

# A brief Analysis of the three Postpartum Diseases in synopsis of the Golden Chamber

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**Abstract:** *Synopsis of the Golden Chamber* treats internal injuries and miscellaneous diseases based on Zang-fu organs, meridians and collaterals, in which a special article discusses the methods of differentiation and treatment of women's postpartum diseases. In this paper, the pathophysiological characteristics of postpartum women are summarized as deficiency of qi and blood, deficiency of viscera and internal obstruction of blood stasis, and combs the etiology, pathogenesis and treatment of three postpartum diseases (spasm, depression and difficulty in defecation). This paper summarizes the characteristics of Zhong Jing in the differential treatment of postpartum three diseases: paying attention to syndrome differentiation of deficiency and excess, dispelling evil and nourishing blood, dispelling wind, qi, removing blood stasis, moistening and other methods at the same time, in order to regulate qi and blood and calm the function of yin and yang.

**Keywords:** Spasm; Depression; Difficulty in defecation; Postpartum disease

## 1. Introduction

*Synopsis of the Golden Chamber*, written by Zhongjing, is the earliest extant monograph on the treatment of internal injuries and a variety of external diseases in China. It pioneered the systematic treatment of gynaecological diseases and laid a solid theoretical foundation for future generations of doctors. In this book, Zhongjing devoted a section to the identification and treatment of common postnatal conditions. Postpartum diseases are the general term for all kinds of illnesses during the puerperium, including the three postpartum diseases (spasm, depression and difficulty in defecation), postpartum abdominal pain, postpartum stroke, postpartum diarrhea and postpartum disturbance and vomiting, etc. *Synopsis of the Golden Chamber*, as a clinical guidance, is essential and impactful with great value. In this essay, we summarized, analyzed and discussed the three postpartum diseases (postpartum spasms, depression and difficulty in defecation) based on the etiology and pathogenesis, treatment principles and prescriptions, combined ancient and modern literature to synthesize the clinical treatment experience of the three postpartum diseases, in order to provide a better reference for clinical diagnosis and treatment of postpartum diseases and theoretical research.

The puerperium is defined in Chinese gynaecology as the period of time after parturition when the women gradually return to their pre-pregnancy state for about six to eight weeks, and post-partum diseases are the illnesses that occur during the puerperium. It is written in the *Jing Xiao Chan Bao* that postpartum diseases mainly affect the spleen and stomach, followed by the heart and bladder. The spleen and stomach are the source of Qi and blood biochemistry and the foundation of the postnatal period; when the spleen and stomach are deficient, the source of transformation is not available, resulting in the deficiency of all the five viscera and six internal organs. The third physiological feature of the postpartum period is stasis and blood stagnation, based on the deficiency of Qi and Blood and the deficiency of the internal organs, as the process of pregnancy and delivery depletes Qi and injures Blood, making it difficult to expel the dew and therefore difficult for the new blood to follow. In conclusion, the physiology of the postpartum period is characterized by deficiency, stagnation and stagnation, while under the conditions of deficiency of Qi and blood, deficiency of internal organs and internal obstruction of blood stasis, it is easy to feel external evil, which can lead to postpartum external illness.

The *Tai Chan Xin Fa*<sup>[1]</sup> says: "In treating the postpartum period, one of the three examinations should not be missing. The first is to examine whether the abdomen is painful or not, to indicate the presence or absence of the dew; the second is to examine whether the bowels are open or closed, to indicate the strength or weakness of the fluids; the third is to examine whether the lactation is active or inactive and the amount of food or drink, to indicate the fullness or weakness of the gastric energy. If

the pulse and evidence match, the disease will be cured. If the pulse and evidence are contrary, even if there is no danger, there will be many changes." Considering the characteristics of postpartum illnesses, which are characterized by many deficiencies, many stasis and many external sensations, the principle of "do not confine yourself to the postpartum period, do not forget the postpartum period" should be followed in its treatment, paying attention to the identification of deficiency and reality, using the right formula when there is such evidence, and taking care to protect the normal qi when eliminating evil, and stopping the illness immediately when it is in progress, so as not to injure the normal.

