

Discussion on Chinese Medicine Treatment of Chronic Itching Based on the Theory of "Unity of Form and Spirit"

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Abstract: Itching as a conscious symptom affected more skin patients, and it was easy to ignore that chronic itching patients are often accompanied by mental problems such as anxiety and depression. In clinical practice, treating skin symptoms from "form" and regulating and relieving itching from "spirit" was widely used in the TCM treatment of skin diseases. Still, no one had yet elaborated on the TCM treatment of chronic itching from the perspective of "form and spirit" coexistence. This article discusses the TCM treatment of chronic pruritus from the perspective of "unity of form and spirit", to provide a better understanding of the TCM treatment of chronic pruritus. This article discusses the TCM treatment of chronic pruritus from the perspective of "unity of form and spirit", to provide a new perspective for the clinical treatment of chronic pruritus.

1. Introduction

Pruritus is a self-perception that can lead to scratching behavior and is prevalent in patients with inflammatory skin diseases [1, 2], with a high probability of 47.8% of dermatological patients having itch symptoms [3]. Persistent itching not only induces scratching behavior leading to skin damage, infection, and pain, but chronic itching can also cause sleep disorders, psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, social disorders, and even the risk of induced suicide. Conventional drugs used to treat itch in clinical practice work by reducing inflammation, releasing antihistamines, decreasing neuronal excitation, and inhibiting key targets of itch. Although there have been many studies [4, 5] confirming that acupuncture and psychotropic (e.g., opioid receptor antagonists, antidepressants, and gabapentin) medications can treat chronic itch, the level of evidence-based medicine evidence remains low. The Chinese medicine treatment of chronic itch is based on internal medicine, external treatment, acupuncture, cupping, etc. Still, there is no literature on Chinese medicine treatment from the perspective of "form and spirit unity". Therefore, exploring the etiology and pathogenesis of pruritus from the perspective of "form and spirit" has positive and extensive clinical significance.

2. Theoretical origins

The theory of the unity of form and spirit is one of the core theories of Chinese medicine, emphasizing the unity and interplay of form and spirit, which first originated in ancient Chinese philosophy, especially Taoism and Confucianism, and was systematically elaborated and developed in the Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine (HUNDI NEIJING), which became an important part of the theoretical system of Chinese medicine. "Form is the body of God; God is the use of form. No God can not live in the form, no form is not born of God" ("Class Classic" [6]), visible form and God are closely related, only "form and God" can be "the end of its days, the degree of a hundred years is to go". With time, the theory of the unity of form and god has been enriched and developed in the practice of medical practitioners through the ages, Zhang Zhongjing further emphasized the importance of the unity of form and god in the Treatise on Miscellaneous Diseases of Typhoid Fever [7], which put forward the therapeutic principles of "guarding the god and the whole form" and "preserving the form and the whole god". The principles of treatment were further emphasized in the Ming and Qing dynasties. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, with the development of medicine, the theory of unity of form and spirit was widely used in clinical practice and became an important guiding principle in the treatment of diseases in Chinese medicine.

3. The etiology and characteristics of form and spirit causing itching

Most Chinese medicine surgeons from "wind, dampness, heat, blood deficiency, insect obscene" and other causative factors to focus on the etiology of chronic itchy skin. With the evolution of the evidence, more and more medical doctors found that long-term emotional upset caused by Qi Qi stagnation, affecting the function of the internal organs, the decline in the function of qi and blood moistening can not be supplied to feed the heart and spirit activities, resulting in itching and "heart and spirit" mutual influence and lead to recurrent episodes of the disease.

"As we all know, the skin is the largest organ of the human body, and it is also the sensor that reflects the internal disease. The unity of form and spirit of the "skin moist, red, light and bright" and other "five good" performances. On the contrary, there will be "withered skin, emaciation, dark color of sores" and other characteristics of form and spirit co-disease. The characteristics of itch caused by form and spirit mainly show the following features: recurrent attacks, aggravation at night, emotional influence, skin damage, and psychosocial influence (e.g., sleep disorders, and social avoidance).

3.1. Forms that cause itching

The term "form" in the context of chronic itchy skin disorders refers to physical evils and the itching caused by changes in form and quality, as well as to forms that are not visible to the naked eye and that can be characterized as such, as opposed to the divine. It mainly involves the following aspects.

3.1.1. External Evil Attack

External "wind, dampness, heat, dryness, insect obscene" can lead to itching. "Wind" itch is a common type of dermatological itching, "the origin of all diseases - wind itching wait" in the "wind itch, it is a deficiency in the body by the wind, the wind into the couper, the blood and gas fight, and the club to and fro, in the skin between. Evil gas micro, can not impact for pain, so but itching" [8]. Wind itch more than with "wind, pimples, itchy place indeterminate" and other morphological characteristics.

