

Traditional Chinese Medicine in Treating Depression

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ABSTRACT

Depression is a mental health disease that causes patients to be in a negative emotional situation. It is a psychosomatic disease that is difficult to recover from and has a high recrudescence rate. Much research and clinical results showed that Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is effective in depression and can reduce the symptoms. A depression patient with depression came for acupuncture treatment. After four acupuncture treatments, the emotion turned more positive, and symptoms such as insomnia, poor appetite, body pain, etc., had reduced. These cases showed that TCM is an effective and alternative option for depression.

Keywords: *Traditional Chinese Medicine, Herbal, Acupuncture, Depression, Case*

Introduction

Depression is a common mental illness that significantly burdens public health with a higher risk of dementia, premature mortality from physical disorders, and maternal depression impacting child growth and development [1]. Depression patients will suffer from depressed emotion (sadness, irritability, emptiness) or loss of pleasure or interest in activities for most of the days for at least two weeks. The factors of depression included life events (childbirth, bullying, life stress), diseases (thyroid diseases, menopause), personality, etc. [2-4]. Reports showed that 3.8% of the population has depression, and it had an 18% increase in depression patients between 2005 and 2015 [5-7]. In Thailand, a report showed that 4.3 million adolescents between 13-17 years old, 6.4% of the total population, had signs of suicidal behavior, anxiety, loneliness, etc. [8].

Depression in TCM

In TCM theory, depression is called "Yu Zheng." The main symptoms of "Yu Zheng" are depressed emotion, chest tightness sensation, emotional fluctuation, etc. [9]. Depression is separated into Liver Qi Stagnation, Liver Stagnation with Spleen Deficiency, Heart and Spleen Deficiency, Kidney Deficiency with Liver Stagnation, and other syndrome types according

to TCM theory [10]. The factors that cause depression in TCM are severe and sudden emotional changes that affect Qi circulation and the viscera organ function (Liver, Heart, Spleen, and Kidney).

TCM herbal treatment

Articles from 2007 until 2019, the standard formulas used in the treatment of depression are Wendan Decoction, Banxia Houpu Decoction, Xiaoyao Powder, etc. Moreover, Fuling (*Poria*), Gancao (*Radix Glycyrrhizae*), Chaihu (*Radix Bupleuri*), Banxia (*Rhizoma Pinelliae*), etc. are common herbs used in the treatment of emotional diseases [11].

In treating depression, Wen Dan Decoction and Xiaoyao Powder could regulate monoamine neurotransmitter levels, anti-inflammation reaction, hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, etc. [12,13]. Randomized Clinical Trial (RCT) research showed intervention group had better results than the control group [14,15].

TCM acupuncture treatment

A study showed that between 2010 to 2020, 234 research studies about TCM treatment on depression [16]. The study also showed that 54.70% of 234 research on acupuncture treating depression, TCM combination

treatment was 23.93%, and a combination of TCM with western medicine treatment was 20.09%. Acupuncture showed good effects on depression [17]. The most common acupoints were Bai Hui (DU 20), Yin Tang (EX-HN 3), Nei Guan (PC 6), San Yin Jiao (SP 6), Sishenchong (EX-HN 1), and Shenmen (HT 7) [18].

Research showed that Baihui (DU 20) and Shentang (BL 44) were the common acupoints in the early stage of depression. In mid-stage, Neiguan (PC 6), Shuigou (DU 26), Baihui (DU 20), Yintang (EX-HN 3), etc. will be the common acupoints. In the late stage, Si Shen Chong (EX-HN 1), and Shenting (DU 24) will be the common acupoints for the treatment [19].

The acupoints called "Thirteen Ghost Points" (TGP) have been used for emotional diseases since ancient China. There are Renzhong (DU 26), Shaoshang (LU 11), Yinbai (SP 1), Daling (PC 7), Shenmai (BL 62), Fengfu (DU 16), Jiache (ST 6), Chengjiang (RN 24), Laogong (PC 8), Shangxing (DU 23), Huiyin (RN 1), Quchi (LI 11), Jinjin (EX-HN 12), Yuye (EX-HN 13), Shenting (DU 24), Xingjian (LR 2), Yanglingquan (GB 34), Ruzhong (ST 17), and Jianshi (PC 5) [20]. They brought good effects on the treatments of neuropsychological disorders [21]. Research showed regional homogeneity and amplitude of low-frequency fluctuation value decreased after laser acupuncture on TGP. The results mean the treatment could induce alternations of spontaneous brain functions and affect neuropsychological diseases [22].

Gui Ku acupoint from *Beiji Qianjin Yaofang* (Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold for Emergencies) is a common acupoint that is used for emotional diseases. It is located on the nail's angle on the thumb's radial side and the big toe's medial border. The specific operation of moxibustion at Gui Ku point is first to put the two thumbs together, keep the front edge of the nail in the side-to-side position, then moxibustion with wheat grains until the patient feels hot, and then remove it. It is one of the most common acupoints for emotional diseases in ancient times. It showed good results in the treatment of depression [23,24].

Some studies have shown that moxibustion at Shaoshang (LU 11) and Yinbai (SP 1) points has a good curative effect on phlegm-Qi stagnation type depression. The Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAMD) scores of patients who received moxibustion on LU 11 and SP 1 combined with western medicine treatment were significantly lower. The overall curative effect was 16.7% better than the control group [25].

Case Report

23 years old male depression patient with depressed emotion, sluggishness, anhedonia, insomnia, poor appetite, body pain, red tongue with tooth marks, white greasy tongue coating, and string pulse. The psychologist in other hospitals diagnosed the depression

level. The Chinese syndrome differentiation is considered Liver Stagnation with Spleen Deficiency. The patient accepted acupuncture treatment with inserted needles on Shangxing (DU 23), Sishenchong (EX-HN 1), Yin Tang (EX-HN 3), Hegu (LI 4), Tianshu (ST 25), Sanyinjiao (SP 6), and Taichong (LR 3). The needles were kept for 30 mins per treatment. After 4 treatments, the patient felt the emotion more stable and symptoms relieved. The psychologist diagnosed as the level of depression decreased.

The main idea of the treatment was to soothe the liver and regulate Qi, smooth meridians, and strengthen the spleen and stomach. EX-HN 1, EX-HN 3, and DU 23 are the acupoints for negative emotion relief and common acupoints for insomnia [26,27]. The negative emotion of the patient was from study stress and worried about the examination. In TCM theory, worry emotion will damage spleen function. The study showed that mental would affect the gastro-intestine function [28]. ST 25 can strengthen spleen function and relieve the symptoms of poor appetite [29]. LI 4 and LR 3 are the acupoints to smooth the Qi flows and can relieve depressed emotion [30].

Conclusion

TCM treatments effectively control negative emotions and have been used for years. The treatments can enhance negative emotional problems and bring good clinical application effects.

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