

The Alterative Herbs

A 21st Century Look at Blood Purification

Paul Bergner

North American Institute of Medical Herbalism

See supplemental materials: <http://naimh.com/vitalways>

North American Institute of Medical Herbalism

<http://naimh.com>

Resources for medical herbalism: <http://medherb.com>

Blood in traditional systems

- In the Four Humors system “Blood” is composed of the four humors, which correspond to the empirical observation of the clotted blood in a transparent container. The bottom layer is black, the next is the red blood cells, above this is the leukocytes, and finally the serum. The mineral residue of dried blood is black.
- Blood was observed directly, but also its effects on the tissues are noted through the effects of good or poor nutrition, and also of inflammation.
- The ancient concept of Bad Blood was based on empirical observation of the tissue states.
- Blood purifying herbs are those which empirically produce positive effects on the tissue states, returning them to normal, presumably through alteration of the composition of the circulating fluids.

Blood in contemporary physiology

- About 75% of body water is inside cells, 5% in blood, and 20% in the extracellular fluid.
- Cellular function is dependent on the *composition of the ECF*.
- Nutritional composition
- Accumulation of wastes and plasma proteins
- Purification via the lymphatics
- Autophagy vs inflammation in the extracellular space.
- Roles of liver, kidney, bowels, lymph, and white blood cell activity

“Bad blood” signs and symptoms

Superficial

- Acne, boils, low grade fever, foul discharges, skin ulcers, swollen glands

Deep

- Chronic infection, abscesses, septicemia, gangrene

Deep and chronic

- eczema, psoriasis, emaciation, depression, chronic fatigue, arthritis, serious mental disturbances

Terminal

- Malignant tumors

**From Eclectic and Physiomedical literature of the 1800s

Stages of Damp pathologies

- Weak or cold digestion or food in excess of capacity to digest.
- Blocked energy throughout the system. "Subtle" dampness obstructs the flow of vitality. Poor clearance in ECF
- More overt signs of dampness, puffiness, edema, swellings
- More solid signs of dampness, nodules, stones, tumors, etc
- Note the levels are cumulative, an individual has all four simultaneous by the time they reach stage 4.

A Model of alterative therapy

Assimilation

Liver detoxification

Lymphatics/phagocytes

Kidney detoxification

Bowel Detoxification

Nourishment

Alterative herbs

Herbs which normalize the metabolism by supporting nutrition or improving the body's natural mechanisms of detoxification and which act “slowly, steadily, and moderately in improving the circulating fluids (Wm. Cook)”

Alteratives acting through immunity

- *Baptisia tinctoria* — cold
- *Echinacea spp* — cool dry
- *Allium sativum* — hot and very dry
- *Sambucus nigra* — cool and dry
- *Eupatorium perfoliatum* — cool and dry

Alteratives acting through nutrition

- *Trifolium pratense* — cool
- *Fucus vesiculosus* - dry
- *Medicago sativa* — neutral
- *Urtica* spp. — dry

Lymphatic alteratives

- *Iris versicolor* — cold and dry
- *Solanum dulcamara* — hot and dry
- *Stillingia sylvatica* — cool
- *Anemopsis californica* — warm and dry
- *Ceanothus americana* — cool and dry
- *Trifolium pratense* — cool
- *Galium aparine* — cool and dry

Alteratives affecting the liver

- *Rumex crispus* — cool and dry
- *Mahonia aquifolium* — cold and dry
- *Taraxacum officinalis* — cool and dry
- *Ceanothus americana* — cool and dry
- *Calendula officinalis* — neutral dry
- *Arctium lappa* — cool dry

Alteratives affecting the skin

- *Rumex crispus* — cool and dry
- *Mahonia aquifolium* — cold and dry
- *Arctium lappa* — cool and dry
- *Trifolium pratense* — cool
- *Solanum dulcamara* — warm and dry

Alteratives affecting fluid excretion

- *Arctium lappa* — cool and dry
- *Galium aparine* — cool and dry
- *Sambucus nigra* — cool and dry
- *Taraxacum officinalis* — cool and dry
- *Urtica dioica* — neutral and dry
- *Juniperus* — warm and dry

