



TCM IN ACTION

Investing in Immunity: Key Formulas

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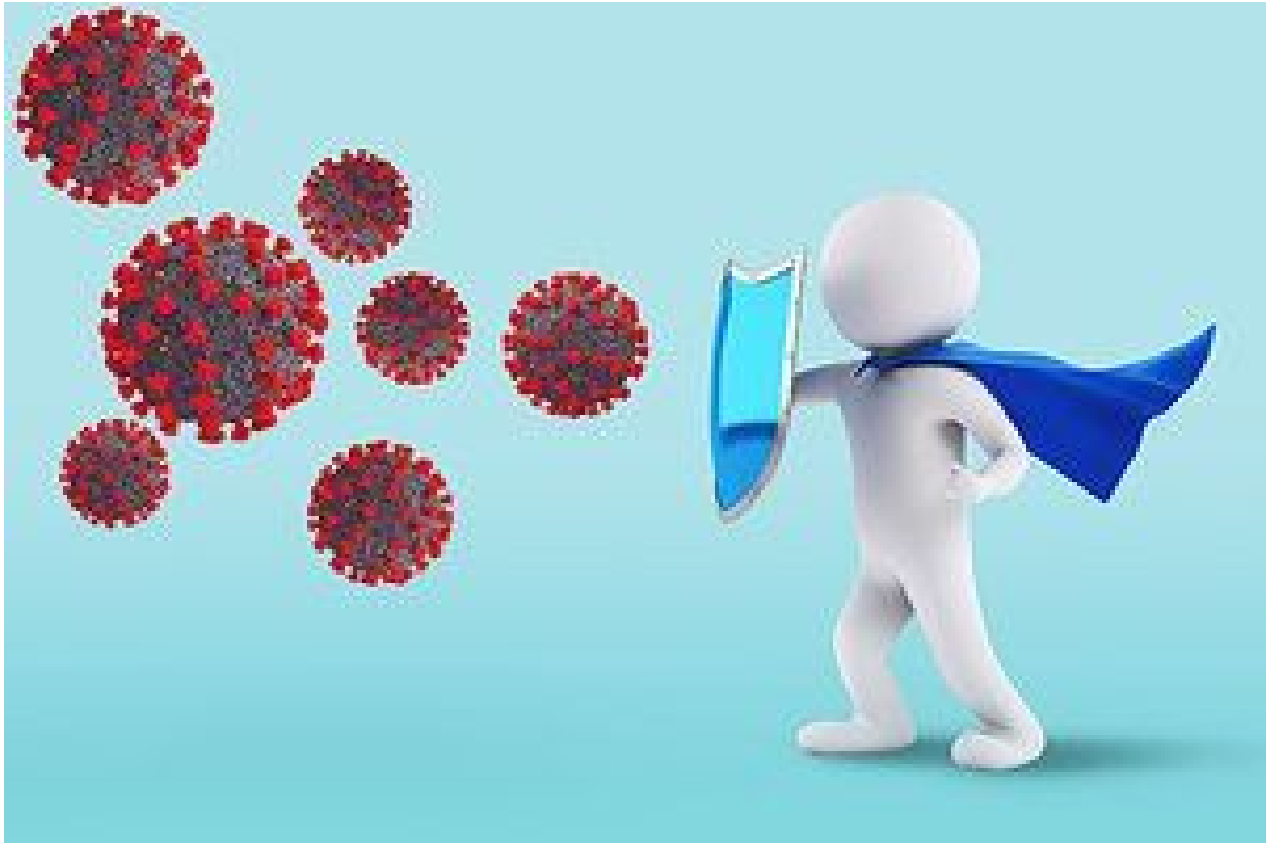
"We may try and do whatever we want with Qi, but if you are not following heaven or the natural order of life within you in some way, you will not succeed in maintaining either your life or your health."

— Elisabeth Rochat De La Valee, *A Study of Qi*

One of the most common questions I hear from patients on a daily basis is, "How do I improve my immunity?" This is a complex question that is not easy to answer in a generic, standardized fashion. An axiom within traditional Chinese medicine is "treat the patient not the disease" and targeting the therapies toward resolving unique patterns of disharmony within the patient is the road toward this individualized goal. This resolution of unique patterns of disharmony involves many physiological and psychological processes which are no doubt involved in improving an immune response in our patients.

