Research Article

Discriminant Analysis of Traditional Chinese Medicinal Properties Based on Holistic Chemical Profiling by $^1$H-NMR Spectrometry

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Medicinal property, which is closely related to drug chemical profiling, is the essence of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) theory and has always been the focus of modern Chinese medicine. Based on dozens of classic and commonly used TCM herbs with recognized medicinal properties, the present study just aimed to investigate the feasibility and reliability of medicinal property discriminant by using $^1$H-NMR spectrometry, which provided a mass of spectral data showing holistic chemical profile for multivariate analysis and data mining, including principal component analysis (PCA), Fisher linear discriminant analysis (FLDA), and canonical discriminant analysis (CDA). By using FLDA for two-class recognition, a large majority of test herbs ($59/61$) were properly discriminated as cold or hot group, and the only two exceptions were Chuanbeimu (Fritillariae Cirrhosae Bulbus) and Rougui (Cinnamomi Cortex), suggesting that medicinal properties interrelate with flavor and body tropism, and all these factors together bring up medicinal property and efficacy. While by performing CDA, $98.4\%$ of the original grouped herbs and $77.0\%$ of the leave-one-out cross-validated grouped cases were correctly classified. The findings demonstrated that discriminant analysis based on holistic chemical profiling data by $^1$H-NMR spectrometry may provide a powerful alternative to have a deeper understanding of TCM medicinal property.

1. Introduction

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has been used to treat and prevent diseases for thousands of years based on a unique theoretical framework [1]. The generalized medicinal property in TCM mainly includes four properties, five flavors, channel tropism, and major function. In a narrower sense, it means four major properties. As firstly described in Shennong Bencaojing, also the Classic of Herbal Medicine, four properties refer to cold (Han), cool (Liang), warm (Wen), and hot (Re) and are usually summed up as cold and hot since the difference between hot and warm, as well as cold and cool, is merely in the extent [2, 3].

In light of TCM theory, the rationale for correct remedy selection is based on relevant syndrome, the biological disorder state or Zheng in Chinese, which is usually classified into cold or hot status showing the imbalance between Yin and Yang in human body [4–6]. Generally speaking, hot ZHENG is caused by excess of Yang, whereas excess of Yin leads to cold ZHENG. Therefore, therapeutic effects mainly depend on medicinal property, as well as the processes they regulate to recover the balance between Yin and Yang [7]. It has become one of the vital TCM treatment principles to cure cold syndrome by medication with hot nature and cure hot syndrome by medication with cold nature, respectively [4, 8]. Resultantly valid medicinal property discriminant is of great significance for prescribing formulary and clinical application of Chinese materia medica.

Medicinal properties represent the types of body reactions after the administration of specific TCM [2, 9]. Traditionally medicinal property is determined according to the
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assay (mainly 1H-NMR) with chemometric methods has effectively combines NMR-based metabolomics that proximal to a specific phenotype or disease [19]. Nowadays, providing a snapshot of the biological processes that simultaneously profile a wide range of metabolites, thus through screening platform, metabolomic analysis can with data mining techniques. As an emerging high-throughput and good destruction, universal response, high throughput, and good acceptance of TCM and guiding clinical usage of traditional medicinal herbs. Undoubtedly, the result from such methodology could direct proper application of Chinese medicinal herbs. However, as a highly abstracted part of TCM theories, the medicinal property is far from being deeply understood, and it is difficult to determine the property for all herbs by this way because of large expenditure of money and time. It has become the research focus of Chinese medicine science to explore medicinal property by modern scientific methods for both the worldwide acceptance of TCM and guiding clinical usage of traditional medicinal herbs, as well as discovery and development of new medicinal resources.

With multiple advantages of noninvasion, non-destruction, universal response, high throughput, and good resolution, NMR shows potent metabolic profiling capabilities and has been widely used for metabolomic analysis [10–12]. A recent study shows the role of metabolomics in order to assess the effects of environmental pollution and metabolomics research in the health and safety of marine organisms [13, 14]. At present, there are related researches on aquaculture marine foods. The study of marine biological metabolomics through proton nuclear magnetic resonance can help to better understand its specific physiological functions [15, 16]. Metabolomics is also used in the field of Chinese medicine; the combination of metabolomic data with multivariate analysis has been used for medicinal property identification. It is highly consistent with the holistic view of TCM and suitable for probing the complex chemical composition of medicinal herb that contains a variety of compounds responsible for efficacy and medicinal property [17, 18].

