

Professor Wang Yali's Experience in Treating Depression Based on the Theory of "Liver Yin in Physique and Yang in Function"

Renyan Zhu^{1,a}, Yali Wang^{2,b,*}, Yingmei Zhang^{1,c}, Renrui Chang^{1,d}, Shaocong Liu^{1,e}

¹Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xianyang, 712046, Shaanxi, China

²Affiliated Hospital of Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xianyang, 712000, Shaanxi, China

^a516661084@qq.com, ^bwylsxzy666@163.com, ^c3141403254@qq.com, ^d2475980934@qq.com,

^e2440515297@qq.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract: Professor Wang Yali is good at using Chinese-Medicine thinking to identify and treat depression. She thinks the emotional diseases should focus on the treatment of liver firstly. Liver stores blood, soothes and regulates the flow of qi and blood, yin in Physique and yang in function, the yin and blood of liver are often inadequate, but the yang and qi are often surplus. Rage impairs liver or desires do not achieve, the qi of liver stagnates for a long time, all these will lead to physiological dysfunction of "Liver Yin in Physique and Yang in Function", which is the main pathogenesis of depression. In clinical practices, Professor Wang Yali advocates nourishing yin and blood of liver runs through the entire treatment process of depression. In the initial stage of depression, liver depression and qi stagnation is the main syndrome, the syndrome of blood deficiency is not obvious, the main treatment is to soothe liver and regulate qi, then is to enrich blood and nourish liver. In the later stage of disease, "seeing the diseases of liver, to know the liver will pass to the spleen", the symptom of liver depression exists with phlegm, fire, blood-stasis, deficiency and the diseases of the other organs, the main treatment is to soothe liver and resolve depression, purge fire and resolve stasis, and nourish yin and enrich blood. My teacher used this method, repeatedly acquired better efficacy, now the experiences are summarized as follows, to satisfy the fellow.

Keywords: Wang Yali; Liver Yin in Physique and Yang in Function; Depression; Clinical Experience

1. Introduction

Depression ^[1] belongs to the category of "Depression Syndrome" and "Globus Hystericus" in traditional Chinese medicine. It is a physical and mental disease characterized by low mood, swelling and pain of ribs, slow thinking and decreased volitional activity, and belongs to the category of emotional disease. By 2020, the data published by the World Health Organization shows that the global incidence rate of depression is 4.4%, and there are about 58 million patients with depression in China, including 7% of severe depression. The latest data from the Institute of Psychology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences shows that the prevalence of depression among adolescents in China will be 24.6% in 2020, including 7.4% of major depression. The incidence rate of depression is so high, and the age of onset tends to be younger. However, western medicine treatment of this disease is prone to lead to arrhythmia, high blood pressure, excessive sleepiness, dry mouth, constipation and other adverse reactions ^[2-3]. Clinical practices show that the treatment of depression with traditional Chinese medicine has fewer adverse reactions and low recurrence rate, so it is essential to give full play to the diagnosis and treatment of this disease with Traditional Chinese Medicine.

2. The theory of "Liver Yin in Physique and Yang in Function"

In "Clinic Guidline of Medical Records" Hua Xiu-yun ^[4] mentioned that the liver was the viscera of wind and wood, stored the ministerial fire, and Yin in physique and Yang in function. Its property is rigid, governing ascension and movement, and depending on the kidney-fluid and blood to nourish it. "Basic Theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine" said that liver stored blood, its nature belonged to yin,

and it governed regulation, so its function belonged to yang. Therefore, there is a saying that "Liver Yin in Physique and Yang in Function". At present, most doctors believe that the theory of "Liver Yin in Physique and Yang in Function" should be understood from the perspectives of "Liver governing regulating" and "Liver storing blood". "Inner Canon of Huang Di" mentioned that liver could see when it received blood. Wang Bing^[5] said that liver stored blood and heart regulated blood, when people moved, blood flowed to the meridians, while when people were still, blood flowed to the liver. Liver stores blood, blood belongs to yin, according to yin and yang attributes, its nature belongs to yin. "Plain Questions" mentioned that rage would cause qi to flow upwards, even hematemesis and diarrhoea. Zhou Xuehai said that liver preferred rise to fall and liver preferred dispersal to gather. Liver governs regulation, represents anger in emotion and regulates emotions, according to yin and yang attributes, its function belongs to yang. The functions of "Liver storing blood" and "Liver governing regulating" are complementary and reciprocal. As pointed out in the book of "Treatise on Blood Troubles"^[6] that liver belonged to wood, when wood qi was mild and unobstructed, it would not lead to stagnation, so the blood and pulse were clear. Therefore, the regulation and peace of liver is the basis of "Liver Yin and Yang". If the function of "Liver governing regulating" is normal, the regulation of liver qi is smooth, and the blood flow is smooth, then the function of "Liver storing blood" is normal. The function of "Liver storing blood" is normal, and liver blood is sufficient, then liver qi will not flow upwards, so the qi of the whole body is smooth and regulated, which will inhibit the occurrence of emotional distress and depression^[7].

