Application of Ying Qi and Wei Qi Theory in the Treatment of Multiple Sclerosis

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Both ying qi and wei qi play important roles in Chinese physiology, and correlate with the defensive and bio-clock systems. Drawing in large part upon classical citations from Chapter 18 of the Ling Shu Jing, this article will define ying qi and wei qi, and their relationship to the shenhen. Ultimately these concepts will be elevated from theoretical constructs to become practical tools to approach the treatment of multiple sclerosis.

Theoretical Bases of Ying Qi and Wei Qi

In this discussion from Ling Shu Jing, Chapter 18, one observes that, both ying qi and wei qi derive from food qi. Ying qi is the nutritive part of food qi while wei qi is the active part of food qi:

The refined energy of a man stems from the refined substance transformed by the cereals received, when the cereals enter into the stomach, the transformed refined substance will be transferred to the five yin organs and six yang organs. In the refined energy, the lucid part is called the ying qi, and the turbid part is called the wei qi, the ying qi flows within the blood vessels and the wei qi flows outside of the vessels, and they circulate in the whole body unceasingly.

The Functions of Ying Qi and Wei Qi

Ying qi warms the body and fills the soft tissues with qi: it controls the opening and closing of the sweat pores. Wei qi also nourishes the couli, which includes the interstices, and connecting tissues between the skin, muscle, and organs. The ying qi nourishes the internal organs, the body tissues, and is an ingredient of the blood.

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Returning to chapter 18 of the Ling Shu Jing we see that wei qi flows outside the blood vessels. The wei qi runs twenty five cycles in the yang portion and twenty five cycles in the yin portion. Its circulation splits evenly between day and night. This circulation starts from the head which belongs to yang and terminates by the yin channels of hand and foot. Clearly ying qi and wei qi have differing functions, but later in chapter 18 of the Ling Shu Jing, we are told that, “Both ying qi and wei qi circulate in the body unceasingly.”

The flow of Ying Qi and Wei Qi

The ying qi flows inside blood vessels, following the twelve primary channels, beginning with the lung channel, and ending with the liver channel. Chapter 16 of the Ling Shu describes this movement:

The ying qi starts from the hand taiyin channel of Lung, it runs along the inner side of the arm, pours into the Hand yangming channel of large intestine, then ours into the foot yangming channel of stomach…then it ascends along the liver channel to teach the liver, pours into the lung from the liver, ascends along the rear of the throat to reach behind the inner orifices of the nose…another branch ascends to teach the forehead, runs along the centre of the top of head, descends to the neck, runs along the spinal column and enters into the sacral bone where the du channel passes, then it passed the ren channel, communicates with the external genitals, passes the pubic hair margin and enters into the navel, then ascends to enter the supraclavicular fossa, then, descends to pour into the lung, then it begins to circulate again from the hand taiyin channel of lung. This is the traveling route of the ying qi.

The Circulation of Ying Qi

Figure 1

The wei qi flows from the eyes to the feet during the day along the taiyang, shaoyang and yangming returning through the yin. At night, the wei qi travels deeply to enter the kidney, Figure 2.
Applications of Ying Qi and Wei Qi: Theory in the Treatment of Multiple Sclerosis

Ying and wei qi theory is commonly applied to explain the mechanism and treatment of many diseases such as: taiyang diseases, bio-clock disorders, induced insomnia, epilepsy, and migraine headaches. The primary focus of this article is the application of ying, and wei qi theory for the treatment of multiple sclerosis.

Biomedical and Epidemiological Considerations

Multiple sclerosis is a progressive, degenerative disorder of the central nervous system (CNS) involving the optic nerve, brain, and spinal cord. There are between 250,000 and 350,000 cases in U.S. with 200 new cases diagnosed each month (recorded in 1995). The condition happens in populations between the ages of 20 and 40. Twice as many females as males have MS. Similarly twice as many Caucasians contract MS than minorities. Further, people in temperate climates are five times as likely to develop MS as people living in the tropics. Lastly, the incidence of MS appears higher in higher social classes. (13)

During an attack of MS, the inflammation occurs through myelin degeneration in the white matter of CNS with random patches called plaques. As a result, the neurological transmissions are slowed, or even completely blocked, resulting in diminished or lost body function.

The symptoms may include: blurred vision, weakness and heaviness of one or both legs, jerking of the legs, double vision, vertigo, vomiting, incoordination, a feeling in the arms and legs like suffering an electric shock, numbness or tingling of limbs, urgency or hesitancy of urination, and impotence.

It can be difficult to diagnose MS in the initial stage since the symptoms tend to be vague. Appropriate diagnosis requires a complete medical history and a neurological examination. Other relevant diagnostic studies include MRIs that demonstrate scarred lesions or lumbar puncture with elevated gamma globulin levels in the spinal fluid.

