

The Treatment of Schizophrenia with Chinese Medicine

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Translator's Introduction

The vast majority of literature on treating schizophrenia with Chinese medicine explains treatments for withdrawal and mania. While there is some relationship between mania-withdrawal and schizophrenia, there is an immense gap between the patients who can be successfully treated with mania-withdrawal treatments and the patients who conform to international diagnostic standards for schizophrenia.

I have been informally reviewing the literature on this subject since 1995, when I was working on the translation of "Soothing the Troubled Mind: The Treatment and Prevention of Schizophrenia with Acupuncture and Moxibustion." On the one hand, I sincerely encourage practitioners to read and understand books like "Soothing" that provide excellent treatments for mania-withdrawal. On the other hand, I want to call attention to general shortcomings in the literature that claims to treat schizophrenia while only explaining treatments for mania-withdrawal.

First, such literature frequently presents or discusses case histories wherein the patients do not meet accepted international standards for schizophrenia; quite often the duration of disease is much too short for schizophrenia to be a reasonable diagnosis.

Second, the success rates presented appear unrealistic for true schizophrenics but may be true for mania-withdrawal patients. The term schizophrenia means "split mind" and it was coined to describe mental patients who continually decline and rarely recover. Although the definition of schizophrenia is ceaselessly evolving, it is a terribly recalcitrant disease and outstanding success rates are not expected. Studies in the West show that after 10 years of treatment 50% of schizophrenics have fully recovered or have improved considerably and 25% have improved modestly, while 15% have not improved and 10% have died. There are numerous reports from China of success rates much higher than these with much shorter treatment spans, but they invite us to question whether schizophrenia was diagnosed by its international standard.

Finally, the treatments do not usually address the specific varieties of schizophrenia, and thus the practitioner must reinvent the wheel when trying to apply Chinese medicine to individual schizophrenics.

Why is it important to understand the best way to treat schizophrenia with Chinese medicine? Because it may help people who are suffering tremendously and have exhausted all other treatment options. In addition, Chinese medicine may enable reductions of anti-psychotic drug dosages, which could reduce suffering from side effects, reduce the costs of treating schizophrenia and advance the role of Chinese medicine in our society.

In the article that follows, Dr. Ding Qinjiang opines that schizophrenia goes beyond mania-withdrawal and provides pattern identifications for six different kinds of schizophrenia. In doing so, he provides a much clearer vision of how to understand and treat schizophrenics with the methods and tools of Chinese medicine.

Traditional Chinese medicine attributes mental diseases to four categories: withdrawal, mania, epilepsy, and feeble-mindedness. Schizophrenia cases are mostly withdrawal, but they also involve mania and feeble-mindedness. Withdrawal encompasses certain positive symptoms of schizophrenia, such as:

- hallucinations
- delusions
- mental disturbance
- hostility

It also encompasses certain negative symptoms of schizophrenia, such as:

- lack of thought
- affective flattening
- social withdrawal
- lack of motivation

It furthermore encompasses emotional symptoms, such as:

- depression
- anxiety
- emotional lability

Mania covers the excitatory state of schizophrenia, while feeble-mindedness applies to the cognitive impediments of schizophrenia, such as poor concentration, poor memory, impaired intelligence, and reduced social functioning capacity.

According to the clinical manifestations of schizophrenia as well as the length of disease, tongue quality, tongue fur, and pulse readings, Chinese medicine divides schizophrenia into the following 6 patterns: (1) qi stagnation with blood stasis; (2) phlegm-fire harassing internally; (3) effulgent yin-vacuity fire; (4) phlegm-damp obstructing internally; (5) yang vacuity damage; and (6) others.

1. Qi Stagnation with Blood Stasis

1.1 Diagnostic Criteria

1.1.1 Psychiatric Symptoms

- primary delusions
- verbal auditory hallucinations
- loose associations
- ambivalence
- bizarre behavior

1.1.2 Chinese Medicine Signs

- purple tongue, possibly with dark spots
- scant tongue fur
- swollen, dilated subglossal blood veins with blood stasis
- rough pulse or stringlike pulse

1.1.3 Standard for Duration of Disease

The psychiatric symptoms must have occurred continuously for at least one month.

