.8 ng/ml. (N < 5ng/ml). The lump was diagnosed as being an enlarged lymph node due to the metastasis of cancer cells.

Treatment principle: Tonify the Kidney and Spleen; soften hardness and dissipate knots.

<i>Gou Qi Zi</i>	15g	( <i>Lycii Fructus</i> )
<i>Nu Zhen Zi</i>	10g	( <i>Ligustri lucidi Fructus</i> )
<i>Fu Ling</i>	15g	( <i>Poria</i> )
<i>Jiao Liu Qu</i>	10g	( <i>Massa medicata fermentata</i> , baked)

<i>Tu Bei Mu</i>	10g	( <i>Fritillariae thunbergii Bulbus</i> )
<i>Mu Gua</i>	15g	( <i>Chaenomelis lagenariae Fructus</i> )
<i>E Zhu</i>	10g	( <i>Curcumae zedoariae Rhizoma</i> )
<i>Ba Yue Zha</i>	10g	( <i>Akebiae Fructus</i> )
<i>Mao Zhao Cao</i>	10g	( <i>Ranunculus ternata Radix</i> ) <sup>1</sup>
<i>Teng Li Gen</i>	10g	( <i>Actinidiae chinensis Radix</i> ) <sup>2</sup>

One packet per day.

After two weeks, his appetite had improved and so had his constipation. The CEA level was lowered from 16.8 ng/ml to 12.8 ng/ml and the size of the lymph node in the neck was reduced to 1.5cm. The original formula was adhered to for a further month and he continued to improve. He continued with his chemotherapy in hospital.

1 *Mao Zhao Cao* (*Ranunculus ternata Radix*) is sweet, pungent and warm. It is specific for swollen glands and treats scrofula, pulmonary tuberculosis and malarial-like disorders.

2 *Teng Li Gen* (*Actinidiae chinensis Radix*) is also known as *Mi Hou Tao Gen* and cools heat, promotes urination, invigorates blood and reduces swellings. It treats hepatitis, oedema, murky Lin syndromes and scrofula.

This means many herbs have the dual effect of “elevating” or “reducing” biological processes and may be said to have a homeostatic function. For example, a patient suffering from DIC (disseminated intravascular coagulation) must be given drugs to stop bleeding during the bleeding phase but anti-coagulation medication during the blood clotting phase.

Many Chinese herbs such as *San Qi* (*Pseudoginseng Radix*), *Dang Gui* (*Angelicae Sinensis Radix*) and *Yun Nan Bai Yao* invigorate blood while stopping bleeding. (The blood invigorating function of these herbs achieves the result of stopping the bleeding by eliminating blood stasis.) This treatment strategy is also indicated for cancer patients suffering from haemorrhage due to accumulated blood stasis. Patients who are on blood thinners such as Warfarin or Aspirin when given blood invigorating herbs such as *San Qi* (*Pseudoginseng Radix*), *Tao Ren* (*Persicae Semen*) and *Hong Hua* (*Carthami Flos*) should have their herbal dosage adjusted accordingly.

Chinese medicine emphasises the importance of supporting zheng qi in order to dispel the pathogen. In another words, the object is to raise the natural immunity in order fight the cancer. For example, *Bai He* (*Lilii Bulbus*) moistens the Lung, calms the spirit and at the same time nourishes the five zang organs to supplement deficiency.

Modern research has shown that it directly enhances the auto-immune system and is anti-fa-

tigue and anti-hypoxic. *Bai He* contains colchicine, an essential ingredient in combating cancer.

Qi and blood tonifying herbs enhance the immune system. There is a saying that: “Accumulation can be attributed mainly to a deficiency of zheng qi, whereby the body succumbs to pathogenic attack.” *Huang Qi* (*Astragali Radix*) and *Nu Zhen Zi* (*Ligustri Lucidi, Fructus*) capsules, known as *Zhen Qi Fu Zheng Jiao Nang* (贞芪扶正胶囊) or *Huang Qi* and *Ren Shen* as an intra-muscular injection, extracts of *Ling Zhi* (*Ganoderma Lucidum*) and *Yin Xing Ye* (*Ginkgo Bilobae Folium*) are all used in treating cancer patients. All of these boost the immune system, activate T cells and their sub-type, increase the activation of NK and LAK cells and protect the haemopoietic stem cells. Furthermore, by reducing the toxicity of the chemotherapy, they are able not only to optimise quality of life, but ultimately are able also to prolong the patient’s life.

Chinese medicine’s common treatment strategies — such as invigorating blood and transforming stasis; softening and dispersing masses; clearing heat and relieving toxin; transforming stasis to free obstruction — are comparable to Western treatment strategies such as preventing uncontrolled proliferation of cancer cells, preventing differentiation of stem cells, regulating apoptosis, preventing angiogenesis and tumor growth, and supplementing micro-nutrients.

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Chinese medicine attributes tumour formation to qi stagnation with blood stasis resulting in the formation of a mass. Herbs used include *Chuan Xiong* (Chuanxiong Rhizoma), *Dang Gui* (Angelicae Sinensis Radix), *San Qi* (Pseudoginseng Radix), *Dan Shen* (Salviae miltiorrhizae Radix), *E Zhu* (Curcumae Zedoariae, Rhizoma), all of which regulate qi and invigorate the blood.

