Experts’ Experience

Clinical Application of the TCM Classic Formulae for Treating Chronic Bronchitis

XIONG Xing-jiang 熊兴江, CHU Fong-yong 褚福永, LI Hai-xia 李海霞, and HE Qing-yong 何庆勇

The principle of formulae corresponding to syndromes is an unique model described in the classics of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) for treatment of diseases. Making the symptoms and signs as the therapeutic targets, in which the intuitive judgments and jumping characteristics are manifested.1-3

Indications of Liu Wei Xiao Chaihu Decoction

Liu Wei Xiao Chaihu Decoction (六味小柴胡汤 Modified Minor Decoction of Bupleurum) is a formula described noted in Shang Han Lun (伤寒论 Treatise on Febrile Diseases). This formula has the effects of reconciling Shaoyang (少阳) and warming the lung and relieving fluid retention. In the formula, Chai Hu (Radix Bupleuri) is used for reconciling Shaoyang, with Huang Qin (Radix Scutellariae) added for clearing away heat of Shaoyang; Ban Xia (Rhizoma Pinelliae) can give the effects of regulating the stomach and alleviating vomiting, with Gan Cao (Radix Glycyrrhizae) added for strengthening the middle-jiao and replenishing qi; Gan Jiang (Rizoma Zingiberis) can warm the lung and dissipating excessive fluid to relieve cough; and Wu Wei Zi (Fructus Schisandraceae) can astringe lung to relieving cough. The authors have successfully treated exogenous fever, acute and chronic bronchitis with Liu Wei Xiao Chaihu Decoction.

There are three outcomes of pathogenic factors in Shaoyang meridians. The first one is simple Shaoyang syndrome and we must reconcile Shaoyang. The second one is disease with Shaoyang and Yangming meridians involved as a result of Shaoyang transferring to Yangming or Yangming transferring to Shaoyang, which maybe related to yang hyperactivity constitution and thermalization tendency of Shaoyang syndrome. It can be seen in Shaoyang syndrome accompanied with thirst and desire for cold drinks, high fever, reddish complexion and no aversion to cold, which are indications of Shi Gao (Gypsum Fibrosum); or cough with yellow phlegm, which is indication of Jie Geng (Radix Platycodi) and Yi Yi Ren (Semen Coicis) in exogenous diseases. The third one is disease with Shaoyang and Taiyin meridians involved, which may be related to hypofunction of spleen and stomach and cold conversion tendency of Shaoyang syndrome, which can be treated with Liu Wei Xiao Chaihu Decoction. As we know, the typical indications of minor bupleurum decoction are bitter taste in the mouth, pharynx dryness, daze, cold and heat exchanges, fullness and discomfort in the chest and hypochondrium, depression, poor appetite, headache, abdominal pain, and wiry pulse. According to the principle of formulae corresponding to syndromes,4 the indications of Liu Wei Xiao Chaihu Decoction include the indications of bupleurum decoction and the indications of Gan Jiang (Rizoma Zingiberis) and Wu Wei Zi (Fructus Schisandrae), with such symptoms of “cold cough” and “cold diarrhea”.1

Illustrative case: A female patient, aged 33, paid her first visit on November 27, 2009. She had suffered from chronic bronchitis for 32 years. She started to cough at the age of one with no obvious predisposing causes, and the patient stated that when she caught a cold, stimulated by cooking smoke, tired and spoke loudly in winter, dry cough occasionally with little white phlegm was worsened, which would alleviate in spring. But severe emotional stimulation would cause the disease all the time. A hospital diagnosed her illness as chronic bronchitis. In spite of taking Western medicine for many years, the effect was not obvious. Two weeks before, the dry cough was aggravated, which could be induced by throat itching and belching, accompanied with the symptoms of depression, irritability, not liable to sweat, facial acne, accelerated heart rate and blood pressure elevation. The examination showed thin tongue with less fur, and congenital short lingual frenum, thready, weakened, rapid pulse. The blood pressure was 145/90 mmHg, the heart rate 105 beats/min, harsh breath sounds were heard in the lungs. Excluding the phlegm and fluid syndrome, the exterior syndrome, the yang deficiency

