

Treatment of multiple sclerosis with acupuncture

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Multiple sclerosis was once regarded in China as a very rare disease of the nervous system. However, China has been experiencing an increasing rate of incidence of this disease in recent years, and more and more doctors tend to consider the ophthalmoneuromyelitis (the Devil Disease) to be one form of this disease. In this report, patients with ophthalmoneuromyelitis were all listed as confirmed cases. Altogether 69 cases of multiple sclerosis have been treated with excellent effect in recent years in our hospital by means of toning the liver and spleen, nourishing

the blood to improve the acuity of vision, and strengthening the muscle and bones. After the treatment, most of the patients gain improvement in their symptoms and some even achieved a permanent cure of the disease.

Clinical Data

Among the 69 cases, 57 belonged to confirmed cases and 12 belonged to almost confirmed cases. 25 were males and 44 females. The ages of the patients ranged from 11-64 years old, most of whom were in their twenties. The average age of onset was 31.

The primary symptoms in the nervous system include visual disturbance (20 cases), pain of the limbs and sensory disturbance (15 cases), weakness of the limbs (11 cases), pain of the limbs, sensory disturbance, and weakness (7 cases), facial paralysis (2 cases), double vision (2 cases), lallation (2 cases), urinary incontinence plus headache (2 cases), and one case, respectively, for tremor, walking disturbance, tinnitus, dizziness, dysphagia, and disorder of consciousness.

From the above table, it can be seen that among the total 69 cases of multiple sclerosis, there are 21 cases (30.43%) mainly with symptoms in the spinal cord and 48 cases (69.57%) with symptoms both in the spinal cord and in the optic nerve. The primary onset cases were 39 (56.53%) and those with more than two onsets were 30 (43.47%).

Criteria of the Diagnosis

All of the patients were diagnosed with the following criteria.

Clinical confirmation

Symptoms and signs indicate one or more foci in the nervous system which affect the predilection sites for multiple sclerosis, such as optic nerve, spinal cord, brain stem, etc.

In the whole process of disease, there are remarkable remittances and relapses, or the disease is with a stepladder development. Examinations were made to exclude such pathogenic factors as tumor, angionosis, cervical spondylosis, or diseases in the cerebellum.

Therapeutic method

According to TCM theory, this disease is considered to be caused by insufficient Kidney-Yin. Deficiency of Qi and Blood and lack of nutrition to the eyes which leads to blurred vision or even blindness: "The Kidney is concerned with the bone and produces bone marrow." Also: "The brain is the sea of medulla." When there is an insufficient supply of nutrition to the brain due to emptiness of the medulla sea, or when there is hyperactivity of Fire due to Yin Deficiency, dizziness will be the result. For longstanding cases, the patient will experience Insufficient Kidney-Yang and this is the reason of cold limbs and urinary incontinence. Flaccidity syndrome often results from Deficiency of Liver-Yin and Kidney-Yin or Deficiency of Qi and Blood, and malnutrition of muscle and tendons.

Principle of the treatment

Tonifying the Liver and Kidney, nourishing the Blood to clear the eyes, and strengthening the muscles and tendons.

Therapeutic course and follow -up

The needling treatment can be given once every day and 14 treatments constitute a therapeutic course. Each case should have a follow-up of therapeutic courses.

It should be noted that the above analysis of the therapeutic effect is based on the clinical symptoms and signs, which may not be identical with the actual anatomical changes. The patient may have wider pathogenic changes which cannot be found by the clinical examinations. In this group of patients, there were 48 cases with disturbance of vision, among whom, 14 cases (29.16%) were nearly recovered, 32 cases (67.66%) were remarkably improved, and 2 cases (4.16%) were with slight improvement. In the 21 cases of cranial nerve disturbance, 15 cases (71.43%) were basically cured; for the 34 cases with motor and sensory disturbance, 28 cases (82.35%) were almost cured.

Comment

The present studies on the etiology and pathogenesis of multiple sclerosis show that the disease, under different geographical conditions and in different individuals, appears with the allergic reaction as the induced factor. Much data indicate that the pathogenesis of this disease is closely related to the immunoregulatory system and the autoimmunity of the central nervous system. As the causes of the disease are still unknown, there is still no specific therapeutic method. In China, multiple sclerosis is shown in most cases in its variant form, i.e., the Devil Disease, with the involvement of the optic nerve and the spinal cord as the two main characteristics. The acupuncture treatment is mainly to tonify the Kidney, Liver and Spleen, and to nourish the Blood to clear the eyes and to strengthen the bones and tendons as a supplement. This therapeutic method is worth further study.

Symptoms in the optic nerve and in the spinal cord may appear simultaneously. In the case when the optic nerve is involved, usually one eye is attacked first, followed by the other. In most cases, the optic symptoms are followed by spinal symptoms. There are also cases with a reversed order.

This group of patients are characterized by a short disease course (average 2.5 years with one month as the shortest and ten years as the longest) and low ages (average onset around 20 years old). Clinically, the injury of the optic nerve or the spinal cord can frequently be seen. The pathogenesis shows that there is part of demyelination making the excitement transmit outward. This showed that ophthalmoneuromyelitis is only a subtype of the multiple sclerosis. For the TCM treatment, to tonify the Liver and Kidney is often taken as the main

method, supplemented by nourishing the Blood to clear the eyes and strengthen the bones and tendons. Any early needling treatment so as to improve the conductivity of the axon is something to be studied further.

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