

Chen Rui-Chun's use of **Wu Ling San**

陈瑞春教授应用五苓散经验

By Zhèng Yàn-Huá,

Jiāng Xī University of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Translated by Eran Even

Professor Chén Rùi-Chun (1936-2008), originally from Tong Gu county in Jiang Xi province, was a well known classical formulas (*jīng fāng* 经方) specialist whose impressive career as a clinician, scholar, and clinical adviser spanned well over 50 years. In order to truly understand the clinical application of *Wu Ling San* (Five-Ingredient Powder with Poria), Dr Chén would often emphasise that one must begin from the perspective of the patho-mechanism and not be limited by the *Shang Han Lun's* (傷寒論 Discussion of Cold Damage) concept of water amassment. This would provide more varied opportunities to use this formula. I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to study with Dr Chén and observe his extensive use of this formula. The following are just a few examples illustrating these ideas.

IN THE SHANG HAN LUN (傷寒論 Discussion of Cold Damage), *Wǔ Líng Sǎn* (Five-Ingredient Powder with Poria) appears in eight different lines (71, 72, 73, 74, 141, 156, 244, and 386), and with the exception of line 386 where it is indicated in the treatment of sudden turmoil disease, the remaining lines are mainly associated with *tàiyáng* water amassment patterns, with symptoms of thirst, and difficult urination, accompanied by either the presence or absence of exterior signs. Excerpts from the following lines illustrate the major signs and symptoms associated with the formula:

Line 71: “If the pulse is floating, urination is inhibited, and there is slight heat with dispersion thirst, *Wǔ Líng Sǎn* masters it.”

Line 72: “Irritability and thirst.”

Line 73: “There is sweating and thirst.”

Line 74: “There is an exterior and interior pattern present, with thirst and a desire to drink water, and vomiting immediately following the ingestion of fluids.”

Line 141: “A desire to drink water.”

Line 156: “Thirst with a dry mouth, irritability, and difficult urination.”

In regards to clinical practice, Dr Chén would emphasise the need for a comprehensive analysis of *Wǔ Líng Sǎn's* patho-mechanism and require students to delve into deep study in order to comprehend the main points or gist of the original text in the *Shāng Hán Lùn* (傷寒論 Discussion of Cold Damage).

He felt that the essential patho-mechanism involved with *Wǔ Líng Sǎn* was the inability of *qì* to transform water. With the loss of *qì* transformation causing the non-distribution of water and fluids, we see thirst, and with the accumulation and stagnation of these fluids, we see difficult urination. In addition, the inability of *qì* to transform water can also manifest with copious urination. Therefore, in order to increase one's flexibility in clinic, and successfully treat numerous conditions, one must grasp the basic mechanism of “*qì* being unable to transform water” when using *Wǔ Líng Sǎn*.

Copious urination

Copious urination is a commonly seen symptom in clinic in both the young and the elderly, usually manifesting as frequent urination. In children, copious urination is commonly due to pre-heaven insufficiency, with inhibited Bladder qì transformation and a lack of water transformation. In the elderly, where qì, blood, yīn and yáng may all be deficient, Bladder qì may be inhibited manifesting as frequent urination, and even in some cases as incontinence and enuresis. Dr Chén thought that when these kinds of patients were treated from the perspective of a Kidney qì deficiency with Kidney supplementing, urine astringing medicinals, the results were typically less than satisfactory. This is because copious urination (especially night time urination), and frequent urination are not just simply due to Kidney deficiency, or qì deficiency, but more directly caused by the decline of the transformative function of the Bladder. Therefore, in treatment one should warm the Kidneys and transform qì, adding a small amount of assistant medicinals to support the Kidney function of absorption and intake. Dr Chén would commonly use *Wǔ Líng Sǎn* with the addition of medicinals such as *Sāng Piāo Xiāo* (Mantidis Ootheca) and *Yì Zhì Rén* (Alpiniae Oxyphyllae Fructus) to obtain satisfactory results.

Case: A 73-year-old female patient presented at the clinic on January 8, 2002. She was seeking treatment with Chinese medicine following breast cancer surgery. She complained of frequent night-time urination – five to six times a night – which significantly affecting her sleep. Her appetite was normal, as were her bowel movements, with one movement per day. She was in generally good health, with no other major complaints. She was given a modified version of *Wǔ Líng Sǎn*.

<i>Guì Zhī</i>	10g Cinnamomi Ramulus
<i>Fú Líng</i>	15g Poria
<i>Zhū Líng</i>	10g Polyporus
<i>Zé Xiè</i>	10g Alismatis Rhizoma
<i>Bái Zhú</i>	10g Atractylodis Macrocephalae
<i>Sāng Piāo Xiāo</i>	10g Mantidis Ootheca
<i>Qìàn Shí</i>	20g Euryales Semen

Yì Zhì Rén 10g Alpiniae Oxyphyllae Fructus

After taking five packages, urination decreased to two-three times a night. After another five packages, it decreased to once or twice a night, which greatly improved her sleep and spirit. Later she was given a formula to boost qì, strengthen the Spleen, and regulate the Spleen and Stomach.

