

**Title:** Does a Traditional Chinese Medicine diagnosis of “Liver” pathology provide guidance regarding the incidence of an adverse liver reaction to Oriental Herbal Medicine?

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### **Abstract**

The study analysed the relationship between a questionnaire-based, standardised Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) diagnosis and ALT (liver enzyme) readings. Patients answered a standard questionnaire to assess “Liver” pathology (as defined by TCM). The score from the questionnaire was translated into a numerical value. A desktop laboratory machine (the Reflotron Plus system) was used to measure ALT readings before and during treatment at the researcher’s practice. Participants were from the normal patient population of a central London integrated healthcare clinic, with 45 people completing the study (30 women, 15 men).

This research asked the question “Does a Traditional Chinese Medicine diagnosis of “Liver” pathology provide guidance regarding the incidence of an adverse liver reaction to Oriental Herbal Medicine (OHM)?”

#### **Experimental hypothesis:**

Patients with a positive TCMQ Score diagnosis of “Liver” pathology have significantly different Alanine Aminotransferase (ALT) readings when compared to patients with a null TCMQ Score

OHM was not found to provide guidance of adverse reactions to OHM or to significantly affect ALT levels. However, the TCMQ score was found to be a predictor of ALT in men, but not in women.

ALT testing alerted the researcher to an undiagnosed liver condition in one case. 9 out of the original 48 participants (18.75%) had an elevated ALT pre-treatment (3 of whom were later excluded). This suggests that OHM practitioners are treating people with raised ALT levels, some of whom may have undiagnosed hepatic conditions.

Due to small numbers and a gender skew, it is unclear whether the TCM questionnaire is an accurate method of measuring TCM pathology.

It is recommended that the OHM profession consider the wider use of ALT testing to defend itself against accusations of causing adverse reactions. Integrating biomedical testing to monitor ALT levels may reassure the public and the medical profession. Further research is needed to assess the accuracy of a TCM questionnaire and to confirm that OHM does not affect ALT. A sufficient number of similar studies may help to clarify the incidence of idiosyncratic reactions to OHM.