

Acupuncture and Moxibustion for the Treatment of Gastric Pain from Theory, Method, Formula, Acupuncture Point and Technique

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Abstract: *Acupuncture and moxibustion is the basis of acupuncture and moxibustion treatment, and is also the specific application of the theory, method, formula, points and techniques in acupuncture and moxibustion clinic. The theoretical study of modern acupuncture evidence-based treatment lags behind clinical practice, and the process of evidence-based treatment is neglected in the clinical process, applying the mode of thinking based on specific acupuncture points, and the lack of acupuncture evidence-based treatment thinking, which restricts the development of acupuncture. The purpose of this paper is to emphasise the necessity and importance of evidence-based thinking in the treatment of gastric pain with acupuncture through the five aspects of theory, method, formula, point and technique, so as to better guide the clinical practice.*

Keywords: Acupuncture, Evidence-based treatment, Gastric pain.

1. Introduction

Stomach pain refers to discomfort or pain localized in the epigastric region. Its clinical etiology often involves prolonged or recurrent exposure to pathogenic factors such as cold, dietary irregularities, or emotional disturbances, leading to stagnation of stomach Qi, impaired descending function, and subsequent pain [1]. Common syndromes include cold invasion in the stomach, food stagnation, liver Qi stagnation, spleen-stomach deficiency-cold, stomach Yin deficiency, and blood stasis in the stomach. As a prevalent condition, stomach pain significantly impacts patients' health and quality of life. Acupuncture demonstrates reliable long-term therapeutic effects for stomach pain, with broad applicability and growing clinical recognition. This article explores the syndrome differentiation and treatment of stomach pain through the five perspectives of "principle, method, prescription, acupoint, and technique," contributing to the theoretical refinement of acupuncture and its practical application in alleviating patient suffering.

2. Principle—Syndrome Differentiation Based on Etiology

"Principle" in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) refers to syndrome differentiation, the initial step in diagnosing and treating diseases. First articulated in *Treatise on Cold Damage and Miscellaneous Diseases* as "observe the pulse and symptoms, identify the pathogenic factors, and treat accordingly" [2], acupuncture-based syndrome differentiation involves analyzing clinical data gathered through inspection, auscultation, inquiry, and palpation to determine the nature of the syndrome and guide subsequent decisions on "method, prescription, acupoint, and technique." This process represents the essence of acupuncture theory [3].

2.1 Cold Invasion in the Stomach Syndrome

External coldness of the six evils, the middle jiao feeling

coolness, internal injury to the stomach, or long-term overdose of cold medicines or food and injury to the middle jiao, resulting in gastric and epigastric qi stagnation, lifting and lowering of the disharmony, and pain if not through.

2.2 Food Stagnation Syndrome

Dietary intemperance, damage to the middle jiao spleen and stomach transport duties, so that the stagnation of gastric qi, resulting in the patient's gastric qi yin and yang disharmony, the loss of the spleen and stomach elevation of the peace, not through the pain. As 'Suwen - paralysis pain theory' said 'diet since double, the stomach and intestines are injured.' [4].

2.3 Liver Qi Stagnation Syndrome

Anxiety and anger and other emotional factors make the liver Qi lose its detachment, up to the stomach, stomach qi stagnation, so the manifestation of stomach pain. As 'Su Wen - Six Yuan Zheng Ji Da Lun' said, 'wood depression of the hair, people sick stomach when the heart and pain.' [5].

2.4 Spleen-Stomach Deficiency-Cold Syndrome

The spleen and stomach have the role of accepting water and grains, and transporting and transforming them. If the spleen and stomach are too weak, or if the yang qi is deficient, the function of transport and transformation will be seriously derelict, and pain will occur without its warmth and nourishment.

2.5 Stomach Yin Deficiency Syndrome

The patient himself has a deficiency of yin, or suffers from fever and then injures the fluids, resulting in a deficiency of stomach yin and fluid, and the pain is caused by a loss of gastric harmony and subduing of the stomach.

2.6 Blood Stasis in the Stomach Syndrome

Qi stagnation and blood stasis damage for too long, blood flow obstruction and poor circulation, or prolonged pain into the complex, stagnant blood stagnation in the gastric complex, stagnation of the veins and collaterals and the development of pain. DANXI XINFA: 'The usual preference for hot food results in the flow of dead blood to the stomach and mouth for pain [6].

