

## Tackling Difficult Sleep Problems Using the Constitutional Review Approach

29/07/14

Aimed at 'seasoned' practitioners

- 1) Difficult cases where diagnosis/pattern seems straight forward that don't respond as expected
- 2) Difficult cases that respond to initial treatment but continue to relapse

Focus is on difficult sleep problems but can be applied to any 'difficult' cases

### Continual Relapsing Case

#### Typical presentation:

Diagnostic pattern/signs seem clear cut, pattern matches symptoms etc. Treatment/formula is constructed and applied and initially works well. Good response is achieved, however within a few weeks or 2-3 months the patient is back in touch, symptoms have relapsed/recurred, almost back at square one. Patient is re-assessed, changes noted and treatment/formula is modified accordingly. Again a similar response may be seen for a while then relapse occurs again and so on with inevitable relapse recurring. Pattern may alter with diagnosis and treatment seeming clear cut each time only for the inevitable relapse to recur.

#### What's a Herbalist to Do?

Phone a friend? Put it down to placebo?

This is the start of how I developed the Constitutional Review Approach (CRA).

#### Key Points

- 1) Clear that patient does respond appropriately to the prescription given.
- 2) Clear that diagnosis and treatment are partly correct.

It shows that something is missing. How do I find out?

#### What To Do?

Clearly working according to the conventional methods is not working. Ideal for CRA.

#### What I Did:

##### Call A Halt

- 1) Tell the patient that you need to do a thorough review of their case which may take 2-3 days – 1 week to 10 days. Set time aside.
- 2) Thoroughly read all the case notes, I mean everything right from the start. Make notes on anything that strikes you. Re-read until you are satisfied that there is nothing else of note.
- 3) Gather your favourite references and settle down for a good read. Regarding all the points of note that you have made search out and look at in full comprehensive detail everything in your notes, do so IMPARTIALLY, it may not relate in the slightest to the presenting symptoms of the case however make note as an important point.

Resources: Internet, Reference books, Seminar notes etc. Be Thorough!

- 4) Investigate ideas that come to mind, you will probably find that 'themes' come to mind/occur. Check out any recurring themes/herbs/formulas etc. This may take you further towards the answer leading into new ground or result in being a total dead end, in which case you can eliminate that approach.
- 5) Once this process is complete you should now be left with a set of herbs/formulas/strategies etc. that relate to your initial notes. Now carefully examine the recurring options in the light of the current presenting pattern. Again don't discard anything that seems largely relevant to the original notes you made. You may find yourself choosing between two similar herbs or formulas, or keeping them both if both actions are clearly relevant on their own.
- 6) Whatever you're left with however improbable is the answer – Quote Sherlock Holmes. It may look outrageously inaccurate compared to what you are treating. However take courage and administer. Try at least two dosage ranges. Be prepared to yet further modify.

## Results

It can be very powerful – see first case history. Often proportional to the degree of effort put in – see second case history.

Remember this is a CONSTITUTIONAL treatment it is going under the radar dealing with issues you probably hadn't even been aware of, or that had any bearing on the current pattern. Signs and symptoms that hadn't changed before may alter – the ground shifts.

Prevents your previous probably very good experience adversely affecting treatment. Opens your eyes to the deeper levels on which the body works.

More fundamental, going back a step etc.

Patient will often report that it feels right, best treatment they had so far.

## First Case History

### Summary Notes Original Case

Insomnia – Difficulty getting off, waking early at 4.30 am, restless, hot, sweating feet, palms, THIRST, awake. TIRED.

Nocturia x 1.

Lumbar ache

Hypertension especially diastolic

Acidity, loose, frequent BM, with ache spasm right lower abdomen

Left ear tinnitus, congestion, cough with white phlegm, dyspnoea with exertion.

Mouth ulcers, sticky mouth

Depression, stress, anxiety

Diabetes mellitus

Neutropenia

Tongue: Red, purple, sore, rough, yellow greasy coating

Pulse: Wiry, Heart Xu, Kidney Yin Xu, some Kidney Yang Xu, Slippery.