3. The main pathogenesis of depression is the disharmony of liver qi and blood and the imbalance of liver yin and yang

Professor Wang Yali thinks that the main pathogenesis of depression is the disharmony of liver qi and blood and the imbalance of liver yin and yang. As the famous doctor Zhu Danxi said that all diseases could not be separated from depression, which belonged to liver. Liver stores the visible blood and regulates the invisible qi, therefore, the imbalance of the liver's "Yin in Physique and Yang in Function" physiological function is mainly manifested in the imbalance of qi and blood of the liver. Professor Wang also points out that the liver and gallbladder are external and internal, which are the pivot of qi, and control the regulation of qi throughout the body. Therefore, the stagnation of liver qi, the disharmony of liver and gallbladder, and the imbalance of the pivot will cause depression. Liver stores blood, soothes and regulates the flow of qi and blood, therefore, the normal function of "Liver Yin and Yang" is essential to maintain and regulate the normal physiological function of the body, and is an important condition for the balance of qi, blood, yin and yang. If the function of "Liver storing blood" is abnormal, dizziness, tinnitus, dry eyes and other manifestations of liver blood deficiency may occur, and even vomiting, epistaxis, hemoptysis and other clinical manifestations may occur. If the function of "Liver governing regulating" is abnormal, stagnation of liver qi, depression of mood, anxiety, swelling and pain of ribs and other symptoms may occur. Liver depression turns into fire, which can cause irritability, dry mouth and bitter mouth and so on. When phlegm and qi are mixed, which will cause chest tightness and abnormal consciousness and so on. Gradually, stagnation of qi and deficiency of qi and blood can lead to blood stasis, which will cause depression, chest pain and other symptoms^[8-9].

4. Clinical treatment experience

Aim at the main pathogenesis of disharmony of liver qi and blood and imbalance of liver body and function, professor Wang Yali advocates that enriching liver body, regulating liver function, relieving liver depression and nourishing liver blood run through the whole treatment process of depression. Liver is a rigid viscera, governing ascension and movement, and preferring smooth to depression, clinically, the yin and blood of liver are often insufficient, and the yang and qi of liver are often excessive. Liver dominates the regulation of emotions, emotional discomfort, stagnation of qi, depression turns to fire and to damage qi and yin, which will result in yin and blood deficiency of the liver. Blood deficiency cannot nourish the liver wood, and liver further loses its regulation, as a result, the disease develops into a mixture of deficiency and excess. At the beginning, depression is often characterized by the syndromes of "Liver qi stagnation" and "Liver stagnation and phlegm obstruction". Clinically, there are often causes of excessive emotions and prolonged stress that cannot be released. The symptoms such as pain and discomfort of the ribs, chest tightness and foreign bodies in the throat are more obvious, the symptom of deficiency of qi and blood is not significant. Therefore, the treatment is mainly to soothe the liver and regulate qi, and also to nourish and regulate the liver. The

treatment is to add or subtract Xiaoyao Powder, drugs such as Radix bupleuri, White peony, Bergamot, and Tulip are commonly used. As the disease progresses, depression often involves the liver, heart, spleen, and kidney, as pointed out in the book of "Synopsis of prescriptions of the Golden Chamber" [10] that seeing the diseases of liver, to know the liver will pass to the spleen. Liver depression cannot be relieved for a long time, liver wood may multiply spleen soil, which will cause damage to the biochemical source and deficiency of qi and blood. Over time, there are symptoms of liver depression and deficiency of qi and blood of heart and spleen, the treatment is modified with Kaixin Jieyu Decoction, drugs such as Bupleurum chinense, Paeonia lactiflora, Angelica sinensis, Tulip, Acorus tatarinowii, Acacia albicans, Yejiateng, Raw keel and Raw oyster are commonly used. If phlegm and qi intermingle, that will consume yin and fluid, and cause the syndromes of palpitations, insomnia and irritability, the treatment is to add or subtract Kaixin Daomian Decoction, drugs such as Bupleurum chinense, Paeonia lactiflora, Acorus calamus, Poria cocos, Albizia julibrissima, Yejiateng, Sour jujube kernel, Polygala tenuifolia, Raw keel and Raw oyster are commonly used. Prolonged illness will lead to deficiency of qi and blood, involve the kidney and lead to yin deficiency of the liver and kidney, symptoms such as dizziness, dry eyes, blurred vision, fever and night sweats will occur, the treatment is to add or subtract Kaixin Powder and Liuwei Dihuang Decoction.

