



News Spring 2021

Dear Practitioner,

In our Autumn 2020 newsletter, we introduced you to our **5 new formulas** designed to help your patients prevent and recover from external invasions. The whole world has certainly learned a great deal in the last year about viruses!

The lead article in this newsletter is on the cytokine storm. This article digs a bit deeper and provides insights into the relationship between yang, *wei qi*, and yin fluids. It discusses the importance of yin for managing inflammation—which can be dangerous when our body's attempt to address inflammation gets out of balance.

Evelyn Robert has provided an excerpt from her upcoming book, *Chinese Medicine Essential Oils, a Materia Medica and Practical Guide to Their Use*. This is the first book ever published in English on the *materia medica* of essential oils extracted from traditional Chinese herbs.

In the dietary medicine department, we have another wonderful and useful piece by Andrew Sterman. This time around his topic is 'The Art of Losing Weight.'

We remind you that we have available for you and your patients two Chinese herbal products from LifeBiotic. These formulas have been studied and used with oncology patients in hospitals in Israel. These products were developed by Yair Maimon, a TCM expert in Israel. You can learn more about his certification program in acupuncture oncology at: <https://www.yairmaimon.com/courses-2020>. You can access detailed information of the Israeli oncology research at the LifeBiotic link at www.gfcherbs.com You will be impressed at how Chinese Medicine is effectively being used in this medical specialty.

Check out the new CBD tinctures and salves made by us here in New Mexico under the **Plant Wisdom** label.

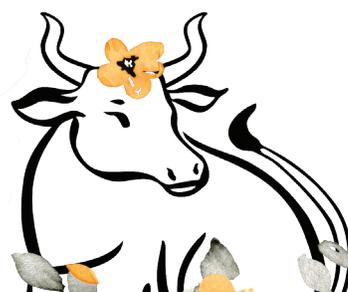
Please support your state professional AOM association and encourage your colleagues to be members. It is critical that we are engaged on all levels in order to help create a better future for our profession as well as the way our medicine in this country can affect future generations.

This pandemic can provide the opportunity to demonstrate just how valuable our medical system is to be obtaining and maintaining health. We all want our neighbors and friends to experience the marvelous healing of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine.

This newsletter and past newsletters as well as the many papers we have published are posted on our web site. They are a fantastic resource! We greatly appreciate your business and support. We appreciate all of your communication, comments, and feedback. We are committed to supporting the growth and acceptance of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine.

Sincerely,

John Scott, DOM and Lorena Monda, DOM



Considerations for the Cytokine Storm

By John Heuertz, DOM

In severe, acute infectious respiratory disease, especially epidemic pathogens such as influenza and the SARS viruses, one of the leading causes of death is the cytokine stormⁱ: an excessive response of our innate immune system. This article will discuss some considerations for the practitioner of Chinese medicine to help identify risk factors for this problem and provide interventions.

INNATE IMMUNE SYSTEM VS ACQUIRED IMMUNE SYSTEM

In modern medicine the innate immune system is our body's automatic and undifferentiated response to pathogenic factors. In contrast, "acquired" immune response happens at the blood level and includes T-cells and antibodies, each of which recognize specific proteins on invading pathogens that the body had already been exposed to. (All vaccines are designed to generate immunity by causing the acquired immune system to produce cells that recognize and attack specific invaders by their proteinaceous identifiers.)



Modern medicine actually offers no positive definition of health, only the negative definition that "health is the absence of disease."ⁱⁱ It is important to bear in mind that health is not defined by the number and variety of the antibodies we produce. Antibodies do not make us healthy; they merely help prevent us from developing illness when exposed to this or that pathogen. But what about all those countless times in our life when we are exposed to a pathogen for the first time, before we have developed an antibody to it?

Consider that the human body is thought to contain approximately 10^{10} (10 billion) antibodies,ⁱⁱⁱ yet our oceans, air, and soil contain about 10^{31} viruses^{iv}—more than the estimated number of stars in the universe – and these are constantly mutating! The math here strongly suggests that the key to good health can never come from simply adding more and more antibodies to our arsenal. Good health does not come from our acquired immune system but is expressed in

the strength and responsiveness of our innate immune system. If our innate immune system is in good working order, properly regulated, and with good support, we should fare well when exposed to new pathogens. This notion is reflected in the ancient Chinese assertion that if one's *zheng qi* (antipathogenic qi) is sufficient, an external pathogen cannot cause disease in that person.^v Because the innate immune system is a first line of defense, the acquired immune system is dependent upon it, not the other way around. (In fact, T-cells cannot respond to an invasion without the innate immune system "presenting" the antigen to the T-cell.^{vi})

A major player in the automatic response of the innate immune system is the production of chemical mediators of inflammation, called cytokines. Cytokines are chemical mediators that recruit immune cells to infection sites and are responsible for our inflammatory response. Under certain conditions, not always understood, a person's cytokine response can become hyperactive during an acute infection. It can become locked in a cycle of over-expression to the point of death. The cytokine storm is now suspected to be the most important

factor that pushes a mild or moderate case of respiratory infection into a severe or fatal condition.^{vii, viii}

In Chinese medicine, the innate immune system is closely identified with our *zheng qi*. *Zheng qi* consists of 3 components and one function. The three components are *yang*, *wei qi*, and *jin*/thin fluids. As "commander of the qi" the lung function needs to be in good working order as well. If the lungs are unable to descend or diffuse/disperse, the *zheng qi* will not have its full antipathogenic force.

YANG QI AND INFLAMMATION

Yang provides some of our "innate" immune response on its own. It is pre-intelligence and generalized, like a fever. Yang qi is characterized as the most basic and undifferentiated form of qi. The qualities of yang involved in innate immune responses are rising, expansion, and warming. The warming action of a generalized fever is an obvious example of a yang response. Sneezing is another way that our yang responds to

pathogens. When we need to sneeze, our yang rises and expands in order to discharge pathogenic cold and particulates through the yang orifice of the nose. Coughing is another yang qi surge the body will use to expel a pathogen.

