

Treating Cancer with Chinese Medicine

In Hong Kong, Western medicine is the mainstream treatment for cancers. Surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, immunotherapy, hormonal therapy and target therapy are often used in treating different types of cancer. Western medicine is target-orientated. The effects of these treatments are fast and sharp but many produce severe side effects. Chinese Medicine can reduce these effects.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is highly personal. Herbal medicines can be used to treat different symptoms but the diagnosis must be carried out carefully, different from the Western way. Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners regard factors such as heat toxin, damp toxin, qi stasis, blood stasis and phlegm stasis as causes of cancers. As a result, heat-clearing herbs, Qi-regulating herbs, circulation-promoting herbs, dampness and phlegm-resolving herbs are often used to treat cancers. Results have shown that toxic drugs in TCM such as arsenic can increase the survival rate of patients suffering from leukemia.

Many of the herbal medicines used to treat cancers are classified as heat toxin clearing herbs. Huang Lian has been used to clear heat and damp toxin for over two thousand years in China. Recent studies show that Huang Lian is an effective herb for treating cancers.

Conventional Western therapies such as surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy are effective in killing tumour cells whereas Chinese medicine treats the side effects caused by conventional Western therapies. Chinese medicine helps to control pain and keeps the immune system strong. Combined use of Western treatments and Chinese medicine may extend the life of cancer patients and improve their quality of life.