

Ban Xia Xie Xin Tang (Pinellia Drain the Heart Decoction) in the Treatment of 128 Cases suffering from Gastrointestinal Symptoms Secondary to Chemotherapy

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Cohort description

All 128 patients had received different types of chemotherapy between February 1995 and June 2001. Out of the 128 patients, 86 were male, and 42 were female. Their age ranged from as old as 68 to as young as 25 years old with an average age of 46. Thirty-five patients suffered from either stomach cancer or surgically treated stomach cancer; 42 cases suffered from either intestinal cancer or surgically treated intestinal cancer; 8 cases suffered from surgically treated esophageal cancer; 25 cases suffered from lung cancer; 10 cases suffered from surgically treated breast cancer; and 8 cases suffered from malignant lymphoma. In all patients, the following gastrointestinal signs and symptoms presented 1-3 days after initiating chemotherapy: nausea and vomiting, lack of appetite, and stomach duct glomus and fullness. Some patients also suffered from abdominal pain with diarrhea. With the continuation of the chemotherapy, these symptoms worsened daily. Most patients were unsuccessfully treated with resorted to metoclopramide, phenergan (promethazine hydrochloride), and Vitamin B₆.

Treatment Method

All patients were administered a modification of *Ban Xia Xie Xin Tang* (Pinellia Drain the Heart Decoction): Rhizoma Pinelliae Ternatae (*Ban Xia*), Radix Codonopsis Pilosulae (*Dang Shen*), 12g each, Radix Scutellariae Baicalensis (*Huang Qin*), dried Rhizoma Zingiberis Officinalis (*Gan Jiang*), 9g each, Rhizoma Coptidis Chinensis (*Huang Lian*), honey mix-fried Radix Glycyrrhizae (*Zhi Gan Cao*), 6g each, and Fructus Zizyphi Jujubae (*Da Zao*), 10g. For severe nausea and vomiting, Haematitum (*Dai Zhe Shi*), 30g, and Flos Inulae (*Xuan Fu Hua*), 10g, were added. For marked loss of appetite Semen Raphani Sativi (*Lai Fu Zi*) and stir-fried Fructus Germinatus Hordei Vulgaris (*Chao Mai Ya*), 12g each, were added. For marked abdominal pain, Rhizoma Corydalis Yanhusuo (*Yan Hu Suo*), 20g and Radix Paeoniae Lactiflorae (*Bai Shao*), 15g, were added. For severe diarrhea, Sclerotium Poriae Cocos (*Fu Ling*), 15g and stir-fried Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae (*Chao Bai Zhu*), 12g, were added. One *ji*, divided into 3-6 small portions, was taken throughout the day.

Treatment Effect Observation

Treatment effect criteria: **Marked effect** meant that after taking the herbs for one day, the stomach glomus and fullness, the nausea and vomiting and the lack of appetite began to disperse and that after having taken the medicinals for 3 days, the appetite had clearly increased, there was no more nausea and vomiting and the patients were able to endure the entire course of chemotherapy. **Some effect** meant that after having taken the medicinals for three days, the stomach duct glomus and fullness, the nausea and vomiting, the lack of appetite lessened and that the food intake increased; the patients were able to endure the entire course of chemotherapy. **No**

effect meant that after having taken the medicinals for three days, the gastrointestinal symptoms had not resolved at all; some patients in this group were forced to discontinue their chemotherapy.

Out of the 128 patients, 86 experienced a marked effect, 39 patients some effect, and 3 patients experienced no effect. Thus, the total amelioration rate was 97.66%.

Representative Case History

The patient was a 56 year old man who had been diagnosed with stomach cancer. The cancer was removed surgically; thereafter, he received chemotherapy. After two days of chemotherapeutic treatment, he developed nausea and vomiting, reduced appetite, stomach duct and abdominal distension and fullness, abdominal pain, lack of strength of the body, a pale tongue with white and slimy fur and a rapid and forceless pulse. This pointed to a mix of cold and heat and a loss of regulation of upbearing and downbearing. Hence, *Ban Xia Xie Xin Tang* with the additions of Haematitum (*Dai Zhe Shi*), 20g, Flos Inulae (*Xuan Fu Hua*), and Tuber Corydalis Yanhusuo (*Yan Hu Suo*), 10g each, was prescribed. One *ji* divided into small portions was taken throughout the day. After taking the herbs for one day, the nausea and vomiting had markedly improved. After taking the herbs for three days, all the symptoms had basically dispersed. The prescription was continued for another 3 days to further improve the condition. Thereafter, he was able to finish the entire course of chemotherapy treatment course.

Discussion

Chemotherapy very often leads to such digestive system symptoms like nausea and vomiting, stomach duct and abdominal distension and fullness, lack of appetite, abdominal pain, and diarrhea. If these symptoms are severe, the patients may need to discontinue chemotherapy; if they continue despite these manifestations, their body becomes weak and debilitated. Chinese medicinals can help reduce and disperse the gastrointestinal side effects and can help patients to better endure chemotherapeutic treatment.

According to the signs and symptoms, chemotherapeutically induced gastrointestinal side effects can be classified as glomus condition (*pi zheng*) in Chinese medicine. The author therefore selected the *Shang Han Lun* (*On Cold Damage*) formula *Ban Xia Xie Xin Tang* to treat the patients. This formula acridly opens and bitterly downbears. It treats mixtures of hot and cold and regulates and corrects the intestine and stomach. Within this formula, bitter Rhizoma Pinelliae Ternatae (*Ban Xia*) enters the stomach and is the governing medicinal. It both acridly opens to dissipate bindings and bitterly downbears to stop vomiting. Thus, it eliminates glomus and fullness as well as upward counterflow. It is supported by dried Rhizoma Zingiberis Officinalis (*Gan Jiang*) which warmly eliminates cold and by Radix Scutellariae Baicalensis (*Huang Qin*) and Rhizoma Coptidis Chinensis (*Huang Lian*) which bitterly cold drain heat. The assistants are Radix Codonopsis Pilosulae (*Dang Shen*) and Fructus Zizyphi Jujubae (*Da Zao*); these medicinals supplement and boost the middle qi. The envoy is Radix Glycyrrhizae (*Gan Cao*) which supplements the spleen and stomach and regulates all other medicinals in this prescription. In combination, hot and cold, acrid and bitter, supplementation and draining are used and coordinated simultaneously.

As the above study shows, using this formula, the author had good results in the treatment of all but 3 cases suffering from chemotherapy-induced gastrointestinal side effects. Hence, he considers the acrid opening, bitter downbearing, and stomach and intestine regulation functions of *Ban Xia Xie Xin Tang* to be effective in the reduction or elimination of the gastrointestinal side effects arising due to chemotherapy.