**Strategy:** Nourish Heart Yin, Remove Heat, treat Liver Yang rising.

This approach proved very successful initially in tackling the presenting symptoms. However in the long term a pattern of constant relapses occurred, tweaking the strategy and subsequent treatment produced successful short term relief only. A deeper approach was needed and achieved using the Constitutional Review Approach (CRA).

Power point illustrates the above original case showing strategy, treatment and responses

## Case Review

Through the process of conducting the Constitutional Review Approach (CRA) using the resources listed below it seemed clear that the way to proceed was to treat the pattern that corresponded more with the Poor Memory pattern with relevant modifications for insomnia to achieve a successful outcome in the case.

The following resources were examined in the light of the case to fully understand how the symptoms had responded to the presenting patterns. Any strategies already employed were eliminated as 'dead ends'. Any strategies relevant to the case/not tried were kept.

Quote (Maciocia):

'The amount and quality of sleep depend of course on the state of the mind (Shen). The Mind is rooted in the Heart and specifically in Heart-Blood and Heart-Yin. If the Heart is healthy and the Blood abundant, the Mind is properly rooted and sleep will be sound. If the Heart is deficient or if it is agitated by pathogenic factors such as Fire, the Mind is not properly rooted and sleep will be affected.' - **Eliminated**

'... emotional stress affecting the Mind may cause a disharmony of the internal organs. In fact any disharmony of the internal organs whether it is due to a Deficiency or an Excess, affects Blood and Essence. Since the Essence and Qi are the root of the Mind (the three Treasures), the Mind has then no residence and insomnia may result. The 'Simple Questions' in chapter 46 says:

*When a person lies down and cannot sleep, (it means) the yin organs are injured (so that the Essence has no residence and is not quiet and the person cannot sleep.* - **Kept**

'If Liver-Yin or Liver-Blood is deficient, the Ethereal Soul is deprived of its residence and wanders off at night, causing a restless sleep with many tiring dreams. ... The Ethereal Soul is affected not only by a deficiency of the Liver, but also by any pathogenic factor (such as Fire or Wind) agitating the Liver. The 'Complete Book of Jing Yue' (1624) by Zhang Jing yue says:

*Overexertion, worrying and excessive thinking injure Blood and fluids so that the Mind and Ethereal Soul are deprived of residence and insomnia results' It also says, Worrying and excessive thinking injure that Spleen so that it cannot make Blood and insomnia results.*

Liver Hun ruled out as not excessive dreaming. - **Eliminated**

Worrying and overexertion injures Spleen, Lungs and Heart. When the Spleen is deficient it cannot produce enough Blood and this deficiency affects the Heart and Mind. The Heart-Blood is directly weakened by worry and this also leads to the Mind being deprived of its residence and insomnia. In some worry, anxiety and pensiveness lead not to Heart-Blood deficiency but Heart-Fire which is due to a constitutional tendency to Yang Excess. Heart-Fire flares upwards to agitate the Mind and insomnia results. - **Eliminated** except tendency for constitutional Yang Excess noted.

When Kidney-Yin is deficient over a long period of time, it fails to nourish Heart-Yin so that Heart-Empty heat develops, especially when there is a lot of worry. This pattern means Heart and Kidneys not harmonised. Or Heart Fire flares upwards and fails to communicate downwards with Kidneys. Or excessive Fire injures the Yin and leads to Kidney-Yin deficiency. Common cause in elderly. - **Kept**

## Sleeping position:

Quote (Maciocia):

'If a person is unable to sleep supine (lying on the back), it indicates an Excess condition, often

of the Lungs or Heart. e.g. in asthma. - **Kept**

If a person can only sleep on one side it indicates that there is either a deficiency of Qi-Blood on that side of the body or an Excess on the opposite side. This especially applies to Heart or Lungs and can be checked on the pulse. (Check for imbalance by rolling finger medially and laterally on Lung pulse.)' - **Kept**

Quote: (Maciocia)

'Finally according to Traditional Chinese Views, the best sleeping position is lying on the right side, with the legs slightly bent, the right arm bent and resting in front of the pillow, and the left arm resting on the left thigh. According to these views, with this position the heart is in a high position so that Blood can circulate freely, the liver is in a low position so that Blood can collect there and root the Ethereal Soul to promote sleep, and the stomach and duodenum are in a such a position that facilitates the downward movement of food.' - **Kept**

Difficulty falling asleep: indicates Blood deficiency - **Kept**

Early waking: indicates Heart and Gall Bladder deficiency. - **Eliminated**

### **Heart and Spleen Blood Xu pattern** (Maciocia)

Difficulty in falling asleep, palpitations, tiredness, poor appetite, slight anxiety, blurred vision, dizziness, poor memory, pale face. T- Pale, P- Choppy.