## 2. Spasms of postpartum diseases

"Spasm" is first mentioned in 7th of the original text of the chapter on spasms and dampness<sup>[2]</sup>, the spasm mentioned in this article is caused by the loss of nourishment of the fascia and veins due to the injury of the fluid by external treatment. The book *Shuo Wen · Ne Bu* says "spasm" is also acute and forceful" . *Yu Pian· Ne Bu* says "spasm" is a stiffness disease".Therefore, spasm is originally an ankylotic disease caused by the wind pathogon<sup>[3]</sup>. In the chapter on Postpartum Diseases, it's said that "new births are characterized by blood deficiency, excessive sweating, and a preference for stroke, thus causing spasms". *Jing Yue Quan Shu· Fu Ren Gui* states that "spasms after childbirth are the evidence of a great loss of Yin and blood..... It is clear that this is the result of a great loss of vital energy and the withering of blood".*Jing Gui Yu Han Jing Er Zhu*<sup>[4]</sup>. says: "The blood is greatly deficient ..... not only to nourish the tendons, but also to dry the blood with wind, thus causing the disease to spasm". *Jin Gui Yao Lue Xin Dian*<sup>[5]</sup>. says: "Spasm is also a disease of the fascia. Blood deficiency and sweating make the tendons and veins lose nourishment, and the wind enters to benefit their strength".Therefore, the basic pathogenesis of postpartum spasms is the injury of fluid and loss of blood after childbirth, and the loss of nourishment for the tendons and veins due to the wind pathogon. However, Zhongjing did not describe the symptoms and their prescriptions, by referring to the treatment of the spasmodic pulse in the chapter "Spasmodic and Damp and Hot Diseases", it is assumed that the spasmodic pulse of postpartum illnesses is "tight on the surface but slow on the inside", and there are also "soft spasmodic, rigid spasmodic and Yangming spasmodic".Postpartum spasms belong to the soft spasms which can be treated with Guizhi Gualou Decoction to relieve the muscles and dispel the wind, generate fluid and soothe the fascia. The spasm of the wind and cold in the postpartum period can be treated with Gegen Decoction to relieve the muscles, nourish the fluids and soothe the fascia, while in dispelling the wind and relieving the spasm, the two formulas should be combined with Ejiao and Renshen to tonify Qi and promote Blood circulation, Danggui and Danpi to promote Qi and invigorate Blood circulation to take care of the pathological characteristics of postpartum deficiency and stasis in women. If the patient is suffering from postpartum Yang-ming spasms, the condition should be taken into consideration and if the stasis, heat, dryness and solidity are not deep and extreme, Da Cheng Qi Tang should not be used arbitrarily to treat it. Although it can be given, prudence comes first. Professor Xiong Jibai<sup>[6]</sup> also divided the postpartum spasms into deficiency and solid , believing that the deficiency is due to deficiency of Qi and blood, resulting in a lack of fluid. For those who are suffering from internal movement of deficient wind and deficiency of qi and blood, they can be treated with Shiquan Dabu Decoction or Fuqingzhu Zirong Huoluo Decoction. The solids are caused by a deficiency of Qi and Blood followed by wind pathogon, they can be treated with Zhuye Decoction or Jiawei Zhijing Powder. *Fu Qing Nv Zhu Ke Kuo*<sup>[7]</sup> said: "For those who sweat a lot after childbirth and become spasmodic, with a strong neck and a rebellious body, and whose breath is like extinction, it is advisable to quickly take Jiajian Shenghua Decocion. Tang Ying et al<sup>[8]</sup> suggested that the Zhuye Decocion could also prevent the spasm of postpartum diseases by warming Yang and nourishing the body and soothing the fascia and veins.

In summary, based on the basic pathogenesis of postpartum spasms, which involves the injury of fluid and blood, and the loss of nourishment of the tendons and veins due to the wind, different treatment methods can be applied to relieve spasms depending on the external evil that is felt. If the postpartum period is characterized by deficiency of Qi and Blood, the treatment is to tonify Qi and nourish Blood; if the postpartum period is characterized by spasms caused by wind, the treatment is to dispel the wind and disperse the evil, soothe the tendons and nourish fluid; if the postpartum period is characterized by spasms caused by excessive sweating, the treatment is to regulate sweating and nourish Yin.