5. Example of Medical Case

Patient Mr. He, male, 49 years old, employee, was initially diagnosed on December 7th, 2021. Chief complaint: anxiety and depression for over 12 years, aggravated by 6 months. The patient complained that 12 years ago, due to high pressure in life and work, he was difficult to fall asleep at night, accompanied by trance, fatigue, weakness, liking to be alone, loss of interest, and attempted suicide. In 2009, he visited a local hospital and was diagnosed as "depression". He was given paroxetine hydrochloride, 25mg, once a day, after taking medication for more than 6 months, he stopped taking the medication on his own. In recent years, symptoms have recurred after drug withdrawal. Six months ago, due to the adjustment of medication dosage, the symptom of drowsiness began to appear, accompanied by dizziness. TCD showed that the blood flowed velocity of bilateral vertebral arteries decreased. The patient had a marked feeling of depression in the morning, with suicidal thought and anxiety in times of trouble. He suffered from decreased interest, fatigue, weakness, sadness, dry mouth, bitter mouth, dizziness, sweating after activity, loss of appetite, lethargy, easy to wake up from sleep, dreaminess, difficulty in resolving stool and normal urination. His tongue was dark red, with thin white fur, thickened sublingual veins with small branches, and wiry thread pulse. TCM Diagnosis: Depression Syndrome (Deficiency of Qi and Yin with Liver Depression). Treatment: Tonifying qi and nourishing yin, soothing the liver and strengthening the spleen. Prescription: To add or subtract Kaixinjieyu Decoction. Composition: Bupleurum chinense 12g, Red peony 10g, White peony 30g, Bergamot 12g, Kudzu root 15g, Cassia twig 9g, Ephedra 2g, Astragalus 18g, Floating wheat 30g, Mulberry white bark 12g, Yuanhu 15g, Black ginseng 12g, Cinnamon 3g, Raw dragon bone 30g, Raw oyster 30g, Tulip 10g, Acacia flower 30g, Calamus 12g, Tuckahoe 15g, Tribulus 18g, Roasted licorice 6g. One dose per day, a total of seven doses. On the second visit, the patient said that the symptoms of fatigue, weakness, dizziness, dry mouth, bitter mouth and drowsiness had improved. He had frequent dreams and was prone to waking up, was anxious when encountering difficulties, had a significantly lower mood in the morning and lacked appetite. In the previous prescription, removing Red peony, Calamus, Astragalus and Acacia flower, and adding Acacia bark, Orange peel, Lily, Gardenia and Lotus seed, one dose per day, a total of seven doses. During the third visit, the patient said that the symptoms of anxiety and depression had improved and the remaining symptoms were alleviated, continuing to use the previous prescription, one dose per day, a total of seven doses. At the fourth visit, the patient said that all symptoms were significantly reduced, using the previous prescription, one dose per day, a total of fourteen doses.

Note: The patient was a middle-aged male with a long-term history of depression, and was prone to relapse after treatment with Western medicine. At the initial diagnosis, the patient said he was obviously depressed, had suicidal thoughts, was more thoughtful and drowsy, accompanied by dizziness, sleeplessness, sadness, dry mouth, bitter mouth and loss of appetite. The patient suffered from emotional distress mainly due to high pressure, stagnation of liver qi, which led to the symptoms of depression and anxiety. Excessive thinking will damage the heart and spleen, deficiency of spleen qi will lead to loss of appetite. Deficiency of both heart and spleen leads to insufficient production of qi and blood, and the body loses nourishment, which will result in fatigue and weakness. Excessive worry and a long course of illness can lead to the deficiency of yin and blood, blood cannot nourish the mind and spirit, which will lead to symptoms of drowsiness and dreaminess. Over time, qi stagnation

