Herbal medicine:
An introductory model

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Herb Clinic

Where?

be creative: office, but also

- forest,
- garden,
- teahouse,
- coop
Herb Clinic

What supportive structures?

- apothecary,
- produce dept,
- filing system,
- referral network
What goes in to it?

- Herbs! (tincture, bulk, powder, etc)
- Scale and graduated cylinder,
- Dispensing bottles (2, 4, 8oz), bags
- Lab notebook
- No need to keep samples of formulas
Lab Notebook

What goes in to it?

- Hard copy or electronic

- Jot notes of what you do (no names):
  Receiving
  Formulas and batches
  Cleaning / calibrating
Herb Clinic

What supportive structures?

- apothecary,
- produce dept,
- filing system,
- referral network
Filing system

What goes in to it?

-client records:
  intake, informed consent, SOAP note
  full interview notes
  additional relevant paperwork
  recommendation / formula form
Intake form

Informed consent
SOAP note

VCIH Student Clinic
Consultation summary and assessment flowsheet

Client name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

[Initial Visit] [Follow-up]

OBJECTIVE DATA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pulse (note strength and quality)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right 80/60 bpm</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>70 kg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Super</td>
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TONGUE

Clinician observations:

Facial color:_________________________________________________________

Temperature: ____________________________ Per渠lary pulse: ____________________________

Skin tone: ____________________________ Hair: ____________________________

Nails: ____________________________ Hair: ____________________________

Other: ____________________________________________________________

Relevant physical exam(s) of body systems / physiology:

General description of physical examination:

Diagnoses received with date(s):

Relevant laboratory results with date(s):

SUBJECTIVE DATA AND CLIENT REPORTS:

Summary of relevant comments from client interview as they apply to the case:

CLINICAL ASSESSMENT:

Constitutional summary (include reference to supportive information from obj/subj data):

Summary of relevant physiology:

Goals based on constitution and physiology:

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PLAN:

Herbal actions required (based on constitutional and physiological assessment above):

General description of herbal support formulas and nutritional recommendations (for doses, times, and frequencies see attached copy of client recommendation sheet):

Other recommendations (including referrals):

FOLLOW-UP PLAN MODIFICATIONS:

Outline timeline for follow-up and outcome goals and potential protocol modifications (based on outcomes, as well as concerns and cautions to monitor):

Primary clinical herbal intern: ____________________________

Partner: ____________________________

Supervisor: ____________________________
Filing system

What requirements?

- confidential information is protected!
  locked
  minimize file transportation
  password-protected electronic records
Clinical encounter

- Gathering information
- Finding a pattern
- Making a plan
- Following up
Clinical encounter

- Gathering information
- Finding a pattern
- Making a plan
- Following up

-BUT HOW?
Clinical encounter

- Gathering information
- Finding a pattern
- Making a plan
- Following up

-BUT HOW? We need a framework for practice!
Fractal reality
Holistic interface
"Paradoxically, herbalism is both a wonderfully simple and a staggeringly complex therapy." ~ Matthew Wood
Holistic interface

Plants are crude but highly complex systems interacting with humans on a whole-system-to-system level.

This does not mean they don’t have specific biochemical effects!
Holistic interface

Biochemical effects are at all levels: ecology, whole person, multi-organ systems, tissue, cell, genetics, more? (that which we have yet to discover)

With plants, it is easier to work on broad patterns than on small pieces
Holistic interface

So what are the broad patterns that are most important?

- Those with the most interconnections in the physiology! “Hubs” of activity
The hypothesis

Plant Deficiency Syndrome

Our culture is experiencing the effects of an abstraction from wilderness both around us and within us. The lack of biodiversity, and especially botanical biodiversity, has profound consequences for our species and the ecology to which we belong.
The hypothesis

Plant Deficiency Syndrome

Plants are a necessary part of us.

We evolved in the context of consuming plants

If you bring wild plants into a person’s life,

THAT is the most powerful medicine they can get
The hypothesis

Plant Deficiency Syndrome

We are a whole “hub”

Wild nature is our dancing partner

Without her, we lose vitality

cf. Richard Louv, “nature deficit disorder”
Plant Deficiency

What plants to use? And why?

The answer helps us define the clinical framework. What are the crucial hubs of physiologic activity?
The Polarities

Yin / Yang (1 – 2 – 3 – all things)
Hot / Cold
Moist / Dry

Alternatively: overactive / underactive
(can apply to individual “hubs”)

Physiologic hubs

- Neuromuscular tone
- Digestive / Hepatic function
- Immune / Inflammatory function
- Epigenetic regulation
Neuromuscular

- Autonomic: feedback loop with all organs, arterial system

- Somatosensory: feedback loop with perception, muscle tone

- Central: mood, arousal, focus
Neuromuscular

-Assessing:

-Mood, sleep, visible tension

-Pulse: variability, tension, speed, depth

-“Somaticization” of stress (Sx linked to stress)
Digestive/Hepatic

- Connection to ecology around us
- Process and “distill” all we consume
- Neutralize harmful inputs
- Process and eliminate waste
Digestive/Hepatic

-Assessing:

-Digestive symptoms, liver disease, chem load
-Tongue: yellow coating, or bright and stripped
-Skin, mucous membranes irritated
Immunity

- Controls inflammatory process
- Creates “field” in which the pathogen cannot (or can) thrive
- Manages cancer
Immunity

-Assessing:

-Degree of inflammation
-Frequency of infection
-Constitutional “heat” (skin, voice, etc…)
-Resilience, energy level (“qi pool”)

- … this also involves metabolic “fire”
Epigenetics

- Regulates genetic expression
- Modifies DNA translation material
- Our habits can be passed on!
Epigenetics

-Assessing:

-Dietary history, nutrition
-Immune / Inflammatory status (see prev.)
-Cardiovascular disease / cancer history
SOAP Note

-Subjective
  -Information and reports from the client

-Objective
  -Tongue, pulse, labs, etc

-Assessment
  -What “hubs” affected? Energetics/polarities?

-Plan...
So what’s the plan??
Aromatics

Egyptian kyphi (incense blend)
Frankincense, myrrh, sandalwood, cinnamon, calamus, bound with raisins (many recipes exist)

Green historian Plutarch (A.D. 46-120) wrote that smelling Kyphi was like “listening to beautiful music.” He also described it as having the power to “rock a person to sleep, brighten dreams, and chase away the troubles of the day.”
Aromatics

All aromatic plants rebalance neuromuscular tone, and they do it gently, safely, and effectively.

Non-psychotropic, nevertheless very effective.

Used during ceremony, “peak” times (childbirth, wedding, death).

Open and flow!
Aromatics
Bitters

Mithridatum (cure-all elixir): mixture of Egyptian kyphi and strongly bitter plants: parsley, wild carrot, gentian, costus, poppy

Traditional bitter-tasting aperitif / digestif used in all cultures
Bitters

All bitters activate the digestive system, perhaps through a poison-like challenge.

Ongoing hepatic detoxification is improved and liver function supported

Used around meals for healthy appetite and digestion

Largely gone now! Our link with the outside world is damaged.

Turn on and challenge!
Bitters
Tonics

Sweet tonics (mushrooms, adaptogenic roots like ginseng, astragalus)

Sour tonics (berries, fruit peels like hawthorn, orange peel, blueberries)

Food-like, safe, long-term
Tonics

Sweet tonics rebalance immunity, inflammation, and energy

Sour tonics are essential regulators of epigenetics, balancing inflammation, gene function, protein expression, tissue integrity

Nourish and balance!
Clinical encounter

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