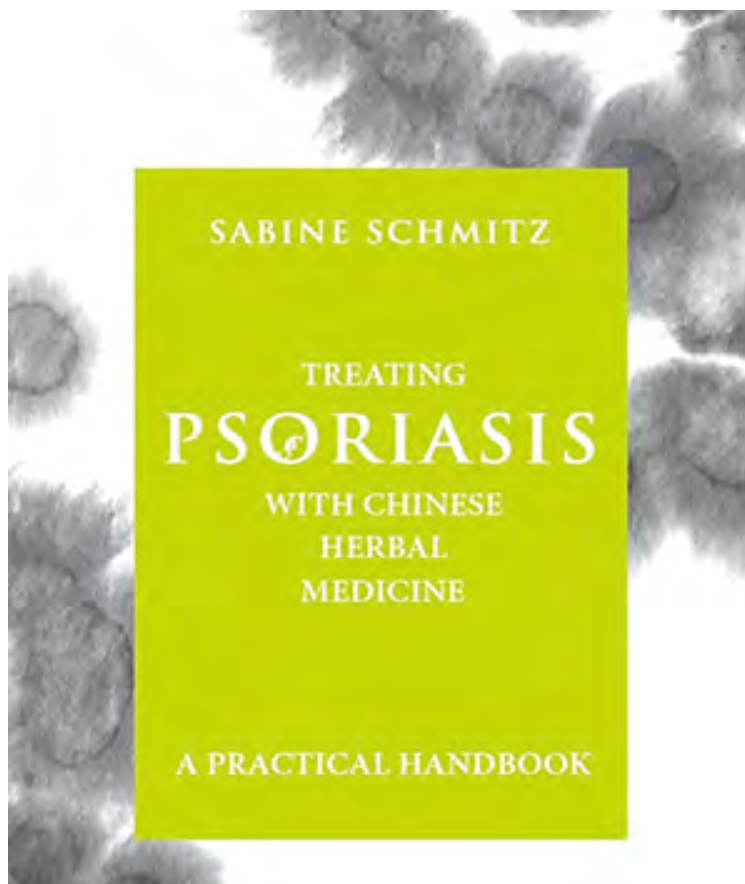




Sabine Schmitz
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A practical Handbook
of treating Psoriasis with Chinese herbal medicine
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**TREATING
PSORIASIS WITH
CHINESE HERBAL MEDICINE –
A PRACTICAL
HANDBOOK**

TREATING PSORIASIS WITH CHINESE HERBAL MEDICINE – A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK

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Dedicated to my teacher, Professor MăLil.

I will always appreciate her knowledge and generosity.

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PREFACE

My motives for writing this book are manifold. When I studied in China, I acquired a very good overview on the information and literature available on the subject of psoriasis and on the latest research. Thus, the main reason for writing this book is that at present, literature about the application of Chinese medicine in the treatment of psoriasis is rare, scattered in different places, or lacks depth and scope in methods and explanations. I found this to be true when I compiled a very detailed literature review for my Master's degree in China, with my key subject Chinese dermatology, in particular psoriasis. However, while performing this initial literature research, I could hardly find any books in English that sufficiently address the application of Chinese medicine in treating psoriasis. There are only two books on the market in English that deal with psoriasis,¹ but both only assign one chapter to this skin disease. Additionally, the results presented in various articles on psoriasis available in English,² are redundant. All in all, I can only point out the insufficient state of literature regarding this topic, and note that this unsatisfactory documentation deviates from the analysis and treatment of psoriasis I have observed and followed in my practice and during my studies in China. This is why I am convinced that a detailed written account of the analysis and treatment practice in TCM has been long overdue; an account that includes the adaptations to our modern context, and the integration of knowledge gained in the past decades.

Chinese herbal medicine has been used to treat psoriasis since ancient times. The earliest ancient description of psoriasis from TCM perspective can be found in a book from the Suí Dynasty³, called *Zhū Bìng Yuán Hòu Lùn* (General Treatise on the Etiology and Symptomology of Diseases), by Cháo Yuánfāng. Yet, societies and their lifestyles have changed. In our more stressful and challenging times, chronic skin diseases like psoriasis seem to be increasing. Living conditions have changed and we, as TCM doctors, need to take the patients' emotions and environment into account. It would be a mistake not to do this – to not consider the obvious which is often the root cause of the disease. Emotional changes, especially “inappropriate” or excessive emotions, play an important role in the onset of psoriasis. The Liver

-
- 1 “Dermatology in Traditional Chinese Medicine”, by Xu Yihou (1st edition, May 15, 2004) and “The Clinical Practice of Chinese Medicine: Psoriasis & Cutaneous Pruritis (PMPH)”, by Lu Chuan-jian, Xuan Guo-wie (published in 2008).
 - 2 For example: Lu Chuan-jian, Yu Jing-jie, Deng Jing-Wen: Disease-Syndrome Combination Clinical Study of Psoriasis: Present Status, Advantages, and Prospects; Chin J Integr Med 2012 Mar; 18(3): 166-171 or T. W. Tse: Use of common Chinese herbs in the treatment of psoriasis; Clinical and Experimental Dermatology, 28, 469–475.
 - 3 Suí Dynasty (581-618 AD).

(*gān* 肝)⁴ plays a crucial role in treating psoriasis in cases of emotional changes. Interestingly, TCM books discussing psoriasis very often miss one of the most common TCM syndromes occurring nowadays, which is Liver qì stagnation syndrome with excess heat. This book, among many things, describes the mechanism behind the pattern of Liver qì stagnation (*gān qì yù jié* 肝气郁结), the resulting negative impact on the skin, and it details the corresponding treatment. Furthermore, it explores the most common TCM syndromes in depth. Finally, aspects of my own clinical experience are included to fill out and bring to life the theory in this book.

Moreover, this book also presents the latest research findings about Chinese herbs commonly used and most effective in regard to the modern pharmacological mode of action in the treatment of psoriasis. One chapter details other essential and useful herbs that I use in my clinic and, perhaps more importantly, lists the formulas that have been proved to be most effective and have not been mentioned in this context before.

