Clinical Experience in Acupuncture Treatment of Allergic Rhinitis

ZHANG Yan-qiu 张艳秋
Ear-Nose-Throat Department, Panshi Municipal Hospital of TCM, Panshi 132300, China

Objective: To observe the clinical effects of acupuncture for allergic rhinitis. Methods: The body acupuncture, auricular seed-embedding and microwave irradiation were adopted for treatment of allergic rhinitis due to various causative factors, such as cold and insufficiency of the lung-qi weakening the body resistance, insufficiency of the spleen-qi with lucid yang failing to rise, insufficiency of the kidney-yang failing to warm the body surface, and the heat accumulated in the lung channels giving invading the nose. Results: After treatment, the symptoms and signs disappeared in all illustrative cases, with no recurrence found after a one-year follow-up. Conclusion: Acupuncture may help to improve the blood rheology indexes with an increased volume of blood flow, and regulate the immunological function of the human body, thus giving therapeutic effects for allergic rhinitis.

Since 1999, based on clinical experiences of predecessors, the author has adopted acupuncture for treatment of allergic rhinitis, which yields very good therapeutic effects as reported below.

Body Acupuncture

1. For the pattern due to cold and insufficiency of the lung-qi weakening the body resistance:

The main symptoms include nasal itching, frequent sneezing, nasal obstruction, watery nasal discharge, mostly happening upon invasion of cold wind, aversion to wind and cold, shortness of breath and disinclination to talk, pale complexion, pale tongue with thin-white coating, and weak pulse. Swelling may be found in the inferior nasal concha with watery secretions from the bottom of the nasal cavity.

The treatment: It should be treated by warming the lungs to dispel the cold, and replenishing qi to consolidate the body’s resistance. The points are mainly selected from the Lung Channel and the Bladder Channel. The treatment is given once daily, with the reinforcing manipulation method applied and the needles retained for 10–20 minutes. 10 treatments constitute one therapeutic course.

Illustrative case: A female patient, 38 years old, had nasal itching, sneezing and watery nasal discharges daily in the morning for over 2 years. The examination showed pale nasal mucosa, swelling of both the inferior nasal concha, and with a little watery nasal discharge from the bottom of the nasal cavity. The patient caught colds very easily, had an aversion to cold, pale complexion, shortness of breath, pale tongue with thin-white coating, and a weak pulse. The skin sensitization test found that she was allergic to house dust. The diagnosis was allergic rhinitis due to cold and insufficiency of the lung-qi.
weakening the body’s resistance. In the treatment, the points were selected and punctured as mentioned above. After the first course of treatment, the patient had her symptoms alleviated. And after 3 courses of treatment with a 3-day interval in between, all the symptoms disappeared, and the patient was cured with no recurrence in a follow-up for one year.

2. For the pattern due to insufficiency of the spleen-qi with lucid yang failing to rise:
The main symptoms include nasal itching, sudden occurrence of sneezing, nasal obstruction, profuse watery nasal discharge, sallow complexion, emaciation, poor appetite, abdominal distention and loose stool, weakness of the four limbs, pale and flabby tongue with teeth marks at the border and thin-white coating, and weak pulse. Severe swelling can be found in the inferior nasal concha, which may attach to the bottom of the nasal cavity or the nasal septum.

The treatment: It should be treated by replenishing qi and reinforcing the spleen, and invigorating the vital functions and removing the nasal obstruction. The points from the Lung Channel and the Stomach Channel are mainly selected and punctured with the reinforcing method. The treatment is given once daily with the needles retained for 10–20 minutes, 10 sessions constituting one therapeutic course.

The point prescription: Fengchi (GB 20), Yingxiang (LI 20), Feishu (BL 13), Taiyuan (LU 9), Zusanli (ST 36) and Pishu (BL 20). The yuan (source) points are the places where the genuine qi pours into the zang organs. Taiyuan (LU 9), the yuan (source) point of the Lung Channel, is selected for removing nasal obstruction. Belonging to the Bladder Channel and located near the lung, Feishu (BL 13) is selected for regulating and reinforcing the lung-qi. Fengchi (GB 20) can give the effect of removing nasal obstruction by giving warmth. When Yingxiang (LI 20) is used in combination, the effect of dredging the nasal cavity can be enhanced. Pishu (BL 20) and Zusanli (ST 36) are added for tonifying the earth to produce the metal, so as to reinforce the lung-qi.