Alteratives affecting tumors

- *Arctium lappa* – cool and dry
- *Trifolium pratense* – cool

The Herbal Energetics of some Alterative Herbs

Hot

Allium sativum

Solanum
Calendula

Moist

— — — —

Medicago

— | —

— — —

Fucus, Urtica — **Dry**

Stillingia,

Vinegar

Trifolium

Arctium, Echinacea, Sambucus,
Eupatorium, Taraxacum
Rumex, Mahonia, Ceanothus
Iris
Baptisia

Cold

Formulation

- Alterative formulas should include herbs that act on each mechanism of detoxification.
- Whoever has the most herbs in their alterative formula wins.
- “Polycrest” alteratives which act through many methods may help to simplify a formula

Alterative Differentials			<i>Tissues and Functions Affected</i>						
	Temp		Liver	immune	lymphatic	kidney	bowel	skin	nutritive
Arctium	cool	8	mild	x	x	x	x	x	x
Eupatorium	cold	7	strong	x	x	x	x	x	
Larrea	cold	7	moderate	x	x	x	x	x	
Calendula	cool	7	mild	x	x	x		x	x
Plantago	cold	7	mild	x	x	x	x	x	x
Baptisia	cold	6	moderate	x	x		x	x	
Iris	cool	6	moderate	x	x		x	x	
Stillingia	cold	6	moderate	x	x		x	x	
Taraxacum	cold	5	strong			x	x	x	
Anemopsis	warm	5	moderate	x	x	x			
Juniperus	warm	5	mild	x	x	x			
Mahonia	cold	5	strong	x			x	x	
Myrica	warm	5	moderate	x	x	x			
Thuja	warm	5	mild	x	x			x	
Trifolium	cool	5		x	x			x	x

Alterative Differentials			<i>Tissues and Functions Affected</i>						
	Temp		Liver	immune	lymphatic	kidney	bowel	skin	nutritive
Urtica	neutral	5		x		x		x	x
Pyrola	cool	5		x	x	x	x	x	
Ceanothus	cool	4	moderate	x	x				
Commiphora	warm	4	mild	x	x				
Echinacea	cool	4		x	x			x	
Hydrastis	cold	4	strong				x	x	
Rumex	cool	4	strong				x	x	
Sambucus	cool	4		x		x		x	
Allium	hot	1		x					
Fucus	neutral	1							x
Medicago	neutral	1							x

Alterative simples

Urtica

- Remarkable alterative for hot damp conditions of the joints.
- General alterative.
- Draining diuretic
- Anti-inflammatory.
- Exceptional nutritive.
- Dry but not hot or cold.
- Ok for general dietary use.
- Can counter dryness with Glycyrrhiza or Althea

Allium sativum

- Remarkable beneficial effects on digestion, blood composition (mild thinning) and immunity.
- Benefits cell-mediated immunity.
- About 1 clove a day in the diet is sufficient and suitable for dietary use.
- Cooked, powdered, or aged are suitable, provided they have garlic odor and flavor

A garlic cocktail

- Three cloves of garlic
- 1 Tbls of red wine
- 1 Tbls of vinegar
- 1 Tbls of olive oil
- Blend well in a blender.
- Add 1 / 4 cup hot water.
- Let stand for 3 hours. Do not strain. Add one-third of this to a cup of hot water.