Department of Cardiology, Guang’annen Hospital, China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences, Beijing 100053, China Correspondence to: Prof. LI Hai-xia, Email: 5administration@163.com

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syndrome and so on, the phenomenon that dry cough induced by throat itching and belching is the extension of “cold and heat exchanges”, which is the typical manifestation of Chai Hu (Radix Bupleuri). Generally speaking, depression, poor appetite, introversion and so on with the pathogenesis of liver qi stagnation are the typical indications of Chai Hu (Radix Bupleuri). However, it’s not quite true. The authors have found that anxiety, irritability, impatience, garrulity, stress, and fear with the pathogenesis of liver depression transforming into fire are also the indications of Chai Hu (Radix Bupleuri). Depression, irritability, not liable to sweating, irrationality, with accelerate heart rate, elevate blood pressure, and with cough induced by emotional fluctuation are really the indications of Chai Hu (Radix Bupleuri) and Huang Qin (Radix Scutellariae). Cough aggravated in winter and alleviated in spring are the typical indication of Gan Jiang (Rizoma Zingiberis) and Wu Wei Zi (Fructus Schisandrae). Cough induced by belching is typical indication of Ban Xia (Rhizoma Pinelliae). The patient’s syndrome belonged to the pathogenic factors in Shao yang meridians with retention of excessive fluid in the lung. Her disease was treated by reconciling Shao yang, warming lung and relieving fluid retention. The recipe consisted of Chai Hu (Radix Bupleuri) 12 g, Huang Qin (Radix Scutellariae) 10 g, Ban Xia (Rhizoma Pinelliae) 12 g, Gan Jiang (Rizoma Zingiberis) 6 g, Wu Wei Zi (Fructus Schisandrae) 6 g, and Gan Cao (Radix Glycyrrhizae) 6 g. After she had taken 3 doses, her cough improved evidently, throat itching and belching disappeared. After taken another 2 doses, all her symptoms disappeared and another recipe was prescribed to treat facial acne. The follow-up survey for half a year showed no recurrence.

**Indications of Shegan Mahuang Decoction**

Shegan Mahuang Decoction (射干麻黄汤 Belamcanda and Ephedra Decotion) is a formula described in *Jin Gui Yao Lue* (金匮要略 Synopsis of Golden Chamber) for treating asthma, dyspnea, cough, anhilation, and phlegm sound in throat, with the pathogenesis of exterior cold and interior fluid retention and cold phlegm-fluid lying latent in the lung. This formula has the effects of warming the lung to eliminate cold, dissipating excessive fluid and relieving cough. In the formula, She Gan (Rhizoma Belamcandae) is used for relieving sore throat and dissolving phlegm, with Ban Xia (Rhizoma Pinelliae) and Sheng Jiang (Rhizoma Zingiberis Recens) added for dissipating excessive fluid; Ma Huang (Herba Ephedrae) can give the effects of ventilating lung to relieve asthma, relieving the exterior syndrome, and dissipating cold; Zi Wan (Radix Asteris) and Kuan Dong Hua (Flos Farfarae) can moisten the lung, lower the adverse qi, dissolve phlegm, and relieve cough; Xi Xin (Herba Asari) can expell wind and cold, and warm the lung to reduce watery phlegm; Wu Wei Zi (Fructus Schisandrae) can astringe lung to relieve cough; Hong Zao (Fructus Ziziphi Jujubae) and Sheng Jiang (Rhizoma Zingiberis Recens) can strengthen qi in the middle-jiao. It's worth noting that the difference and resemblance must be compared between Shegan Mahuang Decoction and Xiao Qing Long Decoction (小青龙汤 Minor Green Dragon Decoction), both of which can treat cough and asthma with the pathogenesis of exterior cold and interior fluid retention. According to the principle of formulae corresponding to syndromes, the former is mainly indicated for abnormal rising of lung qi with the symptoms such as cough and asthma because it contains She Gan (Rhizoma Belamcandae), Zi Wan (Radix Asteris) and Kuan Dong Hua (Flos Farfarae); the latter is mainly indicated for the wind cold superficial syndrome with the symptoms such as aversion to cold, nasal obstruction, watery nasal discharge, headache, and pain and rigidity of the back because it contains Ma Huang (Herba Ephedrae), Gui Zhi (Ramulus Cinnamomi) and Bai Shao (Radix Paeoniae Alba).

