

Yellowstone Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine

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Oriental Medicine (aka Chinese Medicine) is the oldest, professional, continually practiced, literate medicine in the world. This medical system's written literature stretches back almost 2,500 years. And currently, 1/4 of the world's population makes use of it. One can say that modern Western and traditional Chinese medicines are the two dominant medicinal systems in the world today.

Isn't Oriental Medicine Just A System of Folk Healing?

No. This system has been created by some of the best-educated and brightest scholars in Chinese history. The scholars have recorded their theories and clinical experiences from generation to generation in literally thousands of books. It is estimated that there are between 30-40,000 extant books on Chinese medicine written before the turn of the century. Since then, thousands more books and articles in professional journals have been written and published in China, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

How Does Chinese Medicine Work?

Chinese Medicine works by re-establishing balance and harmony within the body. This means balance between yin and yang, balance between the five phases, balance between the viscera and bowels, and balance between the qi, blood and body fluids. This balance is re-established by supporting the body's healthy or righteous energy and attacking an unhealthy or evil energy.

What Methods Are Used to Re-establish Balance Within the Body?

The main professionally applied methods of re-establishing balance are Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture /moxibustion, Chinese herbal medicines may be prescribed internally or applied externally. Acupuncture and moxibustion seek to regulate the flow of qi and blood within the body by either inserting fine, sterile needles at certain acupoints or warming certain acupoints by various methods. In addition, Chinese medical practitioners may also use tui na or an mo, styles of Chinese massage, they may prescribe remedial or preventive exercises, such as tai ji, qi gong, or dao yin, and they typically counsel their patients on diet and lifestyle, and according to the theories of Chinese Medicine.

Is Chinese Medicine Safe?

Very. When practiced correctly by trained, qualified professional practitioners, acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine are extremely safe. In fact, when practiced correctly, they have no side effects and produce no iatrogenic or doctor-caused disease. If a patient reports side effects from a Chinese medical treatment, the practitioner modifies the treatment until there is healing without side effects. This is because Chinese Medicine seeks to restore balance to the entire person, not just the piece or part. Side effects mean there is imbalance that needs to be corrected.

How Can I Find a Practitioner of Chinese Medicine?

In the United States, most practitioners of Chinese Medicine are licensed or certified as acupuncturists. Therefore, the best way to find a professionally qualified practitioner of Chinese medicine is to look in your Yellow Pages under acupuncture. Be sure your practitioner is state licensed, registered, or certified if acupuncture is regulated in your state. In addition, probationers who follow their names with the abbreviations Dipl. Ac. and Dipl. C.H. are nationally board certified in acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine respectively. Chinese medicine as a system is extremely complicated and extensive. It is not just a collection of techniques that can be added to some other health care profession. Just as one does not call an electrician to fix their plumbing, one should only seek treatment from professionally trained and qualified practitioners of Chinese Medicine.

What's the difference between Western folk herbalism and Chinese herbal medicine?

Western folk herbalism primarily treats diseases or symptoms, such as headaches, runny nose, menstrual pain, etc. Chinese herbal medicine, when practiced as part of TCM, is based on an individualized pattern diagnosis as well as a disease diagnosis. This means the TCM patient receives a custom written herbal prescription designed to treat both the symptom or disease and also their individual pattern. Such a TCM pattern is made up of a person's signs and symptoms as well as their emotional temperament and bodily constitution.

Are there any other differences?

Western folk herbalism primarily uses single herbs or groups of herbs which treat the same symptom or disease. TCM formulas include from 6-18 herbs. They are carefully crafted to include herbs addressing a person's main symptoms as well as their entire pattern.

Are all the "herbs" vegetable in origin?

Although called Chinese herbal medicine, TCM practitioners use ingredients from all three kingdoms, vegetable, animal, and mineral. However, the majority of these are from vegetable sources. Leaves, flowers, twigs, stems, roots, tubes, rhizomes, and barks are some of the vegetable parts used.

Do all the herbs come from China?

