

COVID-19: TCHM Research & Practitioner Strategies

The current COVID-19 outbreak is caused by a virus from the same family of viruses that caused SARS in 2002-2003. (Original corona virus -(SARS-CoV)²; Current COVID-19 - (SARS-CoV-2)¹). The World Health Organization (WHO) has collected a large number of reputable studies² on the effectiveness of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) as an integral part of the treatment and prevention of corona virus infections. This resulted in a number of recommendations published in 2004, including the following:

- “Fully utilize TCM resources by bringing TCM into the clinical treatment system for public health emergencies, establish research networks, prepare plans for responding promptly to SARS outbreaks and for conducting research, and strengthen staff training.
- The experiences of treating SARS with integrated TCM and Western medicine described in the 13 clinical reports can serve as a reference for other countries in developing strategies for preventing and treating acute epidemics.”

Sixteen years have passed since these recommendations were initially put forth, yet Western culture has not fully embraced WHO recommendations, nor have they fully adopted Traditional Medicine. One can speculate if it is this difference in prevention and treatment strategies which resulted in Italy's death rate more than double that of China as of 02/23/2020. Real time data on COVID-19 is available on <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

Report from China: TCM had been prescribed to 60,107 infected patients, or 85.2 percent, of the total infections nationwide, according to announcement published on 02/20/2020 at the China Daily website <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202002/20/WS5e4e7fafa31012821727915a.html>. "A large number of clinical practices have confirmed the effect of the combined treatment of TCM and Western medicine on new coronavirus pneumonia patients," said Yu Yanhong, Party chief and deputy head of the administration, also a member of the central government work group guiding epidemic control work in Central China's Hubei province.

Throughout its long history, China has faced many infectious disease epidemics. “There must be around 250 texts written on epidemics from ancient China.”³ This vast experience in managing epidemics led to strategies on how to manage infectious diseases at each stage of development and is outlined in *Shang Han Lun* (Discussion of Cold Damage) and *Wen Bing Xue* (Warm Disease Theory).

In the United States healthcare model, the role of TCM practitioners will be limited primarily to prevention, treatment of early stage disease and the recovery after COVID-19 infection in **ambulatory** patients. Therefore, we can focus on prevention strategies that are in high demand right now.

According to a study published by Luo, et al.¹ the approach to “Tonify Wei Qi” or Strengthen Immunity for the prevention of SARS-CoV has been effective. Yu Ping Feng San formula (consistent of Huang Qi (*Astragalus membranaceus*), Bai Zhu (*Rhizoma Atractylodis macrocephalaeand*), and Fang Feng (*Radix saposchnikoviae*)), which has traditional indications to treat those patients with a higher propensity of coming down with the common cold, and can be used with or without modifications. This formula is also affordable and an available resource to prevent infection.

Avoid prescribing Yu Ping Feng San to patients on immunosuppressants without careful patient monitoring by a western medical doctor. Huang Qi (*Astragalus*) has dose dependent Immunostimulatory effects that may counteract immunosuppressant medications.

Another well-known application of Yu Ping Feng San is for the treatment of Allergic Rhinitis. This can become an important and beneficial feature to reduce panic when spring blooms are causing symptom aggravation of environmental allergies that maybe mistaken as the start of COVID-19.

It is imperative to **instruct patients to stop Yu Ping Feng San formula immediately if feeling ill**. Remember, Huang Qi (*Astragalus*) arrests sweating which contradicts “promote sweating/release the exterior” treatment strategies at initial stages of “Wind” or Upper Respiratory Tract Infection diseases.

It is important to differentiate the **TCM Pattern** currently being presented by the patient and formulate your prevention/treatment strategies and dietary advices appropriately. According to the data from China¹⁷ most hospitalized cases present with “Dampness” characteristics. A great resource of experiences from China can be found on the elotus website <https://www.elotus.org/>. Let us draw on our ancestor’s heritage and the current experience of our colleagues from China in our quest to help patients while also not forgetting to stay within your legal scope of practice!

If any patient meets the corona testing criteria, consider this a **RED FLAG** and refer these patients to their medical doctor for COVID-19 testing immediately. To find CDC guidelines for healthcare practitioners go to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/index.html>

At this time of wide spread panic and world-wide shutdowns, it is our duty as TCM practitioners in the United States to be focused on preventative measures which could mitigate COVID-19 infection, and/or treatment of flulike symptoms at “Tay Yang level”. The moment infection enters deeper levels and fever rises or cough descends into the lungs patient must be referred to their Medical Doctor for additional checkup immediately.

This level of care can be done via telemedicine appointments. The optimal way to deliver herbs to our patients during the current social distancing mandate is to direct ship formulas to the patient from a third-party dispensary. Crane herb pharmacy <https://www.craneherb.com/home.aspx> will ship directly to a patient both custom compounded formulas and patents. Acu-market <https://www.acu-market.com/> will ship only patent formulas to a patient. Some other vendors will do the same. Crane Herb Pharmacy and Acumarket consider essential businesses and will remain open during COVID-19 epidemics.

If you prefer to sell herbal formulas directly from your office, refer to your state practice law as many states have suspended non-essential businesses operations. Follow CDC recommendation on social distancing: collect credit card payment, confirm the time the patient will arrive via phone or other secure communication and put the ready to pick up herbal prescription outside your door.

At this difficult time, beside offering herbs to our patients we also must calm the anxiety patients are experiencing. There is some very interesting statistics about pandemics through history at the Visual Capitalist website (www.visualcapitalist.com/history-of-pandemics-deadliest/). The good news is that compared to the Bubonic Plaque of 1347-1351 this pandemic is mild, so far. We are fortunate, our government very early has taken every possible measure to save as many life’s as possible. Our duty is to follow CDC and government guidelines to prevent spread of disease, even if shutdown is devastating for our financial wellbeing..

You can find information on how to conduct telemedicine appointment in a manner compliant with professional standards, Federal & State legal requirements and HIPAA regulations at (www.asiantherapies.org/telemedicine)

Studies below are to illustrate evidence of Traditional Chinese Herbal Medicine effectiveness. Please share it with our western medicine colleagues. We can help!

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