From the perspective of traditional Chinese medicine, when the *qi* and blood are flowing unencumbered, spleen *qi* is strong, blood is nourished, and the kidneys are banked, the nebulous idea of "immunity" is functioning smoothly in the patient's unique body.

The Limitations of *Yu Ping Feng San*



One of the most common patent medicines I see practitioners recommend for boosting immunity in patients is *Yu Ping Feng San*. This formula replenishes *qi*, tonifies *wei qi*, consolidates the exterior and stops sweating. While I do use this formula extensively in the clinic, I feel it has some significant limitations in patients who are truly expressing deficiency symptoms of *qi* and blood. The majority of patients I encounter possess both *qi* and blood deficiency, and *Yu Ping Feng San* alone will not resolve this more complex pattern.

A Better Choice: *Dang Gui Bu Xue Tang*

In such cases, I use the patent medicine or decoction *Dang Gui Bu Xue Tang*. This formula tonifies *qi*, nourishes blood, consolidates the exterior, and harmonizes *yin / yang*. An elegantly simple formula consisting of just *Huang Qi* and *Dang Gui*, *Dang Gui Bu Xue Tang* is vitally important for patients who present with a combination of *qi* and blood deficiency (which as I stated, *Yu Ping Feng San* does not effectively address in my experience).

Combine the Two Formulas?

In cases of significant *qi* and blood deficiency, *Dang Gui Bu Xue Tang* and *Yu Ping Feng San* can be combined in either decoction / extract form or patent medicines. However, when patients present with significant *qi* and blood deficiency, often more complex formulas are needed.

Ren Shen Yang Rong Tang

In such cases, I use the patent medicine *Ren Shen Yang Rong Tang*. This formula / patent medicine tonifies *qi*, nourishes and invigorates blood, nourishes *yin*, warms *yang*, benefits the spleen, heart and lungs, and calms the *shen*. This is an extremely comprehensive patent medicine / formula that deeply nourishes all aspects of a patient's health and vitality.

I personally feel *Ren Shen Yang Rong Tang* is one of the most important and underused patent

medicines / formulas in helping patients boost their health and vitality. Instead of pushing questionable trendy "superfoods," clinicians should refamiliarize themselves with this important formula and its comprehensive actions.

Other Important Formula Combinations

In patients who present with *qi* and blood deficiency with concomitant kidney *yin* / *yang* deficiency, I use the patent medicine *Wu Zi Yan Zong Wan* in combination with *Dang Gui Bu Xue Tang*. *Wu Zi Yan Zong Wan* warms kidney *yang*, tonifies blood, nourishes *yin* and consolidates *jing*. A deeply nourishing formula / patent medicine, *Wu Zi Yan Zong Wan* can also be used in combination with the ever-popular patent medicine *Xiao Yao Wan* in cases of *qi* / blood deficiency, kidney deficiency and liver depression *qi* stagnation. This complex pattern is a very common occurrence in the clinic, and resolving these patterns of disharmony allow the patient's immune response to function efficiently.

I personally find *Wu Zi Yan Zong Wan* to be more clinically relevant than the traditional *yin*-supplementing formula *Liu Wei Di Huang Wan*. However, there is no clear-cut need to only use one of these two *yin*-supplementing formulas. You can easily combine the two formulas.

In most cases, I combine *Wu Zi Yan Zong Wan* with *Ren Shen Yang Rang Tang* to deeply and comprehensively target a complex array of pattern disharmonies involved with the concept of immunity.

If a patient presents with *qi* / blood deficiency, kidney deficiency and significant liver depression *qi* stagnation, combining *Ren Shen Yang Rang Tang* with *Yi Guan Jian* can be used to effectively target all aspects of this complex pattern combination. *Yi Guan Jian* nourishes liver *yin* and blood, soothes the liver *qi*, moistens the tendons, and supports kidney *yin*.

Time-Proven Medicine

I hope this short discussion inspires you to avoid the endless search for "immunity superfoods" and instead focus on the time-proven medicines used within TCM. Harmonizing the patient's *qi* and blood, and teaching the patient the importance of sleep hygiene and its relationship to immunity, are vitally important prescriptions for investing in long-term health, immune resilience and vitality. No amount of miracle cures or "superfoods" can replace the tools we have at our disposal.

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