

Case Report

Open Access

One Case Report on The Use of a Multi-Herbal Tincture to Treat Psoriasis

Johnson Gao

Research Professor in Cell Biology, Retired from, But not Currently Associated with, the College of Medicine, University of Cincinnati, OH

ABSTRACT

Psoriasis is a kind of dermatological disease that could infect more than 8 million people in the U.S., 125 million people worldwide, nearly 2 to 3 percent of the total population. The causative mechanism of psoriasis is still not very clear. However, many physicians believe that it might be related to an over activity of immune system or autoimmune disease. The drugs for treatment of psoriasis have not reach to a point of totally satisfaction. Here is a case report of psoriasis treated with water and alcohol extract of 14 herbs, a few of which are OTC pills. After 7 weeks' local application of that homemade tincture, the lesion on the left inner side of the leg was obviously improved. Chinese and English names of those herbs are listed in a table for readers to compare. The good thing of this tincture is that its materials are non-prescription herbs and their prices are rather cheap.

*Corresponding author

Johnson Gao, Research professor in Cell Biology, retired from, but not currently associated with, the College of Medicine, University of Cincinnati, OH, USA. Email: jkgao@hotmail.com

Received: March 17, 2022; **Accepted:** March 23, 2022; **Published:** March 31, 2022

key words: Psoriasis, dermatology, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), Rhubarb, Cnidium seed, Tincture, Himalayan salt, Saffron.

This is a case report on curing psoriasis by applying a homemade multi-herbs' water-alcoholic tincture. Here is the story. Mr. A, age 53, computer software engineer, no major diseases, with slightly higher blood pressure and a little bit overweight only. He got skin disease on his belly, chest, arms and more on the inner sides of his two legs for few years, including rash, coloration, sand-like dark spots and itching. In the beginning he thought that it could be caused by streptococcus or fungus like infection. He had applied variety of medicine or ointment to the affected areas, but the symptom was not improved. He was very annoying. About two months ago, he applied a kind of lotion for diabetes skin. Unexpectedly, he got trouble with that, especially in the inner side of the left leg. A large area of tender skin turned to be high degree of rash and itching with purple-red-brown color, spotted black nodes, flaky and with a few white scaly patches. (See a photo in Fig. 1.)



Figure 1: Photo of Mr. A's left leg, inner side, showing the symptom of beginning date on Jan. 22, 2022 starting to apply the 14 herb

extract tincture. The psoriasis was obvious with red purple color, thickened skin in an area about two palm sizes, and the patient felt very itching.

Since the Covid-19 is more dangerous than skin disease, Mr. A didn't want to see a dermatologist. He consulted with me, because I am a retired Cell Biology research professor with some solid knowledge of traditional Chinese herb medicine (TCM). After inspection of his body and through quite lot of literature search, I could pretty much sure that it belongs to the psoriasis. To my limited knowledge it seems that the ultimate reason that could cause psoriasis is still not fully understood. It is said that there are more than 8 million people in the U.S. who have psoriasis; 125 million people worldwide, nearly 2 to 3 percent of the total population. There are some over the counter (OTC) drugs or ointments for soothing psoriasis. Personally, I have no idea to evaluate those items. I read a well-documented web site about SKYRIZI for curing psoriasis. In clinical trials with SKYRIZI, the majority of people saw a 20% improvement in psoriatic arthritis (PsA) symptoms, including joint pain, stiffness, and swelling at 24 weeks. [1]

SKYRIZI is an expensive prescribed medicine. The list price (or Wholesale Acquisition Cost) is \$18,272.79 for one 150mg/mL dose of SKYRIZI every 3 months as of January 2022. I felt that it was impossible for Mr. A to use such a prescribed and very expensive drug, since he didn't even want to see a dermatologist in the Covid-19 pandemic period, plus that medicine is so expensive and low curing percentage (20% only). After I discussed with Mr. A, I thought it was worthy to start with a multi-herbal homemade tincture, since that is very low price, maybe around \$100 or less, and all materials do not need a physician's prescription. I frankly told him that it is only a trial without predicable result. But, I can explain to him with my knowledge why I would like to select those herbs. Also I taught him how to make the tincture in a convenient way, i.e. without need to use expensive equipment, which could be difficult to operate on a home based facility, based on my years'

research experience. And we practically produced a novel multi-herbal tincture at home. And through one and half month trial by him-self to treat his psoriasis infected area the result is almost a miracle. (See a photo in Fig. 2.)



Figure 2: Photograph of the inside of Mr. A's left leg showing improvement in skin condition after using 14 herbal extract tinctures (once or twice daily) on March 12, 2022. (Nearly 7 weeks after treatment). In compared with Fig. 1, that is the same area of the left leg, the psoriasis symptoms were subsided significantly. Skin is now smoother, lighter in color and free of itching.

I discussed with patient Mr. A on January 21, 2022 in regarding to why I chose those 14 herbs to make up my prescription as follows.

