

The December 2020 Newsletter of The GP-TCM Research Association



Monthly Chinese Materia Medica Highlights

Opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*, Papaveraceae, 罌粟, left) and
corn poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*, Papaveraceae, 虞美人, right)



Native to Europe, opium poppy is the oldest effective medicine in continuous use. The dried latex or sap obtained from its incised unripe fruits is the well-known opium. Selling huge amount of opium from Britain to China caused the opium wars in the 19th century. The main components of opium, morphine and codeine, are typical opiate drugs. Drug abuse has been causing serious worldwide social problems. Corn poppy is a common field poppy native to Europe. Also known as red poppy, it is of medicinal, culinary, and ornamental values, and is a symbol of World War I. From opium and corn poppies, relationships of health, life, death, and our knowledge of medicinal plants can be observed.

Both plants were introduced into China since ancient times. The dried pericarp of the ripe fruit of *Papaver somniferum* (papaveris pericarpium) is the Chinese medicinal *yingsuqiao* (opium poppy husk). Official in current Chinese Pharmacopeia, opium poppy husk constrains the lung, binds up the intestines, stabilizes the kidney, and alleviates pain. The aerial part, flower, fruit, and seed of *Papaver rhoeas* are Chinese folk medicinals that stop coughing, alleviate pain, and relieve diarrhea.

罌粟

园中罌粟色缤纷
碧叶宽花唤作神
远道而来常荐客
初逢便识痛时人

虞美人

娇柔多彩色宜人
次第花开总是春
古有悲歌为寓意
雕栏玉砌月中尘

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).