

The Treatment of Herpes Zoster and Post Zoster Neuralgia with Acupuncture and Western Herbs in Chinese Medicine

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Introduction

I am a doctor in western medicine and started to learn and practice Chinese medicine more than 15 years ago. In 2003 I turned my back to western medicine and dedicated myself to the Chinese medicine. In my practice I do acupuncture and Western herbs, integrated into the Chinese diagnostic system [1].

In March this year (2014), a 64 year old lady came into my practice. In the past she suffered from rheumatism and chronic sinusitis and cystitis, which we were able to treat successfully with acupuncture, western herbs in chinese medicine and exercises in visualisation, breathing and bodyawareness (this is my partners work in our „selfheal center“).

Now she had an acute infection with Herpes Zoster. The rash was on the front of her left thigh, along stomach-and spleenmeridian spread from the hip to the knee.

Diagnosis (according to tongue and puls): Her SpleenQi and KidneyYang Energy were depleted and there was Phlegm in the Stomach and StomachMeridian, Phlegm and Cold-Stagnation in Bladder- and Gallbladdermeridian, and Qi-Stagnation in the liver.

Herbal Prescription

Elecampane rad. helenii

Tonifies the SpleenQi and Yang, tonifies the stomachQi, tonifies the Qi in general, Bi-Syndrom with cold, wind and dampness, moves the Qi in liver and gallbladder, dampness and cold in the lower warmer, moves the Qi in the kidney

Mugwort herb. artemisiae vulgaris

Tonifies kidney Yang, warms the channels, tonifies the spleen, moves and tonifies the liverQi, clears retained pathogen, clears toxins

Cinnamon cort. cinnamomi

Warms and tonifies the kidney Yang, regulates the Qi of spleen and stomach, clears wind cold, moves Qi and blood

Lemonbalm fol. melissae

Antiviral, analgetic, tonifies the spleenQi, calms the nervous system, moves the Qi in stomach and kidney, tonifies kidney essence

Angelica rad. angelicae archangelicae

Clears wind, cold, damp, warms and tonifies the spleen, transforms damp and phlegm, warms the stomach, Bi-Syndrome wind/damp/cold

Ginger rhiz. zingiberis

Clears wind, cold and damp in the channels, moderates other herbs, tonifies the spleen Yang, reduces viral infections

Burdock rad. bardanae

Clears wind and retained pathogen, assists kidney and bladder to drain damp, microbial toxicosis with damp, damp in the skin, tonifies

the kidney Qi, tonifies the stomach- and gallbladderQi, promotes tissue repair

Dandelion rad. taraxaci

Tonifies and moves the Qi of stomach, liver and gallbladder, tonifies and moves the Qi of the bladder, clears retained pathogen, microbial toxicosis, moves the fluids of liver and kidney, damp in the skin, chronic ekzema in herpes conditions

Nettle herb. urticae

Clears retained pathogen, clears damp and phlegm, tonifies the blood, tonifies the liver Yin, moves the kidney Qi, moves the fluids in liver and kidney

Vervain herb. verbenae

Tonifies the Qi in general, tonifies and moves the liver Qi, helps with the pain in neuralgia, moves the kidney Qi, tonifies the kidney essence

Thuja herb. thujae

Tonifies the defensive Qi, clears retained pathogen, clears damp and phlegm, tonifies the kidney Qi, antiviral (herpes), chronic eczema

Thyme herb. thymi

Clears retained pathogen, transforms phlegm, tonifies and regulates the spleen Qi, tonifies the kidney Yang, tonifies the Qi in general, nerve and brain deficiency, viral infections, microbial toxicosis, anesthetic

Yarrow herb. millefolii

Clears retained pathogen, tonifies the defensive Qi, tonifies the Qi of spleen and heart, tonifies the blood, tonifies and moves the kidney Qi, moves the Qi in liver, stomach and gallbladder

Ground ivy herb. glechomae

Clears phlegm, tonifies the lung Qi, clears damp in the lower warmer

Valerian rad. valerianae

Moves and calms the heart Qi with nerve excess, relieves pain, moves the kidney Qi, tonifies the kidney Yin, tonifies the spleen Qi

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Procedure

She was treated with acupuncture as well. I encourage my patients during an acupuncture session, to come in contact with their body, to increase the awareness and feel the energy system. At the beginning this was quite difficult for this patient even though she already had experiences with awareness exercises in our practice (see above). Unfortunately she stopped practising after her rheumatism was cured (it was a phantastic experience, that she could stop the western medication for the joint pain). But she could finally manage to feel more and more during a session. The post zoster neuralgia was very serious at the beginning, she was very empty when the illness started and there is eventually a family disposition, because her mother and uncle suffered from the same problem.

At the beginning the pain was so bad, that she had to take painkillers „Novalgin“ and „Lyrica“. We were working with moxibustion and „crystal acupuncture“ (This is an extra subject I discovered with my partner in our practice, where small crystal were taped on acupuncture points. This form of treatment is extraordinary useful for children or patients in empty-conditions) in addition to the needles.

After two months of herbal treatment and 6 acupuncture treatments she felt strong and stable enough to go on a 4 week holiday trip to the USA.

The pain, dysaesthesia and paraesthesia of the nerval area is now (3 months after the beginning) completely gone. There is only a small area left, where she feels numb.

We continue the acupuncture to stabilize her and continue the work with the herbs as well, to treat the underlying pattern/weakness.

Conclusion

Integrating Western herbs into the Chinese Medicine System is a quite young idea. With gratitude to the work of Peter Holmes, Jeremy Ross and others we are more and more able to study and practice this wonderful inventive method, that enables us as western practitioners to work with the herbs that grow in front of “our garden doors” and are easy to get for the local pharmacy [2,3].

References

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