In order to treat patients successfully, we cannot simply look at efficacy but we also need to consider the patients' safety. What use is it, if a treatment seems to be effective in improving affected skin areas but the patient experiences significant side effects? In the course of my studies on psoriasis in China, we performed a case series with 56 patients to prove the efficacy and safety of Chinese herbal medicine in the treatment of psoriasis. With the background of all clinical data collected and my personal clinical experience in treating patients with skin diseases, it is evident that TCM offers a safe and effective treatment option for psoriasis, based on natural sources, and with less adverse effects. My clinical experience confirms the high efficacy and low recurrence that TCM offers, along with a variety of treatment methods and flexibility in the use of herbs. This — and the fact that TCM has few side effects — make it a promising alternative therapy to conventional medicine.

I am glad to share my findings and considerations with all readers of this book. Hopefully, this publication will serve as a resourceful reference book for the treatment of patients with psoriasis in everyday practice.

4 *Pinyin* will be named first for all Chinese terms throughout the book, then Chinese. This should make it more accessible for all those who do not speak Chinese.

INTRODUCTION

Psoriasis (*bái bǐ* 白疔, or in common usage *niú pí xuǎn* 牛皮癣) is a recurring, chronic inflammatory skin disease, characterized by thick, dry and silver-colored scaly plaques. Although it primarily affects the skin and nails, the joints can also be involved. The etiology is not clear, but it is linked to genetic and immune system abnormalities, resulting in hyperproliferation of the epidermis and inflammation of the skin.

Western medicine does not offer any complete cure for psoriasis at present. The various treatments currently available only aim at reducing the intensity of its symptoms. The current treatments range from external (topical) application to internal (systemic) therapy as well as UV phototherapy. These treatments are often burdensome, unpleasant and largely unsatisfactory. Oral medication is usually reserved for severe cases because of potential side effects. The intake of oral methotrexate (MTX) or retinoic acid (marketed as roaccutane), for instance, may adversely impact the patient's physical and mental condition. External use of ointments, which contain ingredients like glucocorticoids, have shown poor efficacy after the discontinuation of skin treatment: recurrence and aggravations have been observed. Therefore, patients become frustrated and start looking for alternative treatment options.

An additional factor in the frustration with Western medicine is that patients nowadays are better informed than they used to be. Awareness concerning pharmaceutical products has changed significantly; not only in regard to their efficacy but also to the benefits versus the risks of the drugs prescribed. Thus, for Western psoriasis patients a suitable therapy proven to be without recurrences and aggravations has yet to be found. This is what Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) can offer. When the advantages of TCM are explained in a simple and clear manner, patients are quite open to taking new paths and trying new approaches.

In China, TCM is a popular method to treat this disease, because the positive results are known. It is fascinating to consider how long TCM has been used for the treatment of psoriasis in China: over one thousand years. And this only refers to specialist treatments of dermatological diseases, such as psoriasis. TCM in general can produce records for over two thousand years of medical development. In comparison, the origins of empirical conventional medicine barely stretch to three hundred years. This is something that should be particularly pointed out to patients who consult a TCM doctor for the first time. Without any exaggeration, it can be

stated that TCM offers a variety of internal and external treatment methods that allows for a flexible approach in the use of remedies. This flexibility is essential to the treatment of skin diseases, because the tendency of skin diseases is to develop and change rapidly. This variation has to be reflected in their medical treatment, which needs to be flexible and applicable. Monitoring and checking the patient's progress continuously is thus crucial. Practice shows that even a minor external or emotional irritant can worsen a skin condition that seemed to be perfectly fine the previous day.

Finally, Chinese herbal therapies – the focus of this book – are not only effective but also safe. Patients generally comply well, and the remission period seems to be longer lasting compared to conventional medicine.

The occurrence of psoriasis is increasing, although the reasons for this upsurge have not been identified.⁵ Considering that the worldwide prevalence of psoriasis is at around 2%⁶ and rising, it seems obvious that there is a definite demand and need for more specialist literature exploring this area of TCM. This book reviews the long history of Chinese medical dermatology and explains psoriasis from a TCM perspective. It depicts the most common TCM syndromes, and introduces the corresponding internal and external treatments for each case. Lifestyle suggestions are presented, as they are crucial to the patient's recovery – keeping in mind that the patient him – or herself is always a part of the treatment. Finally, clinical cases are explained and the latest biochemical research results are taken into account.

Having learned, applied and experienced the advantages of Chinese treatment options, it is quite obvious that it offers the most beneficial treatment for patients suffering from this chronic disease. By choosing the most suitable treatment method and knowing the effects, TCM provides immense flexibility in treatment options and a broad range of applications. This is essential since not all patients with the same Western medicine diagnosis can or should be treated in the same way. In psoriasis, for example, TCM allows for individual treatment, fully adapted to each individual's needs, because it takes into account different locations, different stages, and different sub-types according to their appearance.

5 Trends in incidence of adult-onset psoriasis over three decades: J Am Acad Dermatol. 2009 Mar; 60(3):394-401.

6 WHO: Psoriasis - Report by the Secretariat, EB133/5, 2013.

THE PERSPECTIVE ON PSORIASIS IN TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

The Historical Naming of Psoriasis in Traditional Chinese Medicine

TCM now refers to psoriasis as *bái bǐ* (white crust). This has not always been the case, psoriasis had had multiple other labels and names in ancient literature until TCM finally settled on this term.

Many ancient TCM books describe psoriasis. From ancient times to now, the Chinese have referred to psoriasis by many names: *bái bǐ* 白疔 (white crust), *niú pí xuǎn* 牛皮癬 (pine skin tinea or alternatively cow skin eczema), *sōng pí xuǎn* 松皮癬 (a kind of ringworm), *gān xuǎn* 干癬 (dry ringworm), *fēng xuǎn* 风癬 (wind ringworm), *shé fēng* 蛇风 (snake wind), *wán xuǎn* 顽癬 (prolonged ringworm). In addition to all these names, terms such as *bái ké chuāng* 白壳疮 (named by its silver scales) or *jīn qián fēng* 金钱风 (the size of its skin lesion is as big as copper and the color is silver) have appeared as well.

