



FORMULA COMBINATIONS

BY ERIC BRAND, L.AC.



1

INTRODUCTION

The practice of combining whole formulas is a widespread new trend in the field of Chinese medicine. Formula combining is not an entirely new trend by any means, but the widespread availability of prepared formulas in the modern day has allowed the practice of formula combining to expand significantly.

The practice of formula combining is particularly prevalent with granule extracts, and formula combining is a fundamental feature of the basic

method of granule use as practiced in Taiwan and Japan. Formula combining is comparatively less common in mainland China, because pre-made formulas have not yet been approved by the government, leaving only single herb extracts and raw herbs available on the market. In the West, we use formula combining on a small scale with granule products and liquid concentrates, but most Western practitioners lack experience and training in the principles of formula combining.

Historically, there are many examples where a compound formula like Liu Yi San (Six to One Powder) was used as an addition to a whole formula. In the modern day, the availability of hundreds of pre-made granule formulas has greatly expanded the scope of formulas that can be easily combined.

Granule formulas are commonly built from mixing single-herb extracts in mainland China. In fact, compound granule formulas that have been decocted together are presently uncommon on the Chinese domestic market. The situation is different in Taiwan and Japan, where granule formulas are generally decocted together, and whole formulas (rather than single herb extracts) form the bulk of most prescriptions. In this prescription style, whole formulas are often added as a single principle, much as one would add a single medicinal to modify a base prescription.

The prevalence of combining whole formulas together in Taiwan and Japan may be related to the fact that granule technology initially arose for creating Japanese Kampo medicines. In Japanese Kampo, whole formulas are used frequently and single medicinal extracts are rarely used. Japanese Kampo uses a smaller range of formulas than Chinese medicine, and most Kampo formulas are prescribed without modifications. Kampo formulas are frequently combined together but the addition of single medicinals or the construction of new formulas from single medicinals is uncommon.

The technology to make granules initially spread from Japan to Taiwan, where it rapidly adapted to the Chinese medical prescription style prevalent in Taiwan. Many new formulas were added to the repertoire of prepared products, and single herb extracts were added to allow for formula modifications. Taiwanese doctors have many ready-made compound formulas on the shelf to choose from, so a new prescription style based on combining whole formulas (often with single herb additions) developed there.

These variations in product availability and prescription styles have fueled different approaches in different regions. Regions that decoct formulas together tend to favor the use of compound formulas, and many practitioners in Taiwan and Japan believe that whole formulas cooked together are more effective than formulas built entirely from single extracts. Whole formulas are thought to have clear direction and succinct principles, with an eloquent balance of ingredients and an enduring historical track record. In fact, Japanese granule manufacturers must apply for arduous “new drug” applications if any aspect of a classical formula is changed, such as variation in the dose ranges of constituent medicinals.

By contrast, in mainland China the prevailing view is that combining multiple whole formulas instead of building a prescription based on single herbs causes one to include unnecessary medicinals, making the formula lose its clarity and direction. In addition, the “formula compounding” method has never been extensively evaluated clinically on the mainland because the whole formula granule products are rarely available there.

These diametrically opposed viewpoints have caused prescription styles to develop different regional characteristics. It is impossible to say that one approach is more effective than the other because both the mainland prescription style and the Taiwanese prescription style are routinely used in millions of patient visits.

It is not uncommon to find doctors in mainland China that do not understand the granule prescription trends in Taiwan, and many doctors in Taiwan are not aware of the new granule industry in mainland China. Since most Westerners are trained by teachers from mainland China, we often have relatively little exposure to the approach of formula combining. Thus, many practitioners are unclear on how to combine formulas.



2

USING BASE FORMULAS

Using formulas as building blocks speeds the time required for dispensing, since fewer bottles need to be pulled from the shelves and fewer products need to be weighed. For example, if the pharmacy has only single herbs and Shi Quan Da Bu Tang (Ten Complete Major Supplementation Decoction) needs to be filled, 10 individual herbs must be pulled. If the whole Shi Quan Da Bu Tang formula is available, only one item needs to be weighed.

Continuing this example, even if the whole Shi Quan Da Bu Tang formula is not stocked, it can be built from Ba Zhen Tang plus Huang Qi (astragalus) and Rou Gui (cinnamon bark). If Ba Zhen Tang is not available, it can be elaborated by combining Si Jun Zi Tang (Four Gentlemen Decoction) and Si Wu Tang (Four Agents Decoction). In this way, fewer items need to be pulled off the shelf, and one has the advantage that the ingredients have been cooked together to preserve any positive chemical interactions that may result from decocting the items together.

Many of the formulas in early classical texts of Chinese medicine contained relatively few ingredients but revealed very clear principles. In particular, the eloquent ingredient combinations in Zhang Zhong-Jing's formulas from the *Shang Han Lun* ("On Cold Damage") and the *Jin Gui Yao Lue* ("Essential Prescriptions of the Golden Coffer") were the first records of many famous herbal combinations. These essential combinations have been elaborated to form other famous formulas for centuries, and they represent a critical aspect of the empirical evidence base of Chinese medicine. In fact, it could even be said that the herbal pairings and formulas from the *Shang Han Lun* and *Jin Gui Yao Lue* have represented one of the key areas of consensus between the medical traditions of China, Japan, and Korea up to the present day.

In many instances, the actions created by many of the basic herbal pairings in classical formulas have actually defined our modern understanding of single-herb actions and indications. For example, we now study that Chai Hu (*Bupleuri Radix*) resolves lesser yang, courses the liver, and raises yang, but these actions were largely developed from its employment in formulas such as Xiao Chai Hu Tang (Minor *Bupleurum* Decoction), Si Ni San (Counterflow Cold Powder), Chai Hu Shu Gan San (*Bupleurum* Liver-Coursing Powder), and Bu Zhong Yi Qi Tang (Center-Supplementing Qi-Boosting Decoction).

The small, concise formulas from early texts such as the *Shang Han Lun* strongly influence modern formula combining, because many of these classical formulas have a very clear therapeutic direction. In the context of the *Shang Han Lun*, it is not uncommon to see formulas that treat relatively severe patterns, such as the patterns associated with Si Ni Tang (Counterflow Cold Decoction) or Bai Hu Tang (White Tiger Decoction). Such formulas are

rarely used on their own in the modern day, but the combinations of medicinals that they contain illustrate crucial elements of Chinese medical theory and offer great clinical efficacy.

Many of the strong classical formulas that have clear principles but are rarely indicated on their own can be incorporated into compound formulas. Illustrative examples include formulas such as Bai Hu Tang (White Tiger Decoction), Er Chen Tang (Two Matured Ingredients Decoction), Si Ni Tang (Counterflow Cold Decoction), and Huang Lian Jie Du Tang (Coptis Toxin-Resolving Decoction). These formulas are rarely used alone in an unmodified form, yet each offers a perfect unit of medicinal combinations that is succinct, focused in principle, and highly effective.



3

BAI HU TANG (WHITE TIGER DECOCTION)

Shi Gao (Gypsum Fibrosum)

Zhi Mu (Anemarrhenae Rhizoma)

Zhi Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix Praeparata)

Geng Mi (Oryzae Semen)

As a compound formula, Bai Hu Tang clears heat and eliminates vexation, engenders liquid and relieves thirst. It is used to treat yang brightness

(yang ming) qi-aspect exuberant heat (also known as yang ming channel disease or qi-aspect heat). This presents with vigorous heat effusion, red face, vexation and thirst with taking of fluids, sweating and aversion to heat, and a flooding, large, forceful pulse.

Bai Hu Tang treats internal heat spreading throughout the whole body, with heat in both the interior and the exterior. Shi Gao is the sovereign medicinal because its great cold clears yang ming (qi-aspect) heat. It clears heat and eliminates vexation without damaging liquid. Zhi Mu, the minister, helps Shi Gao to clear repletion heat from the lung and stomach, and also enriches yin to engender liquid. These two medicinals have a relationship of mutual need, and their combination increases their heat-clearing and liquid-engendering power. Zhi Gan Cao and Geng Mi boost the stomach and protect liquid while preventing the cold nature of the sovereign and minister from damaging the center burner. Thus, they are both assistants and couriers.

When we look at the construction of this formula, it is obvious that the central thrust lies in the combination of Shi Gao and Zhi Mu. Shi Gao and Zhi Mu complement each other with their ability to clear heat and boost liquid. These two items are powerfully cold and can be used to clear heat to treat many different disorders when they are combined with the appropriate medicinals. In the compound formula Bai Hu Tang, their cold nature is moderated by Zhi Gan Cao and Geng Mi. Thus, Bai Hu Tang is a very concise and useful formula that is perfect to use in combination with other formulas.

Bai Hu Tang is a useful formula to consider adding for cases that need a strong heat-clearing action. For example, it is common to see Bai Hu Tang with the addition of Gui Zhi (Cinnamomi Ramulus) to treat hot impediment (bi) conditions that affect the joints. Modern applications of this theory can be seen in conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, which often manifests as a hot impediment pattern according to traditional theory.

When using Bai Hu Tang in granule form, it can also be used in small doses to increase the strength of formulas that clear lung heat. While its original indications on its own were based on treating strong heat disease, Bai Hu Tang can be used in lower doses to treat heat disease of lesser intensity. Applications include conditions such as the common cold in patients with high fever, thirst, and other symptoms of lung heat.

Similarly, Bai Hu Tang can be used to treat conditions of heat in the stomach channel. By adding Niu Xi (*Achyranthis Bidentatae Radix*), Sheng Di Huang (*Rehmanniae Radix*), and Mai Men Dong (*Ophiopogonis Radix*), one can essentially create the principle of the formula Yu Nu Jian (Jade Lady Brew), which is an important formula for stomach heat with yin deficiency. Bai Hu Tang can also be used with medicinals such as Huang Lian to enhance the ability of Huang Lian to clear heat in the stomach channel.

Classical modifications of Bai Hu Tang include Bai Hu Jia Ren Shen Tang (White Tiger Decoction Plus Ginseng) and Bai Hu Jia Cang Zhu Tang (White Tiger Decoction Plus *Atractylodes*). Both of these formulas are perfect units for a modular approach, because each formula contains potent medicinals that are combined with a clear focus and direction.

Bai Hu Jia Ren Shen Tang is a modification of the main formula that also appeared in the original Shang Han Lun. It is the same formula with the addition of Ren Shen (*Ginseng Radix*). This formula clears heat, boosts qi, and engenders liquid. It is indicated for basically the same presentation as the main formula, with one key difference- in this formula, while there is profuse sweating, the pulse is large but forceless because qi and liquid have been damaged. This formula may also be used for summerheat disease with damage to both qi and liquid, manifesting in sweating of the upper back, slight aversion to wind and cold, generalized heat effusion, and thirst. In wider applications, Bai Hu Jia Ren Shen Tang can be used for any of the above situations for which Bai Hu Tang is indicated, as long as there is significant qi deficiency.

If Cang Zhu (*Atractylodis Rhizoma*) is added, the formula clears heat and dispels dampness. It is indicated for damp-warmth disease, with generalized heat effusion, glomus in the chest, profuse sweating, and a red tongue with white greasy fur. There may also be wind-damp impediment (*bì*), great generalized heat effusion, and swelling and pain of the joints. This is a suitable base formula for many joint diseases that are characterized by heat and dampness.



4

SI NI TANG (COUNTERFLOW COLD DECOCTION)

Fu Zi (Aconiti Radix Lateralis Praeparata)

Gan Jiang (Zingiberis Rhizoma)

Zhi Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix Praeparata)

This simple formula is a textbook formula for warming yang. Originally indicated for *shao yin* disease with severe cold signs due to insufficiency of yang, this formula combines one of the most important herbal pairs for warm-

ing the interior: Gan Jiang and Fu Zi. These two hot medicinals complement each other, as the heat of Gan Jiang is said to be staying in nature while the heat of Fu Zi is mobile in nature. Gan Jiang also reduces Fu Zi's toxicity, and Zhi Gan Cao further moderates their extreme nature to harmonize the formula.

