

How my family fought against COVID-19

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While editing this article three weeks ago, I and my family contracted COVID-19 and become sick.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic situation, Belgian government finally decided and announced lockdown on Wednesday evening, 11 March, which occurred at middle night on Friday 13 March. Prior to it, I was careful with my practice and seeing much lesser patients in that week. Any patient with fever and cough was refused, because I wanted to protect myself and family. The practice was close on 12 March. Unfortunately, I treated one Dutch couple on the same day, who went to Rome, Italy for a holiday for a few days in the week of 02 till 08 March. The lady told me that she suffered from fever and a bit diarrhea without other complaints, and she even went to her work in a shop. Her colleague was very upset, asking her to stop working. Her husband did not develop any symptoms.

The research paper on " Clinical characteristics of 2019 novel coronavirus infection in China" led by Nan-shan Zhong was published on the preprint server medRxiv on 09 Feb. 2020, which shows that the median incubation period for new coronary pneumonia is 3.0 days, up to 24 days¹, but I have noticed from this paper that only 1 out of 1,099 patients has incubation period of 24 days.

On 16 March, my wife felt headache, severe aversion to cold, slight fever, tiredness, throat pain, bitter taste in the mouth, slight diarrhea, loss of taste and smell and poor appetite. I was extremely careful with her situations, afraid of possible COVID-19 infection. Meanwhile I was especially aware of her fever, cough and shortness of breath. Her fever started raising in the evening, reached 38.5 Celsius. I immediately suspected that she could have this infectious disease, however, it was impossible for her to be tested in Belgium. I had to give her an acupuncture treatment (all together 3 treatment was given in that week), using exactly the acupuncture points as I have listed in my article publish on The Journal of Chinese Medicine (Issue 123 | June 2020 Acupuncture in the Treatment of COVID-19: An Exploratory Study). Confluent acupoints and ghost points were used.

Her situation went to better and better, especially her fever was under the control, however, her throat pain and cough became worse. On 19 March, I started to give her the following herbs based upon a famous herbal formula – **Qing Fei Pai Du Tang**, presented by the State administration of TCM:

Sang Bai Pi 10g, Xing Ren 10g, Shi Gao 20g, Zhi Gan Cao 6g, She Gan 10g, Chai Hu 10g, Huang Qin 10g, Ban Xia 10g, Sheng Jiang 10g, Zhi Shi 10g, Chen Pi 6g, Huo Xiang 10g, Qing Hao 10g, Jin Yin Hua 10g, Lian Qiao 10g, Yu Xing Cao 15g, Ze Xie 10g, Bai Zhu 10g, Zhu Ling 10g, Gui Zhi 10g, Fu Ling 12g in concentrated herbal granulates. Three times a day, 2g each time.

On 18 March, I suffered from slight running nose, sneezing, general muscle pain and headache. I was thinking that it was due to my hard working in my garden that day. But when I measured my body temperature in the evening 20 March, I noticed that I had fever, 37.5 Celsius. Then I realized that both of my wife and myself have contracted this virus. So I started to take the same above herbs. The next day, I developed the same symptoms as my wife, except no loss of smelling and taste.

I also gave the following herbs to my youngest daughter, who is 4 years old to try to prevent her from catching this virus. This formula was based upon **Yu Ping Feng San** and **Huo Xiang Zheng Qi San**:

Fang Feng 20g, Bai Zhu 15g, Huang Qi 15g, Cang Zhu 20g, Chang Pu 20g, Huo Xiang 20g, Lian Qiao 20g, Jin Yin Hua 20g, Pei Lian 20g. 2 times a day, each time 1g.

My wife's conditions became alleviated after pure TCM treatment. I was very delighted to see that on Saturday 21 March, after treatment for 5 days, she has almost no symptoms at all. However, my situation went to worse

¹ <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.02.06.20020974v1>

and worse, because my cough, shortness of breath and pressure over the chest became obvious. On Monday 23 March, I went to a hospital and my wife also accompanied me to see if I could be examined and tested. But the hospital only checked our blood oxygen saturation and did not have any CT control about our lungs. We were sent home because we did not have fever at that moment.

Meanwhile my symptoms became more and more typical that I have this virus already:

- Severe aversion to cold, slight fever and headache, which are the symptoms of Taiyang stage;
- Throat pain and bitter taste in the mouth, which are the symptoms from involvement of Shaoyang stage;
- Slight diarrhea, loss of taste and smell and poor appetite, which are the symptoms of Tainyin stage;
- Tiredness and somnolence, which are the symptoms of Shaoyin stage.

Of course, these symptoms are neither an Influenza nor an abdominal Flu, but it is a COVID-19. I was glad that I stated my herbal treatment immediately on Friday 20 March, the first day when fever started. This herbal formula I formulated above intended to deal with above situations at same time, covering all the stages at simultaneously. No delay in treatment is permitted.

