Acupuncture and Chinese Patent Drugs for Treatment of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

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We have, in recent years, treated 84 cases of chronic fatigue syndrome with acupuncture therapy and Chinese patent drugs and obtained quite good clinical therapeutic effects. A report follows.

Clinical Data

All the 84 cases (27 male and 57 female) were all out- and in-patients of this hospital. Their ages ranged from 25 to 41 years and the duration of illness ranged from 3 months to one year. These cases were randomly divided into a treatment group of 42 cases treated with acupuncture and auricular seed-embedding therapy, and a control group of 42 cases treated with Chinese patent drugs. Based on TCM differentiation, the patients were classified into five types: 1) Incoordination between the liver and spleen, characterized by mental depression or quick temper, fullness and pain in the chest and hypochondrium, sighing, palpitation and insomnia, decreased food intake, abdominal distention and loose stool or irregular bowel movements, borborygmus or abdominal pain and diarrhea, pale tongue proper with white coating, and wiry pulse. 2) Qi-insufficiency of the spleen and stomach, characterized by lassitude of limbs, emaciation, and sallow-dull complexion, poor appetite, gastric distention after food intake, loose stool, disinclination to talk due to qi-insufficiency, pale tongue proper with white coating, and thready pulse. 3) Deficiency of both the heart and spleen, characterized by palpitation and forgetfulness, lassitude, insomnia and dream-disturbed sleep, decreased food intake, abdominal distention and loose stool, dull complexion, pale tongue proper with white coating, and thready pulse. 4) Yin-deficiency of the liver and kidney, characterized by dizziness and vertigo, emaciated body figure, forgetfulness and insomnia, and soreness and weakness of the waist and knee joints, tinnitus, dry throat and mouth, hypochondriac pain, dysphoria with feverish sensation in chest, palms and soles, malar flush and night sweating, nocturnal emission in men, decreased quantity of menstruation in women, red tongue proper with little coating, and thready-rapid pulse. 5) Yang-insufficiency of the spleen and kidney, characterized by chilliness with cold limbs, listlessness and sleepiness, pale complexion, cold pain in the waist and knee joints or in the lower abdomen, diarrhea with fluid stools containing indigested food or diarrhea before dawn, pale tongue proper with white coating, and deep-thready pulse.

Methods of Treatment

The treatment group was treated with combination of acupuncture and auricular seed-embedding therapy. The main acupuncture points selected were: Baihui (GV20), Sishencong (EX-HN1), bilateral Zusanli (ST36), and bilateral Sanyinjiao (SP6). For incoordination between the liver and spleen, Yanglingquan (GB34) and Taichong (LR3) were added; for qi-insufficiency of the spleen and stomach, Pishu (BL20) and Weishu (BL21) were added; for deficiency of both the heart and spleen, Xinshu (BL15) and Pishu (BL20) were added; for yin-deficiency of the liver and kidney, Ganshu (BL18) and Shenshu (BL23) were added; and for yang-insufficiency of the spleen and kidney, Pishu (BL20) and Shenshu (BL23) were added. The acupuncture treatment was given once daily, with 5
days constituting a course, and 2 days interval between two courses. The therapeutic effects were evaluated after 4 courses of treatment.

The main auricular points were: Ear-Shenmen, Brain Point, Occiput, Sympathetic Nerve, Subcortex and Endocrine. The adjunctive auricular points were: Liver, Kidney, Spleen, Stomach and Heart. The sensitive spots were first identified with a probe needle. In each treatment, the main auricular points must be taken, and the adjunctive auricular points were added according to the type-differentiation. The treatment should follow the following procedures. A vaccaria seed was put on a piece of square adhesive plaster of 0.7 × 0.7 cm², and taped tightly onto the selected unilateral auricular point and pressed for 1-2 minutes till local redness and warmth. The auricular seed-embedding therapy was applied twice a week, and the two ears were treated alternatively. Patients were asked to press the auricular points for 4-5 times daily, and the therapeutic effects were evaluated after four weeks.

The control group was treated with Chinese patient drugs. For incoordination between the liver and kidney, Xiaoyao San (逍遥散 Ease Powder) was prescribed for soothing the depressed liver, strengthening the spleen and nourishing the blood; for qi-insufficiency of the spleen and stomach, Xiangsha Liujuanzi Wan (香砂六君子丸 Pill of Six Noble Ingredients with Cyperus and Amomum) was used for replenishing qi to strengthen the middle-jiao, strengthening the spleen and nourishing the stomach; for deficiency of both the heart and spleen, Guipi Wan (归脾丸 Pill for Invigorating the Spleen and Nourishing the Heart) was used for replenishing qi, tonifying blood, strengthening the spleen and nourishing the heart; for yin-deficiency of the liver and kidney, Liuwei Dihuang Wan (六味地黄丸 Bolus of Six Drugs Including Rehmanniæ) was used for nourishing yin and tonifying the kidney; and for yang-insufficiency of the spleen and kidney, Sishen Wan (四神丸 Pill of Four Miraculous Drugs) was used for warming the kidney and spleen.