The colloquial name *niú pí xuǎn* originates from *Yī Zōng Jīn Jiàn* (The Golden Mirror of Ancestral Medicine, ca. 1736-1743), written by Wú Qiān et al. The book describes six types of “*xuǎn*” (ringworm) and clearly distinguishes *sōng pí xuǎn* from *niú pí xuǎn*: “The forth “*xuǎn*” is called *niú pí xuǎn*. The skin lesion feels like the skin of an ox’s neck, thick and firm. The fifth “*xuǎn*” is called *sōng pí xuǎn* and the skin lesions of this type feels like the coating of a pine tree, characterized by whitish lesion connected to reddish lesions and an itching sensation.”⁷⁴ However, at the present time psoriasis is mostly called *bái bǐ* (white crust), as it appears in dotted form with white marks.

The Definition and History of Psoriasis according to Traditional Chinese Medicine

Now that TCM has settled on a name for the disease, it is interesting to explore the history of psoriasis and how the perspective on it has changed (or been expanded) during the last 1500 years.

74 *Yī Zōng Jīn Jiàn* (The Golden Mirror of Ancestral Medicine).

Suí Dynasty ⁷⁵ 610	<i>Zhū Bīng Yuán Hòu Lùn</i> (General Treatise on the Etiology and Symptomology of Diseases), by Cháo Yuánfāng	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • earliest ancient description of psoriasis from TCM perspective • description of a disease called <i>gān xiǎn</i> (<i>xiǎn</i> = lichen) • manifestation of the lesions: “The boundary of skin leisure is evident. ... epidermis is thickening, shriveled, cracking and itching. ... silver scales will be drawing off when the epidermis is scratched.”⁷⁶ • pathogenesis: pathogenic factors combined wind (<i>fēng</i> 风), dampness (<i>shī</i> 湿) and toxin (毒 <i>dú</i>), which invade the exterior skin
Táng Dynasty ⁷⁷ 752	<i>Wài Tái Mì Yào</i> (Arcane Essentials from the Imperial Library), by Wáng Tǎo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mentions that the etiology of psoriasis is mainly due to wind and dampness in the skin combined with an imbalance between cold-dampness, qi and blood • at this time, a lot of external applications for psoriasis were first reported, which were mostly used for the elimination of dampness and parasites, e.g. worms
ca. 1065–771 BC	<i>Wǔ Shí Èr Bīng Fāng</i> (Prescriptions for Fifty-Two Diseases), author unknown ⁷⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seemingly earliest reference to the term “<i>bǐ</i>” • records <i>shēn bǐ</i> 身疔 (<i>bǐ</i> over the trunk) • character <i>bǐ</i> 疔 at that time mainly meant external injuries
early Míng Dynasty 1575	<i>Yī Xué Rù Mén</i> (Introduction to Medicine), by Lǐ Chān	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first time: psoriasis caused mainly by blood-heat and wind-dryness • leads to wind toxin that invades skin
Míng Dynasty 1602	<i>Zhèng Zhì Zhǔn Shéng</i> (Standard Differentiation of Patterns and Treatments), by Wáng Kěntáng	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • psoriasis most likely caused by invasion of combined dampness and heat in Spleen (<i>pí</i> 脾) channel • also by external invasion of wind-heat in Lung (<i>fēi</i> 肺) • manifestation is generalized all over body with skin lesions eroding and diffuse • patient’s skin itches and aches – course of disease prolonged • <i>bái bǐ</i> (white <i>bǐ</i>) is rather described as symptom

75 Suí Dynasty (581-618 AD).

76 *Zhū Bīng Yuán Hòu Lùn* (General Treatise on the Etiology and Symptomology of Diseases).

77 Táng Dynasty (618-907 AD).

78 This medical text was discovered during the excavation of the Mǎ Wángduī tomb in 1973.

Ears

Psoriasis generally occurs in the external ear canal, not on the inside of the ear or behind the eardrum. Psoriasis in the ears can cause a scale buildup that blocks the external ear canal. This may lead to temporary hearing impairment. Patients often report an accompanying itching sensation in the ears.



Genital Area

The most common type of psoriasis in the genital region is the “inverse type” (see above for intertriginous regions of the skin folds, called “yīn area”). Lesions first show up as smooth, dry, red lesions. The following areas can be affected by psoriasis: pubis, upper thighs, creases between the thigh and groin, genitals, anus and surrounding skin and buttocks crease. In early stages, this type is often misdiagnosed as syphilis.



Nails

Nail changes occur in up to 50 percent of psoriasis patients, and in at least 80 percent of patients with psoriatic arthritis. The most common nail problems are: pitting, characterized by shallow or deep holes in the nail; deformations, which are alterations in the normal shape of the nail; thickening of the nail; onycholysis (a separation of the nail from the nail bed) and discoloration creating an unusual nail color, such as yellow-brown.



Negative Impacts of Excessive Emotions on the Skin

Skin diseases significantly worsen in connection to negative emotions. And, vice versa, the condition of the skin improves as soon as the patient's emotional state improves.

TCM considers the main cause of psoriasis to be heat. Long-lasting anger usually disrupts the up- and down-bearing qì dynamic and qì becomes constrained and stagnant, and eventually transmutes into heat and fire, as discussed previously. Heat and fire lie along a continuum and differ only in their severity, with heat at the mild end and fire at the more extreme end.⁹⁴ Since rapid movements characterize pathogenic heat, symptoms caused by heat are characterized by an acute onset and rapid transmission. This can be frequently observed in patients with psoriasis who have an episode of severe stress or periods of recurring angry outbursts. Skin lesions develop very quickly and are bright red immediately after a severe incident. It is not uncommon that a patient you have just seen the day before looking good comes into your practice with a severe worsening of his skin. Therefore, it is essential to explain to these patients how important regular visits and formula modifications are.