### 3. Depression of postpartum diseases

The article on postpartum diseases states that "loss of blood followed by sweating and cold lead to depression". The cause of depression is due to the three main factors of blood loss, sweat and cold. Blood loss hurts fluids is the internal cause, cold damage to the body is external cause. The combination of internal and external causes Yang Qi to be blocked internally and then reversed upwards, symptoms include dizziness and lightheadedness. Chen Yi et al<sup>[9]</sup> interpreted it as a disease in which dizziness and faintness are associated with depression and even mental abnormality. The pathogenesis is summarized as "loose of striae, qi and blood are weak". The pathology is characterized as "Blood deficiency leads to syncope, and syncope leads to depression. In *Jin Gui Yao Lue Qian Zhu*<sup>[10]</sup>, Chen Xiuyuan notes that: "When the blood dies, its qi leaks out without coupling, and sweating resumes. When the Qi and Blood are depleted, the cold is generated from within, and there is much cold. The blood is yin, the yin is lost, the qi is yang, the yang is deficient and the upper convulsions are caused by dizziness, or unconsciousness, and depression". The pathogenesis of depression is attributed to an imbalance of yin and yang, with yang deficiency leading to upper syncope and depression. *Jin Gui Yao Lue Xin Dian* also annotated, "depression is also a neurological disease. When the yin and blood are deficient, the yang is then convulsed, and the cold is repeatedly depressed, dizziness and lightheadedness."<sup>[5]</sup> Relation to 2nd of the original text of Postpartum diseases, "A woman with a weak pulse ..... vomits and cannot eat, treated with Xiao Chai Hu Decoction". The clinical manifestations of the disease are dizziness, depression, vomiting, inability to eat, difficulty in passing stools, head sweating, and weak pulse. The essence is internal deficiency, hence its weak pulse. The Yin and Blood are deficient, Yang Qi is convulsed upwards and fluid moves upwards with Qi, hence the head sweats. The yin and yang are separated at the first moment, hence the syncope and depression. If you want to be relieved, you need to reunite yin and yang, treat with Xiao Chai Hu Decoction then you can sweat profusely and pathogeny will go away, Yang is weak and Yin is in harmony, and Yang is lost for the sake of Yin. Zheng Xinggang et al<sup>[11]</sup> suggested that the pathogenesis of depression is the invasion of pathogenic qi upon the deficiency of vital energy. The use of Xiao Chai Hu Decoction is in accordance with Zhong Jing's idea of "using the right formula when there is the right evidence". Exploring the mechanism of using Xiao Chai Hu Decoction, Gong Honghong et al<sup>[12]</sup> concluded that the three groups of medicines, Radix Bupleurum with Scutellaria, Radix Panax with Ginger, Radix Ginseng with Jujube. The upper energizer is cleared, the fluids go down, the stomach Qi is harmonized, and the body is relieved by sweating. From the pivot of Shao Yang, to reach the Qi of Tai Yang and relieve the pain of vomiting, inability to eat and defecation. Jia Bei et al<sup>[13]</sup> distinguished postpartum dizziness from postpartum haematochezia and "bitter dizziness" in the chapter on phlegm and beverages, and concluded that postpartum haematochezia is simply a fainting spell due to loss of yin and blood and is not accompanied by disturbance of external evil, whereas "bitter dizziness" in the chapter on phlegm and beverages is a dizziness due to a reversal of the qi flow after the drink has stopped in the heart. The pathogenesis of the disease is different and therefore the treatment varies. Li Kaiqiong<sup>[14]</sup> treated a total of 38 cases of post-partum dizziness with Xiao Chai Hu Decoction plus and minus, with significant reduction in the main symptoms of dizziness and improvement in quality of life as the efficacy criteria. Xie Feng'e et al<sup>[15]</sup> described the treatment of postpartum yu hu Tang with a case study. In the case, the mother was dizzy and dry after bathing, grasping her chest and pounding her ribs with both hands and calling for help. Seven days later, the patient's fever suddenly rose and she had difficulty in passing stools, with a distended and full abdomen.

To sum up, the pathogenesis of postpartum yu-vomiting is the imbalance of yin and yang and the loss of harmony between qi and blood. The formula uses Xiao Chai Hu Decoction as the mainstay to harmonise the pivotal mechanism, in order to support the righteousness and reach the evil, to regulate the qi flow, and to calm yin and yang, so that the body can sweat, and to attenuate the yang energy in favour of the yin. As You Zaijing said, "In order to dissipate qi, we must not ignore the deficiency of qi, but this method is the only one that can dissolve the guest evil and harmonize yin and yang."

### 4. Difficulty in defecation of postpartum diseases

In the article on postpartum diseases in women, it is said that "the loss of fluid and the dryness of the stomach make it difficult to have a bowel movement." The pathogenesis of this disease is due to the loss of fluid and blood after childbirth, the intestinal tract is not moistened, and the intestinal bowels are not able to pass and descend, thus making it difficult to defecate. In the "*Jin Kui Yao Lue Xin Dian*", it says: "Difficulty in passing stools is also a liquid disease. The stomach collects fluids and infiltrates the yang, but if the fluids are lost and the stomach is dry, the large intestine loses its moistening and it