3. Method—Establishing Treatment Strategies

"Method" refers to the diagnosis of the law, including meridian identification, organ identification and other methods of identification. According to the diagnostic method to establish the 'virtual is supplemented, trapped under the moxibustion, real is diarrhoea, aster Chen is removed, not full and not false to take the meridian [7]. 'Hot is the disease, cold is to stay.' 'If it is hot, then it will be fast, and if it is cold, then it will stay.' And other treatments.

Medical doctors throughout the ages have had their own views on the 'method' of stomach pain. In the 'jingyue quanquan - heart and abdominal pain': 'gastric pain evidence, mostly due to food, due to cold, due to the gas is not smooth, but due to food due to cold, are not all about the gas, cover food stops gas stagnation, the cold flow of gas congealed, so the treatment of pain in the main, but to observe its fruit is solid evil, all when to regulate the gas is given priority to [8]. Zhang Jingyue also emphasised that the method of regulating qi to relieve pain also needs to be used in combination with other auxiliary treatments according to the condition of the doctor. In the modern acupuncture clinical diagnosis and treatment of diseases in the process of acupuncture treatment for patients with stomach pain more adhere to the 'through' for the method, the treatment of qi and gastric pain relief as the main, followed by evidence-based treatment.

Even if there is the disease mechanism of 'if not through, then pain', the meaning of 'through' should be understood from a broader perspective, as Ye Tianshi said, 'The word "through" should be investigated into the qi, blood, yin and yang [9]. Patients with stomach pain belonging to the 'through' category should be treated with acupuncture and moxibustion [9]. If the patient has a deficiency of yin, nourishing yin is the so-called 'pass'; if the patient has blood stasis, resolving blood stasis is the 'pass'; different treatments should be adopted according to different etiologies and pathologies. For example, if the patient is addicted to spicy, fat and sweet products, stomach distension and pain, belching and swallowing acid and noisy performance, often need to cooperate with the elimination of food and stagnation, and stomach pain; or due to worry and anger stomach distension and pain, belching is soothing, sighing and other manifestations, often need to cooperate with the liver to resolve the depression, qi method of pain, and so on.

4. Prescription—Designing Acupuncture Formulations

The term 'formula' refers to the acupuncture prescription, which includes the main points, the supporting points, the acupuncture operation method and the tonic and diarrhoeal techniques.

The main points are the main part of the formula, which are selected according to the main evidence, disease and symptom. The principles of selecting main points include: selecting points for evidence, selecting points in the distant part, selecting points in the near part, and selecting points for symptoms. The pathogenesis of gastric pain is gastric qi obstruction, gastric loss of harmony, and pain when there is no communication. Therefore, the selection of main points is based on the method of 'Tong', taking the foot-yangming stomach meridian, hand-convulsive yin pericardium meridian and the fund-raising points of the stomach as the main points.

The matching points can enhance the synergistic effect between the acupoints and complement each other to improve the therapeutic effect [10]. Commonly used allotment methods include upper and lower allotment, surface and inner meridian allotment, and so on. The matching points for stomach pain are mostly taken according to the disease mechanism. For example, dietary stagnation with the lower epigastric, Liangmen, Tianshu and so on. According to He Tang of the Ming Dynasty, 'the main disease, the king; auxiliary treatment, the minister; and the king opposite and help, the support; lead the meridian and lead the medicine for the treatment of the disease to the place of the disease, make also [11]. The relationship between the main points and the supporting points in the acupuncture prescription is like the relationship between the king's medicine and the minister's medicine and the supporting medicine in the traditional Chinese medicine prescription, which cooperate with each other and work together in the organism so as to improve the therapeutic effect.

Acupuncture and moxibustion operation method should be based on the patient's evidence and physical constitution of the body to choose the appropriate method of acupuncture and moxibustion. Including millimetre needle, moxibustion, fire needle, cupping, three-pronged needle, skin needle. If the patient's evidence of stomach pain is cold spleen and stomach, can be based on the millimetre needle method of moxibustion in order to warm through the meridians, warm stomach and cold to relieve pain.