Properly combined with other medicinals and formulas, Si Ni Tang is widely applicable for conditions with yang deficiency and cold exuberance. Fu Zi is deficiency used to treat all patterns of yang deficiency affecting the spleen, heart, and kidney. Granule preparations of Fu Zi are particularly useful because manufacturers utilize prolonged cooking and testing regimes to minimize its toxicity.

Si Ni Tang can be used with formulas like Si Jun Zi Tang (Four Gentlemen Decoction) to create the principle of Fu Zi Li Zhong Wan (Aconite Center-Rectifying Pill), an extremely effective formula for spleen yang deficiency.

Si Ni Tang can also be used in low doses in conjunction with formulas such as Ba Zhen Tang (Eight-Gem Decoction) for cases of qi, blood, and yang deficiency. Si Ni Tang can also be used in small quantities to enhance the treatment of yang deficiency water swelling. For cases of cold impediment, Si Ni Tang can be used as an addition to other base formulas to warm the channels and relieve pain. It can even be used in small but increasing doses to gradually transform a yin-supplementing formula such as Zuo Gui Wan (Left-Restoring Pill) into a yang-supplementing formula.



5

ER CHEN TANG (TWO
MATURED INGREDIENTS
DECOCTION)

Ban Xia (Pinelliae Rhizoma)

Chen Pi (Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium)

Fu Ling (Poria)

Zhi Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix Praeparata)

Er Chen Tang is a representative base formula for patterns of dampness and phlegm. Er Chen Tang has a very clear direction and utilizes an eloquent combination of medicinals. It is thus one of the most fundamental formulas in a modular approach to formula combining, and it is very versatile when modified appropriately.

Er Chen Tang dries dampness and transforms phlegm while rectifying qi and harmonizing the center. The formula is based on the combination of Ban Xia and Chen Pi (or Ju Hong). Ban Xia is acrid, warm, and dry; it dries dampness and transforms phlegm while also harmonizing the stomach and down-bearing counterflow. Chen Pi rectifies qi and moves stagnation while also drying dampness and transforming phlegm. When combined together, they are not only complementary in the sense that they increase the strength of drying dampness and transforming phlegm, but they also draw upon the principle of “[to] treat phlegm, first rectify qi, [when] qi is normalized, phlegm disperses.” This combination is also the origin of the formula name, because the superior products are aged, which gives them the advantage of not being excessively dry.

Fu Ling assists by fortifying the spleen and percolating dampness, which assists the transformation of phlegm. Fortifying the spleen helps treat the origin of the dampness.

When combined with Chen Pi, the qi stagnation caused by phlegm is treated as well as the origin of the phlegm.

The addition of Sheng Jiang helps control the toxicity of Ban Xia, while also enhancing its ability to transform phlegm, harmonize the stomach, and relieve vomiting. In the original formula, a small amount of Wu Mei was used to constrain the lung qi to provide contraction within the dispersing effect and prevent damage to right from the dry, dispersing medicinals. Gan Cao fortifies the spleen and harmonizes the center, while also harmonizing the other medicinals. The overall formula is tightly constructed, and treats both root and branch, using both dispersing and constraining approaches. It dries dampness and rectifies qi to treat phlegm that is already formed, and it fortifies the spleen to treat the origin of the phlegm.

Er Chen Tang is particularly suitable to treat cases where the spleen is encumbered by dampness. Since spleen deficiency is often an underlying

pathomechanism in the formation of dampness, Er Chen Tang is often combined with spleen-supplementing medicinals such as Bai Zhu (*Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma*) and Ren Shen (*Ginseng Radix*).

Er Chen Tang can also be used for vomiting in pregnancy (morning sickness). The simple addition of Zhu Ru (*Bambusae Caulis in Taenia*) to Er Chen Tang creates an unnamed formula from Sun Si Miao's Qian Jin Fang ("Thousand Gold Formulary") that is one of Chinese medicine's earliest formulas for vomiting in pregnancy. Further adding Huo Xiang Geng (*Pogostemi Caulis*), Huang Qin (*Scutellariae Radix*), Sang Ji Sheng (*Taxilli Herba*), and Xu Duan (*Dipsaci Radix*) to this creates a useful modern empirical formula found in major Chinese gynecology textbooks for vomiting in pregnancy.

Alternatively, Er Chen Tang can be used in combination with Si Jun Zi Tang (Four Gentlemen Decoction) to create the principle of Liu Jun Zi Tang (Six Gentlemen Decoction), which simultaneously supplements the spleen and dries dampness. Cases with more severe damp encumbrance affecting the middle burner can be treated by adding Mu Xiang (*Aucklandiae Radix*) and Sha Ren (*Amomi Fructus*), creating the principle of the formula Xiang Sha Liu Jun Zi Tang (Costusroot and Amomum Six Gentlemen Decoction). These other compound formulas are available on their own, but building them from combining base formulas provides additional versatility because the dosage of the different principles (drying dampness vs. supplementing the spleen) can be adjusted based on need.

In cases where damp encumbrance is more severe than qi deficiency, medicinals such as Cang Zhu (*Atractylodis Rhizoma*) and Hou Po (*Magnoliae Officinalis Cortex*) may be added to Er Chen Tang. This brings the principle closer to the formula Ping Wei San (Stomach-Calming Powder), which treats damp obstruction of the spleen and stomach.

Er Chen Tang can also be used along with spleen-fortifying medicinals such as Bai Bian Dou (*Lablab Semen Album*), Bai Zhu (*Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma*) and Yi Yi Ren (*Coicis Semen*) to treat cases where spleen deficiency is present but damp obstruction is prominent. With the proper modifications, Er Chen Tang can also be used to treat conditions such as cold

damp patterns of vaginal discharge as well as conditions with cold phlegm in the upper burner.

Many traditional formulas are conceptually derived from Er Chen Tang. For example, the formula Dao Tan Tang (Phlegm-Abducting Decoction) is basically Er Chen Tang plus Zhi Shi (*Aurantii Fructus Immaturus*) and Tian Nan Xing (*Arisaematis Rhizoma*), which powerfully strengthen its ability to transform phlegm. Similarly, the formula Di Tan Tang (Phlegm-Flushing Decoction) can be built from Er Chen Tang. Di Tan Tang treats wind-stroke with phlegm confounding the orifices of the heart, and basically consists of Dao Tan Tang plus Zhu Ru (*Bambusae Caulis in Taenia*), Shi Chang Pu (*Acori Tatarinowii Rhizoma*), and Ren Shen (*Ginseng Radix*).

Several other commonly used formulas can be easily elaborated from Er Chen Tang. Using a few base formulas to create related formulas is particularly advantageous to practitioners that have constraints on space or capital, because many formulas can be created from a small number of base formulas. In addition to the formulas mentioned above, Er Chen Tang can also be used to create formulas such as Wen Dan Tang (Gallbladder-Warming Decoction), Qing Qi Hua Tan Wan (Qi-Clearing Phlegm-Transforming Pill), and Ban Xia Bai Zhu Tian Ma Tang (*Pinellia*, *White Atractylodes*, and *Gastrodia Decoction*).

Wen Dan Tang (Gallbladder-Warming Decoction) is a commonly-used formula to treat the pattern of depressed gallbladder with harassing phlegm. This pattern manifests in symptoms such as susceptibility to fright, dizziness, palpitations, insomnia, frequent unusual dreams, nausea, vomiting, and epilepsy. Wen Dan Tang is created by adding Zhu Ru (*Bambusae Caulis in Taenia*) and Zhi Shi (*Aurantii Fructus Immaturus*) to Er Chen Tang. For patients with concurrent heat symptoms, Huang Lian (*Coptidis Rhizoma*) can be added to this to make the formula Huang Lian Wen Dan Tang (*Coptis Gallbladder-Warming Decoction*).

For cases of phlegm-heat cough, the formula Qing Qi Hua Tan Wan (Qi-Clearing Phlegm-Transforming Pill) can be created from Er Chen Tang. To do this, simply add Zhi Shi (*Aurantii Fructus Immaturus*), Gua Lou (*Trichosanthis Fructus*), Dan Xing (*Arisaema cum Bile*), and Huang Qin (*Scutellar-*

iae Radix) to Er Chen Tang. These additions help the formula target phlegm-heat in the upper burner.

To treat wind-phlegm harassing the upper burner, Er Chen Tang can be modified to form the formula Ban Xia Bai Zhu Tian Ma Tang (Pinellia, White Atractylodes, and Gastrodia Decoction). This formula is an important formula for wind-phlegm patterns of headache and dizziness. It can be created by adding Bai Zhu (*Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma*) and Tian Ma (*Gastrodiae Rhizoma*) to Er Chen Tang.

The core ingredients of Er Chen Tang can be found in even more complex formulas, such as Ding Xian Wan (Fit-Settling Pill), a major formula for epilepsy. Bao He Wan (Harmony-Preserving Pill), a key formula for food stagnation, can also be elaborated from Er Chen Tang. In fact, even formulas such as Huo Xiang Zheng Qi San (Patchouli Qi-Righting Powder) can be created from a base of Er Chen Tang.



6

HUANG LIAN JIE DU TANG (COPTIS TOXIN-RESOLVING DECOCTION)

Huang Lian (Coptidis Rhizoma)
Huang Qin (Scutellariae Radix)
Huang Bai (Phellodendri Cortex)
Zhi Zi (Gardeniae Fructus)

Huang Lian Jie Du Tang has been an important formula in Chinese medicine since ancient times. It first appeared in the text Zhou Hou Bei Ji Fang (Emergency Standby Remedies) around the start of the 4th century AD. However, the name did not exist until it appeared in the text Wai Tai Mi Yao (Essential Secrets from Outside the Metropolis), written in 752 CE. In the modern day, Huang Lian Jie Du Tang remains one of the most important formulas for dysentery, jaundice, and various skin diseases due to damp-heat. It is also commonly used in biomedical applications for disease such as septicemia.

Huang Lian Jie Du Tang is indicated for patterns of fire toxin in all three burners. There may be great heat effusion, vexation, and agitation, as well as dry mouth and throat, disordered speech, and insomnia. Other possibilities include warm disease with vomiting of blood or nosebleed, as well as severe heat with macular eruptions, generalized heat effusion with diarrhea or dysentery, or damp-heat jaundice. In external medicine, it is used for welling-abscesses, sores, and clove sore toxin (also known as deep-rooted boils), accompanied by yellowish-red urine, a red tongue with yellow fur, and a rapid, forceful pulse.

As a full-strength decoction on its own, Huang Lian Jie Du Tang is rarely needed in modern, first-world countries. However, it is a very simple and versatile formula, and it can be used for a variety of applications in combination with other formulas. For example, it is often used to treat skin diseases due to heat toxin in combination with a formula such as Wu Wei Xiao Du Yin (Five-Ingredient Toxin-Dispersing Beverage).

Small quantities of Huang Lian Jie Du Tang can be used to modify other formulas to enhance their ability to treat damp-heat. In Taiwan, it is common to use Huang Lian Jie Du Tang in small doses in conjunction with other formulas. In fact, one can even see it used as a paradoxical assistant in warm formulas (a paradoxical assistant is an agent used to counter the extreme nature of the primary medicinals in a formula).

For example, sometimes Taiwanese doctors use minute doses of Huang Lian Jie Du Tang with large doses of You Gui Wan (Right-Restoring Pill) when treating kidney yang deficiency. This is very counterintuitive to most practitioners, because these two formulas are completely opposite to each

other in nature. Huang Lian Jie Du Tang is bitter and cold; it is used to treat damp-heat and is contraindicated in yang deficiency. By contrast, You Gui Wan is sweet and warm. It would seem that the two formulas should never be combined.