Herbs that clear heat and relieve toxicity are used to target the fire toxin that results from constraint or from radiotherapy. Herbs used include *Shan Dou Gen* (Sophorae Subprostratae, Radix), *Ban Bian Lian* (Lobeliae Chinesis cum Radice, Herba) and *Bai Hua She She Cao* (Oldenlandiae Diffusae, Herba). If the fire toxin had injured yin, then yin tonifying herbs are added.

The strategy of using poison to treat poison is seen in the use of toxic herbs such as *Chan Su* (Venenum Bufonis) and *Teng Huang* (Garcinia Morella Resina)<sup>1</sup> which act by targeting the DNA of the cancerous cells, while such herbs as *Zhong Jie Feng* (Sarcandrae, Ramulus et Folium) work by promoting apoptosis (programmed or deliberate cell death) within the tumour.

### Secondary symptoms

Chinese medicine treats secondary symptoms such as pain, sweating, no appetite, low-grade fever and insomnia.

### Emotional stress

Herbs used to moderate emotional stress include *Yu Jin* (Curcumae Radix), *Ju Hua* (Chrysanthemi Flos) and *He Huan Pi* (Albiziae Cortex) to disperse constrained Liver qi.

*Bai He*, *Fen Xin Mu* (Juglans Regia, heartwood), *Lian Zi* (Nelumbinis Nuciferae, Semen), *Sha Yuan Zhi* (Polygalae Radix) nourish the Heart and calm the spirit.

Commonly used formulas are *Suan Zao Ren Tang* (Sour Jujube Decoction), *Ding Zhi Wan* (Settle the Emotions Pill) and *Gan Mai Da Zao Tang* (Licorice, Wheat and Jujube Decoction).

### Pain management

The strategy for treatment of pain focuses largely on “unblocking”. By adhering to the philosophy of “Where there is blockage there is pain”, the main strategy is to open the channels and free them from obstruction.

Frequently used herbs that regulate blood and ease pain are *Ru Xiang* (Olibanum), *Mo Yao* (Myrrha), *Yan Hu Suo* (Corydalis Yanhusuo Rhizoma), *Liu Ji Nu* (Artemisiae Anomolae Herba) and *Wu Ling Zhi* (Trogopterori seu pteromi Excrementum).

Herbs that regulate qi and moderate pain are *Wu Yao* (Linderiae Strychnofoliae Radix), *Xiang Yuan Pi* (Citri medicae seu Wilsonii), *Chuan Lian*

*Zi* (Toosendan Fructus) and *Jiu Xiang Chong* (Aspongopus).

Herbs that dispel wind-damp and moderate pain are *Xu Chang Qing* (Cynachi paniculati Radix), *Fang Ji* (Stephaniae Tetrandrae, Radix), *Du Huo* (Duhuo, Radix), *Wei Ling Xian* (Clemetidis Chinensis Radix) etc.

The traditional formula containing *Chuan Lian Zi* (Melia) and *Yan Hu Suo* (Corydalis) known as *Jin Ling Zi San* (Melia Toosendan Powder) moderates pain by regulating qi and dispersing Liver qi as well as invigorating blood. Another formula similar in function is *Yan Hu Suo San* (Corydalis Powder), which contains *Dang Gui* (Angelicae Sinensis Radix), *Yan Hu Suo* (Corydalis Rhizoma), *Pu Huang* (Typhae, Pollen), *Chi Shao* (Paeonia Radix rubra), *Rou Gui* (Cinnamomi Cortex), *Jiang Huang* (Curcumae, Rhizoma), *Ru Xiang*, *Mo Yao*, *Mu Xiang* (Saussureae seu Vladimiriae, Radix) and *Zhi Gan Cao* (Glycyrrhizae Uralensis, Radix). This formula is warmer and moderates pain by regulating qi, invigorating blood and warming the channels.

### Constipation:

Constipation is a common problem for cancer patients due to age, prolonged immobility or to analgesics. It is not recommended to use harsh purgatives such as *Da Huang* (Rhei Rhizoma), *Mang Xiao* (Mirabilitum) or *Fan Xie Ye* (Senna, Folium). Rather, treatment should be focused on augmenting qi, nourishing blood and moistening the intestines. Useful herbs are *Sang Shen Zi* (Mori Albae, Fructus), *Huang Jing* (Polygonati, Rhizoma), *Hei Zi Ma* (Sesami Indici, Semen), *He Shou Wu* (Polygoni Multiflori, Radix) and *Dang Gui* (Angelicae Sinensis Radix).

### Conclusion

Chinese medicine either as the principal or as a supplementary treatment for cancer patients offers a vast array of benefits in dealing with some of the commonly encountered complications, managing pain and in overcoming the side-effects of surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy.

### Endnote

1. *Teng Huang* (Garcinia Morella Resina) is a tropical native of India and Thailand. The drug is made from the sap of the plant, and is strongly anti-bacterial but also quite toxic and needs careful preparation.



### Ante Babic's Tips for running a successful clinic ...

Be firm with family. Cousin Mujo insists his solo ukelele gig would pack the clinic. I have changed the locks.