Based on such a consensus that there are very close connections amongst property, efficacy, and therapeutic material basis of medicinal herb, it may be a viable problem-solving mode to investigate the medicinal property by integrating advanced chemical analysis of holistic composition with data mining techniques. As an emerging high-throughput screening platform, metabolomic analysis can simultaneously profile a wide range of metabolites, thus providing a snapshot of the biological processes that are proximal to a specific phenotype or disease [19]. Nowadays, NMR-based metabolomics that effectively combines NMR assay (mainly 1H-NMR) with chemometric methods has become a powerful approach for authenticating and assessing the quality of natural products, characterizing the effects of environmental stressors on organism health as well as tracking the effective components that account for therapeutic effects of Chinese materia medica [20–22]. Herein, we report some interesting results of medicinal property discriminant by using multivariate analysis based on 1H-NMR spectrometry providing holistic chemical profiling.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Materials. The herb materials have been enrolled in the Pharmacopoeia of the People’s Republic of China (ChP 2015 Edition, Section), including 61 kinds of classic and commonly used TCM herbs in the present study. All the herbs were collected from the traditional habitat in China, authenticated, and the voucher specimens were deposited in School of Pharmacy, Yantai University, Yantai, China. According to the records of recognized and definite medicinal property in ChP, 31 cold/cold herbs are listed in Table 1, and the other 30 hot/warm ones in Table 2, respectively. For convenience of data mining and analysis, the herbs with cold medicinal property were further coded as CA, and cool as CB, hot as HA, and warm as HB, respectively. Both Chinese and English denominations, as well as habitat, were listed for each herb.

2.2. 1H-NMR Assay. Taking into consideration the fact that TCM herbs are traditionally administered as aqueous decoctions, the air-dried medicinal section of each trueborn herb (80–100 g) was powdered or cut into small pieces and followed by twice extraction with deionized water under reflux (1000 mL, once 1 h). The extracts were combined, evaporated in vacuum to obtain a brown residue, and then freeze-dried for following the NMR assay.

The freeze-dried extract that was equivalent to 200 mg of raw herb material was dissolved in 1 mL DMSO-d6 containing 10% trimethylsilane (TMS) as a reference of chemical shift. After centrifugation (3,000 rpm × 5 min), the supernatant was transferred to a 5 mm o.d. tube for assay, and one-dimensional 1H-NMR spectrum was obtained at room temperature and 400.13 MHz proton frequency on a pulse FT NMR spectrometer (Bruker AV-400, Germany); the software package of XWIN-NMR3.5 and Z-axis gradients were used. A spectral width of 13966 Hz, an acquisition time of 2.35 s, and a pulse interval of 1.00 s, and the typical acquisition parameters included 65536 data points.

2.3. Statistical Analysis. Using the MestReNova NMR processing software (ver. 6.1.1, Mestrelab Research, Santiago de Compostella), the spectrum was processed for phase and baseline correction, and integral calculation by an appropriate interval within the chemical shift (δ) ranges from −0.03 to 10.00, among which the chemical shift regions from −0.03 to 0.03 and 2.40 to 2.60 were excluded to eliminate signals of TMS and DMSO. After normalization, 1H-NMR spectral data were rearranged to obtain the dataset for further statistical analysis with the rows of data matrix representing the herbs (subjects) and the columns representing chemical shifts (variables), respectively. Principle
component analysis (PCA) and discriminant analysis were performed by software of SPSS (ver. 23.0, SPSS, Chicago, IL) and PAST (ver. 1.30, University of Oslo, http://folk.uio.no/ohammer/past).

3. Results

3.1. \(^1\text{H-NMR} \) Assay. The yield of each herb was calculated as weight percentage of aqueous extract in the raw material of herb, and the results are shown in Tables 1 and 2. As to the normalized \(^1\text{H-NMR} \) spectra illustrated in Figure 1, considerable variation with medicinal property could be found. More concretely, the hot herbs were significantly different from the other three groups, which displayed much lower intragroup variation in both shape and intensity of the peaks at this chemical shift range when compared with other groups; an obvious spectral difference could be even found between hot and warm ones with the former generally showing subsidiary peaks at \( \delta \) 7-8, and the latter at \( \delta \) 1-2, respectively (Figures 1(a) and 1(b)). While for those cold or cool herbs, both intragroup and intergroup comparison displayed relatively high similarity (Figures 1(c) and 1(d)).