1.2 Treatment Principle

Quicken blood and transform stasis.

1.3 Treatments

1.3.1 Chinese Herbal Treatment

The following formula is a newly created version of Chaihu Tang (Bupleurum Decoction).

chai hu (bupleurum, *Bupleuri Radix*) 15 g

long gu dragon bone, *Mastodi Ossis Fossilia*) 30 g

mu li (oyster shell, *Ostreae Concha*) 30 g

ban xia (pinellia, *Pinelliae Rhizoma*) 9 g

huang qin (scutellaria, *Scutellariae Radix*) 9 g

tao ren (peach kernel, *Persicae Semen*) 15 g

hong hua (carthamus, *Carthami Flos*) 9 g

qing pi (unripe tangerine peel, *Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium Viride*) 15 g

chen pi (tangerine peel, *Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium*) 15 g

mu dan pi (moutan, *Moutan Cortex*) 15 g

chi shao yao (red peony, *Paeoniae Radix Rubra*) 15 g

xiang fu zi (cyperus, *Cyperi Rhizoma*) 15 g

jiu da huang (wine-processed rhubarb, *Rhei Radix et Rhizoma cum Vino Preparati*) 15 g

gan cao (licorice, *Glycyrrhizae Radix*) 15 g

Take one batch per day.

1.3.2 Patent Medicine

Xuefu Zhuiyu Kofuye (House of Blood Stasis-Expelling Oral Fluid).

dang gui (Chinese angelica, *Angelicae Sinensis Radix*)

sheng di huang (dried/fresh rehmannia, *Rehmanniae Radix Exsiccata seu Recens*)

tao ren (peach kernel, *Persicae Semen*)

hong hua (carthamus, *Carthami Flos*)

zhi qiao (bitter orange, *Aurantii Fructus*)

chi shao yao (red peony, *Paeoniae Radix Rubra*)

chai hu (bupleurum, *Bupleuri Radix*)

jie geng (platycodon, *Platycodonis Radix*)

chuan xiong (chuanxiong, *Chuanxiong Rhizoma*)

niu xi (achyranthes, *Achyranthis Bidentatae Radix*)

gan cao (licorice, *Glycyrrhizae Radix*)

1.3.3 Single Herb Prescriptions and Empirical Formulas

di long (earthworm, *Pheretima*)

1.3.4 Other Treatment Methods

electroacupuncture; cupping; massage; tuina; medicinal baths; laser

1.4 CCMD Correspondence

This pattern of patient roughly corresponds to the paranoid type of schizophrenia, or CCMD-III, 20.1.

2 Phlegm-Fire Harassing Internally

2.1 Diagnostic Criteria

2.1.1 Psychiatric Symptoms

- disorganized thinking
- vivid hallucinations
- emotional lability
- childish or foolish behavior
- excitable and compulsive behavior

2.1.2 Chinese Medicine Signs

- red or crimson tongue body
- thick yellow tongue fur or slimy yellow tongue fur
- slippery rapid forceful pulse

2.1.3 Standard for Duration of Disease

The psychiatric symptoms must have occurred continuously for at least one month.

2.2 Treatment Principle

Sweep phlegm and open the orifices.

2.3 Treatments

2.3.1 Chinese Herbal Treatment

Jieyu Huatan Tang (Depression-Resolving Phlegm-Transforming Decoction)

ju hong (red tangerine peel, *Citri Reticulatae Exocarpium Rubrum*) 15 g

gua lou (trichosanthes, *Trichosanthis Fructus*) 30 g

ban xia (pinellia, *Pinelliae Rhizoma*) 15 g

zhu ru (bamboo shavings, *Bumbyae Caulis in Taenia*) 9 g

dan xing (bile arisaema, *Arisaema cum Bile*) 18 g

chai hu (bupleurum, *Bupleuri Radix*) 15 g

yu jin (curcuma, Curcumae Radix) 15 g
xiang fu zi (cyperus, Cyperi Rhizoma) 9 g
fu ling (poria, Poria) 15 g
yuan zhi (polygala, Polygalae Radix) 9 g
shi chang pu (acorus, Acori Tatarinowii Rhizoma) 9 g

Take one batch per day.