Enuresis

Enuresis is common in younger patients, sometimes being the only presenting symptom. For the most part, they are fine throughout the day without obvious signs or symptoms, which can make it difficult to identify the presenting pattern. Many practitioners treat this condition as a Kidney deficiency, from the basis that the Kidneys master water, and use various astringent medicinals with very little efficacy. Dr Chén believes that with older, weaker constitution patients, a Kidney deficiency seems logical. However, with younger stronger patients with rosy cheeks and a good constitution, a diagnosis of Kidney deficiency makes little sense. The patho-mechanism involved in enuresis in younger patients is “qì being unable to transform water”, where the transformative function of the Bladder has declined and fluids are spontaneously discharged at night. A modified version of *Wǔ Líng Sǎn* assists qì transformation and the Bladder’s receptive power, enables the transformation and movement of qì, frees yáng qì, and strengthens the centre; enuresis will spontaneously cease.

Case: A 15-year-old female patient presented on December 13, 2001 with enuresis for the previous month. Every night, family members would wake her to go to the bathroom, yet she would still wet the bed. This was causing her much distress. During consultation she reported that she felt no dryness in her mouth, had no fear of the cold, no distention in her lower abdomen, and her appetite and sleep were normal. Her overall development was quite good, she was slightly overweight, and her urination was regular. Her tongue was pale red with a thin, white, slippery coating, and her pulse was moderate and



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strong. She was administered a modified version of *Wǔ Líng Sǎn*.

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<i>Fú Líng</i>	15g Poria
<i>Zhū Líng</i>	10g Polyporus
<i>Zé Xiè</i>	10g Alismatis Rhizoma
<i>Bái Zhú</i>	10g Atractylodis Macrocephalae
<i>Shí Chāng Pǔ</i>	10g Acori Tatarinowii Rhizoma
<i>Yuǎn Zhì</i>	6g Polygalae Radix

The formula is essentially *Wǔ Líng Sǎn* with the addition of *Shí Chāng Pǔ* and *Yuǎn Zhì*. These two warm and free Heart yáng, tranquilise the Heart-mind, and open the orifices. After taking five packages of the formula, the patient reported that for those five evenings she had no episodes of enuresis. She was given another five packages to be taken every other day. After taking 20 packages altogether, she has experienced no enuresis to this day.

Difficult urination

In the *Shāng Hán Lùn* (傷寒論 Discussion of Cold Damage), *Wǔ Líng Sǎn* is used in the aftermath of an erroneous treatment for an external contraction, for which the symptoms of difficult urination and thirst manifest. However, in regard to this protocol, Dr Chén believed that whether exterior signs were present or not, as long as the basic mechanism of inhibited qì transformation was evident, this formula may be used. Dr Chén would use this formula in treating prostate enlargement in elderly patients manifesting with difficult urination and dribbling. Dr Chén felt that if patterns of dribbling urinary block were treated primarily with blood invigorating, stasis transforming medicinals such as *Chuān Shān Jiǎ* (Manitis Squama), or *Wáng Bù Liú Xīng* (Vaccariae Semen), there would be very little benefit to this condition. The reason he felt this is because pathological and physiological changes in prostate enlargement in the elderly is inevitable, so how can we merely use blood invigorating and breaking medicinals to bring this condition under control? This method does not conform to actual clinical reality. It makes more sense to see it as inhibited Bladder qì transformation and

Kidney deficiency failing to distribute and transform fluids, which causes dribbling and blockage. In the elderly, the Kidneys are debilitated and the qì transformation function abnormal, which disturbs the opening (discharge) and closing (retention) functions, resulting in difficult urination.

In Western medicine, surgery is the main treatment for this condition, yet Chinese medicinals should also be considered for their effectiveness. When there is substantial proliferation, *Wǔ Líng Sǎn* can be combined with *Chì Sháo* (Paeoniae Radix Rubra) and *Niú Xī* (Achyranthis Bidentatae Radix) to invigorate the blood and transform stasis, so as to gradually reduce this proliferation.

Case: A 75-year-old male patient, presented with frequent nocturia (seven to eight times a night) and dribbling urination. His B-type ultrasonic sonography showed prostate enlargement accompanied by chronic inflammation. On further inquiry we learned that he occasionally suffered from lower abdomen distention and pain, experienced dribbling urination, and one to two soft bowel movements a day. His tongue was pale red with teeth marks, and a white coating. His pulse was slightly wiry. He received a modified version of *Wǔ Líng Sǎn*.