This example illustrates a key feature of formula combining. When formulas are combined, dosage is of critical importance. When supplementing yang in the hot tropical summertime of Taiwan, practitioners sometimes fear generating heat from the sweet, warm medicinals that are used to supplement yang. In raw herb prescriptions, it is common to add a single medicinal such as Huang Bai (Phellodendri Cortex) to counter this tendency. In Taiwan, some practitioners are of the opinion that adding a compound formula such as Huang Lian Jie Du Tang provides better control of any potential side effects of heat than a single medicinal addition such as Huang Bai. Consequently, one can see prescriptions that contain 5.7g of You Gui Wan and 0.3g of Huang Lian Jie Du Tang per dose. To the untrained observer, this would appear to be a chaotic mix of opposing principles, but with proper attention to dosage this approach actually follows clear principles of Chinese medicine.



7

SI NI SAN (COUNTERFLOW COLD POWDER)

Chai Hu (Bupleuri Radix)

Zhi Shi (Aurantii Fructus Immaturus)

Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba)

Zhi Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix Praeparata)

Si Ni San was originally created to treat cold extremities due to depression of yang qi, but later generations expanded its use to treat disharmony of

the liver and spleen. As such, Si Ni San is one of the most important base formulas for coursing the liver and supplementing the spleen. Si Ni San is a simple formula because it contains few ingredients, but it is profound because it contains a very eloquent combination of medicinals.

Si Ni San was one of the first formulas to combine several of the most prominent medicinal pairs in the history of Chinese medicine. Combinations of particular importance include Chai Hu with Bai Shao, Bai Shao with Zhi Gan Cao, and Chai Hu with Zhi Shi.

Wood likes orderly reaching and is averse to depression. When liver qi is depressed, it is treated with acrid, dispersing medicinals such as Chai Hu, which has an upward, floating nature. The acidity of Chai Hu accounts for its strength in coursing the liver qi, but it tends to be dry and prone to damaging yin. To counteract this tendency, it is often combined with Bai Shao, which is said to emolliate (soften) the liver. Bai Shao has a blood-nourishing effect and a sour taste that is used to check the dry, out-thrusting tendency of Chai Hu. Thus, these two medicinals are often combined, and they are routinely used together in common formulas such as Chai Hu Shu Gan San (Bupleurum Liver-Coursing Powder) and Xiao Yao San (Free Wanderer Powder).

In addition, the upbearing nature of Chai Hu is paired with the downbearing medicinal Zhi Shi in the formula Si Ni San. Zhi Shi is a qi-moving medicinal that has a downward direction of movement, while Chai Hu is a qi-moving medicinal with an upward direction of movement. The combination of one upbearing with one downbearing medicinal in the formula Si Ni San is important, because these two medicinals use their complementary opposition to increase the overall movement of qi while checking each other's extreme tendencies. Just as Chai Hu and Bai Shao combine acidity with sourness (and their corresponding dispersing and constraining natures), Chai Hu and Zhi Shi reinforce each other in the goal of moving qi.

The combination of Bai Shao with Zhi Gan Cao is also important in Si Ni San. In fact, the combination of these two medicinals constitutes a formula known as Shao Yao Gan Cao Tang (Peony and Licorice Decoction), which is a major formula for calf spasms. Bai Shao and Zhi Gan Cao are used together

to treat spasmodic, cramping pain throughout the body, and they are particularly effective for cramping pain in the abdomen as well.

Si Ni San is a very useful starting point for many conditions that are due to a disharmony of wood and earth. For wood-earth disharmony manifesting in painful diarrhea, Si Ni San can be combined with the compound formula Tong Xie Yao Fang (Pain and Diarrhea Formula). In modern Chinese medicine, this combination is very common for treating patients with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) when the case manifests with cramping pain and diarrhea due to a wood-earth disharmony.

Tong Xie Yao Fang is itself a formula for harmonizing wood and earth. Rather than using Chai Hu to course the liver, it uses the acrid nature of Fang Feng (*Saposhnikoviae Radix*), which is less drying. Chinese formula texts also often emphasize that Fang Feng is aromatic, which helps to guide the formula to the spleen. Tong Xie Yao Fang also contains Chen Pi (*Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium*) and Bai Zhu (*Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma*), which makes it slightly more suitable for treating spleen deficiency complicated by dampness. Tong Xie Yao Fang and Si Ni San share the presence of Bai Shao. The two formulas can be combined together, or one can simply add Chen Pi (*Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium*), Fang Feng (*Saposhnikoviae Radix*), and Bai Zhu (*Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma*) to Si Ni San.

To take Si Ni San in a different direction, the liver-coursing effect of Si Ni San can be strengthened by adding acrid medicinals such as Xiang Fu (*Cyperis Rhizoma*) and Chuan Xiong (*Chuanxiong Rhizoma*). These medicinals appear together in the formula Chai Hu Shu Gan San (*Bupleurum Liver-Coursing Powder*), which is itself an eloquent formula for treating binding depression of liver qi.

The formula Chai Hu Shu Gan San can also be expanded by adding medicinals such as Hong Hua (*Carthami Flos*) and Tao Ren (*Persicae Semen*) to combine the principles of coursing liver qi and quickening the blood. These principles are often combined because stagnation of qi tends to lead to stagnation of blood, and quickening the blood is best accomplished by simultaneously moving qi. Such modifications are particularly common in the field of gynecology, because conditions such as menstrual pain are often associated with liver depression and blood stasis.

Continuing in the direction of blood-quickening, the formula Xue Fu Zhu Yu Tang (Expelling Stasis in the House of Blood Decoction) and its own derivative formulas can be created from a base of either Si Ni San or Chai Hu Shu Gan San. This opens up an entire category of qi- and blood-moving formulas. For example, medicinals such as Pu Huang (Typhae Pollen), Wu Ling Zhi (Trogopteri Faeces), and Yan Hu Suo (Corydalis Rhizoma) can be added to relieve pain due to blood stasis, a principle also found in the formula Ge Xia Zhu Yu Tang (Infradiaphragmatic Stasis-Expelling Decoction).

In Chai Hu Shu Gan San, the liver-coursing effect of Si Ni San is accentuated. By contrast, if the spleen-fortifying aspect of Si Ni San is accentuated by the addition of medicinals such as Bai Zhu (Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma) and Fu Ling (Poria), the formula moves in the direction of Xiao Yao San (Free Wanderer Powder). Xiao Yao San is a formula that strikes a harmonious balance between coursing wood and gently supplementing earth and blood.

Xiao Yao San itself is an important base formula in modular approaches to formula combining. Like Si Ni San, Xiao Yao San can be used in combination with other formulas or can be easily elaborated to form related classical formulas or their derivatives.



8

XIAO YAO SAN (FREE WANDERER POWDER)

Chai Hu (Bupleuri Radix)

Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba)

Dang Gui (Angelicae Sinensis Radix)

Bai Zhu (Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma)

Fu Ling (Poria)

Sheng Jiang (Zingiberis Rhizoma Recens) [roasted]

Bo He (Menthae Herba)

Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix)

Xiao Yao San is one of the most commonly prescribed formulas in Chinese medicine. According to research conducted by Dr. Chang Hsien-Cheh of China Medical University on Taiwan's National Health Insurance data, doctors in Taiwan prescribed 14.1 metric tons of granule Xiao Yao San between the years of 2003 and 2004. One of its related formulas, Jia Wei Xiao Yao San, was prescribed in a stunning quantity of 86.3 metric tons during the same time period.

The formula Xiao Yao San strikes an even balance between coursing the liver and supplementing the spleen. The acrid, potent liver qi-coursing medicinal Chai Hu is complemented by Bo He, which has a gentle ability to course the liver qi. The dry, acrid, and dispersing nature of Chai Hu is offset by the sweet, blood-nourishing medicinals Bai Shao and Dang Gui. Fu Ling, Bai Zhu, and Gan Cao supplement the spleen to protect earth from being exploited by wood, an essential aspect of treating wood-earth disharmony.

From a base of Xiao Yao San, many additional formulas can be created. For example, the formula Jia Wei Xiao Yao San (Augmented Free Wanderer Powder, also known as Dan Zhi Xiao Yao San) is easily created by adding Mu Dan Pi (Moutan Cortex) and Zhi Zi (Gardeniae Fructus). This gives the formula a heat-clearing effect, which is useful for cases where liver depression forms heat. Like Xiao Yao San itself, the formula Jia Wei Xiao Yao San is a major formula in gynecology and has widespread applications throughout internal medicine.

With the addition of rehmannia to Xiao Yao San, the formula Hei Xiao Yao San (Black Free Wanderer Powder) is formed. Hei Xiao Yao San can be made by adding either Sheng Di Huang (Rehmanniae Radix) or Shu Di Huang (Rehmanniae Radix Praeparata) to Xiao Yao San. This formula is used for cases with more prominent blood deficiency. If there is more heat in the blood, use Sheng Di Huang. If there is more blood deficiency, use Shu Di Huang.

In the method of formula combining commonly seen in Taiwan, compound formulas are often used as a single principle, much as one would consider the addition of a single medicinal when making a raw formula. An entire formula is added to modify the prescription, which allows for more

choices than one has with single medicinals alone. For example, no single medicinal offers the simultaneous action of coursing the liver, supplementing the spleen, and nourishing the blood. However, if whole formulas are used to modify a prescription, the formula Xiao Yao San provides this entire conceptual unit.

Depending on whether the dosage is high or low, Xiao Yao San can be used as either the main prescription or as a modification. For example, Dr. Feng Ye, a prominent expert clinician in Taiwan, has been known to widely use Xiao Yao San as an addition to many base formulas for the purpose of balancing the qi dynamic between wood and earth. In cases where wood-earth disharmony is the primary problem, Dr. Feng will use 12-18 grams per day of Xiao Yao San. For cases where wood-earth disharmony is not the main pattern being treated but remains an accessory concern, Dr. Feng will use Xiao Yao San in a dosage of 1-4 grams per day, in conjunction with other formulas that treat the principle pattern. He also has extensive experience incorporating harmonizing formulas such as Xiao Chai Hu Tang (Minor Bupleurum Decoction) and Jia Wei Xiao Yao San (Augmented Free Wanderer Powder) in similar ways, depending on the constitution of the patient.

To explore another illustrative example of Dr. Feng's clinical formula combining with Xiao Yao San, consider one of his treatment strategies for constipation. Constipation can result from many pathomechanisms in Chinese medicine, all of which require different treatments. However, one presentation that is particularly common in young people, especially young women, is the pattern of mild constipation due to liver depression or a wood-earth disharmony. For such cases, Dr. Feng has successfully employed the combination of Xiao Yao San with Ma Zi Ren Wan (Cannabis Seed Pill).

In this example, Xiao Yao San is able to treat the root cause of mild liver depression, but it lacks the specific action of freeing the stool. Ma Zi Ren Wan is able to treat the symptom of constipation but it lacks the ability to treat the root pattern of liver depression. When the two formulas are combined, both symptomatic and root treatment is achieved. Over time, the symptomatic contribution of Ma Zi Ren Wan can be reduced relative to the root treatment of regulating wood and earth, allowing the Ma Zi Ren Wan to be tapered off and gradually eliminated as the core pattern resolves. Clini-

cally, this strategy starts with a daily dose of about 12 grams of Xiao Yao San and 2-6 grams of Ma Zi Ren Wan. Over the course of a few weeks, the dose of the Ma Zi Ren Wan can be gradually reduced and the Xiao Yao San can be gradually increased, until eventually the Ma Zi Ren Wan is no longer used and the patient achieves normal bowel movements with the root formula of Xiao Yao San alone.



9

GUI ZHI TANG (CINNAMON TWIG DECOCTION)

Gui Zhi (Cinnamomi Ramulus)

Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba)

Da Zao (Jujubae Fructus)

Sheng Jiang (Zingiberis Rhizoma Recens)

Zhi Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix Praeparata)

Gui Zhi Tang is a formula from the *Shang Han Lun* (“On Cold Damage”) that was originally indicated for greater yang wind strike patterns of cold damage. The combination of medicinals within Gui Zhi Tang is very eloquent and subtle variations in additions can take the formula in several new directions. Gui Zhi Tang is essentially a formula for balancing yin and yang, and it is one of the most balanced and profound formulas within Chinese medicine.

