



The Virtue of Chinese Herbs

by Shoshanna Katzman

Herbal medicine has been a natural healing method in China for centuries. Throughout the years, the usage of Chinese herbs has been tested thoroughly through clinical application. Today, it is considered to be the most highly developed and used system of herbal medicine throughout the world - one that provides an excellent adjunct to western medical treatment.

Similar to other branches of Chinese medicine, this holistic system of

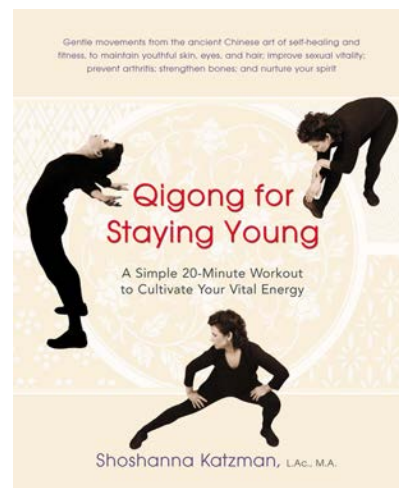
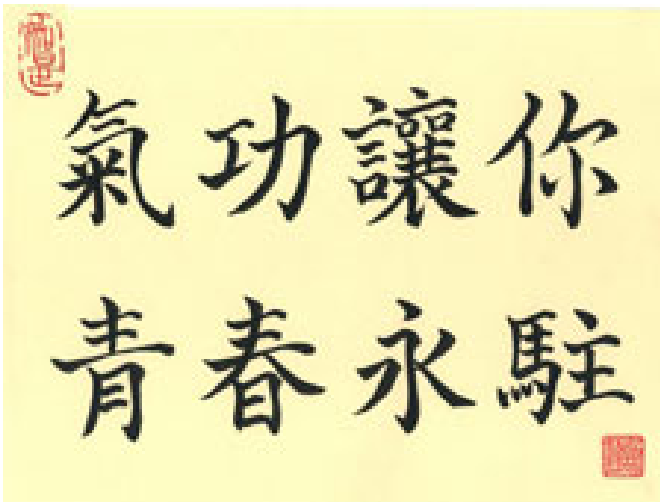
healing works through integration of the whole body via regulation of energetic and physiological imbalances. Accordingly, Chinese herbal treatment provides the distinct possibility for successful treatment for a myriad of conditions.

This treatment approach is based on knowledge found within the compendium known as the "Chinese Herbal Medicine Materia Medica." It includes herb usage, dosage, contraindications, drug interactions and additional research such as their chemical make-

up and physiological effect on the body. Chinese herbs are typically taken in combination with approximately 6-12 other herbs, which is traditionally known as a Chinese herbal formulation, for which thousands are in existence.

These time-proven herbal formulations are gradually finding their way into mainstream medicine, similar to how integration of acupuncture has become more common in hospitals, integrative medicine centers and private practices over the last decade. A prime example of such integration is the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, which has successfully implemented an entire department of Chinese herbal medicine for several years now. Another example is the recent trend toward legitimization of herbs through Federal Drug Administration (FDA) clinical trials. One such example is a Chinese herbal capsule, which is used to treat influenza and was approved in 2015 by the FDA for clinical tests.

Chinese medicine practitioners who specialize in herbal medicine are highly trained, with the majority of them tested and certified through the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (nccaom.org). Chinese herbal formulas are classified as food supplements and can be taken along with Western medications in the majority of cases. Although to ensure safety, drug/herb interactions must be taken into consideration by the Chinese herbalist, prior to recommendation of



a formula. In the same vein, one must inform and consult their physician about their taking of herbs as well as nutritional supplements.

It is important to note that the most effective approach for optimal Chinese medicine efficacy is gained through the combination of acupuncture and Chinese herbs. This stems from it being traditionally believed that acupuncture is a more external (yang) approach, whereas Chinese herbs are a more internal (yin) healing approach. Whereby, increased healing happens when these yin and yang aspects are treated and thus sufficiently balanced.

For both acupuncture and Chinese herbology there is not a "one formula that fits all" – rather each treatment is selected to fit an individual's particular needs. In this process, a Chinese medicine practitioner designs a formula, with changes made to the formula as needed over the course of treatment. As such, treatment for a chronic condition is typically necessary for several months or even a year, whereas a course of treatment for a more acute condition is one to four weeks.

Chinese herbs can be taken internally or applied externally. The most convenient method is to take them in the form of pill or tablet, powdered, granulated or as a liquid extract or syrup. Chinese herbs can also be added to a soup, with foods such as congee or decocted as a strong tea. Taking herbs as a tea is traditionally believed to be the best in terms of assimilation and bio-availability. Externally, herbs are applied in the form of a salve, liniment, balm, fomentation or as a soak when added to a bath.

The most well known category is Chinese tonic herbs, used to strengthen the body – specifically the immune system. Tonic herbs are a mainstay for many people who are feeling tired and run down, have a lack of motivation and/or low sexual drive. Tonic Chinese herbs work by increasing yang energy, which promotes warmth throughout the body. They also nourish yin, thereby increasing bodily fluids and moistening functions. Overall, they gently build the flow of qi (vital energy) and

blood, thereby restoring one's abundant source of energy.

It is essential to always inquire about the quality and standard of preparation for all Chinese herbal products. This is because they may have been sprayed with sulfites in order to pass the importation standards in the United States. However, there are many companies on the market that offer products that are certified to be of high quality and free of additives.

Regardless of form or purpose, Chinese herbal medicine offers a natural and effective way to promote transformation and healing within the body. It is an excellent adjunct to western medicine protocols, especially for restoration and maintenance for one's health, providing yet another way for you to realize your healing goals.

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