Acupuncture tonic and diarrhoeal techniques is through the stimulation of acupoints, stimulate the circulation of the body's qi, so as to replenish positive qi, evacuation of evil qi, balance the body's qi, blood, yin and yang state, and gradually achieve the purpose of restoring the body's life and health. Commonly used tonic and diarrhoeal techniques include twisting tonic and diarrhoeal, lifting and inserting tonic and diarrhoeal, Xuqi tonic and diarrhoeal, etc [12]. Gastroparesis according to the evidence of deficiency to the choice of tonic and diarrhoeal techniques, specific points have different methods of tonic and diarrhoeal, such as the foot Sanli more flat tonic and flat diarrhoeal, gastric Yu more tonic method. The matching points are operated in accordance with the method of tonic and diarrhoea for deficiency.

5. Acupoint—Rational Selection and Pairing

'Acupuncture point' is the selection of acupuncture points, including the selection of main points and supporting points. Selection of acupuncture points is an important part of acupuncture prescription, which is the key to effectiveness

and specificity. Due to the importance and criticality of the main points, they should be taken every time the operation is performed, and the operation should be focused. The selection of main points should follow the main therapeutic principles of acupuncture and should be chosen according to the principles of acupuncture. Sometimes specific points are also selected for acupuncture treatment of diseases. The appropriateness of allotment points will directly affect the therapeutic effect, and the allotment points for stomach pain are mostly chosen according to the identification of symptoms.

5.1 Primary Acupoints

The main points should be the foot Sanli, the middle epigastric region and the Neiguan. Foot Sanli is the acupoint on the Foot Yangming Stomach Meridian and is its conjunction point as well as the lower conjunction point, because Foot Sanli is far away from the stomach and epigastric part, belonging to the distant part of the selection of the point, there is a 'combined treatment of the internal bowels' [13] of the effectiveness of the regulation of gastric and internal organs of the qigong, and the stomach to relieve pain. The middle epigastrium is the collection point of the stomach, for the eight points of the bowels of the meeting point, because of its proximity to the stomach and epigastric region, belonging to the near part of the selection of points, can have to regulate the middle jiao qi, the effect of qi to relieve pain. Neiguan for the eight veins meeting point, through the yinwei vein, yinwei vein and foot yangming gastric meridian convergence in the abdomen, this point can be wide in the qi, relief of depression pain, is the treatment of diseases of the stomach and internal organs of the key points. The combination of the three points can have the effect of promoting the movement of qi in the middle jiao, moving qi and stomach to relieve pain.

5.2 Secondary Acupoints

Cold evils attacking the stomach: the patient can see stomach pains occurring violently, pains decreasing with warmth, bad cold and preferring warmth, pulse stringy and tight. Selected acupoints are Stomach Yu, Shenque, Gongsun, and Liangqiu can be added if the pain is more severe. The combination of all the points is used to achieve the purpose of dispelling cold, warming the stomach, moving qi and relieving pain.

Food stagnation and internal stagnation: the patient can see distension and pain in the stomach and epigastrium, belching and swallowing acid, thick and greasy moss, and smooth pulse. The matching acupoints chosen were the lower epigastric region, Liangmen and Tianshu. The combination of these points can eliminate food and stagnation, harmonise the stomach and relieve pain.

Liver Depression and Qi Stagnation: the patient can see distension and pain in the stomach and epigastric region involving both sides of the ribs, tightness in the chest, belching, sighing, and the symptoms can change according to the changes in emotions and moods, and the pulse is stringy. The matching points are Taichong, Yanglingquan, Stomach Yu, and Ximen. The combination of all the points is used to achieve the purpose of dispersing the liver and relieving

depression, regulating qi and stopping pain.

Stagnant blood stasis in the stomach: the patient can see stabbing pain in the stomach and epigastric region, with a fixed place of pain, purple tongue and astringent pulse. The matching points are diaphragm yu and danzhong. The combination of these points can activate blood circulation, remove blood stasis and clear the channels, and regulate qi and stomach to relieve pain.

Spleen and stomach deficiency and cold syndrome: the patient can see stomach pain vaguely, like warmth and pressing, hands and feet are not warm, the tongue coating is white, the pulse is weak. Selected acupoints are Shen Que, Qi Hai, Guan Yuan, Spleen Yu and Stomach Yu. The combination of these points can warm the middle and disperse the cold, strengthen the spleen and the stomach.

Stomach yin depletion syndrome: the patient can see vague burning pain in the stomach and epigastrium, hunger but not appetite, five heartburn and heat, red tongue with little fluid, and fine pulse. The matching points chosen by [14] were Sanyinjiao, Stomach Yu, Neiting and Taixi. All the points were combined to achieve the purpose of nourishing yin and benefiting the stomach, harmonising the stomach and relieving pain.