Wei qi, though warming, is primarily about movement and reaction. When the body senses a pathogen, the *wei qi* will react by immediately moving to and accumulating at the affected site. The accumulation of *wei qi* then becomes the conduit for the inflammation that originates from the heat provided by the yang qi. In this way the *wei qi* can be seen as the conductor of the cytokine response.

WEI QI

The normal operation of *wei qi* does not involve intelligence; it is a reflex action, constantly adjusting our bodies to our immediate surroundings. Yang is the basis of and raw material for *wei qi*. *Wei qi* draws from the reservoir of yang to convert it into quick responses to external influences. A steady allowance of yang is converted into *wei qi* continuously for normal, ongoing adaptation to our environment, but this rate can increase when adaptation involves a defensive action. For example, exercise requires a more rapid conversion of yang into *wei qi* than sitting at a computer. In a similar manner, when we need to cough or sneeze (each recruiting apparatuses of movement), the burst of yang behind this action is mediated by the *wei qi*: always involved in movement and in reaction to the external environment.

Wei qi moves muscles and fluids but cannot move on its own without a medium. Just like the blood carries the *ying qi*, the *jin*/thin fluids are the mediumship and conveyance of the *wei qi*. In an inflammatory response the *jin* fluids not only allow for smooth movement of the *wei qi* to the site, they also provide the mediumship for the *wei qi* to carry off the casualties of the battle (dead cells, chemical byproducts, and viral material). Insufficient *jin* fluid can therefore be a complicating factor for managing the inflammation.

TIGHT JUNCTIONS

Tight junctions are the intercellular matrix in epithelial tissue that provide a barrier between what is internal and what is external. They are a branching network of proteins that join together the cytoskeletons of adjacent epithelial cells and fill in the spaces between the cells to form a barrier. Breaches in the tight junctions are responsible for the spread of inflammation. In the gut, the tight junctions regulate the passage of nutrients to the interior and prevent the passage

of dangerous microbiota. They are thus an essential partner of the microbiome: that part of our innate immune system that originates in the gut is also the most important part of our innate immune system. In the lungs, tight junctions are found on the surface of the alveoli; in the kidneys, they line the tubules. They even play an important role in the barrier function of the skin and line the nasal passages and throat. In short, tight junctions are found everywhere in the body that have interactions with substances originating from the external environment: air and airborne particles, food, water, sunlight. They provide the physical barrier that separates the internal from the external terrains and regulate what is allowed to enter as nourishment and what is denied entry. They are the yin infrastructure the body provides for defense against invasion from the exterior. In the nose, intestines, and elsewhere the tight junctions are positioned underneath a layer of mucosal lining; the two networks work together as a layered defense system.^{ix} Without good tight junctions we would be in a more or less constant state of reactivity and inflammation because there would be insufficient yin to balance the body's yang response.

Yin and Immune Response

Yin is not a component of *zheng qi*, but it plays a vital role in managing the amplitude of our inflammatory response by balancing and restraining the yang component. If the tight junctions are damaged, the inflammation spreads in direct proportion to the size of the gaps. Many pathogens, such as influenza, are successful in causing a cytokine storm precisely because they damage the tight junctions.^{x, xi} SARS-CoV-2 similarly erodes the tight junctions.^{xii}

If the surrounding tissue at an infection site is yin deficient or the *jin*/thin fluids cannot carry away the byproduct of the inflammatory process, the inflammation can spread into the healthy cells. When the yang that is being converted by the *wei qi* overwhelms the body's yin, this will cause a cytokine storm.ⁱ

PREVENTION OF THE CYTOKINE STORM

A cytokine storm is a complicating factor that can lead to respiratory collapse, organ failure, even death. It is a major deciding factor in a case turning from severe to critical. In Chinese medicine terms, a cytokine storm is a persistent surge of yang with unrestrained *wei qi*. If we look back to our discussion on *zheng qi* we notice something missing here: the fluids. The *jin*/thin fluids not only carry the *wei qi*, they also help to contain it. But that is not all that is going on here. Yang is restrained by yin. So, a cytokine storm is more likely

to be avoided in those patients who have sufficient yin and fluids. The yin restrains the yang inflammation and the *jin*-fluids provide mediumship for the *wei* qi to move yang qi in, and inflammatory byproducts out of the area. If we look at the populations that are most at risk of a cytokine storm, we find diabetics, the elderly, people with chronic kidney disease and/or serious heart conditions, individuals with hypertension, and those with blood clots. Old age and chronic organic disease are almost invariably associated with (among other individual factors) yin deficiency. Diabetes is strongly associated with the *jin*/thin fluids in type II, and with yin deficiency and *jin*/fluid deficiency in type I. Hypertension seems an interesting outlier here, but not after one considers the underlying causes of high blood pressure. The excess forms of HTN originate in the liver, with liver fire or liver wind. But the deficiency patterns are associated with kidney yin. One thing you can do to help your patients and loved ones who are at risk is to encourage them to eat quality foods and take herbs that nourish the yin and fluids. [See below.]

But having sufficient fluids is not the only precaution. The routes of elimination must be open or else the pathogens cannot be expelled, and the body will have difficulty cooling down. The chief routes of normal elimination are through the bladder and colon, but also important is venting through the pores of the skin and sweating. For blockage in the lungs due to sticky phlegm or heat, the most important route to have open is the bowels because of the yin-yang relationship between the lungs and large intestine. If the surface is closed, then at least part of the acute illness is still external and one should include a percentage of herbs that release the exterior, such as bupleurum (*chai hu*). If someone has their routes of elimination open and their yin and fluids in sufficient supply, it will be nearly impossible for a cytokine storm to develop. Note that prevention of a cytokine storm is best addressed well before exposure. During an acute infection, your strategies should be focused on the particular presentation at the time of illness, but these factors concerning the cytokine storm should be kept in mind for formulations.