TCM channel theory is important in determining a diagnosis in dermatology, because the channels serve physiologically as a pathway for transportation of qì and blood. In pathological conditions, they can also serve as a pathway for pathological factors like wind and heat (fire). Based on this theory, it makes sense that skin changes such as red skin lesions or skin inflammation can be seen along the pathway of the affected channel. If stress, overwork or emotions like anger are involved, the Liver channel is affected quite often. If this is the case, bright red, hot and thick skin lesions with scales can be found especially in the upper regions - the head, face, ears and eyes - because of the up-rising nature of heat. As the head is the point of convergence of all yáng channels in the body, the most intense skin lesions are frequently located on the scalp. Please note that if heat is accompanied by dampness, pathogenic skin lesions are mainly found in the lower parts of the body, around the genital region and legs or feet. When caused by heat, the red skin lesions can be accompanied by a localized burning and itching sensation. The red color, the hot temperature, and burning all indicate excessive heat. Itching is due to internal wind, which is caused by dryness and blood deficiency. Excessive heat consumes the yīn fluids (body fluids) and exhausts qì. The blood becomes deficient and the skin is no longer supplied with moisture. Thus, distinct scaling

94 Yán Shí-Lín: Pathomechanisms of the Liver (*Gān Bìng Zhī Bìng Jī* 肝病之病機), p. 174.

accrues which makes it often difficult to detect the underlying redness of the skin. Psoriasis can also affect the trunk and limbs, but the onset of psoriasis usually starts on the scalp (head) before spreading to other locations on the body. This is why it is so important to cure the disease at an early stage before it can spread. Making sure to soothe the Liver will help ensure this. Thus, paying attention to balanced emotions can help improve psoriasis, and also many other diseases! Particularly in our fast-paced societies and times of increasing stress factors, it can be a considerable advantage to slow down, reduce stress and listen to emotional and physical alarm signals.

Impacts of Excessive Emotions to the General Body

Results of long-lasting emotional disturbances do not just result in changes of the skin. The following mentions other consequences that can occur in the context of skin diseases or independently. As explored above, excess yáng (heat) as a result of prolonged qì stagnation within the body often leads to symptoms found in the upper part of the body, such as a red complexion and red eyes, fever, restlessness, irritability, insomnia, headaches. The tongue is usually deep red: red lateral borders on the tongue, a red tip of the tongue or occasionally red spots on the tip of the tongue. The pulse is rapid. Checking tongue and pulse is not only an essential part of making a TCM diagnosis, but also provides information about possible other signs the patient did not mention during consultation. In daily practice, patients often add essential information only when somehow reminded of it. Thus, checking the tongue and pulse is very important and a simple indicator for further enquiries and accurate syndrome differentiation, and should be of great assistance.

Liver qì stagnation also impacts functioning of the digestive system, the Spleen and the Stomach. Typical signs of Liver qì stagnation affecting the digestive system are belching, regurgitation, vomiting, loose stool or diarrhea. If the Liver fails to smooth the flow of qì, qì and body fluids stagnate. This can lead to edema or ascites, which can develop into very serious conditions. And most notably, if the Liver qì stagnates for a long period of time, the orderly circulation of blood is impaired as well. Thus, patients with chronic diseases that involve Liver qì stagnation often have symptoms of both qì and blood stagnation (stasis). Blood stasis goes deeper and presents with stronger signs, such as a stabbing pain in the chest, abdominal masses, including tumors, and irregular or painful menstruation. Please note that in case of blood stagnation, the tongue and pulse condition will most likely present in a different way. The tongue in such a case has a livid (purple or dark) discoloration and/or purplish veins underneath the tongue, or stasis spots. The deeper the

blood stagnation, the more signs can be observed. The pulse can be wiry or rough. Abundant heat usually drives yīn fluids out of the body resulting in sweating. Thus, heat manifestations are often accompanied by thirst with a preference for drinking cold water; a dry throat and tongue; dark and scanty urine, and constipation due to the consumption and impairment of yīn fluids. When extreme heat or fire enters the blood vessels, it quickens the blood flow and sears the blood vessels. This causes an abnormal flow of blood, which manifests as bleeding such as hemoptysis, epistaxis, hematuria, ecchymosis, excessive menstruation, metrorrhagia and so forth.

SYNDROME DIFFERENTIATION AND TREATMENT ACCORDING TO TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

In TCM, psoriasis is caused by an interaction of exterior and interior pathogenic factors (*bìng xié* 病邪). Its characteristics can thus be very diverse. Prior to treatment, the exact cause has to be determined according to TCM, by the process of syndrome differentiation (*biàn zhèng* 辨证). TCM syndrome differentiation is the detailed analysis of all clinical information gained by the four main diagnostic TCM methods: inspection (observation), questioning, auscultation (listening) and olfaction (smelling), and palpation. Successful treatment relies on an accurate diagnosis, so the complex process of making a diagnosis according to TCM is essential, and cannot be replaced. Although there are root causes and trigger factors for psoriasis, each individual psoriasis patient has a distinctive cluster of root cause and trigger factors. Therefore every patient presents with a different origin of the disease and suffers from different accompanying symptoms. Each patient is unique, and without precise syndrome differentiation it is not possible to give the patient the proper treatment he or she requires.

The treatment of psoriasis employs various therapeutic methods, and combines both internal and external treatments corresponding with the individual clinical manifestation on the skin. In general, psoriasis has to be treated in correspondence with the different stages, first by expelling the pathogenic factors during the active and progressive phase, and then by supporting and supplementing during the regressive (stable) phase. The main patterns are explained in detail below. They are listed according to their frequency of occurrence in my practice and during my clinical studies in mainland China. It should be emphasized, however, that the frequency of occurrence can vary.

The ingredients, functions and effects of the different formulas used in each individual TCM syndrome as well as their source are listed, elaborated and explained in great detail. While this primarily serves the understanding for students and beginners, it can also serve as a useful refresher for advanced clinicians.

Heat Stagnation in the Liver Meridian (*Gān Jīng Yù Rè* 肝经郁热)

It seems to me that the most common pattern nowadays is Liver (*gān*) qì stagnation syndrome with excess heat.

An important role here is played by individual living habits and personal environment. It has been suggested that in over 50-60% of patients, stress and emotional factors, like anger, are responsible for the onset or an exacerbation of the disease. As detailed above, anger and functions of the Liver always affect each other. We have observed in the clinic that psoriasis is markedly worsened after an upset, anger/rage or stressful situations. Often patients do not report this on their own initiative; thus, as soon you have the feeling that the patient is in emotional distress you should enquire after their current circumstances and emotional state. Patients then often confirm preceding factors like stress or negative emotions before the onset or exacerbation of their skin condition. Furthermore, patients often consume alcohol or cigarettes to cope with stressful situations and overwork, especially young men. Alcohol, cigarettes and spicy food have been found to be negative factors, which can trigger or worsen heat in the Liver and thus exacerbate psoriasis. Patients also report that lesions get redder and itch more after consuming wine. In women, suppressed emotions as a triggering factor are seen more frequently, because in contrast to the general stereotype, women tend to control their emotions more than men and show them less.