Gui Zhi Tang relies on the complementary opposition of Gui Zhi and Bai Shao. Gui Zhi is warm and outward moving, which Bai Shao is cool and constraining in action. The construction-defense disharmony that is treated in Gui Zhi Tang is essentially an imbalance of yin and yang, here expressed as an imbalance between construction and defense, or the interior and the exterior. The warm freeing action of Gui Zhi treats the yang aspect of the problem (defense) while the nourishing and consolidating action of Bai Shao treats the yin aspect of the problem (construction). Together, they balance the interior and exterior and harmonize yin and yang. Traditionally, this is explained through the use of a military analogy, with Bai Shao representing the “camp” or supply and Gui Zhi representing the “defense” or the troops at the perimeter.

Beyond Gui Zhi and Bai Shao, Gui Zhi Tang also contains a unit of earth-supplementing medicinals that appear together in many other *Shang Han Lun* formulas. These medicinals also rely on mutual opposition; the acrid, dispersing nature of Sheng Jiang prevents the sweet, rich nature of Da Zao from causing stagnation, while Zhi Gan Cao both supplements the spleen and harmonizes the formula.

Chinese formula texts state that Gui Zhi Tang is indicated for external contraction of wind-cold with exterior deficiency and disharmony of construction and defense. This pattern is characterized by headache, heat effusion, aversion to wind, and sweating, possibly accompanied by “noisy nose” (nasal congestion with audible breathing), absence of thirst, and/or dry retching.

Under normal physiologic conditions, defense qi moves outside the vessels and secures and protects the fleshy exterior. Construction-yin stays inside and provides nourishment to defense yang, and construction and defense are in harmony.

In the pathologic state addressed by Gui Zhi Tang, deficiency of defense qi causes the interstices to be loose. Defense yang cannot secure and protect the fleshy exterior, so there is aversion to cold. Construction-yin cannot stay in the inner body and discharges outward, causing sweating. The combination of Gui Zhi (Cinnamomi Ramulus) and Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba) both dissipates and contracts. This allows evil to be dispelled without damaging right while simultaneously nourishing yin without lodging evil.

This formula is said to “transform qi and regulate yin and yang,” and it is used for miscellaneous diseases in internal medicine that are ascribed to disharmony of yin and yang, construction and defense, or qi and blood. It is especially suitable for conditions following illness or childbirth, or for generalized weakness when the chief manifestations are aversion to wind and sweating.

Within the original *Shang Han Lun*, there are uses of Gui Zhi Tang that do not manifest with greater yang wind-strike. For example, it is mentioned for patients with periodic heat effusion and spontaneous sweating, in the absence of other visceral diseases. Here, it is taken prior to the onset of heat effusion to harmonize construction and defense.

Gui Zhi Tang is contraindicated in patients with greater yang cold damage signs. Because it is too mild in comparison with Ma Huang Tang (Ephedra Decoction), one will miss the best opportunity for dispelling evil.

Gui Zhi Tang is also contraindicated in interior damp-heat patterns. This is alluded to in the *Shang Han Lun* in a discussion of its adverse effects on “sick drinkers.” The formula is acrid and sweet, and acrid flavors reinforce heat and sweet flavors reinforce dampness, so there is a general caution against the use of Gui Zhi Tang in the interior damp-heat conditions. The original meaning of the phrase “sick drinkers” (jiu ke bing) is unclear, it may refer either to a disease name (drinker’s sickness, i.e., alcoholism) or to a drinker (jiu ke) who is sick. If it refers to the latter, it is unclear whether they are sick with greater yang wind-strike or sick from drinking. Different sources draw different conclusions about this statement.

Gui Zhi Tang is also inappropriate for patients with exuberant interior heat, as well as in greater yang disease that has been erroneously treated with purging and no exterior signs remain present.

The addition of Ge Gen (*Puerariae Radix*) to this formula modifies it to treat hypertonicity in the nape and back. This is a pattern of simultaneous greater yang wind strike and constrained greater yang channel qi. The fluids are damaged and cannot moisten and nourish the channels normally.

To treat variations of wind-cold with Gui Zhi Tang, consider the following modifications:

For marked insufficiency of defense yang with prominent aversion to cold, increase the quantity of Gui Zhi and Gan Cao, or add Fu Zi (*Aconiti Radix Lateralis Praeparata*).

For incessant leaking sweat in cases of relatively severe defense qi deficiency, add Huang Qi (*Astragali Radix*) and Bai Zhu (*Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma*).

For profuse sweating and a thin pulse from weakness of construction, increase the dose of Bai Shao and Gan Cao.

From a base of Gui Zhi Tang, several other important formulas can be created, such as Xiao Jian Zhong Tang (Minor Center-Fortifying Decoction), Huang Qi Jian Zhong Tang (*Astragalus* Center-Fortifying Decoction), Gui Zhi Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang (Cinnamon Twig Decoction Plus Dragon Bone and Oyster Shell), and Ge Gen Tang (*Pueraria* Decoction).

Xiao Jian Zhong Tang (Minor Center-Fortifying Decoction)

Gui Zhi (*Cinnamomi Ramulus*)

Bai Shao (*Paeoniae Radix Alba*)

Da Zao (*Jujubae Fructus*)

Sheng Jiang (*Zingiberis Rhizoma Recens*)

Zhi Gan Cao (*Glycyrrhizae Radix Praeparata*)

Yi Tang (*Maltosum*)

The profound nature of Gui Zhi Tang is readily apparent because of the dramatic change in indications achieved by subtle modifications, in this case the simple addition of Yi Tang (*Maltosum*). While Gui Zhi Tang is a formula for external contraction, Xiao Jian Zhong Tang is a major formula for inter-

nal medicine. Specifically, Xiao Jian Zhong Tang is a representative formula for deficiency cold patterns of abdominal pain, among other indications.

Yi Tang is a sweet medicinal that supplements the center and “relaxes tension.” The action of “relaxing tension” (huan ji) only appears in three common items in the Chinese materia medica: Yi Tang, Bai Shao, and Gan Cao. All three of these medicinals are used together in the formula Xiao Jian Zhong Tang, which accounts for its profound ability to treat cramping pain in deficiency patterns. The warm nature of Gui Zhi allows the formula to be suitable for cold patterns, and the sweet, supplementing action of the other medicinals makes Xiao Jian Zhong Tang suitable for deficiency patterns.

For cases with more significant qi deficiency, Huang Qi (Astragali Radix) may be added to Xiao Jian Zhong Tang. This forms the formula Huang Qi Jian Zhong Tang (Astragalus Center-Fortifying Decoction), which is also an important formula for qi deficiency patterns of abdominal pain.

Ge Gen Tang (Pueraria Decoction)

Gui Zhi (Cinnamomi Ramulus)

Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba)

Da Zao (Jujubae Fructus)

Sheng Jiang (Zingiberis Rhizoma Recens)

Zhi Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix Praeparata)

Ge Gen (Puerariae Radix)

Ma Huang (Ephedrae Herba)

Ge Gen Tang is a major formula for common cold. In fact, it is the most commonly used OTC herbal formula in Japan for treating common cold. Ge Gen Tang can be formed from Gui Zhi Tang by simply adding Ma Huang and Ge Gen, and it combines the principles of both Ma Huang Tang (Ephedra Decoction) and Gui Zhi Tang. It is also sometimes used in Chinese medical traumatology to treat muscular pain of the upper back and neck (Gui Zhi Tang plus Ge Gen alone can be used here as well).

Ge Gen Tang promotes sweating and resolves the exterior, engenders liquid and soothes the channels. By combining Gui Zhi with Ma Huang, its ability to enhance sweating is accentuated. This makes it applicable for repletion

patterns of wind-cold. The addition of Ge Gen also makes the formula suitable for treating stiff neck and diarrhea.

Ge Gen Tang has several main applications. It is indicated for greater yang (tai yang) disease with “stretched stiff nape and back,” absence of sweating, and aversion to wind. Stretched stiff nape and back refers to hypertonicity of the neck and back and discomfort when looking up and down, as if the neck were forcefully stretched, a condition that is considered more severe than simple stiffness and pain in the neck).

Ge Gen Tang is also used for greater yang (tai yang) and yang brightness (yang ming) combination disease, manifesting with diarrhea. The original text describes this as “spontaneous diarrhea,” meaning that it is diarrhea that occurs without any known natural or iatrogenic cause (such as inappropriate purging). This pattern is one of simultaneous disease in the interior and exterior, with the exterior aspect being the most significant.

Gui Zhi Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang (Cinnamon Twig Decoction Plus Dragon Bone and Oyster Shell)

Gui Zhi (Cinnamomi Ramulus)

Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba)

Da Zao (Jujubae Fructus)

Sheng Jiang (Zingiberis Rhizoma Recens)

Zhi Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix Praeparata)

Long Gu (Mastodi Osis Fossilia)

Mu Li (Ostreae Concha)

Gui Zhi Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang is a formula that is created by adding Long Gu (Mastodi Osis Fossilia) and Mu Li (Ostreae Concha) to Gui Zhi Tang. This formula harmonizes yin and yang, subdues with heavy settling and secures and astringes. This formula is based on the concept of harmonizing yin and yang that underlies most of the Gui Zhi Tang derivative formulas. Gui Zhi Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang is particularly concerned with promoting interaction of the heart (fire) and kidney (water).

If yin depletion affects yang, there will be dual deficiency of yin and yang. Kidney and heart cannot interact; in men there will be seminal emis-

sion or seminal efflux, in women there is dreaming of intercourse with ghosts. There may be hypertonicity of the lesser abdomen, cold pain of the genitals, dizziness and loss of hair, spontaneous sweating or night sweating, heart palpitations and insomnia, pale red tongue with thin white fur, and a thin weak or thin slow pulse. Gui Zhi Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang is indicated in such conditions.



10

SI WU TANG (FOUR SUBSTANCES DECOCTION)

Dang Gui (Angelicae Sinensis Radix)

Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba)

Shu Di Huang (Rehmanniae Radix Praeparata)

Chuan Xiong (Chuanxiong Rhizoma)

Si Wu Tang is an important blood-supplementing formula in Chinese medicine, and it is particularly suitable for use in a modular approach to for-

mula combining. Si Wu Tang is one of the most famous formulas throughout East Asian society because it is often incorporated into medicinal soups and OTC products. Within it, the rich blood-supplementing medicinals are complemented by the acrid, blood-quickening nature of Chuan Xiong, which helps to prevent stagnation when nourishing the blood.

Si Wu Tang can be combined with the formula Si Jun Zi Tang (Four Gentlemen Decoction) to simultaneously supplement qi and blood. The combination of these two formulas forms Ba Zhen Tang (Eight-Gem Decoction). If one makes Ba Zhen Tang from the combination of Si Wu Tang and Si Jun Zi Tang, the relative proportions of qi-supplementing medicinals vs. blood-supplementing can be easily adjusted.

The further addition of Huang Qi (Astragali Radix) and Rou Gui (Cinnamomi Cortex) to Ba Zhen Tang creates the formula Shi Quan Da Bu Tang (Perfect Major Supplementation Decoction). This gives the formula a slightly warmer nature, and takes advantage of the ability of Rou Gui to enhance the generation of qi and blood. Here, Huang Qi strongly supplements the spleen and its combination with Dang Gui forms another formula unit, Dang Gui Bu Xue Tang (Chinese Angelica Blood-Supplementing Decoction).

If Si Wu Tang is instead combined with Hong Hua (Carthami Flos) and Tao Ren (Persicae Semen), the formula Tao Hong Si Wu Tang (Peach Kernel and Carthamus Four Substances Decoction) is formed. Tao Hong Si Wu Tang typically also involves the substitution of Chi Shao (Paeoniae Radix Rubra) in place of Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba) and Dang Gui Wei (Angelicae Sinensis Radicis Extremitas) in place of Dang Gui (Angelicae Sinensis Radix). While this substitution is often desirable, the formula is still viable without substituting these ingredients- Dang Gui Wei and Dang Gui are largely the same in terms of their chemical constituents, and Chi Shao and Bai Shao were used interchangeably for centuries (in fact, the species used as Bai Shao is sold as Chi Shao when it is wild-harvested to this day).