FORMULAS TO SUPPORT ZHENG QI AND PROTECT AGAINST A CYTOKINE STORM

In terms of having a strong immune response at initial exposure, the key is to support your *zheng* qi: make sure that you have sufficient *wei* qi, yang, and *jin*-fluids. Strong *zheng* qi is your first line of defense. If the disease is inflammatory in nature (warm disease/*wen bing*), and if the first line fails to repel the attack, you need to be sure that your body can manage being sick without developing a hyperimmune response. Prevention of a cytokine storm must begin a long time prior to exposure. Having sufficient *jin*-fluids is necessary for the *wei* qi to perform optimally, but to prevent a cytokine storm, you need to have the routes of elimination open and you need sufficient yin.^{xiii}



Zheng Qi Support Formula (*Zheng Qi Fang*)

supplements all the components of *zheng* qi: *wei* qi, yang, and *jin*-fluids. It supports the qi of the lung and spleen, astringes leakage of qi, and frees the chest/ regulates qi in the chest. It can be used by most anyone to prepare for seasonal viruses. It works best if started 4-8 weeks before it is needed and should be taken throughout the infectious season. If an infection manages to get past the initial line of defense, cease **Zheng Qi Support (*Zheng Qi Fang*)** and start taking a formula for an acute infection that matches the pattern presentation.

Lily Preserve Metal Formula (*Bai He Gu Jin Tang*) is best taken if an earlier infection left the individual with deficient yin in the lungs and there is some cough lingering. **Lily Preserve Metal Formula (*Bai He Gu Jin Tang*)** can nourish the lung yin and resolve the remaining phlegm to stop the cough. This is an especially important strategy since many times a person will become severely ill because they contract another virus before fully recovering from a previous one. The actions of **Lily Preserve Metal Formula (*Bai He Gu Jin Tang*)** are strong to support kidney and lung yin while also resolving phlegm and stopping cough.

Jade Source Formula (*Jia Jian Yu Quan Wan*) is one of the best formulas to generate fluids. Its origins lie in the treatment of *xiao ke*/wasting and thirsting syndrome. It supports lung yin, cools the lungs and stomach, and supports the spleen qi. It should be the first formula to consider for generating fluids if the patient is diabetic.

Heavenly Emperor's Formula (*Tian Wang Bu Xin Dan*) is another superior formula for generating fluids. The emphasis of **Heavenly Emperor's Formula** (*Tian Wang Bu Xin Dan*) is much more on the lower burner and less on the lungs. It will be the formula of choice for yin deficiency due to aging (when hormone levels are dropping) or when dryness and yin deficiency are causing insomnia.

Eight Immortals Formula (*Ba Xian Chang Shou Wan*) is best employed when the patient has an underlying chronic kidney yin deficiency that affects the lungs. It treats chronic dry weak cough (from yin deficiency) and asthmatic conditions due to constitutional yin deficiency.

Sheng Mai Formula (*Sheng Mai San*) was developed in the 13th Century to treat qi and yin deficiency that was caused by a severe or long-endured disease, leaving the pulse typically some combination of weak, thin, and rapid. In terms of a cytokine storm, the most dangerous combination of these pulse qualities is when all three present at once. This would indicate a qi and yin deficiency with some smoldering deficiency fire. Note that the yin deficiency in this pattern is not as deep as is found in other yin supplementing formulas discussed above because it has no substances that nourish the yin of the kidneys. This pattern is qi and yin deficiency of the lung with stomach fluid deficiency and possible leakage of qi, generally due to a previous disease that consumed them.

Siler & Platycodon Formula (*Fang Feng Tong Sheng San*) is the only formula in this list that can be used during an acute cytokine storm or when one seems imminent. **Siler & Platycodon Formula** (*Fang Feng Tong Sheng San*) excels at clearing heat by opening up all the routes of elimination. It opens the chest, vents the skin, drains the bladder, promotes urination, and unblocks the bowels. This strategy is very efficient to clear heat, lower fever, and ameliorate a cytokine storm. But it has no action to generate fluids or support the yin. It is important to remember that during an acute febrile condition nourishing strategies need to take a back seat to clearing strategies or you run the risk of a) trapping the pathogen (with yin) or b) strengthening the pathogen (with qi). If the lung yin is insufficient and a cytokine storm is a strong possibility in an acute situation, you can combine **Siler & Platycodon Formula** (*Fang Feng Tong Sheng San*) with **Reed & Seed Formula** (*San Ren Wei Jing Tang*).

ENDNOTES

ⁱ There are several early studies in the COVID-19 pandemic that indicate that cytokine storms play a major role in morbidity with this infection. A Google Scholar search using the terms “cytokine” “storm” and “COVID-19” yields over 25,000 hits! But more recent studies are looking at bradykinin storms as playing a more important role in the pathomechanisms of SARS-CoV-2. [For a synopsis of the bradykinin storm issue with COVID-19 see the Fall 2020 issue of this Newsletter.]

ⁱⁱ Even though modern medicine does not have a working definition of health, in recent years there has been a lot of energy devoted to quantifying fitness. Health and fitness are often confused.

ⁱⁱⁱ Fanning LJ, Connor AM, Wu GE, "Development of the immunoglobulin repertoire". *Clinical Immunology and Immunopathology*. 79 (1): 1–14.

^{iv} <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6924909/>

^v It is precisely this idea of strong *zheng qi* that led some Chinese physicians to shift their focus away from the study of external pathogens toward nourishing and supplementing strategies, such as Zhu Dan-Xi's Yin Nourishing School and Li Dong-Yuan's Earth School.

^{vi} This innate immune process is known as “antigen presentation” and is considered an essential part T-cell response, which is part of the acquired immune system.

^{vii} Hojyo S, Uchida M, Tanaka K, Hirano T, et al, “How COVID-19 produced cytokine storm with high mortality,” *Inflammation and Regeneration*. 2020;40:37.

^{viii} Tisoncik J, Korth MJ, Simmons CP, Farrar J, Martin TR, Katze MG, “Into the eye of the cytokine storm,” *Microbiology and Molecular Biology Reviews*. 2012;76(1)16-32.

^{ix} Capaldo CT, Powel DN, Kalman D, “Layered defense: how mucus and tight junctions seal the intestinal barrier,” *Journal of Molecular Medicine*. 2017;95(9)927-934.

^x Short KR, Kasper J, Van der Ana, S, Kuiken T, et al, “Influenza damages the alveolar barrier by disrupting epithelial cell tight junctions,” *Mechanisms of Lung Disease*. Jan, 2016.

