Xiao Chai Hu Tang in Combination with Antiviral Drugs was More Effective for Hepatitis B

February 28, 2011 By Mike Barr

I'm still working on my response to the Valentine's Day naysayer who reflexively dismisses any and all reports of the efficacy of acupuncture and Chinese herbal formulas for the sole reason, if I understand him correctly, that one formula (in this case Xiao Yao San) is used to treat several different conditions (primarily mood enhancement, PMS, menstrual irregularity, menstrual pain, fibrocystic breasts, hepatic fibrosis). Doesn't he remember that sildenafil was initially studied as a treatment for hypertension and angina?

In assembling my response to him I came across this paper published last year in the prestigious medical journal of China, Zhong Xi Yi Jie He Xue Bao. The paper reports the results of a meta analysis of sixteen different randomized clinical trials of this herbal formula with a total of 1,600 patients and concludes (I have only the abstract in hand) that the Chinese herbal formula (Xiao Chai Hu Tang) "appears effective in improving liver function and clearance of serum hepatitis B viral markers [when combined with standard antiviral therapy] in patients with chronic hepatitis B."

The two formulas, Xiao Yao San and Xiao Chai Hu Tang, share a key ingredient (Radix Buplureum) that may account for both formulas' use in liver disease. (Even if initial results of my literature search suggest a stronger anti-HBV effect for angelica root (Radix Scutellariae or Huang Qin, as it is known in TCM).

If I can get my hands on the full content of this study, in the journal Hepatology no less, published in February 2010, I will compare its methods and findings to this post. Surely more to come.

Mike Barr is a board certified acupuncturist and herbalist and can be reached at Turning Point Acupuncture (just off Columbus Circle across from the Mandarin Oriental hotel) and at Suite 904 in the Flatiron District. His interests and experience include sports acupuncture, pain syndromes, liver health, immunological support, 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 Chinese herbal therapies, and specific acupuncture protocols, for all aspects of sexual health and anti-senescence.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.