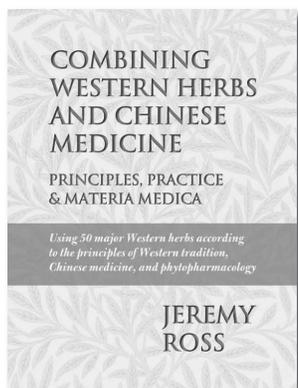


COMBINING WESTERN HERBS AND CHINESE MEDICINE PRINCIPLES, PRACTICE & MATERIA MEDICA



By Jeremy Ross
Greenfields Press, Seattle.
Hardback, 970 pages

FOR 200 years, Western herbalism has abandoned ancient herbal prescribing systems. As a result, a treasury of Western herbs is now prescribed symptomatically without reference to root patterns of disharmony.

Thorough examination of ancient western herbal medicine reveals that, like Chinese medicine, it was similarly systematised in energetic terms, and even though the minutiae of description differ, the occidental and oriental systems are extraordinarily similar.

In his book *Combining Western Herbs and Chinese Medicine - Principles, Practice and Materia Medica*, researcher, experienced TCM and Western trained herbalist Jeremy Ross recasts the traditional Chinese medicine framework to include valued western herbs, and reveals a logical system to prescribe western herbs and formulas.

The contentious issue of assigning TCM properties to herbs that normally take generations to know in this way springs to mind. However, nowadays access to precise pharmacodynamic data provides new information with which we can recognise more completely the actions of herbs.

Interpretation of this data can substantiate and accelerate the understanding of a therapy, hastening the synthesis of knowledge.

Jeremy Ross has taken seven years to create a massive and impressive work linking Western herbalism, traditional Chinese medicine and pharmacological data in a way that will establish a useful repertory for both camps of medicine.

The best available information distilled from many classic Western works, pharmacological research and expert clinical observations is tabulated alongside TCM values to reveal startling portraits of Western herbs.

The book is in two parts — part one surveys western herbal tradition roots, schools of thought, Chinese literature searches, pharmacological and clinical research. The Western herbal parameters of taste and temperature are articulated to link with the Chinese classifications.

The actions of herbs in general are lucidly discussed, and channel tropism and principles of herb combination in theory and practice are very detailed.

Each herb's indications is matched to a TCM syndrome, as is typical of Chinese herbal compendiums, and the introduction of several newly reasoned TCM-like pattern definitions will help to refine herbal prescribing.

Ross also introduces an intriguing concept of variable temperature properties possible within single herbs. Yarrow (*Alchillea millefolium*), for instance, has amphoteric properties, cold and warm, that can be modulated accordingly. His argument is interesting and draws credible weight from pharmacological assays indicating that the array of chemical constituents found within a plant can be deduced to be of differing temperatures. If so, the preparation method will therefore influence their expression.

The subject of dose is thorough and elucidates many important facets of therapeutic dose, presentation and administration.

The three chapters on safety are excellent and examine several aspects of many emergent issues, and the contemporary arguments for and against herbal medicine are given solutions.

The chapter titled *Safety of the Organ Systems* analyses relevant pharmacological studies and the implications for the organs of the body.

Another chapter on clinical safety provides important and crucial information for the clinician mindful of drug-herb interaction, adverse reactions and the management of side effects

Part two, the material medica, presents in detail 50 of the most valuable herbs. Three hundred and eighty herbal couplets, building blocks of the 180 herbal formulas, are then described in concise detail.

Special keynotes highlight the subject herb in Chinese, Western traditional and pharmacodynamic attributes.

Including vigorous analysis with modern pharmacological data and substantiated with over 1500 references, the result is a formidable resource.

This book is excellently indexed, cross-references are efficient and herb nomenclature tables are thorough and easy to read.

The TCM specialist will be impressed by the author's method, lucidity and attention to detail on herbal documentation.

This will provide valuable information for clinical practice, as it presents a firm base from which to access the popular herbs of the Western hemisphere.

— Robbie Todd