"Damp" evil causes itch more sticky, wet heavy turbidity, caused by skin lesions mostly pimples,

blisters, vesicles, and oozing. Wet itch lingering difficult to heal, mostly in the recurrent skin diseases and sores and ulcers, such as wet sores, atopic dermatitis (AD), seborrheic dermatitis, psoriatic arthritis, and other skin morphology changes in the disease, and its recurrent Difficulty in healing is related to the lingering dampness that lingers in the body.

Morphologic changes due to heat are most commonly seen as pimples, erythema, swelling, congestion, and breakdown. Heat is most often seen in diseases such as catarrh, leukoderma, and wind-heat sores.

Itch caused by dryness is mostly manifested as dry, flaky, cracked, and mossy skin, which is mostly seen in pruritus, lack of lipid eczema, and chapped skin disease.

The origin of all diseases, said: "wet scabies, small sores thin skin, often have juice out, and all have insects, people tend to pick with a needle, the shape of the crippled insects in the water" [9]. Insect venom-causing itching is often accompanied by papules, nodules, blisters, swelling, and other manifestations, most often seen in scabies, insect bite dermatitis, lice disease, and other diseases.

3.1.2. Dysfunction of internal organs

Dysfunction of internal organs will affect the generation and operation of qi and blood, which in turn affects the nutrition and metabolism of the skin. Such as liver qi stagnation can lead to stagnation of qi and blood stasis, and the skin is not nourished. Spleen deficiency and dampness can lead to water and dampness, impregnation of the skin, causing itching. If the bile is stagnant, damp-heat toxicity fumigates the liver and gallbladder causing bile stagnation, fumigating the skin coupling, and triggering itching [10]. Diabetic patients experience chronic itching over time, long delay, intolerable trigger scratching behavior leading to scratches, moss-like changes, or even infections and other manifestations [11]. Due to yin deficiency and blood stasis, accumulation of toxins and insufficient skin nutrition, patients with uremia are prone to persistent and difficult to treat itching.

3.2. Psychogenic itch

"Shen" refers to human consciousness, emotion, thinking, and other mental activities [12], and Shen causes itching by emphasizing the influence of the psychological state on itching. Emotional changes (e.g., anxiety, depression, etc.) can affect the function of internal organs and the operation of qi and blood, which in turn affects the nutrition and metabolism of the skin, triggering or aggravating itching.

Loss of nourishment of the heart and spirit is the key mechanism that triggers itching. The heart and spirit loss of nourishment is mostly blamed on the deficiency, nothing more than qi and blood disharmony, blood deficiency so that the heart and spirit are not nourished. "The heart, the official of the monarch, the gods out of it". The heart of the blood, the heart, and the spirit of the loss of nourishment are not full of veins, blood does not glorify the skin and will lead to dry skin, intense itching and other skin diseases. "The heart is silent, pain is small, the heart is restless, the pain is very much, the beginning of a hundred ends, all from the heart, pain, itching, sores, and ulcers born in the heart", the heart and the spirit of the disturbances will lead to increased itching [13]. Heart-spirit loss of nourishment from blood deficiency, blood deficiency to itch is mostly seen in the deficiency of qi and blood (such as the elderly, women in labor, frail and sickly people, etc.), and its skin lesions, skin loss of moistening, so itchy lesions are mostly dry, hyperpigmented, mossy, but also lesions do not reveal the unique scratch.

Disturbance of the mind and spirit is a key factor in triggering chronic itching. Itching for a long time easily causes anxiety, depression, and other mental abnormalities, and long-term anxiety, tension, and other negative emotions can also be disturbed, aggravating the itchy skin symptoms. Chinese medicine theory is that "all pain and itchy sores, all belong to the heart", the heart of the gods, the

president of the soul to guard the spirit. Insomnia and anxiety cause the heart and spirit to be disturbed, and then the heart's blood flow is blocked and the skin is not nourished, which ultimately leads to intense itching, roughness, and other skin changes.