Characteristics:

This pattern usually occurs in the progressive stage of psoriasis. Excessive heat and especially upward flaring of Liver fire are extremely complex and lead to numerous clinical symptoms. The upward rising of heat, a *yáng* pathogen, tends to first affect the head. Thus, the lesions of psoriasis will be most severe at the top of the head and/or on the hairline and the resulting symptoms on the head can certainly become very intense. Red, hot and thick skin lesions in varying sizes with scales can be observed, often accompanied by a burning sensation and itching. Itching is due to internal wind, which, again, is caused by dryness and blood deficiency. The skin bleeds easily after scratching, demonstrating “Auspitz phenomena” (*xuè lù xiàn xiàng*). As mentioned above, the lesions can also affect the trunk and limbs but they mainly start on the scalp.

Other typical signs of heat stagnation in the Liver channel can be: a bitter taste in the mouth and dry throat, irritability, dry stool or dark yellow urine. The tongue

is red, which indicates internal heat. The tongue coating may be thick and yellow, depending on the degree of damp-heat present. The pulse is wiry, rapid and forceful, which indicates heat excess in the Liver channel.

Treatment principle:

Drain excess heat (fire) from the Liver channel (*qīng xiè gān dǎn huǒ rè* 清泻肝胆火热) in order to relieve the inflammation on the skin.

Representative formula:

The formula suggested most often is *Lóng Dǎn Xiè Gān Tāng* (Gentian Decoction to Drain the Liver).

Ingredients:

<i>lóng dǎn cǎo</i>	Gentianiae, Radix	4-6 g
<i>huáng qín</i>	Scutellariae, Radix	9 g
<i>zhī zǐ</i>	Gardeniae, Fructus	9 g
<i>chái hú</i>	Bupleuri, Radix	9 g
<i>mù tóng</i>	Akebiae, Caulis	9 g
<i>chē qián zǐ</i>	Plantaginis, Semen	9 g
<i>zé xiè</i>	Alismatis, Rhizoma	12 g
<i>shēng dì huáng</i>	Rehmanniae Glutinosae, Radix	15-30 g
<i>dāng guī</i>	Angelicae Sinensis, Radix	9 g
<i>gān cǎo</i>	Glycyrrhizae Uralensis, Radix	6 g

First reference: *Lóng Dǎn Xiè Gān Tāng* is a relatively recent formula. The first reference of the formula can be found in *Yī Fāng Jí Jiě* (Medical Formulas Collected and Analyzed, 1682, Qīng Dynasty), written by Wāng Àng. Over 700 prescriptions are listed in this book. The author says that *Lóng Dǎn Xiè Gān Tāng* can clear heat from the organs and he lists the following syndromes where it can be used:

- 1.) Heat excess in the Liver and Gallbladder
- 2.) Liver fire rising
- 3.) Damp-heat in the Liver

(The second combination can be also used as external wash for herpes labialis. *Qín pí* may be removed in that case.)

<i>kǔ shēn</i>	Sophorae Flavescentis, Radix	15 g
<i>dì fū zǐ</i>	Kochiae Scopariae, Fructus	15 g
<i>bái xiān pí</i>	Dictamni Radicis, Cortex	15 g
<i>shé chuāng zǐ</i>	Cnidii, Fructus	15 g

Another very simple example of frequently used and effective combination in this pattern:

<i>huáng bǎi</i>	Phellodendri, Cortex	15 g
<i>huáng qín</i>	Scutellariae, Radix	15 g
<i>huáng lián</i>	Coptidis, Rhizoma	15 g

Please note that other herbs can be added and dosages can be changed as required. To name a few examples: *Jú huā* or *yě jú huā* can be added if the lesions are in the face. *Jīn yín huā*, *pú gōng yīng* or *tǔ fú líng* can be always added in this pattern to increase the heat clearing process, reduce redness and swelling. This combination is often used if the lesions can be found at the upper part of the body, especially in the face. It has been shown to be very effective in practice. More information and standard boiling instructions can be found in appendix I.

It is also always helpful to inform patients that there are many different possibilities for external applications, and a great variety of combinations. Tell patients that their wash can be adapted very flexibly if needed.¹⁰⁴



104 This applies to all forms and variations of external treatments.

Diagnosis:

Bái bǐ – Accumulated blood heat (*xuè rè* 血熱), Western medicine: Psoriasis vulgaris (PV)

Treatment principle:

Cool and invigorate blood, clear heat and relieve toxicity in order to eliminate lesions (*liáng xuè huó xuè, qīng rè jiě dú xiāo zhǒng* 凉血活血，清热解毒消肿).

Formula:

<i>shuǐ niú jiǎo</i>	Bubali, Cornu	30 g
<i>lóng dǎn cǎo</i>	Gentianiae, Radix	6 g
<i>dāng guī</i>	Angelicae Sinensis, Radix	12 g
<i>chì sháo</i>	Paeoniae Rubrae, Radix	15 g
<i>mǔ dān pí</i>	Moutan, Cortex	12 g
<i>shēng dì huáng</i>	Rehmanniae Glutinosae, Radix	15 g
<i>xuán shēn</i>	Scrophulariae Ningpoensis, Radix	9 g
<i>bái huā shé shé cǎo</i>	Hedyotis Diffusae, Herba	15 g
<i>qī yè yī zhī huā</i> ¹⁶¹	Paridis, Rhizoma	9 g
<i>lián qiáo</i>	Forsythiae, Fructus	12 g
<i>gān cǎo</i>	Glycyrrhizae Uralensis, Radix	6 g

Due to the severity of psoriasis, generalized bright red and thick lesions all over the body, and the patient having received several conventional drugs before, the treatment with Chinese herbal medicine was combined with a compound of glycyrrhizin 120 mg intravenous drip once a day, and cefuroxime 3g intravenous drip twice a day to reduce inflammation and to prevent an infection of the skin. Topical application of calcipotriol and halometasone cream was applied twice daily directly to the psoriasis lesions. Both, calcipotriol and halometasone are frequently used in the treatment of psoriasis vulgaris. Calcipotriol is a corticosteroid, an anti-inflammatory agent from the group of vitamin D3 derivatives, which promotes the formation of normal skin. Halometasone is also a corticosteroid. Halcinonide solution, which is a topical corticosteroid primarily consisting of synthetic steroids, was also applied on the scalp twice a day. It is used as an anti-inflammatory and anti-pruritic agent.

