

Acupuncture for the management of dysmenorrhea

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Dysmenorrhea

- 70% of adolescent report dysmenorrhea, lost working and school day, improved after childbirth.
- **West medicine distinguishes between Primary and secondary** dysmenorrhea.
- Primary or spasmodic dysmenorrhea:
 - * cramping central, low abdominal pain
 - * radiation to the back and upper thighs
 - * pain precedes the onset of bleeding by several hour
 - * nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, headache, fatigue

Primary dysmenorrhea

- Elevated myometrial prostaglandin levels (PGF2 PGE2)
- Declining ovarian steroid hormone levels
- increasing contractility
- uterus ischemia and pain

Secondary or congestive dysmenorrhea

- Endometriosis or pelvic congestion may be present
- Pain occurs several days before and through menses
- Dyspareunia
- The pain may be unilateral
- Sensation of abdominal bloating

TCM Etiology

- Emotional strain
- Clod and Dampness
- Overwork, Chronic illness
- Excessive sexual activity; Childbirth

Main Patterns (Syndromes)

- Stagnation of qi
- Stasis of blood
- Stagnation of cold (Excess «full» or deficiency «empty»)
- Damp heat (with blood heat) or damp-phlegm
- Qi and blood deficiency
- Yang and blood deficiency
- Liver and Kidney yin deficiency

Diagnosis

- Symptoms
- Tongue
- Pulse
- Character of pain
- Location for pain

Differentiation I

- Excess syndromes (Full)
 - a. Stagnation of qi
 - b. stagnation of blood
 - c. stagnation of cold
 - d. damp heat or damp-phlegm
 - e. Stagnation of liver qi turning into fire

Differentiation II

- Deficiency syndromes (Empty)
 - a. Qi and blood deficiency
 - b. Yang and blood deficiency
 - c. Kidney and Liver deficiency

Syndromes diagnosis

Clinical manifestations

- Pain and bleeding character (PB):
- Tongue (T):
- Pulse (P):
- Treatment principle (TP) :

Stagnation of Qi

PB: lower abdominal pain during the period , or one to two day before period , a pronounced feeling of distention of the abdomen and breast, PMS, hesitant start to period. menstrual blood dark «without clots»

T : normal colored or slightly red on the side

P : taut pulse

Acupuncture treatment

TP : Move qi and blood, eliminate stagnation, stop pain

- LR 3 , LI 4
- SP 4, PC 6
- GB 34
- SP 8 Dijī SP 10
- ST 29 GuīLai ST 30 REN 6

Stagnation of Blood

- **PB**: Intense, stabbing pain before or during the period, restlessness, pain relieved after passing clots.
- **T**: purple in side or tongue body
- **P**: hesitant or uneven pulse (Se mai)

Acupuncture treatment

- TP: Invigorate blood, eliminate stasis, stop pain
- LR 3 LI 4
- PC 6 SP 4
- GB 34
- SP 8 SP 10 BL 17
- REN 2, REN 6, ST 29 ST 30
- ST 25 (Huanfu mi)
- ST 28 Shui-dao (Jia yi jing; Qian jin fang)

Stagnation of Cold

- Lower abdominal pain before or after the period, pain relieved by the application of heat, scanty bright red bleeding, with small, dark clots, feeling cold, sore back
- **T**: pale or pale purple
- **P**: deep and rolling , or deep taut

Acupuncture treatment

- **TP:** Warm the uterus, expel cold, invigorate yang promote blood
- Lu 7 KI 6 Strengthen the uterus
- BL 23 DU 4 Du 14 BL 31-34 (bailiao)
- Ren 4 ST 36 SP 6 Mox

Damp-heat

- Abdomen pain and bloating before and or after the period, burning sensation extending to the sacrum, bleeding with small clots, vaginal discharge, scanty-dark urine.
- **T**: red with yellow coating
- **P**: rolling or rolling rapid

Acupuncture treatment

- Clear heat, remove damp, eliminate stasis
- SP 6 SP 9 REN 12 ST 29
- LR3 ST 36 ST 40
- ST 30 Ren 2 (Pain)
- LI 11 SP 6 move blood
- LU 7 KI 6 opening the Ren mai

Stagnation Liver -qi turn into Fire

- Abdominal pain before or during the period, dark menstrual blood, heavy bleeding, irritability, dry stools.
- **T**: red with yellow thin coating, red dark in the side.
- **P**: rapid taut

Acupuncture treatment

- Regulate liver, eliminate stagnation, clear hear, stop pain
- LR 3 LR 2 LR 14 qimen LI4
- GB 20 GB 34
- LI 11 TE 6 zhi gou
- Ren 2 ST 36

Review papers

1. Helms JM. Acupuncture for the management of primary dysmenorrhea.

Obstet Gynecol 1987 Jan;69(1):51-6

Randomized and controlled prospective clinical study. Forty-three women were followed for one year in one of four groups.

Result : Real Acupuncture group, 10 of 11(90.9%) women showed improvement; in the Placebo Acupuncture group, 4 of 11 (36.4%); in the Standard Control group, 2 of 11 (18.2%); and in the Visitation Control group 1 of 10 (10%). **There was a 41% reduction of analgesic medication** used by the women in the Real Acupuncture group, and no change or increased use of medication seen in the other groups.

Review papers

2. Maric R. Use of acupuncture in the treatment of primary dysmenorrhea. *Jugosl Ginekol Opstet 1984 Sep-Dec;24(5-6):104-6*

Acupuncture was applied in the treatment of 32 patients with primary dysmenorrhea. Syndromes diagnosis and treatment. The therapy proceeded in sessions for three consecutive days before the expected menstruation, in the course of three consecutive cycles.

Result: One year after the completed therapy **there was a full disappearance of dysmenorrheic pain in 93%** and a partial one in 7% of cases.

Review papers

3. Lewers D et al. Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation in the relief of primary dysmenorrhea.

The purpose was to determine the effectiveness of acupuncture-like transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation in treating primary dysmenorrhea.

Twenty-one women with dysmenorrhea received a placebo pill or 30 minutes of acupuncture-like TENS.

Results **an average pain relief of at least 50% immediately posttreatment**, indicating that acupuncture-like TENS may be useful for dysmenorrheic pain. This study also suggests that auriculotherapy via acupressure may relieve the pain of primary dysmenorrhea.

Four phases of the menstrual cycle

- Menstrual phase: Blood moving, required free flow of liver qi and blood (move blood if period scanty, decrease bleeding if it heavy)
- Post-menstrual phase: blood and yin relatively empty, Ren and Chong mai depleted. (Nourishing blood and yin «liver and kidney»)
- Mid-cycle phase: blood and yin fill up in Ren and Chong mai (promote ovulation by nourishing the essence «kidney and **Yang**»)
- Pre-menstrual phase: Yang qi rise and liver qi moves in prepare for the period (Tonify yang qi if it deficient, move liver-qi if it stagnant)

Giovanni Maciocia . Obstet & Gyne in Chinese medicine

Discussion and Prognosis

- Good indication for acupuncture
- Proper diagnosis
- Select optimal phase
- proper treatment
- Minimum time of treatment