



Letter to the Editor

Allium fistulosum congee as a home remedy to ward off the corona virus at an early stage

At the early stage of COVID-19, patients experience flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, headaches, sore throat and etc.¹ However, eight to ten days after experiencing these initial symptoms, around 20% of patients, especially the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions, progress from the mild stage to the moderate stage, or even severe stage. Therefore, it is critical to find a treatment that can target the early stage of the disease.

In Chinese Medicine, *Allium fistulosum*, also known as spring onion or scallion, has had a long history of being used as a treatment for measles, abscesses, colds, and other similar medical conditions.² Quite a few ancient Chinese medical books have documented the efficacy of *Allium fistulosum* in the treatment of epidemic diseases.³

Based on prior experience, several COVID-19 patients were successfully treated with *Allium fistulosum* congee. One of them is a male patient in his 20's and he had been on the verge of reaching the moderate stage after having been infected with COVID-19 for eight days. Starting from the ninth day, he started taking the *Allium fistulosum* congee by itself twice a day. Two to three hours after the first taking of *Allium fistulosum* congee, the patient started to sweat with lots of phlegm coming out and the body temperature dropped from 38.5 °C to 37.3 °C. By the next day, the patient had more phlegm coming out, and the body temperature dropped to 36.7 °C. The patient eventually fully recovered within 11 days. Other patients who were in the early or mild stage recovered much sooner, usually within three to four days taking *Allium fistulosum* congee.

The recipe for *Allium fistulosum* congee used to alleviate the COVID-19 symptoms is as below:

Ingredients:

- 50 g *Oryza sativa* (rice)

40-80 g *Allium fistulosum** (80 g on the first day, 60 g on the second day, and 40 g on subsequent days) * The amount could be modified according to the severity of disease and duration of use.)

- 4 small mugs of water (ca. 400 ml)

Boil and simmer *Oryza sativa* for 30 minutes, add *Allium fistulosum* and simmer for additional 15 minutes, divide the congee into two portions, take one portion immediately, and take the other portion after about four hours.

Allium fistulosum congee can remove phlegm from the lungs. After consumption, the patient may experience sweating, reduced heat and large quantities of phlegm will be removed from the lungs. This should allow for improved breathing and relief from the symptoms.

A medical anthropologist's reflections

The corona virus is causing havoc, deaths number well above half a million, causing grief and frustration. Governmental lockdown has caused certain economies to collapse, while other governments, rushing to ease it too quickly, are sacrificing the vulnerable. Yet here is a Chinese medical recipe, not even a formula, just a cook recipe. How is it possible that a small episode of self care when the disease is not yet full-blown might become the David who kills the giant Goliath?

The answer is contained in a wisdom phrase: "The superior craftsman treats the illness that does not yet exist" (*shanggong zhi weibing* 上工治未病; *Huangdi nei jing ling shu*, "Ni shun pian")

- 1 Who is the "superior craftsman"? It is the patient, together with the physician. Vigilant and alert patients are attentive to how they feel and make themselves aware of any small change in their sensory experience of the everyday. It can be a dizziness, a slight nausea, a temperature, a dry cough, an itchy eye. To attend to the "not yet manifest state of an illness" (*wei bing*) does not only imply doing general preventive health care but also attending to specifics, and "educating one's attention", like the above symptoms which may or may not be an early stage of covid-19.⁴
- 2 When is the "not yet"? The right moment is the moment one feels just a bit different from usual,⁵ nothing to write home about, a moment of feeling not quite right, just about ready to grant oneself a small extra – of rest, of reflection, of eating some spring onion rice congee.
- 3 And take the time to tuck yourself away under the blanket in order to fall asleep and let the body do the work of sweating and sweating and sweating out the pathogen. (Don't forget to change the bed sheets, as otherwise you might re-infect yourself.)

Social inequality is the worst for the health of a population and national health services are key to treating everyone equally. However, they have as danger that patients start to believe that health is served, with hi-tech, on a silver tablet in the ICU (intensive care unit). National health services co-produce the false belief that health is an item of consumption. Naturally, fate does play a role, and we have to accept it, but you yourself still can try to make a difference - through a simple recipe for self care: the *Allium fistulosum* congee.

Author contributions

Conceptualization of article: EH, ZBX, DZW. Methodology: ZBX, DZW. Analysis: ZBX, DZW. Investigation: ZBX, DZW. Data Curation: ZBX, DZW. Writing – Original Draft: EH. Writing – Review & Editing: EH and EHS.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding

This research received no grant from any funding agency.

Ethical statement


This article documents a *post-hoc report* by Chinese medical scholar-physicians on one single treatment episode of one single patient. Apart from being a confirmed COVID-19 case, the exact circumstances and any treatment procedures regarding this patient specifically, have not been disclosed. The patient has seen our article and is happy for this piece to be published.

Data availability

The data will be made available upon request.

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20 June 2020

Available online 30 June 2020