4. Chronic Itch Chinese Medicine Treatment

4.1. Toning the Spirit in the Treatment of Forms

The treatment of wind itch is mostly started by dispersing wind to stop itching and restoring wind to stop itching. The classic combination of wind-relieving and itch-relieving medicines is Jingwu and Fangfeng. However, in the clinic, wind evils are mostly mixed with cold, heat, and dampness, according to the evidence both mixed and mixed can be combined with wind-dispersing and cold-dispersing medicines such as xinxing, Jiangsu, ligustrum, ephedra, cinnamon, and other drugs to dispel wind, dispel cold and relieve itching, the pair of medicines are ephedra and xinxing, ephedra and oyster, astragalus and antifungal and so on, and the representative formula is the generation of the sun's epigraphic formula of the Epitheloid ephedra of the Treatise on Typhoid Fever (the most classic), which is the combination of ephedra and wind-heat rashes, and in addition to dispersing the cold, the efficacy of wind and relieving itchiness [14]. Those with heat can generally use cicadas, mint, burdock, mulberry leaves, chrysanthemum, and other medicines to clear heat and relieve itching, and the commonly used classic formulas for clearing heat and expelling wind are eliminating wind, preventing wind, and thorns and thistles. Those with dampness can combine with Angelica dahurica, Poria, Coix lacryma, Qiangwu, and Duhong to dispel wind and win dampness to stop itching, and can use Dioscorea villosa to add subtractions to dampness soup. The commonly used method of restraining wind and relieving itching applies to those with internal wind, and clinically, most of the products are used to restrain wind and relieve itching with hookah, stiff silkworm, tianmu, stonecrop, scorpion, centipede, and commonly used tianmu, hookah and stonecrop, and stonecrop and stonecrop as a pair of medicines. If the itching is very serious, it may disturb the mind at night and lead to sleeplessness, or combine with the products of jujube seed, Yuanzhi, and cypress seed kernel to calm the mind internally and stop the itching. It can also be combined with traditional Chinese medicine characteristic therapies, such as external application, cupping, acupuncture and moxibustion and so on, which can relieve itching by dredging the meridians.

Acupuncture programs can choose the wind pool to get rid of internal and external wind evil, the hundred bug nest to activate the blood to get rid of wind and relieve itching, or can be used to harmonize the qi and blood to reduce itching. The meridians are also scattered with many acupoints that have the effect of calming the mind and tranquilizing the spirit, which can effectively alleviate the "spirit disease" caused by itching "form disease" [15].

The treatment of dampness and itching is based on drying dampness, transforming dampness, and inducing dampness as the general outline. Damp-heat mixed cases are often combined with scutellaria baicalensis, cypress, white fresh skin, bitter ginseng, etc. to clear heat and dry dampness, and Dioscorea villosa is a classic formula for the treatment of damp-heat cases. Diannan Materia Medica [16] said: "Bitter ginseng, treatment of skin itching, blood wind ringworm sores eliminating wind, eliminating swollen toxins", now pharmacological research has confirmed that bitter ginseng has antibacterial and anti-inflammatory effects, can inhibit fungal reproduction to achieve the efficacy of eliminating dampness and relieving itching [17]. In clinical practice, Longdan Xiegan Decoction is mostly used to treat Liver and Gallbladder Wetness-heat Syndrome. And if the patient has poor sleep, Yuanzhi and Fushen can be added to calm the nerves and relieve itching.

Dampness for long time damage to the spleen Yang, more spleen and promote dampness, the medicine with white atractylodes, Poria, Codonopsis, can be used to remove the dampness of the stomach Ling Tang and ginseng and white atractylodesan chemical tailoring. If the dampness is in

the lower Jiao, the urine can be used to seep away the dampness, with medicines such as Poria, Poria, and Ze Xie, and formulas such as Wuling San, which is a light seepage and dampness-inducing formula. Dampness for a long time into dryness, supporting the ground skin seeds, XuanShen, DiHuang moisten dry to stop itching. At the same time cupping to dispel dampness and stop itching, Chinese medicine external washing, such as bitter ginseng soup, and snake bed seed fumigation with significant drying dampness, dispel dampness and stop the itching effect. Chinese medicine external washing can directly act on the lesion to relieve itching, break the vicious circle between itching-scratching-pressure, relieve anxiety, and depression, soothe emotions, and achieve the purpose of treating the form to regulate the spirit.

Heat itch is mostly treated from 2 aspects: clearing internal heat and evacuating external heat. Honeysuckle and forsythia are the classic pair of drugs for eliminating heat and toxins, and modern pharmacological studies have shown that they can achieve the effect of clearing internal heat through antibacterial and anti-inflammatory effects [18]. The main treatment strategy for itching with internal heat is to clear the internal heat. The person who has the heat of liver meridian is more combined with mudanpi, gardenia, chaihu and so on to dredge the liver and clear the heat, the medicinal formula can be selected as gardenia free powder and gentian diarrhea liver soup of the generation of the chemotherapy; the wind heat of lung meridian can be used as loquat clearing the lung drink to clear the heat of the lungs; the person who has the dampness-heat of spleen and stomach can be used as Sanren Tang to strengthen the spleen to clear the heat and remove the dampness; As a unique treatment method, bloodletting in specific areas such as Dazhui (GV14), Erjian (ear apex), and Shixuan (ten finger tips) can be used to clear internal heat, which can help alleviate itching when heat subsides. Fire needling is another option, it works by driving heat outward through the skin, which may disrupt or reduce the induced medium of itch. And it can also help regulate the nervous system by reducing the transmission of itch related nerve signals.