Adding E Jiao (Asini Corii Colla), Ai Ye (Artemisiae Argyi Folium), and Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix) to Si Wu Tang creates the formula Jiao Ai Tang (Ass Hide Glue and Mugwort Decoction). Jiao Ai Tang was one of the first formulas in the field of Chinese medical gynecology, preceding Si Wu Tang itself. It treats prolonged menstruation, flooding and spotting, and in-

cessant bleeding due to spontaneous abortion or childbirth. Jiao Ai Tang is also used for threatened miscarriage with bleeding during pregnancy, with soreness and pain of the lower abdomen. Jiao Ai Tang nourishes the blood and stanches bleeding, and also regulates menstruation and quiets the fetus. It is indicated for patterns of deficiency detriment of the thoroughfare (chong) and controlling (ren) vessels, and patterns of blood deficiency with cold.

If Ren Shen (Ginseng Radix) and Huang Qi (Astragali Radix) are added to Si Wu Tang, the formula Sheng Yu Tang (Sagacious Cure Decoction) is formed. This formula supplements qi and blood and contains the blood. It is used to for qi and blood deficiency patterns where qi fails to control the blood, manifesting in early menstruation with profuse bleeding of pale blood.



11

XIAO CHENG QI TANG (MINOR QI- COORDINATING DECOCTION)

Da Huang (Rhei Radix et Rhizoma)

Zhi Shi (Aurantii Fructus Immaturus)

Hou Po (Magnoliae Officinalis Cortex)

Xiao Cheng Qi Tang is an important base formula for constipation. It is relatively strong on its own at full-strength doses, but it is very versatile for formula combining when it is used in small quantities. In fact, Xiao Cheng Qi

Tang is itself found in other formulas, such as Ma Zi Ren Wan (Cannabis Seed Pill).

Xiao Cheng Qi Tang is part of one of the oldest formula families in Chinese medicine, most of which came from the chapter on yang brightness (yang ming) disease in the Shang Han Lun (“On Cold Damage”). For repletion cases of heat constipation manifesting with dryness, hardness, glomus, and fullness, Mang Xiao (Natrii Sulfas) can be added to Xiao Cheng Qi Tang to form its parent formula, Da Cheng Qi Tang (Major Qi-Coordinating Decoction).

In cases where there is depletion of yin-humor, the formula Zeng Ye Tang (Humor-Increasing Decoction) can be combined with Xiao Cheng Qi Tang to form a formula that is somewhat similar to Zeng Ye Cheng Qi Tang (Humor-Increasing Qi-Coordinating Decoction). Xiao Cheng Qi Tang can also be added to formulas such as Bao He Wan (Harmony-Preserving Pill) for severe food stagnation with constipation.

For more mild cases of constipation, the formula Xiao Cheng Qi Tang can be modified by adding Huo Ma Ren (Cannabis Semen), Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba), Xing Ren (Armeniacae Semen), and Feng Mi (Mel). This forms the formula Ma Zi Ren Wan (Cannabis Seed Pill), which is itself an excellent building block for treating constipation within the formula combining approach.



12

XIAO CHAI HU TANG (MINOR BUPL EURUM DECOCTION)

Chai Hu (Bupleuri Radix)

Huang Qin (Scutellariae Radix)

Ren Shen (Ginseng Radix)

Zhi Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix Praeparata)

Ban Xia (Pinelliae Rhizoma)

Sheng Jiang (Zingiberis Rhizoma Recens)

Da Zao (Jujubae Fructus)

Xiao Chai Hu Tang is an excellent base formula to build from because it harmonizes wood and earth and also regulates upbearing and downbearing. Its core medicinal combination of Huang Qin and Chai Hu allows it to harmonize lesser yang, and its supporting medicinals are very gracefully combined.

When wood is depressed, earth will be influenced, causing the spleen and stomach to lose their normal upbearing and downbearing. Here, Ban Xia deals with depressed fluids from poor movement and transformation. By transforming pathological fluids, usable fluids may be diffused and normal downbearing may be restored. In complementary opposition, Ren Shen engenders liquid and promotes the spleen's normal upbearing.

By regulating wood and earth as well as upbearing and downbearing, Xiao Chai Hu Tang can be used as a starting point for a stunning variety of conditions. It is a model of balanced formula construction, displaying a nice balance between supplementing and dispersing, dry and moist medicinals, and warm and cold medicinals. The importance of Xiao Chai Hu Tang cannot be underestimated, and it has proven to be one of the most important and versatile formulas in Chinese medicine. It is also one of the most commonly prescribed formulas in modern Japanese Kampo, where it is used for hepatitis and many other disorders.



13

LONG DAN XIE GAN TANG
(GENTIAN LIVER-DRAINING
DECOCTION)

Long Dan Cao (Gentianae Radix)
Huang Qin (Scutellariae Radix)
Zhi Zi (Gardeniae Fructus)
Chai Hu (Bupleuri Radix)
Dang Gui (Angelicae Sinensis Radix)

Sheng Di Huang (*Rehmanniae Radix*)

Che Qian Zi (*Plantaginis Semen*)

Ze Xie (*Alismatis Rhizoma*)

Mu Tong (*Akebiae Trifoliatae Caulis*)

Gan Cao (*Glycyrrhizae Radix*)

Long Dan Xie Gan Tang is a very important formula. It has two major applications: upward flaming of liver-gallbladder repletion fire, and patterns of liver channel damp-heat pouring downward.

Upward flaming of liver-gallbladder repletion fire may present with headache and red eyes, rib-side pain, bitter taste in the mouth, deafness, swelling of the ear, a red tongue with yellow fur, and a wiry, rapid, and forceful pulse. Liver channel damp-heat pouring downward manifests in swelling of the genitals, itching of the genitals, wilting of the sinews, sweating of the genitals, turbid strangury, or yellow foul-smelling vaginal discharge. The tongue is red with yellow greasy fur, and the pulse is wiry, rapid, and forceful.

This formula has several special features. It combines the use of clearing and draining with percolating and disinhibiting, and drains liver fire above while disinhibiting damp-heat below. It has a balance of opposing principles: Within its draining, it includes supplementing, and although it disinhibits, it also enriches. Within its downbearing, there is upbearing, and it dispels evil without damaging right. Nonetheless, it is still considered a bitter, cold formula that easily damages the spleen and stomach.

Within the formula, Long Dan Cao clears repletion fire from the liver and gallbladder, and also treats damp-heat in the liver and gallbladder. Huang Qin and Zhi Zi drain fire and dry dampness, assisting Long Dan Cao in its ability to drain liver fire, dry dampness, and clear heat. Ze Xie, Mu Tong, and Che Qian Zi clear heat and disinhibit dampness, causing damp-heat to move downward to be eliminated via the waterways. Sheng Di Huang and Dang Gui supplement blood and yin to prevent liver heat from damaging yin and blood. This provides supplementing within drainage and prevents the bitter-drying and percolating-disinhibiting medicinals from damaging yin. Chai Hu courses the liver and clears heat; by coursing qi, it resolves depressed heat. It also conducts the medicinals into the liver and gallbladder,

so it has a concurrent role as a courier. Gan Cao clears heat and harmonizes all the medicinals.

Long Dan Xie Gan Tang is a very versatile formula within the formula combining paradigm. In the context of internal medicine, repletion heat or damp-heat affecting the liver-gallbladder often calls for Long Dan Xie Gan Tang, but some conditions use different additions to modify its focus. For example, it is common to combine Cang Er Zi San (Xanthium Powder) with Long Dan Xie Gan Tang to treat deep-source nasal congestion in cases due to depressed heat in the gallbladder channel.

One interesting application of Long Dan Xie Gan Tang in formula combining can be seen from the following example. In an effort to develop effective treatments for endometriosis, practitioners at Chang Gung Memorial Hospital in Taiwan investigated the appearance of endometrial tissue obtained by a diagnostic biopsy. By using a microscope to examine the tissue, they were able to gather information that was not available to practitioners in the past. One of their findings was that the tissue was typically red and inflamed. Looking through the lens of Chinese medicine, this appeared to be a clear manifestation of heat that may not have been visible via conventional intake methods. In cases where the tissue was proliferating locally, the location of this heat could be placed on the liver channel.

This discovery spurred many doctors to experiment with the use of Long Dan Xie Gan Tang in their patients with endometriosis. For patients that lack a true damp-heat presentation, the cold nature of the base formula may be adjusted by combining it with a warm, spleen-supporting formula such as Xi-an-g Sha Liu Jun Zi Tang (Costusroot and Amomum Six Gentlemen Decoction). Practitioners who use this novel method may use different base formulas depending on the patient's presentation, with a relatively minor quantity of Long Dan Xie Gan Tang added in. While such a strategy is the subject of debate, it is an interesting example of the Taiwanese method of formula combining.



14

LIU WEI DI HUANG WAN (SIX- INGREDIENT REHMANNIA PILL)

Shu Di Huang (Rehmanniae Radix Praeparata)

Shan Zhu Yu (Corni Fructus)

Shan Yao (Dioscoreae Rhizoma)

Fu Ling (Poria)

Ze Xie (Alismatis Rhizoma)

Mu Dan Pi (Moutan Cortex)

Liu Wei Di Huang Wan is one of the most famous formulas for supplementing yin. It is relatively mild and harmonious because of its balance of “three supplementing” and “three draining” medicinals, and it is easily modified to form other related formulas.

One of the most commonly prescribed formulas for clearing deficiency heat is Zhi Bai Di Huang Wan (Anemarrhena, Phellodendron, and Rehmannia Pill), which is formed by adding Zhi Mu (Anemarrhenae Rhizoma) and Huang Bai (Phellodendri Cortex) to Liu Wei Di Huang Wan.

By contrast, the addition of Fu Zi (Aconiti Radix Lateralis Praeparata) and Rou Gui (Cinnamomi Cortex) or Gui Zhi (Cinnamomi Ramulus) to Liu Wei Di Huang Wan forms the yang-supplementing formula Shen Qi Wan (Kidney Qi Pill). This formula is particularly useful for treating patterns of water swelling due to kidney yang deficiency, and it can be used as a base for a wide range of yang-supplementing applications. For example, it can be further elaborated by adding Zi He Che (Hominis Placenta), Mai Men Dong (Ophiopogonis Radix), Lu Rong (Cervi Cornu Pantotrichum), and Wu Wei Zi (Schisandrae Fructus). This forms the formula He Che Ba Wei Wan (Eight-Ingredient Placenta Pill), a powerful qi-, blood-, yin- and yang-supplementing formula.

If Wu Wei Zi (Schisandrae Fructus) and Mai Men Dong (Ophiopogonis Radix) are added to Liu Wei Di Huang Wan, the formula Mai Wei Di Huang Wan (Ophiopogon and Rehmannia Pill) is formed. Alternatively, the addition of Wu Wei Zi, Ci Shi (Magnetitum), and Chai Hu (Bupleuri Radix) to Liu Wei Di Huang Wan creates the formula Er Long Zuo Ci Wan (Deafness Left-Benefiting Loadstone Pill), which is a major formula for tinnitus and deafness.

Additional possibilities for modifying Liu Wei Di Huang Wan include adding medicinals such as Ju Hua (Chrysanthemi Flos) and Gou Qi Zi (Lycii Fructus) to form Qi Ju Di Huang Wan (Lycium Berry, Chrysanthemum, and Rehmannia Pill). This formula supplements the liver and kidney and brightens the eyes. By further adding Shi Jue Ming (Haliotidis Concha), Bai Ji Li (Tribuli Fructus), Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba), and Dang Gui (Angelicae Sinensis Radix), one can make the empirical formula Ming Mu Di Huang Wan (Eye Brightener Rehmannia Pill), which also brightens the eyes.