1. Rhubarb (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei) 60 g.
2. Sophora flavescens 30 g.
3. Cnidium seeds 30g.
4. Saffron 1g.
5. Fresh Aloe vera 30g.
6. Salvia root (Radix Salvia miltiorrhizae) 30g.
7. Allegra antihistamine 180 mg (one pill).
8. Turmeric (Curcuma Longa L) extract 1g.
9. Aspirin 83 mg/pill, 2 pills.
10. Borneol 0.5g.
11. Vitamin B compound 0.5g/pill, 2 pills.
12. Himalayan salt 1g.
13. Honeysuckle flowers (Flos Lonicerae japonicae) 10g.
14. Licorice (Radix Glycyrrhizae) 5g.

To avoid some people who are unfamiliar with the Chinese herbs' name, and also for inducing less difficulty in journal editorial using the Chinese character font, I am attaching Table 1. in the form of a jpg file shown below.

Table 1. Herbs' Name in Chinese and English

1. 大黄 60 克。
Radix et Rhizoma Rhei 60 g.
2. 苦参 30 克。
Sophora flavescens 30 g.
3. 蛇床子 30 克。
Cnidium seeds 30g.
4. 藏红花 1 克。
Saffron 1g.
5. 鲜芦荟 30 克。
Fresh aloe vera 30g.
6. 丹参 30 克。
Radix Salvia miltiorrhizae 30g.
7. Allegra 抗组胺药 180 毫克 (一粒) 。
Allegra antihistamine 180 mg (one pill)
8. 姜黄提取物 1 克。
Curcuma Longa L. extract.
9. 阿司匹林 83 毫克/丸, 2 丸。
Aspirin 83 mg/pill, 2 pills.
10. 冰片 0.5g.
Borneol 0.5g.
11. 复合维生素 B 0.5g/丸, 2 丸。
Vitamin B compound 0.5g/pill, 2 pills.
12. 喜马拉雅盐 1 克。
Himalayan salt 1g.
13. 金银花 10 克。
Flos Lonicerae japonicae 10g.
14. 甘草 5 克。
Licorice (Radix Glycyrrhizae) 5g.

The reason of using rhubarb is that it has many benefits; [2] traced back to 270 BC in 神农本草经 (Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing) it has long been used as an antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, anti-fibrotic and anticancer medicine in China, plus the recent study shows that it can inhibit interleukin, tumor necrosis factor; [3] using *Sophora flavescens* for inhibiting mold; using *Cnidium* seeds for anti-histamine, stop itching and anti-fungus; Saffron for increasing blood circulation and antioxidant, [4, 5] fresh Aloe vera for smoothing skin; turmeric can stop mildew, anti-inflammatory, anti-hyperlipidemic, rheumatic and herpes zoster; Allegra pill is used for antihistamine; Aspirin can prevent blood clot forming and anti inflammation; Borneol 0.5% borneol is antibacterial, and it has mild antiseptic effect, inhibitory effect on staphylococcus, streptococcus, pneumococcus, *Escherichia coli*, etc. It also has obvious inhibitory effect on some pathogenic skin fungi, local analgesic effect, slight stimulation to sensory nerve endings when externally applied, and local mild analgesic effect at the same time; Himalayan salt contains many trace elements and it provides ionic and osmotic balance; and the honeysuckle flowers benefits to respiratory tract infection, influenza, acute infection of the tonsils, acute infection of the mammary glands, lobar pneumonia, bacterial type of dysentery, acute appendicitis, boils, allergic reaction of skin. Licorice can be used to modulate various herbs.

The procedures of making the water-alcoholic tincture extracted from those listed herbs and pills:

Items 1, 2, 5 and 6 are cut smaller, put in boiling water cook for 30 seconds to do the sterilization and drain out dirty dusts but it still can keep the main essence un-extracted. Then, they were packed in empty tea bags. Items 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13 and 14 were added into several empty tea bags directly. Cook in a clean stainless steel pot with 1,000 ml of food grade spring water and 50ml of 190 proof food grade liquor (~ 95 % alcohol concentration) for 10 minutes. Let the extracts passing through coffee filter paper. (Several changes of the filter paper were needed, since the drain will be very slow due to the small particles stuck into the filter paper holes). Then, approximately 500 ml of extracts collected tincture were added with item 12 and item 10 in 50ml of 190 proof of food grade liquor (~95 % alcohol concentration). After further sterilization in a microwave oven for 3~5 min, that was the final multi-herbal-tincture. It was stored in clean glass bottle in refrigerator as a stock solution for external use to treat psoriasis skin with a self-made applicator, which can either use a Chinese hairbrush or gauze-cloth tied on a piece of chopstick. 5-8ml of the tincture are poured in to a smaller glass cup as a working solution, which is optionally 1:2 diluted with pure water to decrease the alcohol concentration, to avoid the stock solution been contaminated. Apply twice a day.

