

## The October 2020 Newsletter of The GP-TCM Research Association



### Monthly Chinese Materia Medica Highlights

Chinese lobelia (*Lobelia chinensis*, Campanulaceae, 半边莲, left) and bearded skullcap (*Scutellaria barbata*, Lamiaceae/Labiatae, 半枝莲, right)



The **dried whole plants** of *Lobelia chinensis* (*lobeliae chinensis herba*, *banbianlian*) and *Scutellaria barbata* (*scutellariae barbatae herba*, *banzhilian*) are common Chinese medicinals that clear heat, resolve toxicity, promote urination, and reduce swelling. Based on empirical knowledge since ancient times, *lobeliae chinensis herba* has long enjoyed a good reputation for treating snake and insect bites. Although **not** recoded in ancient Chinese *materia medica*, *scutellariae barbatae herba* removes blood stasis as well, and is commonly used in the treatment of cancer swellings in current traditional Chinese medicine clinical practice.

The taxonomic differences of *Lobelia chinensis* and *Scutellaria barbata* are obvious. However, their Chinese names 半边莲 (literally 'half-edge lotus') and 半枝莲 ('half-branch lotus') look similar, and might be confusing and misleading. The application of scientific and/or pharmaceutical names indicating their botanical origins and/or medicinal parts provides a useful solution to the nomenclature confusion.

#### 半边莲

玲珑草本出田间  
茎弱花红半似莲  
曲径闻香将日暮  
难寻恶物上人前

#### 半枝莲

丛生草本半枝莲  
侧立花儿色紫妍  
偶闻邻家驱病痛  
时时相见在窗前

The above colour photographs, English texts and Chinese poems are contributed by Prof **Hubiao Chen** (Hong Kong), Dr **Ping Guo** (Hong Kong) and Prof **Jiqing Liu** (Shenzhen), respectively. This column is advised by Prof **Zhongzhen Zhao** (Hong Kong).