161 Alternative Chinese names: *zǎo xiū* or *chóng lóu*.



Ointments (Yóu Gāo, Oil-based Ointments)

Frequently used herbs for the preparation of oil-based ointments in case of blood-heat patterns are for example: *qīng dài* such as used in *Qīng Dài (Yóu) Gāo* or *huáng lián* used in *Huáng Lián Gāo*¹⁷¹.

Qīng Dài (Yóu) Gāo (Indigo Naturalis Ointment)

<i>qīng dài</i>	Indigo Naturalis	60 g
<i>huáng bǎi</i>	Phellodendri, Cortex	60 g
<i>huá shí</i>	Talcum	120 g
<i>shí gāo</i>	Gypsum Fibrosum	120 g

The ingredients mentioned above are *Qīng Dài Sǎn* (Indigo Powder), a popular formula with widely used variations to treat skin conditions. For application, grind the ingredients (except *qīng dài*) to a fine powder and soak them in 500 ml of sesame oil for 24 hours. Cook over mild heat until the ingredients have a dark yellow color. Filter off the sesame oil and finally, add *qīng dài* to the medicated oil and mix well. Allow to gel and apply once or twice a day on the affected areas of the skin.

Huáng Lián Gāo (Coptidis Balm)

<i>huáng qín</i>	Scutellariae, Radix	12 g
<i>huáng lián</i>	Coptidis, Rhizoma	10 g
<i>jiāng huáng</i>	Curcumae Longae, Rhizoma	10 g
<i>dāng guī</i>	Angelicae Sinensis, Radix	15 g
<i>shēng dì huáng</i>	Rehmanniae Glutinosae, Radix	15 g

For application, grind the ingredients to a fine powder and soak them in 500 ml of sesame oil for 24 hours. Cook over mild heat until ingredients have a dark yellow color. Filter off the sesame oil, allow to gel and apply the ointment once or twice a day on the affected areas of the skin.

Both ointments perform a strong action in clearing heat, dispelling toxins, relieving inflammation and stopping any itching. In clinical experience, herbs like *qīng dài* or *huáng lián* seem to have very strong effects and can be used as standalone herbs in ointments. You do not need to add all herbs mentioned to reach the desired

171 From *Yi Zōng Jīn Jiàn* (The Golden Mirror of Ancestral Medicine).

effect. It should be mentioned, however, that these kinds of ointments only should be prescribed when there is no suppuration and skin fissures are closed.

Other commonly used examples of ointments are:

Qīng Liǎn Gāo (Clearing & Cooling Ointment)^{172, 173}

<i>dāng guī</i>	Angelicae Sinensis, Radix	30 g
<i>zǐ cǎo</i>	Arnebiae seu Lithospermi, Radix	6-10 g

Qīng Liǎn Gāo nourishes, moistens and invigorates the blood while clearing heat. It is an ideal choice in the treatment of psoriasis caused by blood heat, blood stasis or blood deficiency with dryness. For application, soak *dāng guī* and *zǐ cǎo* in 300 ml of sesame oil for two or three days. Then cook over mild heat until the herbs turn a dark yellow. Remove the herbal residues and allow the oil to cool before applying to the skin. Apply the ointment once or twice a day on the affected areas of the skin.

This ointment is also known as *Rùn Jī Gāo (Flesh Moistening Ointment)*¹⁷⁴ when, in addition to *zhī má yóu* (sesame oil), it is mixed with 90-120 g *fēng là* (beeswax). The texture is somewhat thicker but the effect remains the same: moisturizing the skin, clearing heat from the blood and alleviating any itching. When *zǐ cǎo* is not available, use the first two formulas (*Qīng Dài Gāo* and *Huáng Lián Gāo*).

Pǔ Lián Gāo (Universally Linked Ointment), also called *Qín Bǎi Gāo*
(*Qín Bǎi Cream*)

<i>huáng qín</i>	Scutellariae, Radix	10 g
<i>huáng bǎi</i>	Phellodendri, Cortex	10 g

Pǔ Lián Gāo clears heat, reduces swelling, moisturizes the skin, and stops itching. For application, grind the herbs into a fine powder and soak them in 250 ml of sesame oil for 24 hours. Cook over mild heat until the ingredients have a dark yellow color. Finally, filter off the sesame oil and allow to gel. Apply the ointment once or twice a day on the affected skin lesions.

172 Prof. Zhào Bǐng Nán clinical experience.

173 Some books mention *dà huáng* as additional ingredient, e.g. Xú Xiàngcái: Complete External Therapies of Chinese Drugs, Foreign Languages Press (January 1, 1998)

174 From *Wài Kē Zhèng Zōng* (True Lineage of External Medicine, 1617).

Yù Huáng Gāo (Jade Yellow Plaster)

<i>dāng guī</i>	Angelicae Sinensis, Radix	30 g
<i>bái zhǐ</i>	Angelica Dahuricae, Radix	9 g
<i>gān cǎo</i>	Glycyrrhizae Uralensis, Radix	30 g
<i>jiāng huáng</i>	Curcumae Longae, Rhizoma	9 g
<i>qīng fěn</i> ¹⁷⁵	Calomelas	6 g
<i>bīng piàn</i>	Borneolum	3 g

Grind the herbs into a fine powder and mix them well with 300 ml of sesame oil. Soak for about 24 hours. The next day shortly bring it to a boil over mild heat and filter off the sesame oil and allow to gel. Remove the herbal residues and allow the oil to cool. Mix it with beeswax before applying on the skin. Please note that in winter usually less beeswax is used than in summer. Apply the ointment once or twice a day on the affected areas of the skin. It clears heat, resolves toxicity, invigorates the blood and break up blood stasis; it reduces swelling and alleviates pain. It is most suitable in blood heat and toxic heat with blood stagnation. This combination as most other ones can also be used as a wash.