**Illustrative case:** A female patient, aged 56, presented herself on February 18, 2010, with the chief complaint of cough and asthma in winter for 10 years. The accompanying symptoms and signs were white phlegm, dyspnea, and phlegm sound in throat, which would be worsened by cooking smoke. A hospital diagnosed her illness as acute attack of chronic bronchitis, which was treated by anti-inflammation, spasmolysis, expelling phlegm and so on. However, the effect was not obvious. 2 months before, cough and asthma was aggravated by cold stimulation, accompanied with the symptoms of chest distress, cough and shortness of breath, cough up white phlegm, heavy cough sound, phlegm sound in the throat, and headache, which would be aggravated by cooking smoke, breathing in cold air. With the signs of pink tongue, thin and white fur, and deep pulse, her syndrome belonged to cold phlegm-fluid lying latent in the lung and abnormal rising of lung qi. The principle of treatment was warming the lung to eliminate cold, dissipating excessive fluid and relieving cough. The recipe consisted of She Gan (Rhizoma Belamcandae) 10 g, Sheng Ma Huang (Herba Ephedrae) 6 g, Ban Xia (Rhizoma Pinelliae) 12 g, Zi Wan (Radix Asteris) 10 g, Kuan Dong Hua (Flos Farfarae) 10 g, Xi Xin (Herba Asari) 6 g, Wu Wei Zi (Fructus Schisandrae) 6 g, Sheng Jiang (Rhizoma Zingiberis Recens) 15 g, and 5 grains of Hong Zao (Fructus Ziziphi Jujubae). After taking one dose of the above prescription, the patient felt the symptoms obviously improved. Having taken another 2
doses, all her symptoms disappeared with no recurrence found until now.

Summary
Chronic bronchitis is chronic non-specific inflammation of bronchial mucosa and its surrounding tissues due to infected or non-infected factors. Except other reasons causing chronic cough, it can be diagnosed from cough and expectoration for 3 months with a history over 2 years. It can be classified as "cough", "dyspnea" and "asthma" in TCM.