15

SMALL FORMULA UNITS

Beyond using major base formulas as a starting point to treat the main pattern, adding small formula units is an important aspect of the formula combining approach. Often, small, succinct formulas contain very concise and targeted combinations of medicinals that are perfect for achieving resolution of specific symptoms or secondary patterns. Below are several examples of formulas that can be easily incorporated into a modular approach.

Er Miao San (Mysterious Two Powder)

Cang Zhu (*Atractylodis Rhizoma*)

Huang Bai (*Phellodendri Cortex*)

San Miao San (Mysterious Three Powder)

Cang Zhu (*Atractylodis Rhizoma*)

Huang Bai (*Phellodendri Cortex*)

Niu Xi (*Achyranthis Bidentatae Radix*)

Si Miao San (Mysterious Four Powder)

Cang Zhu (*Atractylodis Rhizoma*)

Huang Bai (*Phellodendri Cortex*)

Niu Xi (*Achyranthis Bidentatae Radix*)

Yi Yi Ren (*Coicis Semen*)

Er Miao San (Mysterious Two Powder) and its related formulas, San Miao San (Mysterious Three Powder) and Si Miao San (Mysterious Four Powder), are all extremely useful formulas for patterns of damp-heat. When combined appropriately, these formulas can be used to treat a wide variety of conditions, ranging from hot impediment patterns (especially affecting the lower body) to conditions such as damp-heat patterns of vaginal discharge.

Dang Gui Bu Xue Tang (Chinese Angelica Blood-Supplementing Decoction)

Dang Gui (*Angelicae Sinensis Radix*)

Huang Qi (*Astragali Radix*)

Dang Gui Bu Xue Tang is a small formula that uses a high dose of Huang Qi to strongly supplement qi to encourage the generation of blood. On its own, it is originally indicated for blood loss, but it can be added to many other formulas to enhance the base formula's ability to supplement qi and blood. Dang Gui Bu Xue Tang appears within other compound formulas such as Gui Pi Tang (Spleen-Returning Decoction) and Shi Quan Da Bu Tang (Ma-

lor Supplementation Decoction), and it is a very useful conceptual unit for a modular approach to formula combining.

Mu Li San (Oyster Shell Powder)

Mu Li (Ostreae Concha)

Ma Huang Gen (Ephedrae Radix)

Huang Qi (Astragali Radix)

Mu Li San secures the exterior and constrains sweat. It is indicated for deficiency patterns of spontaneous sweating or night sweating. Mu Li San is a representative formula for frequent spontaneous sweating that is especially severe at night and is enduring and incessant, possibly accompanied by palpitations and fright, shortness of breath, vexation and fatigue.

Sweating is differentiated based on night sweating and spontaneous sweating. Spontaneous sweating occurs outside of sleep and is not caused by movement or taxation. Night sweating (literally “thief sweating”) occurs while asleep. Spontaneous sweating is generally ascribed to yang deficiency, while night sweating is generally ascribed to yin deficiency.

When combined appropriately, Mu Li San can be used to treat sweating from either yang deficiency or yin deficiency. It is essentially a formula that treats the branch problem of sweating, and it can be used in combination with other base formulas to treat sweating from a variety of causes. However, it is typically contraindicated in cases of sweating due to external contraction because of its astringent nature.

Yu Ping Feng San (Jade Wind-Barrier Powder)

Fang Feng (Saposhnikoviae Radix)

Huang Qi (Astragali Radix)

Bai Zhu (Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma)

Yu Ping Feng San boosts qi, secures the exterior, and checks sweating. It is a commonly used formula to treat spontaneous sweating due to exterior deficiency, and easy contraction of wind evil. Within a modular approach, Yu Ping Feng San is a useful base formula for treating a wide range of conditions

where defense qi is weak; it is particularly common in treating patients who frequently suffer from conditions such as common colds and allergies.

When defense qi is weak, it is unable to secure the exterior, so the interstices are loose and empty. Construction-yin cannot be safeguarded, so the fluids discharge outwards; this causes spontaneous sweating from exterior deficiency, as well as aversion to wind and a vacuous pulse. When there is exterior deficiency and the qi is weak, the skin and hair are loose and slack. This allows for easy contraction of wind evil, causing common colds.

As in many formulas, the medicinals in Yu Ping Feng San have a relationship of complementary opposition. When Huang Qi is combined with Fang Feng, it is able to secure the exterior without retaining evil. When Fang Feng is combined with Huang Qi, it dispels evil without damaging right. This complementary opposition provides supplementation within dispersing, and dispersing within supplementation.

This formula and Gui Zhi Tang (Cinnamon Twig Decoction) both treat exterior deficiency spontaneous sweating. However, Yu Ping Feng San primarily reaches the exterior to secure the exterior and check sweating, and it primarily treats spontaneous sweating due to defense deficiency. By contrast, Gui Zhi Tang regulates construction and defense, and is used to treat spontaneous sweating due to disharmony of construction and defense. Gui Zhi Tang also resolves the exterior, so it is used to treat externally contracted wind-cold in exterior deficiency patterns.

Sheng Mai San (Pulse-Engendering Powder)

Ren Shen (Ginseng Radix)

Mai Men Dong (Ophiopogonis Radix)

Wu Wei Zi (Schisandrae Fructus)

Sheng Mai San is a very useful formula for the modular approach to formula combining. It is a basic formula for treating qi and yin deficiency, and is particularly appropriate for conditions of chronic cough in cases where qi and yin have been damaged. It is also an important formula for treating fatigue, and it can be easily added to other qi-supplementing formulas such as Bu Zhong Yi Qi Tang (Center-Supplementing Qi-Boosting Decoction).

Sheng Mai San has a relatively neutral temperature because the mild warmth of Ren Shen is balanced by the cool nature of Mai Men Dong. Ren Shen supplements qi and boosts liquid while Mai Men Dong nourishes yin. All three medicinals enter the heart and quiet the spirit, and Wu Wei Zi helps to converse yin and supplement the kidney. All three medicinals also supplement the lung, making the formula particularly useful for patients with dry cough and a weak voice. Additionally, Sheng Mai San can be added to kidney-supplementing formulas such as Liu Wei Di Huang Wan (Six-Ingredient Rehmannia Pill), which creates a formula that is very similar in principle to Mai Wei Di Huang Wan (Ophiopogon and Rehmannia Pill).

Suo Quan Wan (Stream-Reducing Pill)

Wu Yao (Linderae Radix)

Yi Zhi Ren (Alpiniae Oxyphyllae Fructus)

Shan Yao (Dioscoreae Rhizoma)

Suo Quan Wan warms the kidney and dispels cold, reduces urine and checks enuresis. It is a major formula for frequent urination, as well as for enuresis in children. The combination of these three medicinals warms without drying, and eliminates deficiency cold. This allows kidney qi to be restored and reduces the frequent urination and enuresis. While the medicinal strength of this formula is mild, it can be augmented with other warming, supplementing, and securing medicinals if the condition is more severe.

Dao Chi San (Red-Abducting Powder)

Mu Tong (Akebiae Trifoliatae Caulis)

Dan Zhu Ye (Lophatheri Herba)

Sheng Di Huang (Rehmanniae Radix)

Gan Cao Shao (Glycyrrhizae Radix Tenuis)

Dao Chi San is a basic formula that frees urination to treat hot patterns of strangury (*lin*). It is a base formula that can be easily added to for a variety of problems. For example, it can be elaborated to form more complex formulas such as Long Dan Xie Gan Tang (Gentian Liver-Draining Decoction),

which contains all the medicinals in Dao Chi San except for Dan Zhu Ye (used in the preparation instructions for Dao Chi San).

Dao Chi San clears the heart and nourishes yin while disinhibiting water and freeing strangury. It treats patterns of exuberant heat in the heart channel. There may be vexing heat in the heart and chest, thirst and a red face, desire for cold drinks, and sores of the mouth and tongue. There may also heart heat spreading to the small intestine, causing reddish, rough, and painful urination.

Although Dao Chi San was originally indicated for heart fire spreading to the small intestine, it can be used for a variety of patterns associated with strangury and heat. For example, Dao Chi San can be seen as a base in the formula Xiao Ji Yin Zi (Field Thistle Drink), a major formula for bloody urination (xue lin). Xiao Ji Yin Zi can be elaborated from Dao Chi San by adding Xiao Ji (Cirsii Herba), Ou Jie (Nelumbinis Rhizomatis Nodus), Pu Huang (Typhae Pollen), Hua Shi (Talcum), Zhi Zi (Gardeniae Fructus), and Dang Gui (Angelicae Sinensis Radix). With appropriate modifications, Dao Chi San can also be used as a base to make a formula similar to Ba Zheng San (Eight Corrections Powder) for heat strangury patterns.

Zuo Jin Wan (Left Metal Pill)

Huang Lian (Coptidis Rhizoma)

Wu Zhu Yu (Evodiae Fructus)

Zuo Jin Wan is a very small but special formula. It clears and drains liver fire, downbears counterflow and checks vomiting. As a small formula unit, it can be easily added to other prescriptions, such as Chai Hu Shu Gan San (Bupleurum Liver-Coursing Powder) or prescriptions created to harmonize the stomach and treat vomiting of acidic liquid.

Zuo Jin Wan treats liver fire invading the stomach. There may be pain in the rib-sides, “clamoring stomach” (like pain but not pain, like hunger but not hunger), acid swallowing (upflow of acid that is immediately swallowed), vomiting, bitter taste in the mouth, a red tongue with yellow fur, and a wiry rapid pulse.

This formula is used when liver depression forms fire and counterflows transversely to invade the stomach, causing liver-stomach disharmony. Inhibited qi in the liver channel causes distention and pain of the rib-sides, while liver fire invading the stomach produces the loss of the stomach's harmonious downbearing, resulting in clamoring stomach, acid swallowing, vomiting, and belching. Internal exuberance of liver fire causes the tongue and pulse presentation.

In the section on the 19 pathomechanisms, the *Nèi Jīng* states that “all counterflow upsurging is ascribed to fire,” and also states that “all sour retching and vomiting...is ascribed to heat.” This is the underlying theory within this formula, but the special relationship of Huang Lian (*Coptidis Rhizoma*) and Wu Zhu Yu (*Evodiae Fructus*) is its most unique feature.

Huang Lian enters the heart, liver, and stomach channels, and it directly clears liver fire. When liver fire is cleared, it no longer invades the stomach. It also drains stomach fire; when stomach fire is cleared, the stomach qi downbears on its own. Additionally, Huang Lian drains heart fire, which corresponds to the principle of “treating repletion by draining the child.”

If only bitter-cold medicinals are used to treat fire depressed in the liver channel, there is a fear that the coolness will cause obstruction and make the condition difficult to resolve. Therefore, a small amount of Wu Zhu Yu is used to open liver depression and downbear stomach counterflow. Wu Zhu Yu helps Huang Lian to harmonize the stomach and check vomiting while also preventing damage to the stomach from the large quantity of bitter-cold Huang Lian. Wu Zhu Yu also helps guide Huang Lian to the liver channel, so some texts consider it to be a courier in addition to being a paradoxical assistant.

The combination of one cold and one hot medicinal in Zuo Jin Wan is very notable, and the formula has been studied extensively for many different clinical indications. Additionally, research has been done to evaluate the effects of decocting these two medicinals together, and it appears that the dosage of the two medicinals in relationship to each other affects the yield of suspected active chemical constituents. Different dose relationships of Huang Lian to Wu Zhu Yu have been recorded in Chinese medical history, but the most prominent ratio is 6 parts of Huang Lian to 1 part of Wu Zhu Yu (from

Zhu Dan-Xi). Wu Zhu Yu can also be stir-fried with Huang Lian to moderate its cold nature and draw from the principles of the formula Zuo Jin Wan.