Can't fall asleep due to Blood Xu but once asleep because Yin is sufficient, stays asleep.

Tonify Spleen, nourish Blood, tonify the Heart and calm the Mind. - **Eliminated**

### **Gui Pi Tang - Spleen Heart Xu** (Maciocia)

Ren Shen, Huang Qi, Bai Zhu – Tonify Heart Qi

Dang Gui – Nourish Blood

Fu Shen, Suan Zao Ren, Long Yan Rou, Yuan Zhi – Calm Mind and Promote Sleep, Long Yan Rou also nourishes Blood

Mu Xiang – Moves Qi, counteracts possible stickiness of Qi and Blood tonics

Zhi Gan Cao, Sheng Jiang, Hong Zao – Harmonise and tonify Qi and Blood

Tonifies Spleen Qi and Heart Qi, nourishes Heart-Blood and calms Mind. - **Eliminated**

Quote (Ellis):

Best for disorders arising from impairment of Heart capacity to nourish Spirit and decrease of Spleen ability to stimulate appetite and digestion, move the stool, generate Blood and Qi and control Blood. Important signs and symptoms are fatigue, disturbed sleep, forgetfulness, inability to concentrate, poor appetite, weight loss, sluggish digestion, pale face, pale tongue with white coating and fine, weak pulse. - **Eliminated**

Addresses blood Xu primarily through Qi supplementation. - **Eliminated**

Add Ye Jiao Teng for insomnia - **Eliminated**

### **Heart Yin Xu pattern** (Maciocia)

Waking up frequently at night, dry throat, mental restlessness, palpitations, night sweating, poor memory, 5 palm heat. T- Red without coating, Heart crack, tip redder P- Floating, Empty

Nourish Heart Yin and calm Mind - **Eliminated**

### **Liver Yin Xu** (Maciocia)

Waking up during the night, dreaming a lot, talking in one's sleep, in severe cases sleep walking, dry throat, irritability, blurred vision, feeling of heat, sore and dry eyes, dry skin and hair, dizziness. T- Red without coating P- Floating Empty especially on left side  
Deficiency of Liver Yin causes Hun to be deprived of its root and to 'wander' at night during

sleep causing insomnia and excessive dreaming.  
Nourish Liver Yin, root Hun and calm Mind - **Eliminated**

### **Suan Zao Ren Tang - Heart Liver Xu** (Maciocia)

Suan Zao Ren - Main herb, enters Liver, is sour and absorbing, nourishes Yin and by taste absorbs Hun back into Liver Yin, thus promoting sleep.

Chuan Xiong, Zhi Mu - Pungent and warm and sweet and cold, scatter and nourish Yin. Chuan Xiong also enters Liver with Suan Zao Ren both harmonise Liver.

Fu Ling - Calms Mind

Gan Cao - Sweet with Suan Zao Ren nourishes Yin and Moistens. - **Eliminated**

If Empty Heat from Liver Yin Xu add Han Lian Cao and Mu Li - **Eliminated**

If Liver Yang rising add Tian Ma and Gou Teng - **Eliminated**

Quote (Ellis):

Typically Heart palpitation and night sweats with wiry fine pulse. Also applications for unilateral headaches due to Liver Wind Xu and Chronic fatigue disorders. Primarily nourishes Liver.

Use a large dose 4g half an hour before bedtime. Take a root formula in day. Lubricates intestines due to Suan Zao Ren

With multiple vacuity combine with Gui Pi Tang and Tian Wang Bu Xin Dan. - **Eliminated**

### **Heart and Kidneys Not Harmonised** (Maciocia)

Waking up frequently during the night, difficulty in falling asleep, dry throat, night sweating, 5 palm heat, poor memory, palpitations, dizziness, mental restlessness, tinnitus, backache. T-Red without coating, tip redder, Heart crack, dry P- Floating Empty and slightly rapid. -

**Eliminated**

Kidney Yin Xu, Heart Yin Xu and Heart Empty Heat.

