

## Communication tool to describe use of traditional herbal Chinese medicine to Western medicine physicians

Many members of the Chinese community use traditional herbal Chinese medicine concurrently with Western medicine. The traditional herbal Chinese medicine card is a tool to bridge the communication gap between the two forms of medicine.

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**M**any members of the Chinese community use traditional herbal Chinese medicine (TCM) concurrently with Western medicine. A survey of four metropolitan Vancouver family practices with predominantly Chinese patients found that 28% of patients used traditional herbal Chinese medicine in addition to Western medicine.<sup>1</sup> While traditional herbal Chinese medicine

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can be complementary to Western therapies, adverse drug and disease interactions can cause significant morbidity and mortality.<sup>2,3</sup> Currently there is no organized communication system between providers of traditional herbal Chinese medicine and

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Western practitioners. With the growing population of Chinese residents and the increase in traditional herbal Chinese medicine use in other ethnic groups,<sup>4,5</sup> minimizing herbal interactions becomes increasingly important in patient health and safety.

We have created a resource to bridge the communication gap between the use of traditional herbal Chinese medicine and Western medicine—a list of 22 TCM herbs on a

pocket-sized card that patients can carry with them when visiting their physicians (**Figure 1**). We researched herbs listed in the TCM Materia Medica for moderate to severe interactions with drugs or diseases that are supported by level A or B evidence. If patients are taking any of these herbs, they or their physicians can select the applicable items on the card and then show the card to the patients' other health care professionals. While the list is not comprehensive and should not be the only method used in a clinical setting to check interactions, it is a starting point to communicate important potential herb-drug or herb-disease interactions that a patient may be at risk of. For up-to-date information about each herb, physicians can consult the Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database (<http://naturaldatabase.therapeuticresearch.com>).

Our initiative has been supported by the interCultural Online Health Network, a program that supports multicultural citizens in BC in optimal self-management of chronic diseases using e-health technologies. Interested physicians may obtain copies of the TCM card at the following address and contact [icon.support@](mailto:icon.support@)

ubc.ca for additional information. Please note that the cards will not be mailed out.

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**References**

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herbal medicine and acupuncture. How do patients who consult family physicians use these therapies? *Can Fam Physician* 1998;44:1009-1015.

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<input type="checkbox"/> 枳殼, <b>Zhi Ke, Bitter Orange</b> Tyramine containing stimulant, ↑BP and HR, CYP 3A4 inhibitor	<input type="checkbox"/> 牛蒡子, <b>Niu Bang Zi, Burdock</b> Antiplatelet	<input type="checkbox"/> 大黃, <b>Da Huang, Rhubarb</b> Laxative high in calcium oxalate
<input type="checkbox"/> 麻黃, <b>Ma Huang, Ephedra</b> Sympathomimetic stimulant	<input type="checkbox"/> 款冬花, <b>Kuan Dong Hua, Coltsfoot</b> Antiplatelet	<input type="checkbox"/> 番瀉葉, <b>Fan Xie Ye, Senna</b> Purgative
<input type="checkbox"/> 甘草, <b>Gan Cao, Licorice</b> Anti-hepatitis B and C claims, mineralocorticoid effects, ↑warfarin metabolism	<input type="checkbox"/> 小白菊, <b>Xiao Bai Ju, Feverfew</b> Anti-inflammatory and anticoagulant effects	<input type="checkbox"/> 桂枝, <b>Gui Zhi, Cassia Cinnamon</b> Hypoglycemic effects, coumarin content is hepatotoxic at high doses
<input type="checkbox"/> 板藍根, <b>Ban Lan Gen, Indigo</b> Widely used for its antiviral, anti-inflammatory, and antipyretic claims	<input type="checkbox"/> 葛根, <b>Ge Gen, Kudzu</b> Phytoestrogen, antiplatelet	<input type="checkbox"/> 肉桂, <b>Rou Gui, Cinnamon</b> Hypoglycemic effects
	<input type="checkbox"/> 紅花, <b>Hong Hua, Safflower</b> Anticoagulant effects	<input type="checkbox"/> 薄荷, <b>Bo He, Peppermint</b> ↓GI peristalsis, CYP 3A4 inhibitor
<input type="checkbox"/> 白果, <b>Bai Guo, Ginkgo</b> Possibly effective for improving cognition, ↑blood glucose, anticoagulant, CYP 1A2, 2C9 inhibitor, CYP 2C19, 3A4 inducer, ginkgotoxin may precipitate seizure	<input type="checkbox"/> 黃芩, <b>Huang Qin, Skullcap</b> Sedative and anxiolytic effects	<input type="checkbox"/> 石榴皮, <b>Shi Liu Pi, Pomegranate</b> ↓BP, inhibits gastrointestinal CYP 2C9, 2D6

<input type="checkbox"/> 當歸, <b>Dang Gui, Chinese Angelica</b> Phytoestrogen, antiplatelet	<b>Other Herbs</b>  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____	<p>中草藥記錄</p> <p><b>Traditional Chinese Medicine Record</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.iconproject.org">www.iconproject.org</a></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>  *This is an important document, please keep it with you at all times</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> 丹參, <b>Dan Shen, Red Sage</b> Antiplatelet, structurally similar to digoxin		
<input type="checkbox"/> 人參, <b>Ren Shen, Panax Ginseng</b> Widely used as a general tonic, immunostimulatory and hypoglycemic effects, antiplatelet		
<input type="checkbox"/> 西洋參, <b>Xi Yang Shen, American Ginseng</b> Widely used as a general tonic, immunostimulatory, hypoglycemic, and estrogenic effects, ↓warfarin efficacy		
<input type="checkbox"/> 刺五加, <b>Ci Wu Jia, Siberian Ginseng</b> Immuno-stimulatory, hypoglycemic, estrogenic, and diuretic effects, antiplatelet effects, CYP 1A2, 2C9 inhibitor		

**Figure.** Traditional herbal Chinese medicine card, front and back, listing select herbs with moderate to severe interactions with drugs or diseases.