Cang Er Zi San (Xanthium Powder)

Cang Er Zi (Xanthii Fructus)

Xin Yi Hua (Magnoliae Flos)

Bai Zhi (Angelicae Dahuricae Radix)

Bo He (Menthae Herba)

Cang Er Zi San is a very useful formula for treating nasal congestion. It is particularly indicated for the TCM disease category of deep source nasal congestion (bi yuan), but when combined appropriately it can be used to treat many different patterns of nasal congestion.

In the original formula presentation, there may be nasal congestion and loss of the sense of smell, incessant turbid nasal mucus, and frontal headache. The combination of Cang Er Zi, Xin Yi Hua, and Bai Zhi opens the nose, while Bo He balances the warmth of the primary ingredients with its cooling nature. Bo He also helps to resolve the exterior, while Bai Zhi helps to treat frontal headache.

Cang Er Zi San treats wind-heat deep source nasal congestion. Therefore, the formula aromatically opens the orifice (of the nose) and primarily dispels wind and dissipates heat. Paradoxically, other sources indicate that the powder is taken with scallions and green tea, and the formula disperses wind-cold while freeing the orifice of the nose. In fact, some texts treat this formula as a derivative of Chuan Xiong Cha Tiao San (Tea-Blended Chuanxiong Powder), a major formula for headache in cases of external contraction.

For patterns of deep source nasal congestion caused by depressed heat in the gallbladder channel, combine Cang Er Zi San with Long Dan Xie Gan Tang (Gentian Liver-Draining Decoction). If there is exuberant liver-gallbladder fire with severe headache, constipation, reddish urine, rashness, impatience, and irascibility, consider using a modification of the formula Dang Gui Long Hui Wan (Chinese Angelica, Gentian, and Aloe Pill), which drains fire from the liver and gallbladder.

In cases of external contraction with cough, panting, and heat effusion, Cang Er Zi San may be combined with formulas such as Ma Xing Gan Shi Tang (Ephedra, Apricot Kernel, Licorice, and Gypsum Decoction). For wind-heat patterns with prominent sore throat, consider combining Cang Er Zi San with formulas such as Yin Qiao San (Lonicera and Forsythia Powder).

In cases of allergies with significant nasal congestion, Cang Er Zi San may be combined with formulas that treat the root problem, such as Yu Ping Feng San (Jade Wind-Barrier Powder) or Ren Shen Ge Jie San (Ginseng and Gecko Powder). Such formulas treat patterns associated with lung qi deficiency or lung and kidney deficiency. Cases ascribed to spleen qi deficiency can be treated by using Cang Er Zi San with formulas such as Shen Ling Bai Zhu San (Ginseng, Poria, and White Atractylodes Powder) or Bu Zhong Yi Qi Tang (Center-Supplementing Qi-Boosting Decoction).

For cases of nasal congestion due to depressed heat in the lung channel, Cang Er Zi San can be modified by adding medicinals such as Huang Qin (Scutellariae Radix) and Sang Bai Pi (Mori Cortex). Nasal congestion due to damp-heat in the spleen channel can be treated by using Cang Er Zi San with Xie Huang San (Yellow-Draining Powder).

In cases of nasal congestion with dryness, use caution when using Cang Er Zi San so that the dryness is not exacerbated. Consider additions such as Xing Ren (Armeniacae Semen), Chuan Bei Mu (Fritillariae Cirrhosae Bulbus), and Sang Ye (Mori Folium), or combine Cang Er Zi San with other base formulas such as Sang Xing Tang (Mulberry Leaf and Apricot Kernel Decoction), Qing Zao Jiu Fei Tang (Dryness-Clearing Lung-Rescuing Decoction), or Bai He Gu Jin Tang (Lily Bulb Metal-Securing Decoction).

Gui Zhi Fu Ling Wan (Cinnamon Twig and Poria Pill)

Gui Zhi (Cinnamomi Ramulus)

Fu Ling (Poria)

Chi Shao (Paeoniae Radix Rubra)

Mu Dan Pi (Moutan Cortex)

Tao Ren (Persicae Semen)

Gui Zhi Fu Ling Wan was one of the first formulas in the history of Chinese medical gynecology, and it remains one of the most common base formulas in gynecology today. It is traditionally used for cold-damp and blood stasis patterns of gynecological masses, known in Chinese medicine as zheng jia (concretions and conglomerations).

Gui Zhi Fu Ling Wan was first recorded in the Jin Gui Yao Lue (“Essential Prescriptions of the Golden Coffin”), where it was used to treat stirring fetus in pregnant women with a history of blood stasis. It illustrates several herbal combinations that have become standard pairs, such as the combination of Chi Shao and Mu Dan Pi for blood stasis, or Gui Zhi with Fu Ling to treat patterns of dampness. The balance of cool and warm medicinals within Gui Zhi Fu Ling Wan produces a formula that is warm but not overly hot, and the formula has a good ability to quicken the blood without damaging right qi.

For cases with fixed concretions (masses due to blood stasis), E Zhu (Curcumae Rhizoma) and San Leng (Sparganii Rhizoma) may be added to Gui Zhi Fu Ling Wan. These additions are common for conditions such as uterine fibroids, which is often characterized under the TCM pattern of concretions and conglomerations (zheng jia).

In patients with significant pain due to blood stasis, common additions include the formula Shi Xiao San (Sudden Smile Powder) and the single medicinal Yan Hu Suo (Corydalis Rhizoma). Gui Zhi Fu Ling Wan can also be added to formulas such as Chai Hu Shu Gan San (Bupleurum Liver-Coursing Powder) or Jia Wei Xiao Yao San (Supplemented Free Wanderer Powder) to treat patients with liver qi depression and blood stasis.

In cases of congealing cold-damp with blood stasis, Gui Zhi Fu Ling Wan is useful because it uses the warm, freeing action of Gui Zhi in conjunction with blood-quickeners. For patterns with prominent cold signs, warming agents such as Wu Zhu Yu (Evodiae Fructus), Xiao Hui Xiang (Foeniculi Fructus), and Fu Zi (Aconiti Radix Lateralis Praeparata) may be added. Alternatively, the formula Shao Fu Zhu Yu Tang (Lesser Abdomen Stasis-Expelling Decoction) may be added.

For patients with concretions and conglomerations due to phlegm-damp complicated by blood stasis, Gui Zhi Fu Ling Wan can be used with formulas

such as Er Chen Tang (Two Matured Ingredients Decoction) and Xiao Luo Wan (Scrofula-Dispersing Pill).

Beyond concretions and conglomerations, Gui Zhi Fu Ling Wan can be used as a gentle and warming formula for quickening the blood in general. It stands out as a blood-moving formula because it was originally created for use in pregnancy. Overall, Gui Zhi Fu Ling Wan is quite balanced and flexible in terms of its potential applications. It can be used with various other base formulas to add a balanced, warming and blood-quickening action to the final prescription.

Additionally, adding Yi Yi Ren (Coicis Semen) to Gui Zhi Fu Ling Wan forms an empirical Japanese Kampo formula for skin diseases and acne due to blood stasis.

Xiao Luo Wan (Scrofula-Dispersing Pill)

Mu Li (Ostreae Concha)

Zhe Bei Mu (Fritillariae Thunbergii Bulbus)

Xuan Shen (Scrophulariae Radix)

Xiao Luo Wan is a formula that was originally indicated for scrofula. However, beyond its textbook indications for nodules on the neck, it can be used to soften hardness and disperse binds in a variety of applications when combined appropriately. The ability of Xiao Luo Wan to soften hardness and disperse binds can be further accentuated with the addition of medicinals such as Xia Ku Cao (Prunellae Spica), Bie Jia (Trionycis Carapax), Hai Zao (Sargassum), and Kun Bu (Laminariae/Eckloniae Thallus).

It is not uncommon for Xiao Luo Wan to be used in gynecology for conditions such as ovarian cysts or uterine fibroids in cases that are ascribed to phlegm-damp stasis. In such applications, it is often combined with formulas such as Er Chen Tang (Two Matured Ingredients Decoction) or Kai Yu Er Chen Tang (Depression-Opening Two Matured Ingredients Decoction).

Ling Gui Zhu Gan Tang (Poria, Cinnamon Twig, White Atractylodes, and Licorice Decoction)

Fu Ling (Poria)

Gui Zhi (Cinnamomi Ramulus)

Bai Zhu (Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma)

Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix)

Ling Gui Zhu Gan Tang is a formula that was originally indicated for patterns of rheum (pathological thin liquid). It utilizes a very concise and effective combination of four medicinals and offers a perfect base for elaboration in several different directions.

Within this formula, Fu Ling and Gui Zhi again combine to regulate water. Fu Ling percolates dampness and fortifies the spleen while the warm and freeing Gui Zhi promotes the qi transformation function of the bladder. Bai Zhu fortifies the spleen, dries dampness, and disinhibits water, while Gan Cao supplements the spleen and harmonizes the formula. This simple and eloquent combination can be further built for a variety of other conditions.

For yang deficiency with water swelling, Ling Gui Zhu Gan Tang can be combined with Zhen Wu Tang (True Warrior Decoction) or Shen Qi Wan (Kidney Qi Pill). Alternatively, medicinals such as Fu Zi (Aconiti Radix Lateralis Praeparata) and Ze Xie (Alismatis Rhizoma) may be added to Ling Gui Zhu Gan Tang to treat yang deficiency water swelling. For severe water swelling, the formula Wu Ling San (Poria Five Powder) can be added as well.

Ling Gui Zhu Gan Tang is also very close in nature to Li Zhong Wan (Center-Rectifying Pill) and Si Jun Zi Tang (Four Gentlemen Decoction). By adding Ren Shen (Ginseng Radix) to further supplement spleen qi and Gan Jiang (Zingiberis Rhizoma) to warm the center, Ling Gui Zhu Gan Tang can be easily modified to form a center-warming, qi-supplementing formula.

The formula Er Chen Tang (Two Matured Ingredients Decoction) can be added to Ling Gui Zhu Gan Tang to treat patients with spleen deficiency, exuberant dampness, and water swelling. Er Chen Tang dries dampness, fortifies the spleen, and harmonizes the stomach, and it can be added at varying dosage levels according to need. For patients with spleen deficiency and water swelling, Huang Qi (Astragali Radix) and Fang Ji (Stephaniae Tetrandrae Radix) may be added as well.

Zeng Ye Tang (Humor-Increasing Decoction)

Mai Men Dong (Ophiopogonis Radix)
Xuan Shen (Scrophulariae Radix)
Sheng Di Huang (Rehmanniae Radix)

Zeng Ye Tang is a very concise formula for supplementing yin and boosting liquid. It is cold in nature, and is often used to treat conditions with heat signs in the upper body (supplementing water to control fire). In particular, Xuan Shen and Sheng Di Huang clear heat and boost liquid, while Mai Men Dong clears heat and quiets the spirit.

Zeng Ye Tang is a perfect building block for formula combining. On its own, it is a useful intestine-moistening formula to treat constipation due to yin deficiency and liquid damage. It is also well-suited to treating the aftermath of febrile disease in cases where yin and fluids have been damaged by heat. Zeng Ye Tang is an important formula to consider in warm disease, and it can be used as a base to build more complex warm disease formulas, such as Qing Ying Tang (Construction-Clearing Decoction).

For more severe constipation in patients that does not respond to Zeng Ye Tang, Da Huang (Rhei Radix et Rhizoma) and Mang Xiao (Natrii Sulfas) can be added. This combination forms the formula Zeng Ye Cheng Qi Tang (Humor-Increasing Qi- Coordinating Decoction), which is a representative formula for the principle of simultaneous supplementing and attacking therapy. It is used for used yang brightness (yang ming) disease with constipation due to damage to the fluids, when neither precipitation nor enriching yin liquid and increasing humor is effective.

When combined appropriately, Zeng Ye Tang can be used for a wide range of conditions associated with yin deficiency and heat. Regardless of whether it is used in large doses as a principle formula or whether it is used in small doses as an auxiliary formula, Zeng Ye Tang has an important place in formula combining.