Two little reminders:

1. The alcohol used in this product (Mohawk or Everclear Grain Alcohol purchased through the Total Wine & More store) is not industrial chemical but food grade 190 proof liquor, which is equal to 95 % concentration ethanol alcohol. So, it is “green”, less toxic to human beings.

2. The alcohol concentration X% in 1,000 ml of food grade spring water and 50ml of 190 proof of food grade liquor (~ 95% alcohol concentration) starting for herb extraction is calculated as:

$$95\% \times 50 = X\% \times (1,000 + 50)$$

$$X\% = 4.52\%$$

The alcohol concentration of the final tincture Z% is calculated as (X% + Y%), when Y% is approximately:

$$(95\% \times 50) = Y\% \times (500 + 50)$$

$$Y\% = 8.64\%$$

$$\text{The concentration of final tincture } Z\% = 4.52\% + 8.64\% = 13.16\%.$$

At the time of treatment, it is better to avoid eating sea fishes, strong coffee and ice cream. Occasionally, eat one pill of Allegra antihistamine pill every 24 hours to decrease allergy.

There seems no durable theory that can totally explain the causative reason of psoriasis. For a deeper analysis of Mr. A's case, I noticed that he had some grey hair on his head. So, I asked him: “Do you coloring your hair?” He answered: “Yes, occasionally, I do hair coloring for a few years.” Then, I advice him not to do hair coloring anymore, because I suspected that one of the possible reason that could cause psoriasis to appear is the delayed-type of autoimmune response. Although I am not a medical doctor, it does not prevent me from thinking deeper than a dermatologist. Especially, I had studied the Kabat and Mayer's book “Experimental Immunochemistry” [6] some fifty years ago when I pursued an Immunology Ph. D. during 1963-1966.

My speculation is that the hair coloring dyes have the potential to react with hair follicle cells to form an antigen-like substance that the immune system recognizes it as foreign and produces antibodies against it in a manner similar to an unmatched organ transplant, or, incompatibility, and the body will reject the transplanted tissue. If you are allergic to hair dye, you can develop psoriasis when your antibodies cross-react with the follicle cells of your body skin. This may have been the case for Mr. A, who used of a diabetic lotion, if it contained chemicals similar to hair dye. But, further investigation is needed.

This is the whole story of how to run the DIY herbal tincture for treatment of one case of psoriasis, which seems quite effective at lease for one person. One of the reasons that the tincture has provided with superior result probably is that I incorporated the Chinese medicine theory in curing disease. It does not use a single chemical to treat the patient but like using army in battle to defeat the enemy - the disease. Normally, a complex herbal tincture always consists of 君, 臣, 佐, 使, which mean in English: king or monarch, royal court ministers, assistants or logistics and ambassador.

By consulting, comparing, thinking, and accumulating experience, I think psoriasis is probably a kind of autoimmune disease. Although very few people used rhubarb to treat psoriasis, I used rhubarb as the king or monarch in the tincture with 60g, the heaviest among other herbs. In my tincture, the royal court ministers may be of those herbs like: *Sophora flavescens*, *Cnidium*, *Salvia* root, *Curcuma Longa* L, Saffron and *Flos Lonicerae japonicae*. The assistants or logistics may be of those herbs like: Aspirin, Vitamin B compound, Allegra antihistamine, Himalayan salt, Aloe Vera and Licorice. While the aromatic compound Borneol could be considered as the ambassador in my formula. So, it is a combined effect of a “National army” to fight against the psoriasis, which is very different from the “SKYRIZI”. Though I couldn't say that my tincture is better than “SKYRIZI”, I could tell you that my tincture is much cheaper, probably 1/180, than “SKYRIZI”, plus no prescription required.

The method is open access to common people. However, the risk is yours to try it for free. But, the method is an invention of mine. Any individual or company, who wants to use my method or its alternative way for profitable purpose, must contact the author in advance.

References

1. <https://www.skyrizi.com/psoriasis/about-skyrizi/cost>
2. Health Benefits of Rhubarb <https://www.webmd.com/diet/health-benefits-rhubarb>
3. Hisashi Matsuda, Supinya Tewtrakul, Toshio Morikawa, Masayuki Yoshikawa (2004) Anti-allergic activity of stilbenes from Korean rhubarb (*Rheum undulatum* L.): structure requirements for inhibition of antigen-induced degranulation and their effects on the release of TNF-alpha and IL-4 in RBL-2H3 cells. *Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry*. 12: 4871-4876.
4. 11 Impressive Health Benefits of Saffron. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/saffron>
5. Yaqi Bian, Chen Zhao, Simon Ming-Yuen Lee (2020) Neuroprotective Potency of Saffron Against Neuropsychiatric Diseases, Neurodegenerative Diseases, and Other Brain Disorders: From Bench to Bedside. *Front. Pharmacol.*, 11: 579052
6. Elvin A. Kabat, Manfred M. Mayer (1948) Published by Charles Thomas, Springfield, IL. (Please search “Elvin A. Kabat, Manfred M. Mayer and immunochemistry” at google.com)

Copyright: ©2022 Johnson Gao. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.