Even with this herbal treatment, my fever stayed almost the same from till Wednesday, but my cough and pressure over the chest became even worse. I strongly believe that if chest computed tomography could be carried out, then ground-glass opacity would be observed as the typical radiological finding. But the good news was that my wife remained symptoms free. I clearly knew that I had to save my life urgently.

By coincidence, I have learned that one my Chinese medical friend, who is also a University professor in Belgium, encountered the exact same situation in his family. His daughter is a dentist and her practice was infected by COVID-19 virus, and his wife took care the family of this daughter and spread the virus in the whole family. His daughter had a chance to be tested and showed positive result and none of rest of the family had the same chance to be tested even being a medical professor at the University. He had to help the whole family with Hydroxychloroquine and Azithromycin. The whole family got symptoms relief 6 days later. So I decided to take above these classic drugs and Chinese herbs at same time Wednesday 25 March (before my nucleic acid detection).

Due to my serious conditions of fever, shortness of breath and pressure over the chest, finally I went to the same hospital on Wednesday 25 March intended to be checked. Again very disappointing that the hospital did the same routine procedure without nucleic acid detection, blood test or CT for the lungs. In the same evening, finally I got a chance to visit an emergency department in a University hospital, since it only provides the test to some severe cases or medical staffs. That night I had fever 38.5 Celsius. On Thursday 26 March positive result of the test was confirmed.

I took Hydroxychloroquine for 6 days, and each time 200mg, twice a day. Azithromycin 500 mg for the first day, and 250mg the following days for 4 days. But my fever, shortness of breath and pressure over the chest disappeared on Thursday evening before receiving the positive confirmation. I knew that my herbs started to work, same as for my wife. A combination of Chinese herbs and classic drug, especially TCM, has brought about this result. My wife did not take any classic drugs. My daughter stayed with us all the time and remained healthy.

Last week Thursday, 09 April, after having no fever for two weeks, the University hospital confirmed that I could reopen my practice to receive patients.

My own experience of this recovery includes following a few points:

- Early treatment

Although an early diagnosis and intervention are very important, there is no cure at this moment and no vaccination is available. Besides, nucleic acid detection is very limited. Most of the mild cases were not tested, so they are still wondering on the street.

Home isolation, taking some drugs, such as Paracetamol, to lower down body temperature, in my point of view, is a passive and disappointing way, because some mild case could develop into severe cases, and some severe cases could become critical cases. When the University hospital called me to inform me the

positive test result, they only told me to stay at home strictly, and take some Paracetamol for fever. I immediately realized that if I had to listen to this advice, then my life could be in danger, since both home isolation and Paracetamol could not kill any virus at any time. I had to improve my own immune capacity via my TCM procedures. The best ways could be taking the herbs in time. At the end, my wife was quickly recovered and me too.

Both my wife and I are still taking above herbs, but less in quantity, only twice a day and each time 1.5g.

- Enough rest

Before sickness, I was terrible busy with a lot of TCM activities, especially travelling and teaching in abroad. I was very tired. I knew I had to take a good rest. I even told Mr. Daniel Maxwell from the Journal of Chinese Medicine that I was not able to edit this article for a while. I have another Chinese article to edit too, I have a few international online lectures to give. I had to cancel all these activities. I stayed in my bed and slept very much.

- Balance diet

I realize that a balanced diet is extremely important besides rest. I ate one egg every day, variety of food and nutrient chicken soup. I was on diet before my sickness, avoiding eating the supper. But I had now to eat three meals a day to gain the weight. I lost 3kg in one week, but now I regained. Protein intake is an issue which needs to be cared. This is the way to support the yuan-qi as much as possible. I also had to drink of a lot of warm water, about 2.5 till 3 liters per day.

- Intake of some Zinc and vitamins

There are different reports confirmed that Zinc is no COVID-19 magic bullet, but it has shown to help with other coronaviruses. I took Zincotabs, one tablet a day in the morning.

Meanwhile I have also ate a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables. Although I had a very poor appetite, and bitter taste in the mouth, I knew I had to force myself to eat well. Friday 27 March, my appetite became much better and my rest of the symptoms had almost gone completely.

- Regulation of emotions

A lot of patients with COVID-19 reported to suffer from some emotions, such as sadness, panic, fear, restlessness, mental disturbance and worry, etc. I knew it was normal reactions, but they could be negative to the health. I did my best to stay calm and be strong in the mind to be able to sleep well. Although my whole family had to stay at home for quarantine, we were very happy that everyday our symptoms were improving and alleviating. Our daughter remained healthy, which made us extremely happy and delighted in the heart.