2.3.2 Patent Medicine

Mengshi Guntan Wan (Chlorite Phlegm-Rolling Pills)
meng shi (chlorite/mica, Chloriti seu Micae Lapis) (calcined)
chen xiang (aquilaria, Aquilariae Lignum Resinatum)
huang qin (scutellaria, Scutellariae Radix)
da huang (rhubarb, Rhei Radix et Rhizoma)

2.3.3 Single Herb Prescriptions and Empirical Formulas:

Use *gua di* (melon stalk), but do not give an excessive dosage, and take care not to cause excessive vomiting.

2.3.4 Other Treatment Methods:

Electro-acupuncture; point picking; sand scraping therapy (guasha therapy), and ‘intel’ or through-to-through needling.

2.4 Correspondence

This pattern of patient roughly corresponds to the hebephrenic type of schizophrenia, or CCMD-III, 20.2.

3 Effulgent Yin-Vacuity Fire

3.1 Diagnostic Criteria

3.1.1 Psychiatric Symptoms

- hallucinations and delusions
- suspiciousness and hostility
- flat affect with occasional excitation
- loneliness and social withdrawal
- prolonged stuporous state possibly with sudden and brief excitatory states

3.1.2 Chinese Medicine Signs

- red or crimson tongue body
- lack of tongue fur or peeling fur
- fine rapid pulse

3.1.3 Standard for Duration of Disease

The psychiatric symptoms must have occurred continuously for at least one month.

3.2 Treatment Principle

Enrich yin and downbear fire.

3.3 Treatments

3.3.1 Chinese Herbal Treatment

Ziyin Qingre Tang (Yin-Enriching Heat-Clearing Decoction)
sheng di huang (dried/fresh rehmannia, Rehmanniae Radix Exsiccata seu Recens) 18 g
mai men dong (ophiopogon, Ophiopogonis Radix) 18 g
mu dan pi (moutan, Moutan Cortex) 18 g
di gu pi (lycium root bark, Lycii Cortex) 24 g
shi hu (dendrobium, Dendrobii Herba) 15 g
sha shen (adenophora/glehnia, Adenophorae seu Glehniae Radix) 18 g
suan zao ren (spiny jujube, Ziziphi Spinosi Semen) 9 g
tian hua fen (trichosanthes root, Trichosanthis Radix) 15 g
yuan zhi (polygala, Polygalae Radix) 15 g

shi chang pu (acorus, *Acori Tatarinowii Rhizoma*) 15 g

gou qi zi (lycium, *Lycii Fructus*) 9 g

wu wei zi (schisandra, *Schisandrae Fructus*) 9 g

Take one batch per day.

3.3.2 Patent Medicine

Dan Zhi Xiaoyao San (Moutan and Gardenia Free and Easy Powder)

chai hu (bupleurum, *Bupleuri Radix*)

chi shao yao (red peony, *Paeoniae Radix Rubra*)

bai shao yao (white peony, *Paeoniae Radix Alba*)

fu ling (poria, *Poria*)

shan zhi zi (gardenia, *Gardeniae Fructus*)

mu dan pi (moutan, *Moutan Cortex*)

di gu pi (lycium root bark, *Lycii Cortex*)

dang gui (Chinese angelica, *Angelicae Sinensis Radix*)

bie jia (turtle shell, *Trionycis Carapax*)

sheng di huang (dried/fresh rehmannia, *Rehmanniae Radix Exsiccata seu Recens*)

3.3.3 Single Herb Prescriptions and Empirical Formulas

As a single herb, take *yin chai hu* (*stellaria*).

3.3.4 Other Treatment Methods

electroacupuncture; body acupuncture; foot acupuncture; three-edged needle; magnet therapy

3.4 Correspondence

This pattern of patient roughly corresponds to the catatonic type of schizophrenia, or CCMD-III, 20.3.