<i>Guì Zhī</i>	10g Cinnamomi Ramulus
<i>Fú Líng</i>	10g Poria
<i>Zhū Líng</i>	10g Polyporus
<i>Zé Xiè</i>	10g Alismatis Rhizoma
<i>Bái Zhú</i>	10g Atractylodis Macrocephalae
<i>Tái Wū (Yào)</i>	10g Linderae Radix
<i>Xiāng Fù</i>	10g Cyperi Rhizoma
<i>Niú Xī</i>	15g Achyranthis Bidentatae Radix

After taking three packages of the formula, his lower abdominal pain and distention was quite reduced, and he was able to voluntarily discharge a larger volume of urine. After another five packages, his urination flowed easily.

Diabetes insipidus

Diabetes insipidus is a Western medical disease caused by a deficiency of arginine vasopressin (AVP, also known as anti-diuretic hormone, ADH). An impediment in the renal tubules' function of absorbing

fluids gives rise to copious urination and intense thirst, with the primary manifestation of the condition being low urinary output in relation to fluids ingested. Western medicine commonly employs the use of hormones and other anti-diuretic pharmaceuticals to treat this condition. Dr Chén commonly treated it with *Wú Líng Sǎn*, often obtaining excellent results.

Case: Five-year-old male patient. Over the previous two years, this child was experiencing copious urination with excessive fluid intake. Every time he drank something he would immediately urinate, and even felt the need to drink at night. His urination was frequent, yet scanty, and he was otherwise perfectly normal and well developed. At a well-known local hospital he was diagnosed with diabetes insipidus, and was administered several medications to quiet the condition, but none were able to control it. This child was quite intelligent, and both his tongue and pulses were normal. Dr Chén used *Wú Líng Sǎn* with the addition of *Qiàn Shí* (Euryales Semen), and *Sāng Piāo Xiāo* (Mantidis Ootheca). After taking only one package of the formula, he was able to sleep through the night, not having to drink any water, nor having to urinate. His family was thrilled, and thought the formula worked like magic. All together he had taken over 30 packages of the formula, and had no problems adhering to the course of treatment. In the morning and afternoon he drank water only two-three times, and would void roughly 50-60ml once or twice in that time, the urine being clear and with a greater volume.

Leaking sweat

Leaking sweat is a condition in which there is unceasing sweat issuing forth like water, causing the person to become almost dripping wet. There are several reports discussing the effective use of *Dāng Guī Liù Huáng Tāng* (Chinese Angelica Six Yellows Decoction), however many patients do not manifest with a yin deficiency, interior heat pattern, so this formula would fail to achieve positive results. In accordance with the principle of treatment based on pattern identification, Dr Chén often uses

a modified version of *Wú Líng Sǎn* with astonishing results.

Case: A 60-year-old female patient presented at the clinic with increasingly copious sweating, which began following menopause at the age of 51. She was treated for many years for an autonomic dysfunction, and menopause, however these treatments were never able to address the root. In early October 1999, her symptoms got much worse. Because of the copious sweating, she needed to change clothing at least 10 times a night. In addition, she also had an aversion to cold, cold extremities, felt severe cold over her back requiring her to wear a down overcoat and cover up with large comforters, and her complexion was bright-white. In addition, her extremities were cold and edematous, her stools were loose and soft, her urinary volume had decreased, and she had a bland taste in her mouth. Her tongue was swollen with teeth marks, she had a difficult time falling asleep, and her pulse was moderate and weak. She was given a modified version of *Wú Líng Sǎn* (Five-Ingredient Powder with Poria).

<i>Bái Zhú</i>	10g Atractylodis Macrocephalae
<i>Fú Líng</i>	20g Poria
<i>Zhū Líng</i>	10g Polyporus
<i>Zé Xiè</i>	10g Alismatis Rhizoma
<i>Guì Zhī</i>	10g Cinnamomi Ramulus
<i>Shēng Huáng Qí</i>	15g Astragali Radix
<i>Fáng Fēng</i>	10g Saposhnikoviae Radix

She took one package per day, drunk warm. Immediately her urination significantly increased; she had to go up to five times in the evening, and with the increase of urination the sweating stopped. The next day her whole body felt quite comfortable, and her skin felt fresh and relaxed. After taking five packages, the sweating had basically stopped, the edema had reduced, she had a rosy complexion, and her stools were now formed. In order to consolidate the treatment, 25 packages of the formula were taken, and afterwards whenever she would sweat her body felt comfortably warm, and overall her spirit increased. Her long-standing chronic condition was effectively cured.

■ Eran Even is a registered doctor of Chinese medicine and acupuncturist living and practising in beautiful Port Moody, BC. He has studied Chinese medicine and language in Canada and China and is constantly striving to be a better clinician by learning and re-learning Chinese medicine through the classics. To read more translations of various other classical doctors' strategies and case studies, visit Eran's blog at: www.chinesemedicinecases.com