^{xi} Wang S, Le TQ, Kurihara N, Chida JJ, Cisse Y, Yano M, Kido H, “Influenza virus—cytokine protease cycle in the pathogenesis of vascular hyperpermeability in severe influenza,” *The Journal of Infectious Diseases*. 2010(202);7:991-1001.

^{xii} One of many supporting studies is Teoh KT, Siu YL, Chan WL, Nal B, et al, “The SARS coronavirus E Protein interacts with PALS1 and alters tight junction formation and epithelial morphogenesis,” *Molecular Biology of the Cell*. 2010;21(22):3838–3852.

^{xiii} With COVID-19 it is also important to invigorate blood, since there is a very high incidence of clot formation with this disease.



CHINESE MEDICINE ESSENTIAL OILS:

A MATERIA MEDICA & PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THEIR USE

By Evelyn Robert, LAc

Incorporating aromatherapy into the practice of acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine and personal healthcare with essential oils made from Traditional Chinese Medicinal herbs.

Coming in the Spring of 2021!

This book is divided into two sections. The first section introduces the theory and science of essential oils from the perspective of classical Chinese medicine including how to choose, dilute, blend, and apply essential oils in your clinic.

The second part functions as the first *materia medica* and formulary to be published on essential oils extracted from traditional Chinese herbs with over seventy entries.

Here is an excerpt from the *materia medica* illustrating the unique qualities of the essential oils of our herbs:

ZHI ZI 梔子 GARDENIA FRUIT

(*Gardeniae Fructus*, *Gardenia jasminoides*)



梔子

The essential oil extracted from the red Gardenia fruit with its pink color and its aroma's bitter edge aligns with the fire element. Excessive heat or "fire" in the body can arise from internal or external factors. Internally, strong emotions like anger or anxiety can cause a flaring up of liver or heart fire which further disturbs the mind and results in physical symptoms as well. On the other hand, fire caused by external factors

such as poor diet and excessive alcohol intake or environmental toxins will not only cause physical symptoms but will disturb the mind and stir up strong emotions. Gardenia essential oil clears the fire and calms the emotions. Gardenia fruit (*zhi zi*) works throughout the Triple Burner, the upper, middle, and lower areas of the body. The Triple Burner mechanism is the means by which *yuan*/source qi is distributed to the internal organs and by which the movement of fire and water are regulated. When fire and water are unregulated, the normal functions of

metabolism are disrupted and conditions of damp-heat can arise causing illness. If damp-heat conditions are not resolved, they can turn into fire toxins, much more serious illness. Gardenia fruit (*zhi zi*) clears damp heat and cleans toxins from all three burners as well as fire toxins manifesting as skin conditions.

Aroma: Rich and herbaceous with a piercing bitter edge.

Note: Middle/Top.

Part of Plant: Fruit - CO2 extraction.

Color: Red orange.

Growing Region: Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Henan, Hunan, Anhui, Sichuan Provinces. Native to Southern China, a large evergreen shrub with red buds and fragrant white flowers.

Major Chemical Components: Monoterpenoids: gardenamide. Phenols, Aldehydes, 1 Esters, Alcohols, Aliphatic acids. Fatty acids: linoleic acid n-hexadecanoic acid.

CM Category: Clearing Heat and Purging Fire.

Nature and Taste: Bitter and cold.

Affinities: Triple Burner, Heart, Lung, Liver and Stomach meridians. Average Dilution: 4-6%

Pharmacological Actions: Analgesic, antihypertensive, antihyperlipidemic, antipyretic, antibiotic, hepatoprotective, antidepressant, sedative, antioxidant.

Actions and Indications: Calms irritability, restlessness, sleep disorders, and short temper by sedating fire. Clears fire toxin and damp heat from all three burners. Cools heat in the blood to stop bleeding. Quells Stomach fire, decreases secretion of gastric acid and increases pH in the stomach for stomach pain, burning, hyperacidity. Lowers blood pressure and cholesterol. Clears congestion and inflammation in Liver and Gall Bladder, and resolves jaundice. Treats injuries with pain, inflammation, redness, swelling, bruising. Breaks up belly fat. Benefits the brain and nervous system.

CM Concepts, Channel Systems, and Patterns:

Clear damp-heat as part of divergent meridian treatment strategy.

Open and clear the *Dai Mai* (Belt Channel).

Clear Liver and Gall Bladder damp-heat.

Benefit the Health Palace of the Nine Palaces.

Application and Blends:

- To cool and calm irritability, restlessness and short temper with feelings of heat in the upper body due to heart and liver fire, create an aromatic blend of *zhi zi* with *zhi zi hua* (gardenia flower), or another aromatic floral essential oil such as *xun yi cao* (lavender) or *mei gui hua* (rose). Add *bo he* (peppermint) as a top note to release the heat outward. Inhale directly or diffuse.

May also apply to acupoints of the pericardium and Liver channels that clear heat.

- To lower blood pressure combine *zhi zi* with *jiang xiang* (dalbergia). Inhale directly or diffuse and apply to the bottom of the feet, on and around Ki-1. Additionally, if elevated blood pressure causes symptoms such as headache with heat and bloodshot eyes, combine with *ju hua* (chrysanthemum) and *bo he* (peppermint), inhale the aroma and dilute 6% to apply on the painful areas of the head.
- For excessive stomach acidity due to stomach fire, blend with *zhi ke* (citrus aurantium) essential oil as a 4% dilution with black cumin seed oil as the carrier. Apply a few drops gently spread over the upper abdominal and stomach area.
- To break up belly fat and cellulite, combine *zhi zi* with *hu lu ba* (fennugreek) and *wu wei zi* essential oils diluted to 2% in cod liver or castor oil and vigorously apply over the waistline area, then compress with a hot washcloth.