becomes difficult in defecation"<sup>[5]</sup>. Chen Jiadong et al<sup>[16]</sup> considered that the difficulty in defecation after childbirth was due to the drying up of water and the stoppage of boats, which is the reason for "the loss of fluid and dryness of the stomach" as stated in the original text, and not the evidence of Cheng Qi, which is caused by the burning of fluid and fluid due to the entry of evil heat into the interior. Guo Jianfang et al<sup>[17]</sup> used Jia Wei Sheng Hua Decoction to treat the blood deficiency type of postpartum bowel difficulty. Their basic formula consisted of Angelica sinensis, Radix Rehmanniae, Radix Paeoniae, Peach Almond, Motherwort, Cistanches, Radix Shouwu, Chuanxiong and Ginger, and added and subtracted with evidence to increase the fluid and move the boat, which effectively improved clinical symptoms. Yang Congjun<sup>[18]</sup> used the formula of Ganmai Dazao Decoction from the *Synopsis of the Golden Chamber* to treat postpartum dysmenorrhea, which benefited the spleen and nourished blood and nourished yin and moistened the blood, with good clinical efficacy. Wu Pufa<sup>[19]</sup> used Ji Chuan Decoction with the removal of Ox Knee to treat postpartum dyspareunia, taking advantage of its ability to warm the spleen, nourish the kidneys, raise the clear and lower the turbidity. Niu Cong<sup>[20]</sup> treated postpartum dysmenorrhea with Plus and Minus Yi Yin Decoction, which was effective in nourishing Blood, nourishing Yin and increasing fluid, and at the same time facilitated maternal milk secretion. Liu Dongmei<sup>[21]</sup> used Siwu Decoction combined with Zengliang Decoction to treat postpartum dyspareunia, which nourishes Yin, moistens dryness and clears the bowels with definite efficacy. Zhang Minli et al<sup>[22]</sup> used Seinseifa to treat difficult in defecation after delivery, emphasizing the use of raw *Atractylodes macrocephala* in a ratio of 6:1 with Radix Angelicae Sinensis, plus Radix Rehmanniae Praeparata and *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, with remarkable results in 36 cases. He Zhenwen et al<sup>[23]</sup> used Nourishing Blood and moistening dryness soup to treat postpartum stool difficulties. The formula consisted of Huang Qi, Dang Ginseng, Radix Angelicae Sinensis, Sheng Di, Bai Zhu, Chen Pi, Cistanches, Xuan Ginseng, Mai Dong, Black Sesame, Fire Ma Ren, Yu Li Ren and Tao Ren. Of the 76 cases treated, 68 were cured and 6 were improved with satisfactory results. Zhai Binglan et al<sup>[24]</sup> used Ginseng and *Atractylodes macrocephala* to treat postpartum stool difficulty. 38 cases were cured and 2 cases improved out of 40 cases after 5 days of treatment, and only 1 case recurred after 1 week of discontinuation, with satisfactory efficacy.

Article 3 of *Synopsis of the Golden Chamber's* Postpartum Diseases: "Those who are relieved of their illness and can eat, but have fever for seven or eight days, are suffering from gastric solidity, which is treated by Da Cheng Qi Tang". This is a case of the stomach becoming solid after the illness has been resolved by taking Xiao Chai Hu Tang. The stomach becoming solid is caused by the residual heat that has not been cleared and the food that has been consumed stagnating in the middle of the body, with the residual evil and the food that has not been eliminated becoming dry and solid. This is because the residual heat has not been cleared and the food consumed has stagnated in the middle of the body.

In summary, the basic pathogenesis of postpartum dysmenorrhoea is a serious injury to the fluids and a loss of conduction. Therefore, the treatment should be based on the protection of fluids, increase fluids and nourish blood, and the medicine used is mostly sweet and gentle, such as Dihuang, Shou Wu, Cistanches, Tao Ren, etc., together with Qi moving and lifting, such as Citrus Aurantium, Chuan Xiong, etc. In the case of recurrence of yu fever, it is necessary to follow the principle of "use the right medicine if there is the right evidence", and to grasp the key to the disease mechanism of fluid deficiency and stomach solidity in a timely manner, and to use Da Cheng Qi Decoction to urgently reduce and preserve Yin.

## 5. Summary

This article summarises the physiopathological characteristics of the postpartum period, and concludes that deficiency, stasis and external sensations are the basis of the pathological factors that lead to postpartum. The core of the three postpartum pathologies is the loss of blood and fluids, and the great damage to the vital energy, as well as the internal obstruction of blood stasis and the susceptibility to external evil. By sorting out the three postpartum diseases in Book *Synopsis of the Golden Chamber* and summarising the treatment and medicinal features of Zhong Jing's treatment of the three postpartum diseases, the methods of cultivating and tonifying the righteous Qi, while at the same time dispelling wind and dispersing evil, moving Qi and Blood, and increasing fluid and moistening the lower part of the body, will help expand the ideas of identifying and treating postpartum diseases and provide theoretical reference for clinical treatment of postpartum diseases.

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