

## **The prevalence of use of traditional Chinese Medicine in Chinese patients on HAART**

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**Background:** Usage of traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) by Chinese population who have chronic illness is perceived to be common in Hong Kong. Few studies have examined usage of TCM in Chinese HIV-infected patients. The objective of this study is to examine the prevalence of use of TCM in Chinese patients on highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) and the possible factors affecting their use.

**Method:** A self-administered questionnaire survey was conducted at our HIV clinic – Integrated Treatment Centre (ITC) between July and August 2005. Subjects were all male Chinese patients who had been put on HAART for over one year within the study period.

**Results:** Seventy-six patients were recruited totally. Their mean age was 45 years (SD 11.5) and. The median duration on HAART was 59.8 months (range: 12.3 to 100.1 months). Among them, 22 (28.9%) reported use of TCM while on HAART. The goals for using TCM were mainly for general health maintenance (63.6%) and treatment for minor illness (50%). The reasons for taking TCM were prior evidence of its effectiveness (68.2%) and recommendations from family / friends (40.9%). There was no significant relationship between TCM using and non-TCM using group to the following:- adherence to HAART, demographic, CD4, viral load, ADI, disease stage and duration, experienced side effects on HAART, perceived support from ITC doctors / nurses or family members / friends who knew about their HIV status

**Conclusion:** Though no significant factor was found in affecting the use of TCM among Chinese HIV patients, cultural belief may be an important determinant. Further robust study to understand the types of TCM used among Chinese HIV patients could help to elucidate the potential effect and adverse effect on use of TCM alongside with HAART therapy.

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