ZHI ZI HUA 梔子花 **GARDENIA FLOWER**
(Gardeniae Flos, Gardenia jasminoides)

Both *zhi zi*, the gardenia bud, and *zhi zi hua*, the flower, travel throughout the Triple Burner. As essential oils they reach all three levels of *jing*/essence, *qi*, and *shen*/spirit. While the flower and bud share many attributes, by way of comparison, *zhi zi*, the red fruit of gardenia, works more on the material aspects of the *qi*, blood and fluids, clearing heat, draining damp, cleaning toxin, and quieting emotions that arise due to flaring fire, damp encumbrance, and blood stagnation. The beautiful, fragrant gardenia flower works more on the immaterial level, cleansing and clearing away what has gotten in the way of emotional and spiritual transformation. Its aroma invites white light and is deeply calming and freeing. The pure white color of the blossom reflects its affinity with the metal element and specifically with the Lungs which deal with feelings of loss and the ability to let go. *Zhi zi hua* essential oil cools entrapped lung heat thereby releasing overwhelm-

ing grief and sorrow trapped deep inside out to the surface. Gardenia blooms in the spring, season of the wood element, and so its fragrance is imbued with the blossoming of growth, renewal, and transcendence.

Aroma: Heady, sweet floral, fruity and gently spicy.

Note: Middle/Base.

Part of Plant: Flower - CO2 extraction.

Color: Golden amber.

Growing Region: Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Henan, Hunan, Anhui, Sichuan Provinces. Native to Southern China, a large evergreen shrub with red buds and fragrant white flowers.

CM Category: Clearing Heat, Calming the Spirit.

Nature and Taste: Sweet, spicy, cool.

Affinities: Triple Burner, Heart, Lung, Liver.

Average Dilution: 6-10%.

Major Chemical Components: Sesquiterpens: alpha-farnesene, trans beta ocimene, hexenyl tiglate. Monoterpene alcohol: linalool.

Pharmacological Actions: sedative, antipyretic, antihypertensive, antimicrobial, antifungal, antioxidant. Actions and Indications: Calms the spirit. Cools liver and heart fire. Lowers blood pressure. Calms irritability, anxiety, and insomnia. Clears lung heat and frees the chest and diaphragm.

Application and Blends:

- To calm the spirit, the best use of *zhi zi hua* is to inhale the aroma, neat, and wear as a perfume on the inner wrist.
- To subdue shock or fright combine with *ju hua* (chrysanthemum) and *zhi ke* (fructus aurantium) neat for direct inhalation.
- Combine the fruit and flower of gardenia together as an aromatic blend to treat both physical and emotional issues. For example, to work on resolving emotional and spiritual angst arising from the challenge of a serious illness. For topical application dilute 4-6% in an appropriate carrier oil and gently spread over the physically affected area with intention. Deeply inhale the aroma.
- To clear lung heat, free the chest and diaphragm, or to treat depression, create an aromatic blend of *zhi zi hua*, sandalwood, *xiang fu* (cyperus), and *qing pi* (green tangerine peel). Inhale the aroma and dilute 4% in almond oil to spread a few drops over the chest and diaphragm.
- Anoint *zhi zi hua* on *Bai Hui* (GV20) and *Yin Tang* (third eye) to invite white light during meditation. Apply neat. Diffuse to bring light into the meditation space.

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Continuing Education



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THE ART OF LOSING WEIGHT: A PERSPECTIVE FROM CHINESE MEDICINE'S DIETARY BRANCH

By Andrew Serman

Something is going wrong for millions of people. Despite personal discomfort, social shaming, doctors' advice, enormous personal effort, and the 70 billion dollar diet industry, modern people are getting heavier and genuine weight loss too often remains elusive. Obesity rates have jumped by 10% in the last 15 years alone; in that same time extreme obesity has doubled. Something is going on, and the community of Chinese medicine practitioners should be ready to help with a variety of treatments, including well-thought dietary counsel expressed in easy-to-understand language.

The Importance of Individual Assessment/Diagnosis

It's tempting to generalize about weight loss, metabolism, diet, and so forth, but as always, a genuine differential diagnosis is needed. The central tenet of Chinese medicine is the radical individuality of each person. We may think a patient's presentation is unremarkable, only to be amazed again and again at what we actually find through an open-minded, creatively alert diagnosis process. With something as complex as weight management, even if cases seem similar, the effective entry key for different patients can be remarkably different. We honor the humanity of our patients by expecting to be surprised.

The Calorie Model Is Simplistic and Misleading

For years we have been conditioned into accepting an oversimplified calorie model along with its corollary: "People who are overweight just eat too much, it's their own fault." Not only is this negative, it is inaccurate and misleading. The calorie model presumes two bedrock errors: first, that different food types with equal calories are handled similarly by the body; second, that all calories eaten are absorbed. These two ideas are easily understood to be mistaken, and yet, many still defend the basic caloric model that sees the body as a machine somewhat akin to an automobile that takes in a quantifiable amount of fuel and must produce an equal amount of energy.

Each food has a somewhat different energetic effect (or response) after we eat it. Further, even different parts of the same food show differences, as do same foods grown in different seasons and under differing farm conditions. Cooking methods dramatically compound energetic differences, even after accounting for the oils used. And while eating less is a part of establishing a new weight "set point," our food choices are more important for making any change possible.

Excess weight is not a solo situation; it is a risk factor for many serious illnesses. As weight increases, so does immune weakness, hormonal imbalance, metabolic shifts (or metabolic illness), and cardiovascular concerns. This all occurs in the context of nuanced private emotional settings that hold the human side of each individual's path. In the midst of this complexity, what people want is often overly simple: "I just want to lose some weight, well, a lot, actually, but please don't ask me to change my lifestyle very much...."

Western culture is characterized by the mindset of specialization

while largely ignoring the complex interconnectedness of health matters. So often people dieting to lose weight damage other parts of their health (sometimes severely). Some may want only to be thinner through one diet plan or another, but on-again, off-again dieting damages metabolism. Sensing the loss of food, the body switches into famine mode, slowing metabolism, adjusting to preserve existing fat stores in response to deprivation. This is a recipe for failure, frustration, and negative self-judgment. We are interested in sustainable, sensible health, with great tasting foods that bring new messages to the body to signal real change.

What follows are general dietary suggestions to be applied skillfully, either in a patient-clinician context or by individuals seeking change on their own.