For convenience of the patients, patent drugs of the above prescriptions were administered twice daily, once in the morning and once in the afternoon with 5 days constituting a course, and 2 days interval between two courses. The therapeutic effects were evaluated after 4 courses of the treatment.

**Criteria for Therapeutic Effects**

Cured: Disappearance of the symptoms with no recurrence in a Follow-up of 3 months. Markedly effective: The symptoms improved by 70%. Effective: The symptoms improved by 50%. Ineffective: No obvious improvement in symptoms.

**Therapeutic Results**

The comparison of therapeutic results between the two groups is shown in the following table. The therapeutic effects of the two groups show no significant statistical differences. $\chi^2=0.714$, $P>0.05$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Cured</th>
<th>Markedly effective</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Ineffective</th>
<th>Total effective rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acupuncture + Ear- embedding</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28 (66.67%)</td>
<td>7 (16.67%)</td>
<td>4 (9.52%)</td>
<td>3 (7.14%)</td>
<td>92.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patent drugs</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25 (59.52%)</td>
<td>8 (19.05%)</td>
<td>4 (9.52%)</td>
<td>5 (11.91%)</td>
<td>88.09%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sample Cases**

Case 1. The patient, a female of 26 years old, is a staff member in a foreign invested enterprise. She complained that because of increasing strain and stress in her work, she got lassitude of the four limbs, emaciation, and disinclination to talk due to insufficiency of qi, accompanied with poor appetite, gastric fullness and distention after food intake, and loose stool for 3 months. The examination at the
moment found that the patient had a sallow-dull complexion, pale tongue proper with white coating, and thready pulse. It was then differentiated as chronic fatigue syndrome due to $qi$-insufficiency of the spleen and stomach. The therapy of acupuncture combined with auricular seed-embedding was adopted for the patient to replenish $qi$ and strengthen the spleen. After one course of treatment, there is a great alleviation of the above-mentioned symptoms. She was then given another course of such treatment before disappearance of all the symptoms. Three months later when the author met the patient by chance, she was found to be quite well, with a rosy face and full of vitality.

Case 2. The patient, a female of 38 years old, is a staff member in a joint venture enterprise. She complained that in recent two months, owing to increasing work pressure, she became quick tempered, accompanied with such symptoms as fullness and pain in the chest and hypochondriac region, sighing, palpitation and insomnia, decreased food intake, irregular bowel movements, thin-white tongue coating, and wiry pulse. According to TCM differentiation, she was diagnosed as chronic fatigue syndrome due to incoordination between the liver and spleen. The principle of treatment was to soothe the depressed liver, strengthen the spleen and nourish the blood. Xiaoyao San (逍遥散 Ease Powder), a patent drug, was used. After administration of the drug for two courses, the patient got alleviation of the symptoms. She was then asked to keep on the administration. After four courses of the treatment, all of her symptoms disappeared.

**Discussion**

In treating chronic fatigue syndrome, points on the Du, Spleen and Stomach Channels are mainly selected. Baihui (GV20), located in the head where all the channels gather, and Sishencong (EX-HN1), located one cun around Baihui (GV20), has the effect of removing mental cloudiness and clearing the eyes; Zusanli (ST36), a He (sea) point of the Stomach Channel of Yangming, has the effect of strengthening the spleen and regulating the stomach, and strengthening the body resistance and reinforcing the primordial $qi$. Sanyinjiao (SP6), located in the place where the three $yin$ channels meet, has the effect of strengthening the spleen, nourishing the liver and tonifying the kidney so that it is used to invigorate the function of transformation and transportation, and to regulate the circulation of $qi$ and blood; Yinlingquan (SP9) and Taichong (LR3) have the effect of soothing the liver and regulating the circulation of $qi$, and calming down the liver to clear the mind and eyes, while the Back-Shu points, the points on the back where $qi$ of the five $zang$ and six $fu$ organs infuses in, are not only indicated for diseases of the corresponding internal organs but also for pathogenic changes of five sense organs, nine orifices, skin, muscles and tendons related to the internal organs. Therefore, the combined use of all these points can produce the joint effect of regulating the balance of $yin$ and $yang$. The auricular seed-embedding therapy is based on the TCM theory that “ear is the place where all the channels gather,” and the six $yang$ channels are directly connected with the auricle. It has been proved by modern medical research that stimulation induced by auricular needling can spread to the whole cerebral cortex, and it can not only produce an analgesic effect, but also a regulating effect for some pathologic and physiologic functional changes such as the blood pressure, pulse, respiration and activities of the stomach and intestines. In addition, it also has a relaxing effect for the muscles.

(Translated by Wang Xinzhuang 王新中)