Juniperus

- Berries
- from Fr. Kneipp: Take five berries on the first day, then six berries on the second, and so on until you reach 30 berries in a day. Then reduce by one a day until you reach 5 again.
- Kneipp “invariably” produced strong improvement in general health.
- This can be done as a course with small daily doses of the tincture.
- Bitter
- Aromatic
- Digestive tonic/stimulant
- Draining diuretic

Echinacea

- Not seen in older formulas
- Began to be mentioned as an alterative in the 1890s
- Used as such by Physiomedicalists, Eclectics, and N.D.s into the late twentieth century.
- Used as either tincture or tea.
- Tea form is very potent alterative through immune effects.
- Was not described as “immune stimulant” or a remedy for colds or flu until the 1980s

Eupatorium perfoliatum

- Traditional American colonial simple alterative
- Tea at room temperature or cold is predominantly alterative bitter tonic
- Tea taken warm is more pronounced relaxant diaphoretic
- Tincture has less diaphoresis than the hot tea, but still induces sweating through relaxant effects
- Emetic in larger doses.
- No one will thank you for how it tastes.
- Appalachian herbalist Tommie Bass would put at least a small amount of boneset in most of his formulas

Formulas

Whichever formula covers the most systems wins

Some simple formulas

- *Trifolium*
- *Arctium*
- Plus any desired additive or modifying herbs
- Take as tea

- *Urtica*
- *Arctium*
- *Echinacea*
- Take as tea

- *Urtica*
- *Arctium*
- add 2 crushed cloves of garlic to cup of tea.

Trifolium compound (Parke Davis ca 1888)

- Trifolium 8 parts
- Artcium 4
- Stillingia 4
- Mahonia aq. 4
- Phytolacca 4
- Zanthoxylum 1
- Potassium iodide 2
- **Cascara amarga (Simarouba spp.) 4**
- In simple syrup

Trifolium compound Merrell Co ca 1898

- *Trifolium*
- *Artcium*
- *Stillingia*
- *Mahonia*
- *Phytolacca*
- *Zanthoxylum*
- *Potassium iodide*
- *Cascara amarga*
- *Podophyllum*

Trifolium compound Eli Lilly 1898-1942

- Trifolium 4
- Artcium 2
- Stillingia 2
- Mahonia 2
- Phytolacca 2
- Zanthoxylum 2
- Potassium iodide 1

Hoxsey formula ? To 1956

- **Trifolium**
- **Arctium**
- **Stillingia**
- Berberis v. (subbed for Mahonia aq) (omitted Phytolacca)
- **Zanthoxylum**
- **Potassium iodide**
- Rhamnus purshiana
- Rhamnus frangula
- Glycyrrhiza

A modern variant of Hoxsey (Eclectic)

- Trifolium
- Arctium
- Stillingia
- Berberis aq. (subbed for Berberis v.
- **Phytolacca**
- Zanthoxylum
- Potassium iodide
- Rhamnus frangula
- Rhamnus purshiana
- **Baptisia**
- Glycyrrhiza

Alterative/laxative Howard 1932

- Arctium 2
- Stillingia 3
- Smilax 3
- Rumex 3
- Taraxacum 2
- Alnus nig. 2
- Mandragora 2
- Guaiacum 2
- as syrup in whiskey

Mild blood purifier Mauser 1932

- Trifolium 2
- Arctium 2
- Rumex 2
- Rhamnus fr 6
- Viola 2
- Smilax 2
- Glycyrrhiza 3
- Coriander 1
- Take as tea, $\frac{1}{2}$ cupful in am and pm

Blood formula Ward 1936 (England)

- Trifolium 15 grams
- Arctium 15 grams
- Iris 15 grams
- Rumex 15 grams
- Sarsaparilla 22.5 grams
- Wild Ginger 2 grams
- Boil in 3 pints of water, simmering down to 2 pints. Dose, 3 tablespoons,

Alterative tincture with pairing

- “Polycrests” Arctium 4, Eupatorium perf 4
- Immune Echinacea 2, Baptisia 1
- Lymphatic Ceanothus 2, Iris 1
- Kidney Juniper 2
- Liver Taraxacum 2, Mahonia 2
- Bowel Rumex 2

Alterative tea with pairing

- “Polycrests” Arctium 3, Trifolium 3, Calendula 3
- Nutritive Urtica 3
- Immune Echinacea 2
- Lymphatic Ceanothus 1 Anemopsis 2
- Liver Taraxacum 1 Mahonia 1
- Kidney Juniperus 1
- Neutralizing Cordial (Rheum, Mentha, Hydrastis) 6