Additionally, Zeng Ye Tang can be used as a modification in formulas to treat sore throat, especially in cases of yin deficiency with internal heat. For cases of thirst and severe sore throat due to fire-toxin, Zeng Ye Tang can be used in combination with medicinals such as Ban Lan Gen (Isatidis Radix),

Huang Qin (*Scutellariae Radix*), Niu Bang Zi (*Arctii Fructus*), and She Gan (*Belamcandae Rhizoma*).

Suan Zao Ren Tang (Spiny Jujube Decoction)

Suan Zao Ren (*Ziziphi Spinosa Semen*)

Fu Ling (*Poria*)

Zhi Mu (*Anemarrhenae Rhizoma*)

Chuan Xiong (*Chuanxiong Rhizoma*)

Gan Cao (*Glycyrrhizae Radix*)

Suan Zao Ren Tang represents a very nice unit for formula combining. It nourishes the blood and quiets the spirit, and also clears heat and eliminates vexation. It can be used to add a nourishing, spirit-quieting aspect to a compound prescription, and it can be further elaborated to treat deficiency insomnia from a variety of causes.

Suan Zao Ren Tang also has a slight ability to check sweating, and Wu Wei Zi (*Schisandrae Fructus*) and Ma Huang Gen (*Ephedrae Radix*) can be added to treat night sweating. For palpitations, Long Chi (*Mastodi Dentis Fossilia*) and Long Yan Rou (*Longan Arillus*) can be added to Suan Zao Ren Tang.

Gan Mai Da Zao Tang (Licorice, Wheat, and Jujube Decoction)

Xiao Mai (*Tritici Fructus*)

Da Zao (*Jujubae Fructus*)

Gan Cao (*Glycyrrhizae Radix*)

The formula Gan Mai Da Zao Tang was originally created to treat a disease in women known as visceral agitation, though it is now used for both genders. Typical manifestations of visceral agitation include disturbed emotions, sorrow and crying without reason, frequent stretching and yawning, and mental fatigue. It is now generally thought that visceral agitation is caused by emotions causing liver depression transforming into fire, which damages yin and results in dual deficiency of the spleen and heart.

Gan Mai Da Zao Tang is a balanced, gentle formula. It nourishes the heart and quiets the spirit, and harmonizes the center and supplements spleen qi. The simplicity and gentle nourishing nature of this formula makes it applicable for a wide range of applications in formula combining.



16

CHALLENGES IN FORMULA COMBINING

There are a few features of the formula combining method that pose logistical challenges and unresolved questions. Formula combining allows one to add medicinals but one cannot subtract medicinals, so there are often ingredients present that could be eliminated if multiple formulas are compounded together.

There are many approaches to formula combining. The basic outline of treatment ideas suggested in this chapter represents just the tip of the ice-

berg. At the beginning, it is easiest to start with relatively small, simple formulas that have clear principles and few ingredients. This approach is also ideal for practitioners that maintain small pharmacies or new practitioners that want to start a dynamic pharmacy with minimal overhead. However, formula combining can get much more complicated than the basic approaches outlined here.

In Taiwan, formula combining is extremely common, and practitioners routinely use 2-4 formulas together in any given prescription. Chinese medical doctors in Taiwan memorize hundreds of classical formulas, and any given pharmacy has hundreds of classical formulas on the shelf to choose from. Consequently, Taiwanese doctors tend to prescribe relatively complex blends of even fairly large formulas, resulting in a very distinctive prescription style that takes time to learn and appreciate.

The widespread use of both raw herbs and granules in Taiwan has made Taiwan a unique environment for formula combining. The traditional method of raw herb decoctions remains common in Taiwan, so Chinese medical doctors there regularly use two independent systems of formulation, one for granules (covered by insurance) and one for raw (not covered by insurance).

By contrast, doctors from mainland China are accustomed to writing raw herb prescriptions only. In mainland China, the main revolution of convenience revolved around the use of small decoction machines, and granules are a relatively late arrival. In comparison to Taiwan, mainstream pharmacies in China have relatively few unmodified classical formulas. Most mainland Chinese prepared medicines are custom formulations and proprietary mixtures rather than classical formulas in granule form, so the marketplace availability varies significantly between the two regions.

Granules have now started to take off in mainland China, but the primary products available are single herb extracts. Compound classical granule formulas remain rare on the Chinese domestic granule market (at least in hospitals and large clinics), so there has not been a major change in the prescription style in the mainland like there has been in Taiwan. Consequently, Chinese medical doctors that move to Taiwan from mainland China often have a

difficult time accepting the Taiwanese method of compounding whole formulas.

The fact that additions can be made but removing ingredients is not possible results in some final compound formulas that contain 40 ingredients or more. This fact causes some people to view formula compounding as too chaotic, because some medicinals overlap in multiple formulas and some unnecessary medicinals are present in the final prescription. However, whole formulas can also be thought of as representing a clear, single principle so there is some inherent validity in the formula combining approach. After decades of use of both methods, it is clear that both approaches can achieve satisfactory clinic results.

One challenge to be aware of is the duplication of ingredients when multiple formulas are combined. If several formulas have the same ingredient, an item that was originally intended as an auxiliary medicinal can ultimately be given at a dose that is higher than that of some of the more important medicinals. The most common example of this problem is Gan Cao, which appears in many formulas. If several formulas that contain Gan Cao are combined, the relative dosage of Gan Cao can move from that of a courier to that of a sovereign medicinal. Thus, it is important to have a strong command of formula ingredients to minimize the problem of duplication. In some situations, duplication may be desirable to add emphasis to a certain principle, but in other situations duplication of medicinals can upset the balance of the formula.



17

CASE STUDIES

A 26 year-old male presented with an acute episode of ulcerative colitis. He had suffered from periodic episodes of ulcerative colitis several times over the past few years, and often required hospitalization and IV prednisone to control the severe bleeding and diarrhea. In this particular episode, he presented with watery bowel movements characterized by blood and mucus (approximately 20 times per day), accompanied by tenesmus. At the time of examination, he appeared fatigued from the prolonged diarrhea and was anx-

ious about the possibility of hospitalization if the condition did not improve. He associates the condition with significant emotional stress and presented with abdominal distention, poor appetite, a puffy pale tongue with thick greasy yellow fur and a bowstring, slippery pulse. After questioning, he was diagnosed with the Chinese medical disease category of dysentery (li ji), presenting with a pattern of liver depression and spleen deficiency complicated by dampness and heat.

The first prescription was based on Si Ni San (Counterflow Cold Powder) plus Tong Xie Yao Fang (Important Formula for Painful Diarrhea), with the addition of heat-clearing and dampness-drying herbs.

Prescription #1:

Si Ni San (Counterflow Cold Powder) 5 g

Tong Xie Yao Fang (Important Formula for Painful Diarrhea) 5 g

Huang Lian (Coptidis Rhizoma) 1 g

Mu Xiang (Aucklandiae Radix) 1 g

Bai Jiang Cao (Patriniae Herba) 1 g

Hong Teng (Sargentodoxae Caulis) 1 g

Chen Pi (Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium) 0.8 g

Qin Pi (Fraxini Cortex) 1 g

Yi Yi Ren (Coicis Semen) [dry-fried] 1.2 g

Huang Bai (Phellodendri Cortex) 1 g

This prescription was given for three days, at which point the tenesmus, bleeding, and mucus had improved markedly. The frequency of bowel movements was reduced dramatically but the patient still had watery diarrhea with blood. The tongue fur was less yellow and greasy and the chief complaint now centered on fatigue and diarrhea. The prescription was modified as follows.

Prescription #2:

Si Ni San (Counterflow Cold Powder) 4 g

Tong Xie Yao Fang (Important Formula for Painful Diarrhea) 4 g

Huang Lian (Coptidis Rhizoma) 1 g

Mu Xiang (Aucklandiae Radix) 1 g

Chen Pi (Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium) 1 g

Yi Yi Ren (Coicis Semen) [dry-fried] 1.5 g

Huang Bai (Phellodendri Cortex) 1 g
Fu Ling (Poria) 1.5 g
Shan Yao (Dioscoreae Rhizoma) 1.5 g
Ren Shen (Ginseng Radix) 1 g
Qian Shi (Euryales Semen) 1.5 g
Xian He Cao (Agrimoniae Herba) 1 g

Following 6 days of this formula, the patient continued to have improvement in the frequency of the diarrhea and the bleeding continued to reduce. The tenesmus and mucus were resolved and the patient was now able to consume solid food without provoking the diarrhea. Bowel movements remained watery but were limited to a few times per day. The formula was modified to strengthen the spleen and astringent medicinals were added.

Prescription #3:

Si Ni San (Counterflow Cold Powder) 5 g
Shen Ling Bai Zhu San (Ginseng, Poria, White Atractylodes Powder) 7 g
Xian He Cao (Agrimoniae Herba) 1 g
Chen Pi (Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium) 1 g
He Zi (Chebulae Fructus) 1 g
Wu Mei (Mume Fructus) 1 g

Variations of this formula were given for 14 days, with consistent improvement that eventually led to complete resolution.

Case Two:

A 47 year-old woman presents with an enlarged uterus due to uterine fibroids and heavy menstrual bleeding. Her uterus is slightly visible through her clothing and its superior and lateral borders can be clearly palpated. Her chief complaint is her appearance (she is self conscious about her belly), but she acknowledges that she feels fatigue after her period, which is regular, lasts 8–12 days and is characterized by thick, dark blood with many large clots. She also complains of dizziness, poor concentration and memory, and poor appetite. Her pulse is thin and weak, and her tongue is pale-purple with distended sublingual veins. Based on a Chinese medical diagnosis of profuse menstruation manifesting with a pattern of qi and blood deficiency and blood stasis, the following granule prescription could be given:

Gui Zhi Fu Ling Wan (Cinnamon Twig and Poria Pill) 5 g

Gui Pi Tang (Spleen-Returning Decoction) 7 g

San Leng (Sparganii Rhizoma) 1 g

E Zhu (Curcumae Rhizoma) 1 g

Yi Mu Cao (Leonuri Herba) 1 g

Alternatively, the following prescription could be made by combining singles instead of using base formulas:

Huang Qi (Astragali Radix) 2 g

Dang Gui (Angelicae Sinensis Radix) 1 g

Bai Zhu (Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma) 1.2 g

Fu Ling (Poria) 2 g

Ren Shen (Ginseng Radix) 0.8 g

Bai Shao (Paeoniae Radix Alba) 1.5 g

Tao Ren (Persicae Semen) 1.2 g

Chi Shao (Paeoniae Radix Rubra) 1 g

Mu Dan Pi (Moutan Cortex) 0.8 g

E Zhu (Curcumae Rhizoma) 1.2 g

San Leng (Sparganii Rhizoma) 1.2 g

Yi Mu Cao (Leonuri Herba) 1 g

Zhi Gan Cao (Glycyrrhizae Radix Praeparata) 0.5 g

During episodes of heavy menstruation, Yi Mu Cao, San Leng, E Zhu, and perhaps Tao Ren, Chi Shao, and/or Mu Dan Pi should be removed, and medicinals such as Pu Huang (Typhae Pollen), Qian Cao (Rubiae Radix), San Qi (Notoginseng Radix) and Hai Piao Xiao (Sepiae Endoconcha) may be added.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ERIC BRAND



Eric is a licensed practitioner of Chinese medicine with a passion for Chinese herbal pharmacy. After graduating from the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine, Eric pursued a prolonged clinical internship at Chang Gung Memorial Hospital in Taiwan, and he continues to spend much of his time immersed in his studies in Asia. He is the author of *A Clinician's Guide to the Use of Granule Extracts* and co-author of the *Concise Chinese Materia Medica*, and he has translated a variety of modern and classical Chinese medical texts.

Eric's current focus centers on Chinese herbal processing, quality control, and traditional materia medica literature, and he is the owner of the granule company **Legendary Herbs**.



For more e-books on Chinese medicine, please visit the **Redwing Book Company**.