Establish Meal Rhythm

Two aspects of health that respond well to regular timing are digestion and sleep. To begin healing digestion, avoid erratic eating times. Skipping meals leads to overeating later. Allowing blood sugar levels to drop too far is taxing for the brain (which relies entirely on glucose in the blood for energy). Low blood sugar stimulates brain-generated urgent hunger, a craving for anything that is quick and can raise blood sugar. Since these cravings are so challenging to resist, it is better to avoid these situations. Bring more regularity to eating times, even if eating very small meals—for example, eat something even if you are not hungry in the morning.

Another very important point on meal timing is to stop eating late at night or just before sleep. One client who successfully lost substantial weight and stabilized into a new shape, did so by following only two dietary rules: eat no gluten (pasta, bread, etc.) and never, ever eat after 8pm. Meal timing matters.

Eat Satisfying Meals

There are countless fad diets that prey on people's frustrations and desire for quick fixes. Some include interesting ideas but suffer from tunnel-vision. One example is the no-carb trend, which fails to sufficiently differentiate refined sugar, glutinous grains, and non-glutinous grains (the carbs from gluten-free, whole grains are the safest for most people).

Sustainable diets are well-rounded and satisfying. Eat good quality fats, protein, and carbs to avoid craving bad fats and carbs. The difference is significant. Real food is satisfying; low calorie, low fat foods are not.

To be simple, eat satisfying meals not only to avoid cravings and binges, but to nourish and energize all the various aspects of digestion, organ functions, and internal health resources. If the organs of digestion are themselves nourished, they can fully transform food and clear the waste. These are key principles in weight maintenance.

Leave Room In Your Stomach, Then Pause

The stomach stretches; it doesn't fill like a glass jar that remains one size whether full or empty. But, it's a very useful thinking tool to say, "Fill the stomach only two-thirds full, leave the upper third

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empty.” Much more than a point of discipline, there are two crucial health points here:

Leaving room instead of eating until full allows the descension of breath, essential for supporting the digestive flame that is necessary for properly digesting food. When the digestive flame is low, food digests too slowly, can stagnate and ferment, with serious consequences including weight gain and inflammation.

We may not feel full “leaving 1/3 room empty,” but satiation is complex, involving nearly a dozen hormones that normally work in exquisite synchrony to signal that we’ve had enough to eat. These hormones (including insulin, cortisol, leptin, estrogen, ghrelin, glucagon-like peptide 1, neuropeptide Y, etc.) are sensitive to what we’ve eaten and how it is digesting. If response of these factors is slow, we easily overeat, before receiving the hormonal response that we’ve had enough.

Introduce the “Pause”

Leaving the stomach only 2/3 full isn’t meant to be punishment, or even conventional dieting. The idea is to digest better and leave enough time for your blood to respond to what you’ve eaten. Then, after about 30 minutes, if you really are hungry and the food is appropriate for your specific health, have some more. Technically, it’s a question of leaving time for the hormonal responses to kick in, but experientially it can be called “waiting for the food to land.”

Introducing a pause before going for more food (and certainly before any dessert) is a simple and powerful tool to avoid overeating. This is a method to break the habit of overeating using skill, not just self-control (with the associated feelings of will power failure). It’s an easy challenge that can give you a very welcome “win,” since, after all, if you truly remain hungry after pausing, you can then eat more (set a timer at first). During the pause we break the pattern of habitual overeating. We have time to notice the food “land” as our satiety hormones kick in. For a number of clients in my practice focusing on weight loss, the pause has been the main method used to successfully reach a new set point and feel renewed.

Eat Clear Meals

One of the underlying mechanisms behind weight gain is food stagnation. Foods stagnate when we eat what we can’t digest well; when we eat foods that don’t combine well (are difficult to digest together), or when we simply eat too much. Foods also stagnate if we eat on top of food that has not yet digested fully. We want to be hungry before eating, and we want to eat meals that we, individually, can digest well and in a timely manner. This is the definition of a clear meal. The practice varies dramatically between individuals.

The principles of clear meals are summarized here (see *Welcoming Food: Diet as Medicine for Home Cooks and Other Healers* for a fuller discussion):

A clear meal is nourishing and digests fully within 2-6 hours.

If food stagnation is present, begin meals with a true appetizer: carrots, olives, radishes, soups, fermented foods, or a genuinely small taste of wine (1-2 ounces).

Avoid cold foods, eat nearly everything cooked, because the stomach only works well when it is warm and moist, cooked foods aid digestion.

If needed, resolve chronic constipation with whole grains, nuts and

seeds, root vegetables, certain fruits (apples, pears, figs, prunes), beans, plenty of green vegetables, and adopt a habit of drinking warm water first thing in the morning. Food stagnation occurs if chronic constipation is present, as peristalsis slows down and prevents forward passage.

For those who digest complex meals poorly, separating proteins from carbs strongly strengthens digestion. Carbs and proteins digest with very different secretions; separating them allows digestion to focus on a simpler task. Green vegetables digest well with proteins or carbs. Have dairy alone, if at all. (Milk’s natural use is for calves to double their size in six months.)

Avoid sugar. Sugar impairs digestion of real food by providing easy blood sugar without the need to digest complex carbohydrates, proteins, or lipids.

Kitchen herbs and spices have a very important role to play. Many people see spices as just a way to make food taste good, but what’s important is the way spices can strongly aid digestion of the foods with which they are traditionally paired.

Consciously Include More Fiber

Modern diets—including both fast food and high cuisine—are dramatically low in fiber. Fiber feels satisfying; it is more filling than similar amounts of refined foods. It also feeds a healthy microbiome in the gut, aids peristalsis, and clears constipation. Problems with the gut microbiome often precede (or at least accompany) weight gain and obesity. Poor microbial colonization interferes with secretion of some hormones involved with satiety, leading to cravings. Restoring healthy gut microbes is one of the most powerful things we can do to regulate metabolism and hunger levels.

Foods that contribute good types of dietary fiber include oats, brown rice, millet, carrots, sweet potato, green vegetables, nuts, seeds, and beans. Foods that don’t provide fiber include bread, pasta, white rice, processed foods, meats, fish, poultry, eggs, and dairy.

