

SUPPLEMENTARY TREATMENT WITH HERBAL MEDICINE OF SARS OR SARS-LIKE INFECTIOUS DISEASES: A RANDOMIZED, DOUBLE-BLIND AND CONTROLLED PRELIMINARY TRIAL

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BACKGROUND/AIMS: In view of the possible beneficial effect of natural herbal medicine (NHM) on SARS, we conducted this study to examine whether NHM is of any benefit as a supplementary treatment of SARS or SARS-like infectious diseases.

METHODS: This was a randomized, double-blind and placebo-controlled trial conducted in Taipei Hospital, Taiwan in 2003. A total of 28 patients fulfilled the WHO inclusion criteria and our exclusion criteria. All enrolled patients received routine Western-medicine treatment. Patients were randomly assigned to one of three supplementary treatment groups: NHM A (n = 9), NHM B (n = 9), or placebo (n =10). Every patient had chest X-ray every 1 or 2 days. Reading radiologists set up a standard 0 to 3 scoring system according to the severity of infiltration in each lung field (three lung fields in both right and left lungs). The main outcome measures were improvement of chest radiographic scores and the number of days until improvement (DI). The prognosis was also evaluated.

RESULTS: One patient from the placebo group passed away. NHM A improved faster (6.7 ± 1.8 days) than the placebo group (11.2 ± 4.9 days), which reached statistical significance ($p = 0.04$).

DISSCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS: The initial results showed that supplementary treatment with NHM A shortened DI, which suggests its benefit as a supplementary treatment of SARS or SARS-like infectious diseases. The findings need to be verified in a larger sample.

Key words: SARS, Supplementary medicine, Herbal medicine