Liú Huáng Gāo (Sulfur Ointment)

<i>liú huáng</i>	Sulfur	5-10 g
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Sulfur ointment is another option if there are very thick lesions with serious scaling, pain and swelling. It clears heat, reduces toxicity, invigorates blood and stops itching. As it can relieve inflammation, it is often given in case of bacterial super-infection. For application, grind *liú huáng* into a fine powder and mix it well with 90-95 ml of sesame oil. Shortly bring it to a boil over mild heat, filter off the sesame oil and allow to gel. Apply once or twice a day on the skin lesions. Sulfur ointment is very effective but the color and the smell has to be considered, and patients must be informed about these downsides before usage.

This prescription is also known as *Liú Huáng Ruǎn Gāo*¹⁷⁶ (Sulfur Ointment) when, instead of sesame oil, it is mixed with about 90-95 g beeswax. The texture is somewhat thicker as in *Liú Huáng Gāo* but the effect remains the same. However, one can add a tiny amount of sesame oil (or jojoba oil) to make the consistency more spreadable.

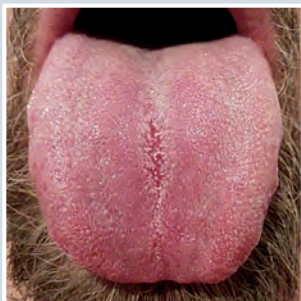
175 Not available everywhere; in Germany, for example, it is not available.

176 *Liú Huáng Gāo*, Chinese: 硫磺膏; *Liú Huáng Ruǎn Gāo*, Chinese: 硫磺软膏.

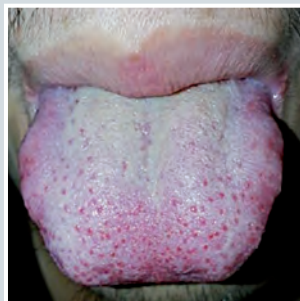
APPENDIX II – COLORED TONGUE ATLAS

This appendix illustrates the different tongues as seen in individual TCM patterns. It should be mentioned that in clinical practice patterns often overlap, thus clear forms of tongues are not always seen. Each tongue image is briefly described to illustrate the different patterns.

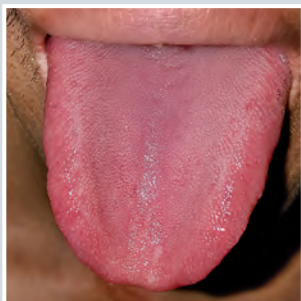
Heat Stagnation in the Liver Meridian (*Gān Jīng Yù Rè* 肝经郁热)



A red tongue with a yellow coating and a crack in the middle. This indicates more heat than dampness and a deficiency of the middle jiāo.



The tongue is red with a yellow coating, which indicates internal heat and dampness.



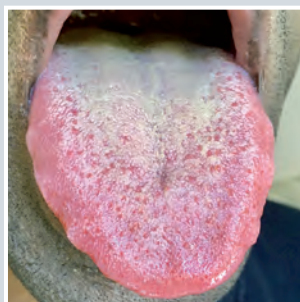
The tongue is red with a very thin yellow coating, which indicates internal heat and mild dampness.



The tongue is red with a yellow coating, which indicates internal heat and some dampness.

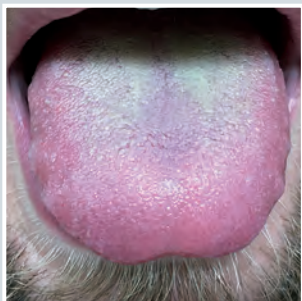


The tongue is red, especially at the borders which correspond to the Liver in Chinese medicine. The tongue coating is thin and yellow.



The tongue is red, which indicates internal heat. The tongue coating is thick and yellow.

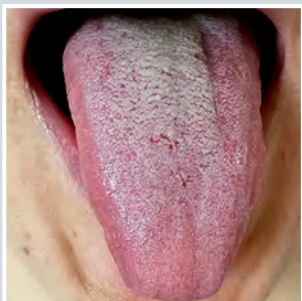
Dampness – Heat (*Shī Rè* 湿热)



A puffy and red tongue with a thick yellow tongue coating.



A red tongue with a thick and greasy yellow tongue coating due to stress, alcohol and smoking.



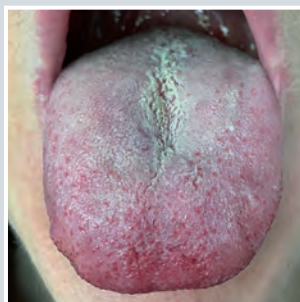
A red tongue with a thick yellow tongue coating.



A tongue with a very thick and greasy yellow coating.



A tongue with a thick yellow and greasy coating that is peeling in some places, which can be a sign of the beginning of yīn deficiency.



A slightly red tongue with a thick yellow coating.