4 Phlegm-Damp Obstructing Internally

4.1 Diagnostic Criteria

4.1.1 Psychiatric Symptoms

- lack of thought
- emotional indifference
- laziness and passivity
- lack of motivation
- impaired social capacities

4.1.2 Chinese Medicine Signs

- fat tongue body, possibly with tooth marks
- white slimy tongue fur
- slippery pulse or sunken moderate pulse

4.1.3 Standard for Duration of Disease

The psychiatric symptoms must have occurred continuously for at least two years.

4.2 Treatment Principle

Dry damp and transform phlegm.

4.3 Treatments

4.3.1 Chinese Herbal Treatment

Wendan Tang (Gallbladder-Warming Decoction)

chen pi (tangerine peel, *Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium*) 6 g

fu ling (poria, *Poria*) 9g

jiang ban xia (ginger pinellia, *Pinelliae Tuber cum Zingibere Praeparatum*) 6 g

zhi shi (unripe bitter orange, *Aurantii Fructus Immaturus*) 6 g

zhu ru (bamboo shavings, *Bumbusae Caulis in Taenia*) 3 g

zhi gan cao (mix-fried licorice, *Glycyrrhizae Radix cum Liquido Fricta*) 1.5 g

Take one batch per day.

4.3.2 Patent Medicine

Alum and Curcuma Pill

bai fan (alum, Alumen)

yu jin (curcuma, Curcuma Radix)

4.3.3 Single Herb Prescriptions and Empirical Formulas

As a single herb, use *gua di* (melon stalk), but do not use it in excessive dosage and take care not to cause virulent vomiting. Alternatively, use *huang yuan hua* (黄芩花genkwa, Flos Daphnes Genkwa) [1] (but *gan cao* (licorice) is contraindicated if the patient takes this).

4.3.4 Other Treatment Methods

electro-acupuncture; moxibustion

4.4 Correspondence

This pattern of patient roughly corresponds to the simple type of schizophrenia, or CCMD-III, 20.4.

5 Yang Vacuity Damage

5.1 Diagnostic Criteria

5.1.1 Psychiatric Symptoms

- lack of thought or significant thought content
- flat affect
- lack of motivation
- withdrawn behavior
- taciturn

5.1.2 Chinese Medicine Signs

- pale tongue body
- thin white tongue fur
- sunken fine weak pulse

5.1.3 Standard for Duration of Disease

The psychiatric symptoms must have occurred continuously for at least two years.

5.2 Treatment Principle

Supplement vacuity and support the right.

5.3 Treatments

5.3.1 Chinese Herbal Treatment

Zhuangyang Xingfen Tang (Yang-Invigorating Excitation Decoction)

ba ji tian (morinda, Morindae Officinalis Radix) 9 g

yin yang huo (epimedium, Epimedii Herba) 9 g

xian mao (curculigo, Curculiginis Rhizoma) 9 g

xiang fu zi (cyperus, Cyperi Rhizoma) 6 g

rou gui (cinnamon bark, Cinnamomi Cortex) 6 g

gan jiang (dried ginger, Zingiberis Rhizoma) 6 g

dang shen (codonopsis, Codonopsis Radix) 6 g

huang qi (astragalus, Astragali Radix) 9 g

shu di huang (cooked rehmannia, Rehmanniae Radix Praeparata) 15 g

gui ban (tortoise shell, Testudinis Carapax et Plastrum) 15 g

chen pi (tangerine peel, Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium) 9 g

sha ren (amomum, Amomi Fructus) 3 g

gan cao (licorice, Glycyrrhizae Radix) 3 g

Take one batch per day.

