

The Combination of Traditional Chinese Medicine with Western Medicine

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It's well accepted that traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), with its wide sources, less side effects, and perfect efficacy, has made great contributions to Chinese people and the global pharmaceutical industry for thousands of years. However, its complex components as well as the oral administration of aqueous decoction make a lot of troubles to researchers in the investigation of the mechanism of active components, which will hinder the promotion or development of TCM to some extent. On the other hand, the side effects and drug resistance of western medicine have been increasingly prominent, which makes researchers pay more attention to the combination of TCM with western medicine. Fortunately, it turns out that this works with many advantages and also succeed in the clinical practice.

On the basis of the researches of combination of TCM with western medicine, we find that the main advantages can be listed as follows. At first, it can reduce the side effects of western medicine. For instance, if glycyrrhizic acid, a compound from licorice, is concomitantly used with streptomycin, it can reduce or even eliminate the damage to the eighth nerve of our brain induced by streptomycin. Furthermore, it will not affect the activity of streptomycin [1]. Secondly, it can enhance the efficacy or reduce the dosage of TCM. As we know, TCM has chronic effects while western medicine can quickly act on the targets. If we can make good use of these advantages, the excellent results can be obtained. For example, *Andrographis paniculata* is reported to have bacteriostatic and bactericidal activity against *Escherichia coli* containing fos A3 gene, and its activities can be largely improved when it is used with antibiotics together [2]. Thirdly, it can reverse the resistance of bacteria. This has been proved by Jia [3] with three aqueous decoctions from different herbal drugs. His results showed that the herbal drugs in different concentrations inversed the resistance of bacteria to the drugs in different degrees.

Of course, every coin has two sides. There are also researches showing that the unreasonable combination of medicines can not get the desired effects, but may lead to serious consequences. It is even worse when TCM is combined with antibiotics, because it may cause drug-induced disease through the formation of insoluble substances,

which in turn hinder the absorption of antibiotics or even enhance the original drug toxicity. Taking the mineral drugs as an example, if metal ions are combined with tetracycline antibiotics, the resultant chemical reactions will cause the change of physicochemical properties and the medicine will lose its efficacy. What's worse, the mixed substances may affect the excretion of drugs, and finally the residues may influence our health.

Base on the discussions above, we can draw the conclusion that the combination of TCM with western medicine does not mean their simple addition. Many factors such as the efficacy, compatibility ratio, and potential side effects should be considered. That means we should learn more about the drug compatibility before combining the TCM with western medicine. Thanks to the efforts of many researchers, there are a lot of articles we can refer. One of them is from Luo [4], which referred various results reported in recent years. This paper summarized the incompatibility and clinical adverse effects of combination of TCM with western medicine in the clinical application. Thus, we can understand the compatibility of medicine from other similar articles.

It can not be denied that the people worldwide have special respect to TCM since Prof. Tu obtained the Nobel prize. However, with the progress of globalization, the combination of TCM with western medicine still needs more promotion; thus, we should do more to make sure that the concomitant use is appropriate.

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