Chinese Herbal Formulas for Your Liver

March 23, 2013 By Mike Barr

I feel a bit of a fool for not realizing that Ray Schinazi had single-handedly cured hep C and at the same time rid the world of the need for interferon (a la sofosbuvir and the promise of a soon-to-be FDA approved all oral treatment regimen). Then quickly selling his company to the Gilead goliath for a cool $11 billion.

If others out there have beat me to the punch in experimenting, successfully one hopes, with herbology--Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, Korean, Tibetan, Ayurvedic, Indigenous American or otherwise, please share your experiences.

In the meantime, I will report on 2 or 3 classic formulas (Shu Gan Tang, Chai Hu Shu Gan Tang, Xiao Chai Hu Tang, for starters) that, over the centuries, have proved good for your "gan" (anglicized pinyin for liver in Mandarin): reducing inflammation, slowly (reversing?) fibrosis, encouraging the growth of new hepatocytes.

While personally I prefer the freshly brewed broth-like Chinese herbal potions, this is not terribly practical and eventually a bit costly for chronic administration, there are some reasonably effective tablet and granule products at many of the better herb companies. The Hepatoplex series, as well as Ecliptex and Milk Thistle 80, of Oakland, CA-based Health Concerns, are four tablet forms that come to mind. (Opinions vary on whether or not the recommended dosage is adequate, although the company says that the dosage labeling is based on 150-pound body weight, and one might want to adjust accordingly. Thrice daily dosing is often not practical, so the total daily dose is often divided by two and taken morning and late afternoon or early evening.) Depending on your constitution and individual presentation, there might also be other, less liver specific, formulas that can help you.

Ruth aka "Misha" Cohen, out in SF, most recently at the Cancer Research Institute at the UCSF School of Medicine, has of course been focusing on Chinese medicine and hep C for a good part of the past 20 years or so. Her 2007 Hep C book (and various YouTube type streaming videos) might also be a valuable resource. In addition to the tableted formulas mentioned above, Dr. Cohen in her book recommends Enhance, Clear Heat, and then a variety of more specialized formulas according to the person's individual constitution and/or symptoms.

Michael Barr is a board certified acupuncturist and herbalist and can be reached at Manhattan Acupuncture Associates, with offices at Columbus Circle and Flatiron. His expertise and interests include sports acupuncture, pain syndromes, liver health, immunological support, low energy,

mood disorders, anxiety, insomnia, GI complaints, and herbal and acupuncture approaches to getting off/putting off prescription medications of unsatisfactory or unclear benefit, and in helping to manage the side-effects of other necessary and life-saving biomedical interventions. He has also been busy exploring the application of East Asian herbal therapies, and specific acupuncture protocols, for all aspects of sexual health and anti-senescence.

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