

# *Descend the Qi*

## *A Guiding Principle for the Treatment of Chronic Disease in Modern Times*

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### A Basic Introduction to Xiaqi Tang (Descend the Qi Decoction)

It has been the declared purpose of CLASSICALCHINESEMEDICINE.ORG to rediscover and preserve some of the diverse classical and folk medicine practices that have been neglected in standardized TCM teaching in both China and the West. One of the clinical gems we discovered during the last 3 years is the unique clinical system of Dr. Wu Sheng'an from Xi'an, who is a 6<sup>th</sup> generation disciple of the Qing dynasty scholar physician Huang Yuanyu (1704-1758), more often referred to by his nickname Huang Kunzai (Huang Who Stabilizes Like the Earth, a reference to the spleen/stomach focused approach by this influential doctor).

Banxia	9g
Fuling	9g
Chenpi	9g
(fried) Baishao	9g
(fried) Huangqin	9g
Gancao	6g

While we are starting a video series about Wu Sheng'an's intricate lineage system with an introduction to his style of chrono-acupuncture in the Associates Forum members area of CLASSICALCHINESEMEDICINE.ORG this month, the following translation may serve as an introduction to the historical background and evolution of Dr. Wu's favorite herbal remedy, Pingjia Tang (Harmonize Yang Wood Decoction), which serves as the foundation for most of his formulas.

### An Excerpt from “The Clinical Experience of Ma Ruiting”

The remedy Xiaqi Tang is recorded in volume four of the Qing Dynasty scholar physician Huang Yuanyu's book, *Sisheng xinyuan* (Core Teachings by the Four Sages). The original remedy is composed of the ingredients:

In order to use this formula as a general remedy for all types of qi stagnation in the chest and intestines—to stimulate the proper descend of qi on the right—Dr. Ma Ruiting (1903-1997; Dr. Wu Sheng'an's teacher) modified this remedy by removing the herbs that have a more astringent effect on the lung and are more directed at symptoms of coughing, namely Wuweizi and Beimu, and added herbs that moisten the blood and emolliate the liver, specifically Heshouwu and Mudanpi, thus creating the following version of this remedy:

Gancao	6g
Banxia	9g
Fuling	9g
Xingren	9g
Beimu	6g
Wuweizi	6g
Jupi	6g

Thereby, he created his favorite remedy for descending the qi of the lung and stomach, for which he was so well known at his time. This remedy has the ability to ascend the clear qi of the liver and spleen

Fuling	9g
Gancao	6g
(fried) Baishao	12g
Mudanpi	9g
(processed) Heshouwu	20g
Juhong	9g
(fried) Xingren	9g
Banxia	9g

on the left, while simultaneously descending damp/phlegm turbidity. This was the remedy that he used, in modified form, for many of the chronic diseases he saw during his life as a Chinese medicine physician.

Fuling builds the spleen and percolates dampness; it balances the spleen by specifically assisting its rising function. Banxia harmonizes the stomach and descends counterflow; it balances the stomach by specifically assisting its descending function. Gancao harmonizes the center, and balances both the spleen and the stomach. When these three materials are united, they regulate the post-natal force of the spleen

and stomach, thus supporting the source where all qi and blood production originates from, so that the righteous qi is supported and all pathogens are kept at bay. Baishao, Mudanpi, and Heshouwu enter into the blood layer; they emolliate the liver and lift up prolapsing qi, while harmonizing the function of the gallbladder. Juhong and Xingren enter into the qi layer; they clear the lung and regulate qi flow, transform phlegm and descend counterflow. In combination, all eight substances achieve the effect of building the spleen, emolliating the liver, clearing and descending the downward momentum of lung and stomach, and regulating the communication between the upper and lower parts of the body. As a result, the stomach descends and fulfills its function of containing [food], while the spleen rises and does its job of grinding [food]. The liver, moreover, rises so that the blood does not stagnate, and the lung descends so that the qi does not slow down. As a result, heart and kidney are communicating, and any type of chaotic qi dynamics that may exist anywhere in the organ systems becomes restored to its natural flow of movement, cyclically rising and descending. Healing can therefore happen.

Although all of these ingredients tend to be fairly bland and there is nothing unusual about any of them, together they have the uncanny ability to address the pathological qi dynamics that underly most chronic disease processes. This is achieved by focusing on the center (thereby disinhibiting all surrounding regions) and restoring the body's up-down movements and reconnecting its vital water/fire axis. Chronic diseases, by their very nature, involve dysregulation of multiple organ networks, with an imbalance of the spleen/stomach being most pronounced among them. The overall etiology, therefore, is an unhealthy state of the central qi, leading to stagnation of liver and gallbladder, counterflow of lung and stomach, prolapse of spleen and kidney—altogether a situation of spleen/stomach imbalance and liver/gallbladder disharmony, with signs of empty heat at the top and cold damp at root below.

This remedy harmonizes the center and relieves stagnation, while percolating spleen damp without harming liver yin. By the same token, it moistens liver yin without increasing spleen damp; removes congestion at the top by draining turbid yin; remedies prolapse by raising clear yang. In this way, the spleen's ability to rise is restored in a very natural way, and the qi of liver and kidney can rise along with it. Similarly, the stomach's ability to descend is restored and the qi of heart and lung can descend along with it. Altogether, all organ imbalance can become rectified because the system's natural qi flow has been restored: rising on the left, and descending on the right. The stomach can now contain again, and the spleen can grind again; the liver is not depressed anymore and the lung not deflated; qi and blood can gradually become abundant, and all disease will disappear by itself.

