

A Monumental Step for Chinese Herbal Medicine



By Shoshanna Katzman

The ancient tradition of Chinese medicine is made up of eight branches which include acupuncture, moxibustion, herbal and nutritional remedies, acupressure and massage, T'ai Chi and Qigong, as well as Feng Shui. China has been the main country where both Western and Chinese medicine have been practiced alongside each other within every level of their healthcare system. Over the last ten years, acupuncture in particular has become increasingly integrated into American hospitals and integrative medical settings for treatment of both acute and chronic conditions; yet without the accompaniment of Chinese herbal medicine.

In April of this year, the Cleveland Clinic announced the opening of their Chinese Herb Department - a monumental step bringing Chinese medicine closer to the way it has been practiced for thousands of years. Melissa Young, an integrative medicine physician from the Cleveland Clinic states "Western medicine does acute care phenomenally. But we're still struggling a bit with our chronic-care patients and this fills in that gap and can be used concurrently." This shift will likely spur growth of other Chinese herb depart-

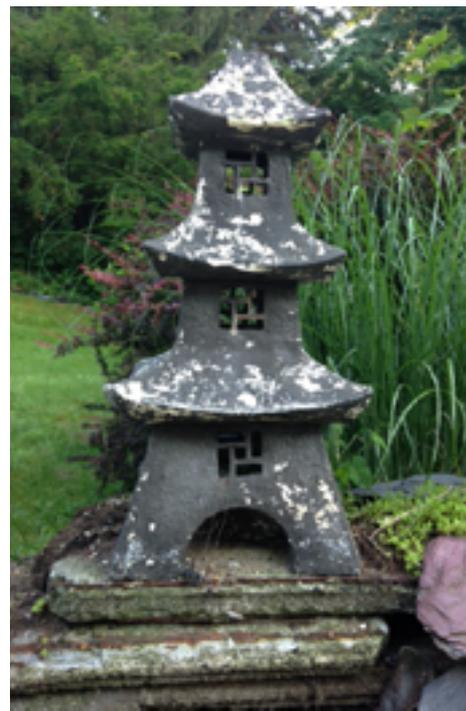


ments, bringing with it the opportunity for increased healthcare options.

The Chinese herb pharmacopeia is made up of approximately 13,000 individual herbs and over 100,000 formulas in the form of natural plants, minerals and animals. In actual practice an approximate 300 herbs are commonly used. Taken predominantly in combination with other herbs, effects are oftentimes based on the interaction with other herbs in the formula. Each individual herb within a formula is specifically classified according to its energetic quality, flavor, taste, vital organ it enters, and effect on body function. A typical formula is made up of anywhere from ten to twenty individual herbs. They can be taken internally as a

tincture, extract, pill, capsule or decoction or externally applied as a cream, fomentation, or plaster. Numerous companies provide certification that their herbal formulas are organically grown or free of pesticide residue.

The art and science of Chinese herb formulary is based on thousands of years of research and practical application providing today's practitioners with a comprehensive body of knowledge to study and use in clinical



practice. A practitioner chooses and recommends a formula according to Chinese Medicine diagnostic and treatment guidelines applied to information gathered through evaluation of presenting symptoms and signs, Chinese pulse and tongue analysis along details gathered from taking a medical history. Each herb has specific characteristics that are more or less suitable for a particular constitution. A practitioner must also be cognizant of potential drug interactions, appropriate dosage, product quality, contraindications, and possible side effects.

Chinese herbs are recommended to treat the person as a whole, not the illness. In fact, there is a classical Chinese medicine saying "same disease different treatment, different treatment same disease." Chinese herbal treatment promotes physical healing by addressing the root cause of illness, often stemming from an energetic imbalance. It balances Yin and Yang, nourishes what is deficient, and releases what is blocked - to restore a natural, harmonious healthy state of being.

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