Primary Formulas for Sleep

An Mien Formula (An Mien Pian) is beneficial for a number of different patterns. It contains several natural sedatives, yet generally does not cause a desire to sleep during the day. An Mien Formula directly addresses heart qi deficiency. In addition to its ability to support sleep, this formula stabilizes the shen and calms anxiety.

Zizyphus Formula (Suan Zao Ren Tang) is also likely to be effective no matter what the pattern. Like An Mien Formula, Zizyphus Formula contains natural sedative herbs. Zizyphus Formula most benefits those with liver yin and blood deficiency. It soothes emotions associated with wood imbalance.

Restful Sleep Formula (An Xin Pian) is a modification of Baked Licorice Formula (Zhi Gan Cao Tang). It is used for sleep patterns with deficient qi and blood. It is similar in action to Ginseng & Longan Formula (Gui Pi Tang), but is specifically modified to address sleep. It is especially effective for deficiency sleep patterns in the elderly.

Heavenly Emperor’s Formula (Tian Wang Bu Xin Dan) has legendary origins. It is originally indicated for heart and kidney exhaustion when the individual has used their will to push past their post-natal capacity, and they begin to consume the pre-natal qi in order to continue pressing forward, especially with too much thinking. This exhaustion can affect memory and clear thinking. Today, this formula is indicated for use with kidney and heart yin deficiency, making it very popular for sleep support among menopausal or andropausal patients. It is also the best sleep support formula when dryness is a significant factor, since it replenishes fluids.

Bupleurum D Formula (Chai Hu Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang) is used for excess patterns only, with a feeling of fullness in the chest and possible signs of heat. Bupleurum D Formula is useful for supporting sleep during periods of acute stress that have a clear end in sight, such as pre- or post-performance, heavy workloads associated with a particular project, or smoking cessation. Bupleurum D Formula calms restless and dream-disturbed sleep.

Blood Palace Formula (Xue Fu Zhu Yu Tang) is used for sleep patterns with blood stasis or stagnation in the chest. This is often missed in diagnosis because the practitioner’s attention is usually on heart deficiencies or excesses of heat when they are differentiating sleep patterns. This formula is effective when there is a feeling oppression in the chest or ribcage (not arising from phlegm patterns).
ZANG-FU DEFICIENCY PATTERNS AFFECTING SLEEP

All sleep problems involve the heart in some way. Deficient patterns of the heart can arise from within the heart zang itself, or from one of the three organs that nourish the heart: spleen, liver, or kidney. The heart does not make its own blood; “heart blood” refers to the blood in the heart supplied to it from another organ. This blood is created by the spleen and distributed by the liver. So if there is heart blood deficiency, either the spleen is not producing adequate amounts of blood or the liver is not supplying blood to the heart. The correct pattern can be distinguished easily through the pulse or other accompanying signs.

The heart-kidney connection is the primary yin-yang connection among the zang-fu. Yin from the kidney should rise to cool and nourish the heart tissue while fire from the heart should descend to the kidneys to prevent jing from congealing and to provide yang support from the post-natal realm for the distribution of the jing through the sanjiao mechanism. If kidney yin is not rising to nourish the heart, then the heart will over-heat. When this has continued for a long period of time, other body fluids will also become deficient, especially those in the lower burner.

When the heart zang itself is the primary deficiency in a sleep disorder, the pattern will always include “heart qi deficiency.” The three main patterns you will see that include “heart qi deficiency” are: “heart qi and yin deficiency,” “heart qi and blood deficiency,” or “heart and gallbladder qi deficiency.” The yin of the heart is supplied by the kidney, and the blood of the heart is supplied by the spleen or liver; so usually more than one organ will need support.

ZANG-FU EXCESS PATTERNS AFFECTING SLEEP

Excess patterns affecting sleep are always related to fire or blood stasis in the chest. (Phlegm is also a common factor, but rarely the chief pathogen responsible.) Fire is often misleadingly defined in OM as merely “intense heat,” but the real definition of fire is “heat that affects the eyes and the shen.” The fire pattern that matters most for sleep is liver fire. All other fire patterns (including heart fire) are acute situations where problem sleeping is secondary to an external pathogenic factor. Liver fire, however, can accumulate over time (for example with nightly alcohol consumption) or can develop out of persistently stagnating liver qi. Anatomically, the heart sits on top of the liver and it is the nature of heat to rise, so liver fire disturbing the heart is common.

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John Scott, DOM and Lorena Monda, DOM