### Modifications

- For severe conditions of dampness (edema, bloating and fullness due to spleen deficiency), add 9-12g of Zhuling to replace Fuling, and use 9g of Zexie to replace Gancao. For severe water accumulation accompanied by abdominal bloating, use Fulingpi 9-15g or Zhulingpi 9-12g to replace Fuling.
- For *lijie* disease (severe and migratory arthralgia, such as arthritis or rheumatoid arthritis), use 15-30g of Tufuling to replace Fuling, and add 9g of Zexie to replace Gancao.
- For counterflow issues in the stomach involving symptoms of poor appetite, blurry vision and dizziness (as in cases of high blood pressure), use 9-12g of fried Baizhu to replace Gancao (Gancao has a tendency to cause fullness in the center and thereby counteract food intake; in addition, this herb tonifies qi and raises blood pressure, therefore my recommendation to remove it for patients suffering from these conditions).
- For cases of damp heat during the summer months involving a thick white and greasy tongue coating accompanied by poor appetite, use 15-20g of raw Yiyiren to replace Gancao.
- For counterflow in the gallbladder and stomach, representing a transformation of yang wood into pathological fire, manifesting as symptoms of bitter taste in the mouth, dry throat, headache, blurry vision, big pulses in the guan and cun positions, and a reddish tongue with yellow coating, use 9-12g of Huangqin to replace Baishao, in order to harmonize the gallbladder and clear upper burner heat.
- For spleen deficiency with liver stagnation, representing a downward collapse of yin wood, manifesting as symptoms of cold pain and a downward pressure sensation in the lower abdomen, big pulses in the guan and chi positions, and a pale tongue with moist coating, use 6-9g of Guizhi to replace Baishao, in order to warm the liver and aid the lifting processes of the body.
- For blood deficiency (i.e., iron deficiency anemia and aplastic anemia), use 9-12g of fried Chishao to replace Baishao, in order to moisten dryness and tonify blood deficiency.
- For heart palpitations with a deficient and rapid pulse or an irregular pulse (i.e., various forms of heart disease), use 9-12g of charcoaled Sheng Dihuang to replace Mudanpi, in order to moisten the blood and return the pulse to a regular state.
- For symptoms of headaches caused by blood stasis, stagnation in the channels and collaterals, pain and soreness in the extremities, hemiplegia, and/or stagnant and scanty menstrual flow, use 6-9g of aged Chuanxiong to replace Mudanpi, in order to open the channels, unblock the collaterals and remove stasis.
- For excessive menstrual flow accompanied by pallor and fatigue, use 9-12g of Danggui to replace Heshouwu, in order to warm the channels, tonify blood and regulate the menses.
- For cold in the spleen and kidney accompanied by symptoms of poor appetite, low back pain, big pulses in the guan and cun positions, and a pale tongue with moist coating (i.e., stomach disorders, chronic nephritis), use 3-5g of high quality Rougui to replace Heshouwu, in order to warm the middle and lower burners and drive out cold.
- For chronic cough that persists for years, representing an exhaustion of the water element source, with symptoms of a reddish tongue with little coating and restlessness and heat sensations at night, use 9-12g of Shu Dihuang to replace Heshouwu, in order to moisten dryness and generate water.
- For counterflow in the lung manifesting as symptoms of coughing, use 9-15g of Cantonese Chenpi to replace Juhong, in order to harmonize qi flow and stop the coughing.

- For qi stagnation in the gallbladder and stomach, manifesting as symptoms of soreness and pain in the chest and intercostal spaces (i.e., cholecystitis, gall stones), use fried Zhike to replace Juhong, in order to break up the stagnation, open the chest and stop pain.
- For severe qi stagnation in the chest, use 9g of fried Zhishi to replace Juhong, in order to break up qi stagnation, stop pain, and stimulate large intestine function.
- For even more severe cases of stagnation and pain, use 6-9g of fried Qingpi, or 6g of unprocessed Zhishi to replace Juhong.
- For depression of liver qi accompanied by intercostal pain (i.e., chronic hepatitis), use 6-9g of Foshou to replace Juhong, in order to smoothe the liver, regulate qi and stop pain.
- For pain in the epigastrium, deficiency of stomach acid, poor appetite and fatigue, use 6-9g of Xiangyuan (Citrus medica), in order to emolliate the liver and stimulate appetite.
- For qi stagnation leading to stuffiness in the chest, accompanied by symptoms of profuse phlegm that is hard to expectorate, use 9-12g of Quan Gualou to replace Xingren, in order to transform phlegm, disinhibit qi flow and open the chest.
- For sensations of distention and stuffiness in the chest and diaphragm region leading to difficulties looking up and down, use 9-12g of Gualoupi to replace Xingren, in order to disinhibit qi flow and expel congestion.
- For cough with sticky phlegm that is hard to expectorate, stuffiness in the chest and shortness of breath, use 9-12g of fried Gualouren to replace Xingren, in order to disinhibit phlegm/rheum and open the chest.
- For qi stagnation manifesting as stuffiness in the chest and dry and inhibited bowel movements, use 9-12g of Yuliren to replace Xingren, in order to clear heat in the lung, moisten the intestines and disinhibit bowel movements.
- For scanty and stagnant menstrual flow with black blood and blood clots, stuffiness in the chest and sensations of restlessness in the heart, use 9-15g of fried Taoren to replace Xingren, in order to transform stasis by moving blood and regulating qi.
- For pregnant women with sensations of nausea and vomiting and aversion to food intake, use 6-9g of ginger treated Banxia to replace the regularly processed Fa Banxia (Fa Banxia is said to have the potential side effect of aborting the fetus), in order to harmonize the stomach, pacify counterflow, adjust downward qi flow and stimulate appetite.

This is the how the master remedy can be modified according to different key symptoms and different diseases—I thus call it “The Boat.”