transforms into fire, causing the deficiency of both heart and kidney yin, symptoms such as restlessness, sadness, crying, dry mouth, bitter mouth and insomnia can be seen. The normal circulation of qi and blood does not cause illness, qi stagnation can cause blood stasis, which will result in a dull red tongue and thickened and dark sublingual collaterals. Liver dominates the regulation of emotions, emotional discomfort and stagnation of qi can cause the wiry thread pulse. The syndrome belongs to the deficiency of qi and yin and liver depression. The treatment is based on supplementing qi and nourishing yin, strengthening the spleen and soothing the liver. In Kaixin Jieyu Decoction, Bupleurum chinense^[11] soothes the liver and relieves depression to help the liver function. Red peony can cool blood and nourish yin to promote blood circulation and remove stasis. The combination of Bergamot, Tulip, Calamus, Acacia Flower and Tuckahoe can promote qi and relieve depression, dissipate phlegm for resuscitation, regulate qi and promote blood circulation, and nourish the heart and calm the mind. Yuanhu regulates qi and promotes blood circulation, calms and relieves pain. Cassia twig and peony can harmonize ying-qi and wei-qi and nourish yin and yang. Tribulus can calm liver and relieve depression, promote blood circulation and dispel wind. Raw dragon bone and oyster can nourish yin and subdue yang, and tranquilize and allay excitement. Ephedra can relieve external symptoms, Soothe liver and relieve depression, taking the meaning of "Depression need to disperse". Roasted licorice replenishes the spleen and stomach qi and harmonizes all herbs. The patient's syndrome belongs to deficiency of qi and yin, accompanied by liver depression and blood stasis. The whole treatment process is based on the method of harmonizing qi, blood, yin, and yang. To Soothe liver, promote qi, resolve depression, nourish yin, supplement blood and remove blood stasis.

6. Conclusion

"Medical Bank Stone"^[12] said that all diseases arose from depression, wood stagnation was the first of the five depressions, qi stagnation was the beginning of the six depressions, and liver depression was the main of the various depressions. Zhou Xuehai also said that the doctors, who were good at regulating the liver, would be good at treating all diseases. Professor Wang thinks that depression should focus on the treatment of liver firstly, and keeping the normal function of "Liver Yin in Physique and Yang in Function" is essential to treat depression. She advocates that enriching liver body, regulating liver function, relieving liver depression and nourishing liver blood run through the whole treatment process of depression. At the beginning of depression, the main symptom is liver depression and qi stagnation, the deficiency of yin and blood is not significant, so the treatment should focus on soothing liver and regulating qi, as well as nourishing blood and regulating liver. For a long time, liver depression is accompanied by symptoms such as phlegm, fire, blood stasis, deficiency and other visceral diseases, the treatment is based on the method of enriching liver body, regulating liver function and harmonizing the qi and blood. To soothe liver and resolve depression, supplement qi and nourish blood, clear heat and resolve phlegm, and promote blood circulation and remove blood stasis.

References

- [1] Luo R, Cao WF. *Internal Medicine of Traditional Chinese Medicine [M]. 2nd Edition. Beijing: Science Press, 2016. Mar. 264-265.*
- [2] Guo WF, Cao XL, Sheng L, et al. *Expert Consensus on the Diagnosis and Treatment of Depression with Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine [J]. Chinese Journal of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine, 2020, (02): 141-148.*
- [3] Zhou L. *What side-effects do antidepressants have that require attention [J]. Health Care Guide, 2019(50).*
- [4] Ye TS. *Clinic Guidline of Medical Records [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai People Press, 1959: 20-21.*
- [5] Wang ML, Liu L, Peng LL. *Tracing the Origin of the Thought of "Liver Yin and Yang".[J]. Asia-Pacific Traditional Medicine, 2017, 13 (20): 46-47.*
- [6] Tang ZH. *Treatise on Blood Troubles [M]. Beijing: People Health Press, 2005:10-15.*
- [7] Wang HJ, Wang JQ, Sun P, et al. *The connotation and clinical application of the theory of "Liver Yin and Yang". [J]. Modernization of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Materia Medica (World Science and Technology), 2015, 17 (4): 885-890.*
- [8] Zhang HQ, Li H. *Treatment of perimenopausal syndrome based on "Liver Yin and Yang".[J]. Henan Traditional Chinese Medicine, 2019, 39 (7): 1042-1044.*
- [9] Zhang LY, Xu FQ. *Research progress in TCM syndrome classification of depression [J]. Hebei Traditional Chinese Medicine, 2012, 34 (3): 464-465.*
- [10] Li N, Fan X. *Treatment of insomnia based on the theory of "Liver Yin and Yang".[J]. Journal of*

Liaoning University of Chinese Medicine, 2019, 21 (5): 136-138.

[11] Zhong GS. *Chinese Medicine [M]. 4th Edition. Beijing: China Press of Traditional Chinese Medicine, 2016.*

[12] Zhang BL. *Internal Medicine of Traditional Chinese Medicine [M]. 4th Edition. Beijing: China Press of Traditional Chinese Medicine, 2017:290-294.*