6. Technique—Precise Clinical Application

'Technique' is the method of administering acupuncture. It includes therapeutic modalities (millimetre acupuncture, moxibustion, auricular acupuncture, acupoint acupuncture, etc.) and the corresponding operation methods (needle insertion techniques, tonic and diarrhoeal techniques, etc.). Among them, the needle insertion methods of millimetre needle include single-handed needle insertion method, diastolic needle insertion method, lifting and pinching needle insertion method, etc [15]. The tonic and diarrhoeal techniques include single-type tonic and diarrhoeal techniques and compound-type tonic and diarrhoeal techniques.

The choice of treatment modality is a direct influence in the effectiveness of acupuncture in the treatment of stomach pain. Clinically, millimetre needling and moxibustion are mostly chosen to treat stomach pain. Moxibustion has the effect of warming the meridians and dispersing the cold, supporting Yang and fixing the detachment, dispersing the knots and expelling the stasis, and inducing the heat to travel outward [16]. It includes warm needle moxibustion, moxibustion, ginger moxibustion, fire dragon moxibustion and so on. As the saying goes, 'What needles do not do, moxibustion is appropriate [17]. The solid heat of stomach pain is more often used in acupuncture, usually not moxibustion, in order to achieve the purpose of diarrhoea and pain relief. Deficiency of cold evidence of the complementary method of acupuncture with moxibustion, in order to achieve the warm meridians and channels, and the purpose of the stomach and pain relief.

The technique of tonicity and diarrhoea is also one of the important factors affecting the effect of acupuncture in the treatment of gastric pain. 'Tonic its deficiency, diarrhoea its surplus, regulate its deficiency and reality, in order to pass its

way, and remove its evil [18]. Interpreted the meaning of the tonic and diarrhoeal techniques and emphasized that the therapeutic principle of tonifying deficiency and diarrhoea should be followed when needling. Cold and evil gastric evidence of gastric pain, food stagnation and internal stagnation evidence, liver depression and stagnation of qi, blood stasis and gastric evidence are mostly real evidence, and should be operated by diarrhoeal method; spleen and stomach cold and gastric yin deficiency evidence are mostly seen in the deficiency evidence, and should be operated by tonic method.

Modern clinics also use acupoint injections for the prevention and treatment of stomach pain, which integrates acupuncture and medicine, allowing the advantages of medicine and acupuncture to be combined and play the maximum role of both, so as to achieve the purpose of treating stomach pain. For example: Acupuncture foot Sanli, on the basis of obtaining qi, injection of methylcobalamin or astragalus injection to replenish qi and nourish blood, nutrient nerves, can make the spleen and stomach qi lifting and lowering in order, in fact, for the treatment of the root of the method. Or choose auricular acupuncture therapy, the Wang Buliuxing seeds in the ear acupoints for pressure bean stimulation, often choose the spleen, stomach, sympathetic, Shenmen, subcortical [19] and other auricular acupuncture points in both ears in order to harmonise the stomach and relieve pain.

The administration should be specific analysis of specific problems, for the same disease with different evidence or the same evidence of different diseases or different stages should be used flexibly, not pattern, should be used as a test of the therapeutic effect, so we should do the three reasons for the appropriate, i.e., according to the person, according to the place, according to the time to make the appropriate [20], adapt to the situation, and constantly adjusted, in order to achieve the best therapeutic effect.

7. Conclusion

This article discusses the acupuncture treatment of gastric pain from five aspects: rationale, method, formula, acupoints and techniques, which are closely related to each other; rationale and method are the basis of formula, acupoints and techniques, and formula, acupoints and techniques are the tools of rationale and method. Stomach pain can be divided into six types according to the 'rationale' of diagnosis. Acupuncture and moxibustion treatment is mainly based on the method of 'Tong', according to the diagnosis and clinical manifestations, it is reasonable to choose the treatment method of warming the stomach and dispersing the cold, eliminating food and stagnation, relieving the liver and resolving depression, removing blood stasis and clearing the channels and warming the middle and dispersing the cold, etc. The main points and the matching points are used together. The main points are paired with the supporting points, and appropriate methods are chosen to regulate qi, harmonise the stomach and relieve pain, so as to achieve the purpose of treating stomach pain.

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