Understand the Concept of Dampness

Being overweight can often mean that dampness is accumulating rather than ordinary weight, leading not just to heaviness but to a combination of lethargy, cravings, a sense of being emotionally overwhelmed, and even difficulties concentrating. Dampness is a term in Chinese medicine that refers to a wide variety of fluid stagnation issues ranging from water-weight and edema, to swellings anywhere in the body (internal or external). Dampness results from weakness in digestion and contributes to problems of cognition and awareness including blurry vision, sinus problems, hearing loss, and what is commonly described as brain fog.

Clearing dampness is central to the process of establishing a healthy weight set-point. [See Golden Flower Newsletter 2018 for a fuller discussion in my article, Diet and Dampness.] There are four points important to understand:

Dampness can arise from excesses or from deficiencies. As the body senses a deficiency of healthy yin resources (blood, hormones, healthy fluids), we tend to hoard any version of yin available, often craving fried foods, cheese, and sugar. Weight gain becomes a surrogate for healthy yin reserves. The strategy forward is to provide plenty of good oils such as olive oil, butter, oily fish, eggs, nuts, etc., increase fluids, soups, and stews, then begin clearing the excess that arose from old eating patterns.

Dampness also arises in response to internal heat as the body attempts to protect from inflammation through accruing damp. Eat soups and wet-cooked dishes that are made to digest easily, along with significantly increasing green vegetables for their ability to clear inflammation.

Dampness arises when our kidney yang qi is low; in other words, when we are run down and our deep “batteries” aren’t strong enough to spark good digestion. We fall behind, which leaves us lower in energy than we were before, and we intuitively try to repair by eating more. But, lacking energy to digest our food well (see clear meals above), we fall ever more behind. This is an amplifying loop of cravings and weight gain. The way forward is to implement the recommendations above while finding ways to rest more, when possible.

Dampness can arise as a kind of psychological protection (for some the central mechanism in weight gain). It is important to nourish healthy yin before asking anyone to shed what is unconsciously built as a survival-level layer of protection.

In general, the path to clearing dampness starts with avoiding foods that very easily add to dampness (sugar, dairy, gluten, fried foods, alcohol, overeating). Then, include foods that actively help the body clear dampness (steamed leafy green vegetables, string beans and snow peas, spices such as oregano, cumin, coriander, dill, etc.) Be sure to include mushrooms, sprouts, naturally fermented foods, and grains such as wild rice, buckwheat, barley, millet, quinoa, amaranth, and job’s tears.

Have Healthy Snacks

Many people love to snack. Snacking isn’t good or bad in itself. However, many people become nervous when their hands are far from food. The need to snack should be explored for issues of blood sugar problems that need to be addressed, or issues of habit that need to be awakened. When we do snack, our snacks should contribute to our overall dietary strategies.

Good snacks should include fiber and be low in sugar. For example, snacking on olives, carrots, artichoke hearts and perhaps some cured meats. Almonds and dried figs can be an excellent snack that clears food stagnation and aids peristalsis. Low-sugar granola is also a clearing snack, and for a small meal, a bowl of muesli with yogurt is satisfying and healthy for most people (try a nut-milk in place of yogurt if you are dairy-free). Adding berries will help build blood so that emotional neediness becomes less urgent.

Meals and snacks both should be avoided unless actually hungry.

Avoid Processed Carbohydrates and Hidden Sugar

Much has been written about the dangers of carbs, but it’s not rice, millet, barley, or antique wheat such as spelt that are causing modern health problems, it is the processed grains, poorly grown and made unrecognizable in processed food, along with huge amounts of hidden sugar, food industry chemicals, and preservatives. To lose weight, avoid packaged foods. The decision to eat carbs or avoid them until metabolically healthier should be made on an individual case basis. When you do eat carbs, the best way is when you can see the individual grains, not processed or hidden. For most people, non-glutinous, unprocessed grains actively tune digestion and make it stronger, enabling the cultivation of one’s natural weight balance to develop.

Avoid Irritants to Digestion

Many very popular foods and drinks act as irritants to digestion. When irritated, two things happen: our stomachs complain in a way that feels like hunger, and our bodies produce dampness to soothe the irritation. Very common foods that irritate digestion include hot spices such as chili peppers of all types, garlic, onions, coffee, alcohol, modern wheat, and for many, tomatoes.

Identify and Avoid Foods You Don’t Tolerate Well

It’s very important to identify foods that you may be sensitive to, allergic to, or to which you have an intolerance. Avoiding foods that set off negative reactions in our digestion is crucial for calming inflammation and clearing the dampness that responds. In time, many (not always all) of these food sensitivities can fade, at which point they may be reintroduced, one at a time, with moderation.

The Shortest Note Ever on Foods and Metabolic Weakness

Obesity and metabolic illness are not identical but are closely linked. We have been taught that oils make us fat and salt gives us heart disease, but oils don’t stimulate insulin and damage the hormonal system, nor is normal use of salt dangerous. Hormonal disturbance and systemic inflammation are caused primarily by excess sugar. Sugar disrupts digestion and disorganized digestion disrupts metabolism. Do the work to absorb these truths, supported equally by Western and Chinese medicine.

Avoid Fake Foods, Including Low-Fat Processed Foods and Artificial Sweeteners

Artificial sweeteners (including non-caloric plant sweeteners such as stevia) signal that sweetness is coming and confuse digestion when it doesn’t arrive. Taste is the central signal for digestion in the body. Many studies show weight gain and raised risk of diabetes resulting from artificial sugars, and modern endocrinologists have begun recommending avoiding fake sugars. To include the sweet taste, have sweet potatoes, steamed grains, and butternut squash. After about two weeks, your sense of sweet will recalibrate to real foods. Many clients report being shocked when tasting an old favorite sweet they used to have daily; their tastes have recalibrated.

Similarly, low-fat dairy products set up an expectation of fats that do not arrive. The body, frustrated, will speak to you with hunger sensations, a vague empty feeling, and cravings. Further, the fat removed to make a product “low fat” is replaced with highly processed carbohydrates and thickeners. Have real foods with their natural fats; the body knows how to digest these well. Oils and fats do not contribute to metabolic disease. (The cause is primarily sugar and processed foods.) At the same time, choose quality oils; avoid damaged, overheated, cheap oils used for deep-frying that stress gallbladder and liver function.