3.2. Principal Component Analysis (PCA). According to the results shown in Figure 2, the first two PCs captured nearly 70% of the total variance, whereas all the other factors displayed much lower eigenvalue with each accounting for less than 8% of the total variance. However, the score plot from PCA based on the \(^1\text{H-NMR} \) spectral dataset of all the herbs exhibited noticeable intermingling of the black dots representing cold or cool medicinal property and those gray ones representing hot or warm medicinal property (Figure 3).

3.3. Fisher Linear Discriminant Analysis (FLDA). FLDA was processed by the software of PAST on the basis of \(^1\text{H-NMR} \) spectral dataset, and all the herbs having plus scores were classified as cold/cool class, while those with minus scores as hot/warm class. As shown in Figure 4, a total of 59 herbs were correctly discriminated with the accuracy up to 96.72\% (59/61 \times 100\%). The two exceptions happened to Chuanbeimu (Fritillariae Cirrhosae Bulbus) and Rougui (Cinnamomi Cortex), which were coded as CA04 and HA06, respectively.

3.4. Canonical Discriminant Analysis (CDA). As shown in Table 3, the significance test of function coefficients further demonstrated that three CDFs could be built for medicinal property classification with a significance level less than 0.001. Furthermore, the first two CDFs were both indeed linear combination of original variables with canonical
correlation coefficients more than 0.9, and they together accounted for more than 90% of the total variance. For the two standardized CDFs, the function coefficients are illustrated in Figure 5, which indicated that the first CDF had a greater contribution than the second one.

98.4% of the original grouped cases were correctly classified are shown in Table 4, and the only exception was Nvzhenzi (Ligustrl Lucidi Fructus), a traditionally warm herb but classified into cool group by CDA. However, the result in Figure 6 indicates that leave-one-out cross-validated grouped cases that were correctly classified only accounted for 77.0% of the total. As shown in Figure 6, both the red points for the herbs in hot group and the blue ones for those in cold group were fairly centralized and

Table 2: Sample information of TCM herbs with hot/warm medicinal property.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Denomination (Chinese/English)</th>
<th>Collection place</th>
<th>Yield (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HA01</td>
<td>Bibo/Piperis Longi Fructus</td>
<td>Hainan</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA02</td>
<td>Fuzi/Aconiti Lateralis Praeparata</td>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA03</td>
<td>Ganjiang/Zingiberis Rhizoma</td>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA04</td>
<td>Gaoliangjiang/Alpiniae Officinarum Rhizoma</td>
<td>Guangdong</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA05</td>
<td>Hujiao/Piperis Fructus</td>
<td>Hainan</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA06</td>
<td>Rougui/Cinnamomi Cortex</td>
<td>Guangxi</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA07</td>
<td>Wuzhuyu/Euodiae Fructus</td>
<td>Guizhou</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA08</td>
<td>Xianmao/Curculiginis Rhizoma</td>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB01</td>
<td>Baijiezi/Sinapis Semen</td>
<td>Anhui</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB02</td>
<td>Buguzhi/Psoraleae Fructus</td>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB03</td>
<td>Cangzhui/Atractylodis Rhizoma</td>
<td>Liaoning</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB04</td>
<td>Caoudoukou/Alpiniae Katsumadai Semen</td>
<td>Guangdong</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB05</td>
<td>Chenpi/Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium</td>
<td>Guangdong</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB06</td>
<td>Chuanxiong/Chuanxiong Rhizoma</td>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB07</td>
<td>Duzhong/Eucommiae Cortex</td>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB08</td>
<td>Fabanxia/Pinelliae Rhizoma Praeparatum</td>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB09</td>
<td>Gansong/Nardostachyos Radix Et Rhizoma</td>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB10</td>
<td>Gaoben/Ligustici Rhizoma Et Radix</td>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td>17.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>HB11</td>
<td>Honghua/Carthami Flos</td>
<td>Xinjiang</td>
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<tr>
<td>HB12</td>
<td>Houpu/Magnoliae officinalis Cortex</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB13</td>
<td>Mahuang/Ephendrac Herba</td>
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<td>Yunnan</td>
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<td>HB15</td>
<td>Muxiang/Aucklandiae Radix</td>
<td>Yunnan</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB16</td>
<td>Qianghuo/Nototerygii Rhizoma et Radix</td>
<td>Gansu</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB17</td>
<td>Taxiang/Santall Albi lignum</td>
<td>Guangdong</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB18</td>
<td>Tiannaxing/Arisaematis Rhizoma</td>
<td>Liaoning</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB19</td>
<td>Weilingxian/Clematitis Radix Et Rhizoma</td>
<td>Liaoning</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB20</td>
<td>Xixin/Asari Radix et Rhizoma</td>
<td>Liaoning</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB21</td>
<td>Yanhusuo/Corydalis Rhizoma</td>
<td>Zhejiang</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB22</td>
<td>Yinyanghuo/Epimedi Folium</td>
<td>Shanxi</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: $^1$H-NMR spectra of 61 Chinese medicinal herb samples with specific herb nature. (a) Hot; (b) warm; (c) cool; (d) cold (color).
separated from other groups. On the contrary, the other
two groups for the herbs with warm (yellow points) or cool
(green points) medicinal property displayed obvious
commingling with the shortest distance between their
group centroids.