15-20% of the standard Chinese repertoire of 500 ingredients originated from outside China. The Chinese have adopted and incorporated into their material medica herbs from all over the world. What makes these "Chinese" herbs is that they are prescribed according to the Chinese medical theory and a TCM pattern diagnosis.

Do Chinese herbs work for Western patients?

Yes, empirical evidence has proven that Chinese herbal medicine works for Westerners just as well as for Chinese. Chinese herbal medicine has been used successfully in North and South America, Europe, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and all throughout Asia.

How are Chinese herbs taken?

The most common method of taking Chinese herbal medicine is a decoction. This means that the herbs are cooked at a low boil for an hour or more and then strained and drunk 2-3 times per day. However, there are also herbal pills, tinctures, and powdered extracts for those who do not have the time or taste for drinking traditional decoctions.

What are the benefits of drinking Chinese herbs in decoction?

This method allows the practitioner maximum flexibility in writing a prescription. They can just put in just what is necessary in just the right amount. The formula can be changed even on a daily basis if necessary and decoctions tend to be more potent than other means of administration.

Why do herbal decoctions taste so bad?

Chinese herbal teas tend to taste very bitter because they are made mostly from roots and barks where the strongest medicinal ingredients are found. If the formula is correctly written, the bad taste should go away after 1-2 days. After that time, the patient may even come to crave the taste. This shows that the medicine is working.

What are the benefits of pills and powders?

Pills and powders are good for prolonged administration in the case of chronic disease where formulas do not have to be very potent or changed on a frequent basis. Pills and powders are also commonly used to consolidate therapeutic results after a successful course of therapy with decoctions.

Does Chinese herbal medicine have side effects?

No, not if the formula has been correctly chosen and written. Most of the medicinals in the Chinese material medical have a very low toxicity compared to even common, over the counter Western drugs. When they are prescribed according to a correct TCM pattern diagnosis, they should have virtually no side effects, only beneficial healing results. If a patient experiences any discomfort while taking Chinese herbs, they should tell their practitioner, who will then modify their formula until there are no side effects.

What is Chinese herbal medicine good for?

Chinese herbal medicine treats the full range of human disease. It treats acute diseases, like intestinal flu and the common cold, as well as chronic diseases, such as allergies, gynecological disorders, autoimmune diseases, chronic viral diseases, and degenerative diseases due to aging. In particular, Chinese herbal medicine is especially good for promoting the body's ability to heal and recuperate.

Can pregnant women take Chinese herbs?

Yes, if prescribed by a professional TCM practitioner. Chinese herbal medicine has been used for over 2,000 years to treat more than two score of diseases and symptoms occurring during pregnancy without harm to the fetus. Likewise, lactating mothers can take Chinese herbal medicine safely as long as they are prescribed by a trained practitioner.

Can children take Chinese herbal medicine?

Yes. Pediatrics is a specialty within TCM and children can be given reduced dosages. There are also special prepared pediatric medicines in pill and powder form. Chinese herbal medicine can treat colic, the fussiness of teething, earache, diarrhea, cough, and fever in babies and children.

How long does it take to see results with Chinese herbal medicine?

In acute conditions, results can be expected in a matter of minutes. In chronic conditions, some results should be seen within two weeks. Although chronic conditions may require taking Chinese herbal medicine for a long time, nonetheless, signs that the medicine is working should be apparent to patient and practitioner alike almost from the very start.

How do I know if a practitioner is professionally trained in Chinese herbal medicine?

In some states, such as California, all acupuncturists must pass a licensing test that includes Chinese herbal medicine. In addition, the National Commission for the Certification of Acupuncturists (NCAA) has created a certification process for Chinese herbal medicine. Practitioners who have passed that certification process are entitled to add the abbreviation Dipl. C.H. for Diplomat of Chinese Herbs after their name. Although Chinese herbs are safe when professionally prescribed by a trained, knowledgeable practitioner, they are strong medicine nevertheless. Therefore, it is important that a practitioner be adequately schooled and experienced in their use. A prospective patient should feel free to ask about the training and credentials of a potential practitioner.