The Heart of the Matter

Weight gain and associated health ills sit at the crossroads of industrial food production and a culture filled with profound personal stressors. Working with individuals, we must consider emotions, habits, histories, and their complete social and personal context. Profit-driven food providers cannot be relied on to have our health in mind, and unfortunately, nor can the for-profit medical complex (which sees the epidemic rise in metabolic disease as a “growth platform,” at least on the business level). No one is poised to support our health better than ourselves.

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The way forward is to make real changes in our own food selection and cooking, based on simple principles of how our bodies truly digest our meals from both energetic and material points of view. Making these changes opens the door to seeing life itself in a new way. May we never go back.

Food Choices and Recipes

While the inner energetics of wellness and healing can be extremely complex, most people can benefit greatly from the simple approach outlined above: eat real foods that the body knows how to digest; have personal clear meals; eat until only 2/3 full and leave a pause before eating more; have positive snacks; avoid irritants and fake foods; wake to the problems of sugar and refined carbohydrates so that eating well is not an experience of white-knuckle discipline but an act of motivation based on experience and understanding.

But with all this in mind, what is there to eat?

Plenty of great food that is moderately priced, easy to cook, and very satisfying. Below are general suggestions for grains, vegetables, animal foods, and a few more things. Make balanced meals that suit your (new) taste and digestion by mixing and matching a grain with a protein and some greens. Separate proteins and carbs, if appropriate, at least for one very clear meal per day.

Grains	Protein	Vegetables	Other
Buckwheat (kasha)	Fish, including salmon and white flesh fish	Kale, cabbage, bok choy, collards, chard, Napa cabbage, Brussels sprouts	Mushrooms
Wild Rice	Lentils	Broccoli, broccoli rabe, Chinese broccoli	Olives, artichokes
Brown Rice	Black or adzuki beans, etc.	Zucchini, summer squash, okra	Seaweeds
Long-grain White Rice	Chicken	Asparagus, radicchio, endive, dandelion greens, chicory greens	Chia seeds
Oats	Beef, Pork, Lamb	String beans, snow peas, sugar snap peas	Hemp nut seeds
Black or Red Rice	Eggs	Carrots, daikon, parsnips, turnips, rutabaga, radishes	Almonds, walnuts, pine nuts, chestnuts
Barley (best in soups)	Tofu	Sweet potatoes, butternut squash, acorn squash, other winter gourds.	Pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds
Rye (as in crackers)	Clams, mussels, scallops, oysters	Sprouts, pea shoots	Muesli/granola (home-made is easy and superior)
Job's Tears (aka Chinese barley, helps drain dampness)	Duck	Warming spices (not hot spices)	Nut or seed milk

Sample Recipe:

Buckwheat, Wild Rice, Red Lentils, and Kale

Ingredients

wild rice | 1/2 cup
 buckwheat | 1 cup
 red lentils | 1 cup
 kale | 2 bunches
 scallions | 3, slivered
 extra virgin olive oil | enough to coat lightly
 sea salt | chef's pinch
 spices | choose several (but not all) from the following: fennel seed, cumin, cardamom, oregano, thyme, nigella seed, grain of paradise, fresh ginger (slivered), ground turmeric

Directions

Wild rice strongly aids clearing, being particularly helpful for digestive stagnation. Rinse the wild rice then soak it in 1.5 cups boiled water overnight in a bowl wrapped in towels to stay warm longer (or use a large thermos). This method is called blooming the wild rice. After 6-8 hours it is ready to eat. Alternately, steam for 45 minutes. Wild rice is usually combined with other grains, here, with buckwheat.

Buckwheat is a non-glutinous grain that is not related to wheat. Purchase whole kernel buckwheat that has been toasted. Buckwheat does not need to be rinsed prior to cooking. Begin by dry-roasting in a dry pan over medium-high heat for a few minutes (to add warming yang qi that will aid digestion and promote internal movement). Steam the toasted buckwheat like you would rice: 1.5 cups water to 1 cup grain. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cover tightly; do not stir or disturb. Steam for 15-18 minutes; turn off heat. Allow to rest 5-10 minutes, covered, before proceeding.

Lentils are high in protein and fiber. Red lentils are a special type of brown lentil with the outside removed to reveal the red-orange interior, and therefore they provide less fiber. For the same reason, they cook very quickly. Sort the lentils on a white plate background, remove any stray matter. Rinse quickly, then add to a pot. Add just enough olive oil to coat each lentil lightly, then boil with 1.5 cups water. The cook can decide whether to catch the red lentils just as they are soft but not mushy, or allow them to cook fully soft. Both ways are good; either way, after cooking, add a pinch of good quality salt and another splash of olive oil.

Kale is a trendy green vegetable that deserves much of the attention it receives. Kale aids digestion through its descending directional energy, the way it helps move fluids and eases any digestion pain, and of course for the nutrients it offers. Rinse the kale, strip leaves from stems (use stems in stock, but not this dish), cut or tear the leaves into bite sizes, then steam in a very shallow amount of water, covered, until lightly cooked, about 5-8 minutes. Drain residual water (into your stock pot or into the grains that are now ready). Coat the kale with olive oil and a pinch of sea salt, stir to mix evenly.

In a large pan, add a splash of olive oil, the slivered scallions, and your selected spices. After allowing the spices to warm and season the oil (about 1 minute over medium-high heat), add the cooked wild rice and the cooked buckwheat. Stir to combine. Taste for salt; adjust if needed.

Serve with generous scoops of red lentils and kale.

This vegan meal contains healthy carbs, protein, and greens, along with spices and scallion to ensure movement and aid digestion. If desired, reduce portion size somewhat and add a piece of steamed salmon, grilled chicken, or lightly seared slices of beef.

Andrew Sterman is the author of the two-volume: *Welcoming Food, Diet as Medicine for the Home Cook and Other Healers*. Both books are available for sale at www.gfcherbs.com. Visit Andrew at andrewsterman.com/food