There are more than 20 classic formulae that can treat cough and asthma. For example, Xiao Qing Long Decoction (小青龙汤 Minor Decoction of Green Dragon), Xiao Qing Long Jia Shigao Decoction (小青龙加石膏汤 Minor Green Dragon plus Gypsum Decoction), Houpu Mahuang Decoction (厚朴麻黄汤 Decoction of Magnolia and Ephedra), Shegan Mahuang Decoction (射干麻黄汤 Belamcanda and Ephedra Decoction), Zhen Wu Decoction plus Ganjiang Xixin Wuweizi (真武汤加五味子干姜细辛 Decoction for Strengthening the Spleen-yang plus Schisandra, Dried Ginger and Asarum), Si Ni Powder plus Wuweizi Ganjiang (四逆散加五味子干姜 Powder for Treating Cold Limbs plus Schisandra and Dried Ginger) and Liu Wei Xiao Chaihu Decoction (六味小柴胡汤 Liuwei Minor Bupleurum Decoction) can treat phlegm-fluid lying latent in the lung; Zaojia Pill (皂荚丸 Gleditsia Sinensis Pill), Tingli Dazao Xie Fei Decoction (葶苈大枣泻肺汤 Decoction of lepidium Seed and Jujube for Removing Phlegm from the Lung), Gualou Xiebai Bajiju decocion (桔薤薤白白汤 Decoction of Trichosanthes and Allium with Wine), Weijing Decoction (苇茎汤 Reed Stem Decoction), Jiegeng Decoction (桔梗汤 Decoction of Platycodon Root) and Jiegeng Bai Power (桔梗白散 White Powder of Three Drugs) can treat interior retention of phlegm; Gancao Ganjiang Decoction (甘草干姜汤 Decoction of Glycyrrhiza and Dried Ginger) can treat yang deficiency of upper-jiao; Shi Zao Decoction (十枣汤 Ten Jujubae Decoction) and Gui Ling Wuwei Gancao Decoction Qu Gui plus Ganjiang Xixin (桂苓五味甘草汤去桂加干姜细辛 桂枝汤 Five tastes jujube bark Decoction of Glycyrrhiza and Dried Ginger) can treat excessive fluid; Xiao Xu Ming Decoction (续命汤 Small Emergency Decoction), the associated prescriptions of Mahuang, Yue Bi Jia Banxia Decoction (越婢加半夏汤 Decoction for Relieving Edema plus Pinellia Tuber) and Guizhi Jia Houpu Xingzi Decoction (桂枝加厚朴杏子汤 Decoction of Cinnamon Twig with Magnolia and Apricot Kernel) can treat exterior syndrome; the associated prescriptions of Dahuang can treat fu-organ syndrome. Apart from these, other formulae, such as Xing Su Er Chen Decoction (杏苏二陈汤 Apricot kernel, Perilla and Two Old drugs Decoction), Banxia Houpu Decoction (半夏厚朴汤 Decoction of Pinellia and Magnonia Bark), Guizhi Fuling Pill (桂枝茯苓丸 Cinnamon Twig and Poria Pill), Mahuang Fuzi Xixin Decoction (麻黄附子细辛汤 Decoction of Ephedra, Aconite and Asarum) and so on, which are not used to treat cough and asthma originally, may show good effects. HU Xi-shu, a famous veteran doctor of TCM, treat asthma with blood stasis syndrome by using Da Chaihu Decoction (大柴胡汤 Major Bupleurum Decoction) combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill (桂枝茯苓丸 Cinnamon Twig and Poria Pill) or Taohe Cheng Qi Decoction (桃核承气汤 Decoction of Peach Kernel for Activating qi); treat congestion of fluid-retention syndrome by using Shegan Mahuang Decoction (射干麻黄汤 Belamcanda and Ephedra Decoction), Xiao Qing Long Jia Shigao Decoction (小青龙加石膏汤 Minor Green Dragon plus Gypsum Decoction), Gegen Decoction (葛根汤 Decoction of Pueraria) combined with Xiao Xian Xiong Decoction (小陷胸汤), Ling Gan Wuwei Jiang Xin Xing Decoction (苓甘五味姜辛杏汤 Decoction of Poria, Licorice, Schisandra, Dried Ginger, Asarum, Prunella Spike and Bitter Apricot Kernel); and treat blood stasis and congestion of fluid-retention syndrome by using the former two kinds.  

Facing specific disease and so many formulae, selecting the formula and herb with correct indications is the basic skills of TCM doctors. If a patient has chest distress, dyspnea, and feeling of expansion in the eyes, these may be the indications of Yue Bi Jia Banxia Decoction (越婢加半夏汤 Decoction for Relieving Edema plus Pinellia Tuber). If a patient is liable to sweating, aversion to wind, and with chronic bronchitis induced by exogenous pathogenic factors, these may be the indications of Guizhi Jia Houpu Xingzi Decoction (桂枝加厚朴杏子汤 Decoction of Cinnamon Twig with Magnolia and Apricot Kernel).

The principle of formulae corresponding to syndromes pay more attention to collecting the objective evidence of the formulae and herbs, which does not emphasize the etiology and pathogenesis in TCM. It is not exactly the same as syndrome differentiation. Recognition of the indications of the formulae and herbs is the key to clinical application of the TCM classic formulae.

REFERENCES
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