Nourish Yin, tonify Kidneys and Heart, clear Empty Heat and calm Mind

### **Tian Wang Bu Xin Dan - Heart Kidney Xu** (Maciocia)

Sheng Di Huang, Xuan Shen, Mai Men Dong, Tian Men Dong - Nourish Kidney and Heart Yin

Ren Shen, Fu Ling - Tonify Heart Qi to help nourish Heart Yin, Fu Ling also calms Mind

Wu Wei Zi - Sour and absorbing, help to nourish Yin also calms Mind

Dang Gui, Dan Shen - Harmonises Heart Blood to help to nourish Yin, Dan Shen is also a messenger to Heart channel

Bai Zi Ren, Suan Zao Ren, Yuan Zhi - Nourish the Heart and Calm the Mind, Suan Zao Ren and Yuan Zhi combine well sour and absorbing with pungent and scattering which harmonises Heart and calms Mind

Jie Geng - Messenger to direct herbs to Upper Burner. - **Eliminated**

To enhance sleep promotion add Ye Jiao Teng. To clear Empty heat add Mu Li and Qing Hao. - **Eliminated**

Quote (Ellis):

Primary for insomnia, palpitations, Xu Heat night sweating due to Heart Xu. Nourishes Yin, Blood and Qi of the Heart. Pulse fine and weak, if wiry prefer Suan Zao Ren Tang or combine. Good for elderly insomnia with dry stool constipation. Also long term fatigue patterns with poor sleep, fatigue and night sweats. - **Eliminated**

For tongue and mouth ulcers add Huang Lian and Mu Dan Pi or combine with Qing Wei San. For insomnia add Ye Jiao Teng and He Huan Hua. Excessive rumination add Xiao Yao San. -

**Eliminated**

## KEY formula

A key area of symptoms emphasised when the patient returned was that memory was significantly worse. In TCM three main areas contribute:

Quote: (Maciocia)

'The Spleen houses Intellect and influences memory in the sense of memorisation, studying and concentrating. It's corresponding pathological aspect is excessive thinking and pensiveness. The Kidneys' house Will Power and influence the brain since the Kidney Essence produces Marrow which nourishes the brain.

The Kidneys are responsible for memory in the sense of memorisation of everyday events, names, faces etc. It will be remembered that Zhi of the Kidneys, apart from "will power", also means "memory".

The Heart controls memory because it houses the Mind. There is a considerable overlap between the Kidneys and Heart with regard to memory, but the Heart is responsible more for the memory of long past events rather than of everyday things like the Kidneys.'

The pattern for Kidney Essence Deficiency:

'Poor everyday memory, dizziness, tinnitus, weak knees and back. Tongue: Pale or Red according to whether there is Kidney Yang or Kidney Yin deficiency. Pulse: Deep and fine.

### Strategy:

Tonify the Kidneys, nourish Essence and Marrow and strengthen memory.

The key formula given for this pattern was Liu Wei Di Huang Wan with variation of Yuan Zhi, Wu Wei Zi and Suan Zao Ren which were added to enter Heart and strengthen Mind and Memory. With Shi Chang Pu to open the Mind's orifices and improve memory by facilitating the rising of clear Qi to the head.

Other variations if both Yin and Yang deficiency were Lu Jiao Jiao, Ba Ji Tian and Zi He Che.

With all this is mind it seemed that this pattern even though it related mainly to poor memory rather than insomnia most suitably fitted with all the key presenting symptoms of the case. I prefer to use Zuo Gui Wan rather than Liu Wei Di Huang Wan as it seems to have a deeper more robust action and this also fitted more closely with the Other variation options including Lu Jiao Jiao. In any long standing condition both Kidney Yin and Yang tend to get depleted.

Quote (Ellis):

**Zuo Gui Wan** – Treats insufficient true Yin. Symptoms include dizziness or visual dizziness, poor memory, lack of sleep, weakness and pain in the lower back and knees, seminal efflux, spontaneous sweating, night sweats, heat in the five centres, a dry mouth and throat, thirst, thirst with a desire to drink, a red tongue with scant fur, and a fine or rapid pulse.

