

# Western and Chinese physicians to jointly look into efficacy of TCM on dry eyes



Western and TCM doctors will look into how effective TCM treatments are when it comes to dry eyes in a new study funded by the Ministry of Health. -- PHOTO: ST FILE

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SINGAPORE - You can say that Western and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) doctors are seeing eye to eye over this study.

In a novel study funded by the Ministry of Health, Western and TCM doctors will look into how effective TCM treatments are when it comes to dry eyes.

The Singapore Eye Research Institute (Seri) and the Singapore Chung Hwa Medical Institution, which has certified TCM physicians, hope to recruit 150 patients for the study. The patients will be divided into three groups: 50 patients will be treated with only eye drops, another 50 with acupuncture and eye drops and the other 50 with herbal remedies and eye drops. They will receive treatment for four weeks before doctors at Seri evaluate their conditions with state-of-the-art equipment.

All patients will be recruited at Chung Hwa and they will be screened for lung and kidney deficiency as Chinese physicians believe that dry eyes are a symptom of these. The herbal remedies and acupuncture target the dry eye condition, but they will also treat the lung and kidney deficiency to some extent.

A pilot study by Chung Hwa last year shows promise. After herbal and acupuncture treatments, most of the 90 patients said their dry eyes had improved.

"Though some scientific tests were done to ascertain these, more rigorous tests with Seri will help us ensure that these treatments work," said Chung Hwa's Head of Ophthalmology Pat Lim.

Patients recruited for the new study will be 40 to 85 years old and display symptoms of eye irritation, burning or watering.

Currently, there is no definitive cure for dry eyes. Eye drops treat only its symptoms. Special eye drops may also be expensive and induce side-effects, said Seri's principal investigator for the study Louis Tong.

"Given that there is an increasing interest in holistic care in Singapore and the rise of scientifically-trained TCM practitioners, a study like this is timely," he added.

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