The symptoms of MS can be classified into five groups including sensation disorder, motor dysfunctions, psychosocial disorders, urinary, and reproductive tract conditions. Sensation disorders include optic neuritis, double vision, perception of a band in the abdomen, tingling, numbness.

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of extremities and heaviness of the extremities. Motor dysfunctions include tremors and spasms, ataxic gait, increased deep tendon reflexes, Babinski’s sign, hemiplegia and paraplegia. Psychosocial dysfunctions include stress, forgetfulness, hysteria and mental confusion. Urinary problems may include frequent urination and incontinence. Reproductive weakness may include sexual dysfunction, impotence, decreased libido, infertility, and sterility.

**Chinese Medical Treatment of MS Using the with Ying Qi and Wei Qi Theory**

MS falls into a class of diseases that are described in the Chinese literature as flaccidity syndrome. Wei syndrome is often translated as flaccid syndrome. MS is a typical example of ying and wei qi disorder, resulting in motor and sensory disorder of the extremities. All of the symptoms of MS can be explained through ying and wei qi theory and circulation.

When inflammation occurs in the white matter of the CNS, plaque, and myelin damage occurs. Under these circumstances, neurological transmissions are slowed, or even completely blocked. This can result in diminished or lost body function. The result is flaccidity syndrome with numbness and dysfunction of extremities. This is consistent with a blockage of the pathway of ying qi and wei qi.

Through the flow of ying qi and wei qi, the head, brain, and kidney, urine bladder and uterus are all connected together. Many symptoms, such as sensory and motor disorders, directly reflect disorders of ying qi and wei qi. These relationships are highlighted in, Figure 3.

**The Interrelationship of Symptoms**

**The Application of Needling Techniques**

One can achieve great clinical efficacy using techniques and skills based on ying and wei qi theory. Various manifestations of MS can be treated with these acupuncture techniques. Based on relevant chapters from the Neijing, the flow of ying qi and wei qi can be used to explain the application of needling techniques in clinical practice. We begin with a global representation of the depths as they relate to wei qi, ying qi, and yuan qi, and then give specific needling techniques.

As we can see in Figure 1, wei qi is in the first layer, while ying qi and yuan qi are located at progressively deeper layers, Figure 4. One should feel the difference at the wei qi, ying qi and yuan qi when performing acupuncture.

**Flow of Ying-Wei Qi in Channels & Collaterals**

![Diagram](image)

Figure 4 demonstrates the flow of ying qi, wei qi and yuan qi at the various depths. Appropriate needling technique involves needling to the corresponding depth.

**Treatment Methods Using the Spine Dragon Insertion for Regulating Ying and Wei Qi**

Here we will examine spine dragon insertion for regulating ying and wei qi. The points include: dragon’s eyes, (GB 20), dragon’s mouth, (DU 14), dragon’s body, (Located .5 cun lateral to the depression below the spinous process of T 1 - L 5) and dragon’s tail (DU 3 & DU 4).

These are the techniques for the spine dragon insertion for regulating ying and wei qi. Needle obliquely towards the spine using 1 to 1.5 cun needles at a depth of 0.5 to 1 inches. Begin from the left, then the right on the next vertebra, 7 on each side. The next treatment may start from right, then the left on the next vertebra. GB 20, BL 14, DU 3 and DU 4 should be chosen each time.

**Explanation**

The intention of these points is to stimulate the appropriate spinal nerves. It’s said that stimulating the du is to work on the central nervous system. The du channel is the sea of yang and the pathway for flow of ying qi and ying qi. Stimulating the du channel can treat the sensation and motor dysfunctions of extremities, while also adjusting internal organ function.

Alternately, puncturing points on the 12 regular channels, works on the peripheral nervous system.

**Duration and Frequency**

Sustain the needles in the points for 20-30 minutes each time, 1-3 times a week. Base this on the symptoms and signs. Ten treatments is one course of treatment, take 1-3 days off before starting the next course of treatment.

**Auxiliary Methods**

There are auxiliary techniques for the treatment of the ying qi and wei qi. If there is more wei qi deficiency, then moxibustion can be added. Usually moxa is applied, up and down the spine 9 times. If there is a ying qi disorder then slide-cupping technique along the spine is applied, up and down for 9 times.

**Endnotes:**

(3) Wu, N.L, & Wu, A.Q., (1997), ch. 18 of Ling Shu Jing. The issue of distribution and operation of Ying Qi and Wei Li, p. 600, Yellow Emperor's Canon Internal Medicine, China Science & Technology Press


(5) Wu, N.L, & Wu, A.Q., (1997), ch. 16 of Ling Shu Jing. Ying Qi, p. 595, Yellow Emperor's Canon Internal Medicine, China Science & Technology Press

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(10) Wu, N.L, & Wu, A.Q., (1997), ch. 34 of Plain Question, On Maladjustments, p. 172, Yellow Emperor's Canon Internal Medicine, China Science & Technology Press


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