4. Discussion

The result of $^1$H-NMR spectra indicated that the TCM herbs
with different medicinal properties indeed have obvious
difference in chemical compositions, and $^1$H-NMR spec-
troscopic assay may provide an effective way for illustrating
and exploring such a variation.

PCA is a kind of unsupervised multivariate statistic
approach commonly used for dimensionality reduction and
has become a standard technique for data analysis in various
fields from neuroscience to computer graphics and process
monitoring. The abovementioned spectral datasets from $^1$H-
NMR assay of 61 TCM herbs were conducted by PCA. Such
findings suggested a poor potency of PCA in discriminating
medicinal property of TCM herbs between cold and hot
classes.

The Fisher discriminant algorithm has been widely used
for pattern recognition through making full use of fault
classification information and concentrating all the efforts
on finding the optimal Fisher discriminant vector. Using
Fisher’s discriminant algorithm, linear discriminant analysis
(FLDA) for two-class recognition and canonical discrimi-
nant analysis (CDA) for multiclass identification were
further performed in the present study to improve the poor
discrimination of medicinal property classes obtained by the
PCA model.

CDA is such a technique that could achieve a fairly
convenient description on the relation among various
classifications via establishing a small amount of canonical
variables for canonical discriminant function (CDF), a linear
combination of the original variables. CDA for multiclass
discriminant thus was further performed to investigate the
four medicinal properties classification of TCM herbs fol-
lowing FLDA in the present study. High recognition effi-
ciency indicated that CDA based on $^1$H-NMR spectral
dataset would provide a powerful alternative for the clas-
sification of four medicinal properties.

The two exceptions herein from FLDA are Chuanbeimu
and Rougui. As of Chuanbeimu, it has sweet flavor to the
accompaniment of bitter and cold properties, which belong
to the properties of Yang and hence endues some hot/warm
property for this medicinal herb. Chuanbeimu is actually
one of the vital therapeutic components in various TCM
compound formulas for the treatment of thoracic diseases of
typhoid due to Yin deficiency, such as Beimu Pills and
Yuehua Pills originated from Taiping-Shenghui Fang (the
North Song Dynasty, China) and Yinxue Xinwu (the Qing
Dynasty, China), respectively. Just because of such dual
property of both bitter and sweet flavor, Chuanbeimu is
good at treating various heat hyperactivities caused by Yin
deficiency. As to Rougui, it may provide a reasonable proof
for the interaction between Siqi and SJFC of TCM herbs.
According to the discourses in Bencao Xinbian compiled by
Shiduo-Chen in the Qing Dynasty, Rougui has a submerging
body tropism although it is extremely hot with spicy and
sweet flavor, which eventually gives rise to some Yin

![Figure 2: The screen plot of PCA (black-and-white).](image1)

![Figure 3: The plot of PCA score (color).](image2)
properties within Yang and the therapeutic effect on lower-Jiao syndromes.

5. Conclusion

The findings from the present study indicated that $^1$H-NMR metabolomic approach could be applied to demonstrate the holistic chemical profile of medicinal herb that is closely associated with its medicinal property. Multivariate analysis based on $^1$H-NMR spectral dataset, especially the technique of stepwise CDF for multiclass discriminant, could effectively classify the four medicinal properties, thus providing a feasible means for both the reasonable understanding of the material basis responsible for medicinal property of TCM herbs and discovery and development of new Chinese medicine resource for therapeutic usage. The follow-up
research may be concentrated on credibility validation using enlarged-size samples, optimizing the property classification and prediction, as well as assigning the peaks and developing biomarkers.

Data Availability
The data including tables and figures used to support the findings of this study are included within the article.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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