Quote of comparison between Liu Wei Di Huang Wan and Zuo Gui Wan:

'This formula is a stronger yin-supplementing formula than Liu Wei Di Huang Wan but contains fewer agents to clear vacuity heat. In other words, it is less well balanced. For more serious cases of yin vacuity that do not have strong signs of vacuity fire, use Zuo Gui Wan. Also in contradistinction to Liu Wei Huang Wan, Zuo Gui Wan addresses kidney yang vacuity by including the yang supplementing agent Lu Jiao Jiao. This is a clinical application of the theoretical principle of interdependence and mutual engendering of Yin and Yang.'

Listed in modifications:

For memory and sleep disorders, add Dan Shen and a small amount of Yuan Zhi or combine with Tian Wang Bu Xin Dan.

In addition I added He Huan Hua for the depression/mood swings/palpitation aspects and Long Chi for the sleep issues due to a 'racing mind' and to help 'put a brake on the adrenaline'.

Ability to sleep only on right hand side (Maciocia) and not on back is relevant as listed above and emphasises 'fit' with rest of constitutional analysis.

Given:

**Zuo Gui Wan 30g, Dan Shen 8g, Yuan Zhi 6g, He Huan Hua 12g, Long Chi 5g**  
sig 10mls nocte aqua cal ac/pc

**Result:**

08/06/11

Sleeping a lot better, 1.5 hours to get off but sleeps right through till 8.00am, wakes once for nocturia, then off again. Knees slightly better, memory decreased still. Feeling calmer in self/better.

Power point discusses results of case in detail including response and subsequent management

07/11/11

Sleeping 5 hours, branch formula helped restore sleeping pattern, then went back to root formula.

Tongue: Slight thin white coat - NORMAL!

Repeated branch formula. No further contact ...

**References:**

Maciocia, G.. (1994). Insomnia (somnolence, poor memory). In: *The Practice of Chinese Medicine*. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. 281-303.

Ellis, A. (2003). *Notes from South Mountain*. Berkeley: Thin Moon Publishing.

**Second Case History**

Power point illustrates 'Journey' aspect of CRA in a case of Delayed Sleep Phase Disorder

**Third Case History**

Power point illustrates how to achieve a 'result' using the CRA when presented with a confusing set of symptoms/pattern.

**Some Key Strategy and Suggestions Examples– My Sledge Hammers**

Whether you are using tinctures or Chinese Herbs I'd like to explain three of the key components I generally use for the symptomatic element of tackling sleep disorders: Long Gu, Long Chi, Mu Li. Form a key part of my management of symptoms of sleep disorders. i.e. falling into sleep, agitation, sweating, waking up early etc. Each have slightly different properties but essentially when analysed the most predominate component is calcium carbonate. Therefore can be classed as 'minerals'.

**So how do they work?**

Since very little substance will actually dissolve into the medicine it has been suggested that these substances may work mainly in a homeopathic sense. In fact there does seem to be a window of optimal use of two months activity. After this unless the longer term sleep strategy is in place then they are best withdrawn from the treatment and used again at a later date. Unless of course they are being used in the formula predominately for their other properties. My own theory is that these

substances 'put a brake on the adrenaline' and help the body to regulate this better. See cortisol later.

### **Side Effects:**

Generally very safe. Important as with all Chinese Herbal medicines to check origin and quality control testing. If using these items in a raw state then you MUST boil for the suggested 20-30 minutes prior to use in the main decoction mainly to soften but also to kill any dangerous bacteria that can be associated with these components in their raw state. Also see individual Contra-indications listed for each item.

### **Usage:**

If bought as granules (not raw form) then these items can be added directly to tinctures, teas, granule prescriptions. Suggested dose for each component is:

Long Chi: 6g – Primarily where patient complains of a 'racing mind'

Long Gu: 8g – Use especially for somatic symptoms – sweating, agitation.

Mu Li: 8g – As above but can also be useful when acidity involved.