5.3.2 Patent Medicine

Shenqi Wan (Kidney-Qi Pill)

gan di huang (dried rehmannia, *Rehmanniae Radix*)

shan yao (dioscorea, *Dioscoreae Rhizoma*)

shan zhu yu (cornus, *Corni Fructus*)

fu ling (poria, *Poria*)

mu dan pi (moutan, *Moutan Cortex*)

rou gui (cinnamon bark, *Cinnamomi Cortex*)

xiang fu zi (cyperus, *Cyperi Rhizoma*)

5.3.3 Single Herb Prescriptions and Empirical Formulas

As a single herb, take the leaf of ginkgo. [*yin xing ye* or *bai guo ye*, *Folium Ginkgo*]

5.3.4 Other Treatment Methods

ear acupuncture; body acupuncture; moxibustion; laser; dietary therapy

5.4 Correspondence

This pattern of patient roughly corresponds to chronic schizophrenia, or CCMD-III, 20.5.

6 Others

The other forms of schizophrenia are those that do not conform to the types explained above.

7 Commentary

Using Chinese medicine to treat schizophrenia has both merits and shortcomings. The merits include the few side effects, broad applicability, ease of patient compliance, and low rate of relapse. Chinese medicine does not have the side effects of typical anti-psychotic drugs, such as:

- extrapyramidal symptoms
- sudden death
- delayed dyskinesia
- cognitive dysfunction
- negative impact on major organs, such as the heart, liver, and kidney

Chinese medical treatments also do not have the side effects of the atypical anti-psychotic medicine clozapine, such as:

- reduced granulocytes
- drooling
- obesity
- hypotension
- glycometabolic irregularities
- excessive sedation

They also do not have the side effects of Risperidone, such as: raised levels of galactin, which causes irregular menstruation in women; reduced sexual function in men; and reduced bone density. Moreover, Chinese medicine treatments are suitable for the elderly and infants. For patients who have certain physical ailments that are not compatible with anti-psychotic drugs, Chinese medicine can be the only alternative.

The shortcomings of Chinese medicine for treating this disease include slow responses from patients and the difficulty of administering the medicine during certain acute phases of disease.

Experience shows that integrated Chinese and Western medicine can enhance benefits, reduce shortcomings, and improve therapeutic effectiveness of the respective approaches. There is a large mass of clinical data that shows the clinical effectiveness of integrated Chinese-Western medicine is better than the effectiveness from purely using Chinese herbs or purely using Western medicine. This is particularly true when only one of these modalities has been used for an adequate length of time yet has produced dissatisfying results.

As with other diseases, Chinese medicine emphasizes a holistic perspective when it comes to diagnosing schizophrenia.

Within integrative medicine, different forms of treatment are used at different stages of the disease. For example, in acute stages Western medical treatments primarily govern disease management and the role of Chinese medicine is secondary. During the consolidation stage of treatment, Chinese and Western medicine are used in tandem. For the maintenance stage, Chinese medicine is the primary modality

and Western medicine plays a secondary role, while the patient also receives psychotherapy and other restorative treatments.

Single herb prescriptions and empirical formulas as well as non-medicinal therapies are low in cost, the materials are easily accessible, and they are convenient to administer. In certain cases they have made good clinical results. It is too bad that nobody has discerned a pattern of effectiveness, and thus we still cannot push for a broader use.

Finally, Chinese medicine has been able to ease certain side effects of anti-psychotic drugs that are often used in the treatment of schizophrenia, including:

- extrapyramidal symptoms
- reduced granulocytes
- irregular menstruation
- dry mouth
- constipation
- drooling
- insomnia

These are all symptoms that Western medicine has not been able to address effectively.

Furthermore, Chinese medicine has had unique success in treating symptoms like:

- vegetative nerve functional disturbances
- dizziness
- headache
- amenorrhea
- anxiety
- depression
- poor memory

Thus, as with other diseases, Chinese medicine is very suitable for schizophrenia and has great untapped potential.

There are two more issues that readers should be aware of regarding the use of Chinese medicine to treat schizophrenia. First, the effectiveness of Chinese herbal medicines can vary significantly depending on where the herbs are grown and how they are collected, processed, and stored. Second, pattern identification to determine treatment is the essential nature of Chinese medicine, and when treating schizophrenia it is very important to adhere to its principles. That is, physicians must agilely apply eight principles pattern identification to interpreting the tongue, tongue fur, and pulse and they must act according to the person and according to the time.

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