APPENDIX III – PINYIN-CHINESE-ENGLISH FORMULA CROSS REFERENCE

<i>Pīnyīn</i>	Chinese	English
<i>Bái Hǔ Tāng</i>	白虎汤	White Tiger Decoction
<i>Bì Xiè Shèn Shī Tāng</i>	萆薢渗湿汤	Dioscorea Decoction to Leach Out Dampness
<i>Bǔ Gǔ Zhī Dīng</i>	补骨脂酊	Bǔ Gǔ Zhī Tincture
<i>Dān Zhī Xiāo Yáo Sǎn</i>	丹栀逍遥散	Moutan and Gardenia Rambling Powder
<i>Diān Dǎo Sǎn Gāo</i>	颠倒散膏	Upside Down Powder Paste
<i>Èr Miào Sǎn</i>	二妙散	Mysterious Wonder Powder
<i>Fáng Fēng Tōng Shèng Wán</i>	防风通圣丸	Ledebouriella Powder That Sagely Unblocks
<i>Huáng Lián Gāo</i>	黄连膏	Coptidis Balm
<i>Huáng Lián Jiě Dú Tāng</i>	黄连解毒汤	Coptis Decoction to Relieve Toxicity
<i>Jiě Dú Xǐ Yào</i>	解毒洗药	Detoxifying Lotion
<i>Jīn Huáng Sǎn</i>	金黄散	Golden Yellow Powder
<i>Liú Huáng Gāo</i>	硫磺膏	Sulfur Ointment
<i>Liú Huáng Ruǎn Gāo</i>	硫磺软膏	Sulfur Ointment
<i>Liù Jūn Zǐ Tāng</i>	六君子汤	Six Gentlemen Decoction
<i>Lóng Dǎn Xiè Gān Tāng</i>	龙胆泻肝汤	Gentian Decoction to Drain the Liver
<i>Pǔ Lián Gāo</i>	普联膏	Universally Linked Ointment
<i>Qín Bǎi Gāo</i>	芩柏膏	Qín Bǎi Cream
<i>Qīng Dài Gāo</i>	青黛膏	Indigo Naturalis Ointment
<i>Qīng Dài Sǎn</i>	青黛散	Indigo Powder
<i>Qīng Liǎn Gāo</i>	清脸膏	Clearing & Cooling Ointment
<i>Qīng Rè Jiě Dú Xǐ Jì</i>	清热解暑洗剂	Clear Heat and Reduce Toxin Wash
<i>Qīng Wēn Bì Dú Yǐn</i>	清瘟败毒饮	Clear Epidemics and Overcome Toxin Decoction
<i>Qīng Yíng Tāng</i>	清营汤	Clear the Nutritive Level Decoction
<i>Rùn Jī Gāo</i>	润肌膏	Flesh Moistening Ointment

APPENDIX IV – PINYIN-CHINESE-ENGLISH HERB CROSS REFERENCE

<i>Pīnyīn</i>	Chinese	Pharmaceutical
<i>ài yè</i>	艾叶	Artemisiae Argyi, Folium
<i>bǎi bù</i>	百部	Stemona, Radix
<i>bǎi hé</i>	百合	Lilii, Bulbus
<i>bái huā shé shé cǎo</i>	百花蛇舌草	Hedyotis Diffusae, Herba
<i>bái jí lí</i>	白蒺藜	Tribuli Terristris, Fructus
<i>bái máo gēn</i>	白茅根	Imperatae, Rhizoma
<i>bái sháo</i>	白芍	Paeonia Albiflora, Radix
<i>bái xiān pí</i>	白鲜皮	Dictamni Radicis, Cortex
<i>bái zhǐ</i>	白芷	Angelica Dahuricae, Radix
<i>bái zhú</i>	白术	Atractylodis Macrocephalae, Rhizoma
<i>bǎn lán gēn</i>	板蓝根	Isatidis, Radix
<i>bàn xià</i>	半夏	Pinelliae, Rhizoma
<i>bàn zhī lián</i>	半枝莲	Scutellariae Barbatae, Radix
<i>bì má yóu</i>	蓖麻油	Castor Oil
<i>bì xiè</i>	草薢	Dioscoreae, Rhizoma
<i>bīng piàn</i>	冰片	Borneolum
<i>bò hé</i>	薄荷	Menthae, Herba
<i>bǔ gǔ zhī</i>	补骨脂	Psoraleae, Fructus
<i>cāng zhú</i>	苍术	Atractylodis, Rhizoma
<i>cè bǎi yè</i>	侧柏叶	Platycladi Cacumen
<i>chái hú</i>	柴胡	Bupleuri, Radix
<i>chē qián zǐ</i>	车前子	Plantaginis, Semen
<i>chén pí</i>	陈皮	Citri Reticulatae, Pericarpium
<i>chì sháo</i>	赤芍	Paeoniae Rubrae, Radix
<i>chóng lóu</i>	重楼	Paridis, Rhizoma
<i>chuān jiāo</i>	川椒	Xanthoxyli, Semen
<i>chuān niú xī</i>	川牛膝	Cyathulae, Radix
<i>chuān xiōng</i>	川芎	Chuanxiong, Rhizoma
<i>dà huáng</i>	大黄	Rhei, Radix et Rhizoma

APPENDIX V – SOURCE TEXT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Pinyin Title	Chinese Title	English Title
<i>Bèi Jī Qiān Jīn Yào Fāng</i>	备急千金要方	Essential Prescriptions Worth a Thousand in Gold For Every Emergency
<i>Huáng Dì Nèi Jīng</i>	黄帝内经	The Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor
<i>Shí Shān Yī Àn</i>	石山医案	Medical Cases of Wāng Jī
<i>Tài Píng Huì Mǐn Hé Jī Jù Fāng</i>	太平惠民和剂局方	Formulary of the Pharmacy Service for Benefiting the People in the Taiping Era
<i>Wài Kē Dà Chéng</i>	外科大成	Great Compendium of External Medicine
<i>Wài Kē Jīng Yào</i>	外科精要	Essence of Diagnosis and Treatment of External Diseases
<i>Wài Kē Jīng Yì</i>	外科精义	Treatment of Surgical Diseases
<i>Wài Kē Lǐ Lì</i>	外科理例	Exemplars for Applying the Principles of External Medicine
<i>Wài Kē Qǐ Xuán</i>	外科启玄	Profound Insights on External Diseases
<i>Wài Kē Xīn Fǎ</i>	外科心法	Essential Teachings on External Medicine
<i>Wài Kē Zhèng Zhì Quán Shū</i>	外科证治全书	Complete Book of Patterns and Treatments in External Medicine
<i>Wài Kē Zhèng Zōng</i>	外科正宗	True Lineage of External Medicine
<i>Wài Tài Mì Yào</i>	外台秘要	Arcane Essentials from the Imperial Library
<i>Wàikē Zhèng Zhì Quán Shēng Jí</i>	外科证治全生集	Complete Compendium of Patterns and Treatments in External Medicine
<i>Wāng Shíshān Yī Shū Bā Zhǒng</i>	汪石山医书八种	Eight Medical Books of Stone Mountain Wang
<i>Wēn Bìng Tiáo Biàn</i>	温病条辨	Systematic Differentiation of Warm Pathogen Diseases
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