Occasionally I may increase these to 8g, 10g, 10g if the persons constitution demands it but for most situations the above doses work well. Used together these components seem to provide a 'sledgehammer' effect in helping to quell to mind, cool the body, sedate. Also see below:

Therapeutically because these items are being used in a symptomatic sense I often suggest that the patient tries out two dose ranges. i.e. initially try taking a double dose in the evening. If however the patient experiences excessive drowsiness/other side effects during the following day then the dose should be used singly at night only. A small number of patients are unable to tolerate the higher dose. If depression has developed don't forget to check on Vitamin D levels.

### **Long Chi:**

Dragons Teeth, *Dens Draconis*, *Stegodon orientalis* Owen

Fossilised bone of ancient large mammals such as dinosaurs and reptiles.

Astringent and Cool, enters Heart and Liver.

Action: Sedative and Tranquiliser

Indications: Palpitation, insomnia with lots of dreams due to neurasthenia and epilepsy.

Contra-indication: True heat and dampness

Chemical component: CaCO<sub>3</sub>, CaPO<sub>4</sub>

'Teeth' especially effective for palpitations with anxiety, insomnia and dream disturbed sleep.

Dosage: 9-15g (raw) Cook initially before adding to remaining decoction.

### **References:**

Yeung, Him-che. (May 1996). *Handbook of Chinese Herbs*. 2nd ed. Rosemead, CA: Institute of Chinese Medicine. 309.

Bensky, D and Barolet, R. (1993). Substances that Calm the Spirit. In: *Chinese Herbal Medicine: Materia Medica*. Washington: Eastland Press. 397-399

## **Long Gu:**

Dragons Bone, *Os Draconis*, *Stegodon orientalis* Owen

Fossilised bone of ancient large mammals such as dinosaurs and reptiles.

Sweet, Astringent, Cool, enters Heart, Liver and Kidney.

Action: Sedative and Tranquiliser. To subdue the hyperactivity of Liver Yang. To arrest excessive sweating and seminal emission (Astringent).

Indications: Palpitation, insomnia, dreamfulness due to neurasthenia. Hypertension with headache and dizziness. Spontaneous sweating, leucorrhoea, uterine bleeding, involuntary seminal emission.

Contra-indication: True heat and dampness. Counteracts Shi Gao, should not be mixed with fish.

Chemical component: CaCO<sub>3</sub>, SiO<sub>2</sub>, hydroxy apatite

Dosage: 15-30g (raw) Cook for 20-30 minutes before adding to other herbs, crush before adding.

### References:

Yeung, Him-che. (May 1996). *Handbook of Chinese Herbs*. 2nd ed. Rosemead, CA: Institute of Chinese Medicine. 312.

Bensky, D and Barolet, R. (1993). Substances that Calm the Spirit. In: *Chinese Herbal Medicine: Materia Medica*. Washington: Eastland Press. 397-399

## **Mu Li:**

Oyster Shell, *Concha Ostreae*, *Ostrea gigas* Thunb.

Salty, Astringent, Slightly Cold, enters Liver and Kidney.

Action: Sedative and Tranquiliser. Astringent. To soften and disperse hard lumps.

Indications: Headache, dizziness, palpitation and insomnia due to hypertension and neurasthenia.

Night sweat, spontaneous sweat, leucorrhoea, uterine bleeding, seminal emission. Scrofula, goitre, splenomegaly. Peptic ulcer.

Contra-indication: Cold and Weakness. High Fever with absence of sweating. Adverse effects with Ma Huang, Wu Zhu Yu and Xi Xin. Overdose may lead to indigestion or constipation.

Chemical component: CaCO<sub>3</sub>, CaPO<sub>4</sub>, CaSO<sub>4</sub>, Mg, Al, K

Dosage: 15-30g (raw) Cook for 20-30 minutes before adding to other herbs.

### References:

Yeung, Him-che. (May 1996). *Handbook of Chinese Herbs*. 2nd ed. Rosemead, CA: Institute of Chinese Medicine. 347.

Bensky, D and Barolet, R. (1993). Substances that Calm the Spirit. In: *Chinese Herbal Medicine: Materia Medica*. Washington: Eastland Press. 397-399

Power point discusses further use of a 'Stress Mixture' including importance of Passiflora and Valerian, and a long forgotten herb: *Asperula odorata* particularly important where accumulation of tension in head area contributes to insomnia.