For those who have external dryness in the lungs, Loquat Lung Clearing Drink can be given to clear the dryness and moisten the lungs. Sour and sweet yin, dry itch patients with a long-term yin fluid deficiency in the pathological state, can be appropriate to add sour and sweet drugs to help the recovery of its yin fluid, gas with Jin off, can also add a small amount of qi products such as astragalus, ginseng so that fluid biochemistry has a source. Yin fluid and fluid deficiency of dry itch can be supplemented with yellow essence, rhubarb, and goji berries with increased fluid soup nourishing yin and moistening dryness to stop itching, blood deficiency and wind dryness itch with angelica factor to nourish blood and moistening dryness, at the same time can be combined with plum blossom needle percussion to stop itching. Dry itchy lesions more dry, flaky, and plain should do a good job of moisturizing.

Insect venom caused by itch uses insecticide itching method, available in traditional Chinese medicine external washing, such as bitter ginseng, Poria cocos, neem skin, Hundred, sulfur, etc., and at the same time diligently sunbedding clothing, eliminating the causative factors. Fungal infections caused by itching more insecticide dampness itch, if itching is intolerable, affecting sleep, can be accompanied by dragon bone, oyster, magnetite, and other heavy town tranquilizing. The characteristic of itching caused by delusions of parasitosis is a persistent crawling or stinging sensation on the skin, although there is no evidence of mites, scabies, lice, fleas, or other parasites under the microscope. Treatment should focus on regulating the patient's emotional state, with an emphasis on soothing the liver and calming the mind. A modified version of Chaihu Shugan Decoction may be prescribed to help relieve stress and restore emotional balance.

4.2. Regulate the spirit to cure the form

For itching caused by insufficient mental nutrition, the core treatment principle should be to

nourish the blood and calm the mind, which should be maintained throughout the entire treatment process. Due to the dominance of the mind over physical form, restoring the balance of qi, blood, yin, and yang can effectively nourish the mind and achieve harmony between spiritual tranquility and physical health. Long term itching can deplete qi and blood, and it is necessary to focus on treating blood nutrition, calming the mind, and relieving itching. According to the symptom, we can choose modified formulas such as Danggui Yinzi, Siwu Xiaofeng Decoction, and Guipi Decoction. Some studies have found that Guisheng Tang has an antidepressant effect [20], which can improve the symptoms of emotional discomfort caused by itching. Meanwhile, acupuncture can regulate autonomic excitability by inhibiting increased mast cells, lowering immunoglobulin E (IgE) levels, and suppressing abnormally active metabolic reactions, thus achieving the effect of regulating qi and blood to calm the mind and relieve itching. Some studies have shown that the five acupoints with the highest frequency of itching are Quchi, Blood Sea, Foot Sanli, Hegu, and Sanyinjiao [21]. Acupuncture on Neiguan and Shenmen can achieve the effect of calming the mind and tranquilizing the spirit to stop itching by harmonizing qi and blood. According to the study, based on the form-spirit homeopathy method for the treatment of itching in physical and mental dermatoses, acupuncture points such as Liver Yu, Shangxing, Waiguan, Shuigou, Fengchi, Sanyinjiao, and Baiyunwu could significantly improve the itching symptoms [22].

Itching caused by disturbing the heart and spirit is often used to calm the heart and tranquilize the spirit, calm the heart and tranquilize the spirit formula from the heart and spirit theory of treatment, the heavy use of dragon bone, and oyster to calm the spirit [23-24], in the treatment of AD itching with emotional and emotional anomalies has achieved significant clinical results. Acupuncture can also be used to regulate the mind. Clinical studies have confirmed [25] that Baihui and Yintang have anti-anxiety and depressive effects, and acupuncture on the two points can achieve itch relief by calming the mind and tranquilizing the spirit. In clinical practice, doctors often use the principle of treating God to regulate the form to treat itching, and acupuncture points related to the heart and brain can achieve the purpose of regulating form by regulating God, and good results have been achieved [26]. Emotional therapy is closely related to the regulation of the spirit, "Su Wen - Tang Liquid Mash Sweet Treatise" [27] says: "The spirit enters, the will is cured, so the disease can be cured." This means that psychological interventions can act directly on "God", improve physical symptoms by "regulating God to nourish the form", and achieve the purpose of regulating God to guard the form, so-called God's safety is the form of the whole.

5. Summary

Chronic itching is often accompanied by emotional and mental anomalies, and mental discomfort can lead to itching, and the two influence each other as a cause and effect. Form and spirit co-adjustment treatment of itching, from the form and spirit to start, in the treatment of form in the adjustment of God, adjusting God in the treatment of form, form, and spirit of the same treatment, can block their mutual influence of the adverse consequences, improve the clinical efficacy. The theory of "unity of form and spirit" has a far-reaching influence on modern medical diagnosis and treatment ideas, and the treatment from form and spirit provides clinical ideas for improving the treatment effect of pruritus.

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