Illustrative case: A female patient, 39 years old complained of nasal itching, sneezing and watery nasal discharge for over 5 years. The examination at the moment showed pale nasal mucosa, swelling of both the inferior nasal concha, and with watery nasal discharge from the bottom of the nasal cavity. The patient had a thin body figure, poor appetite, loose stool, lassitude, pale tongue proper with teeth marks at the border and thin-white coating, and weak pulse. She was sensitive to the mycotic and dust allergens. The diagnosis was allergic rhinitis due to insufficiency of the spleen-qi with lucid yang failing to rise. The above-mentioned method of treatment was adopted. The patient received 4 courses of the treatment with a 3-day interval in between. After the 4-course treatment, all symptoms disappeared. During the one-year follow-up, no recurrences showed.

3. For the pattern due to insufficiency of the kidney-yang failing to give warmth:
The main symptoms include nasal itching, frequent sneezing, watery nasal discharge, with a lingering course of illness, pale complexion, coldness of the body and the limbs, soreness and weakness of the waist and knee joints, lassitude, profuse clear urine, pale tongue proper with white coating, and a deep-thready pulse. Examination may find swelling of the pale smooth inferior nasal concha, and watery secretions from the bottom of the nasal cavity.

The treatment: The treatment principle should be warmly tonifying the lungs and kidneys, and strengthening the kidneys to help inspiration. Points are mainly selected from the Lung Channel of Hand-Taiyin, the Bladder Channel of Foot-Taiyang and the Gallbladder Channel of Foot-Shaoyang. In the needling, the reinforcing method should be applied, and the needles are retained for 10–20 minutes. each time. The treatment is given once daily, with 10 times constituting a treating course.

The point prescription: Fengchi (GB 20), Yingxiang (LI 20), Feishu (BL 13), Taiyuan (LU 9), Shenshu (BL 23), and Mingmen (GV 4).
The analysis of the prescription: The yuan (source) points are the places which the genuine qi of this zang organ pours into. Taiyuan (LU 9), a yuan (source) point of the Lung Channel of Hand-Taiyin, is selected for removing nasal obstruction. Belonging to the Bladder Channel of Foot-Taiyang and located near the lung, Feishu (BL 13) is selected for regulating and reinforcing the lung-qi. Fengchi (GB 20) can give warmth to and remove obstruction from the nasal cavity. The local point Yinxia (LI 20) is used in combination for enhancing the effect of removing nasal obstruction. Shenshu (BL 23) and Mingmen (GV 4) are added for warming the primordial qi of the kidney to produce lung-qi.

Illustrative case: A male patient, 30 years old, complained of sneezing, profuse watery nasal discharges for about 30 minutes every morning after getting up, and seasonal attacks for 4 years. The patient had a pale complexion, profuse clear urine, oldness of the body and the limbs, swelling of the pale nasal mucosa, with a little watery nasal discharge for the bottom of the nasal cavity, and with eosinophils shown by the smear of nasal secretion. He was sensitive to the mycotic, feather, and pollen allergens. The patient had a pale tongue proper with white coating, and deep pulse. The diagnosis was allergic rhinitis of the pattern due to insufficiency of kidney-yang failing to give warmth. The above-mentioned method of treatment was adopted. After 2 courses of treatment, the patient’s symptoms were alleviated. After 6 courses of treatment with a 3-day interval in between, all the symptoms disappeared, and the one year follow-up showed no recurrence.

4. For the pattern due to heat accumulated in the lung channel giving advanced upward to the nose:

The main symptoms include nasal itching, frequent sneezing, watery nasal discharge, nasal obstruction, aversion to hot weather, dry mouth, itching of the throat, red tongue proper with yellow coating, and rapid pulse. Examination can find reddening of the nasal mucosa, and swelling of the nasal concha.

The treatment: It should be treated by promoting the dispersal function of the lungs, and removing the nasal obstruction. The points from the Lung Channel are mainly selected, and punctured with the reducing method or by reinforcing and reducing in combination. The treatment is given once daily with needles retained for 10–20 minutes, 10 sessions constituting one therapeutic course.

The point prescription: Fengchi (GB 20), Yinxia (LI 20), Feishu (BL 13), Taiyuan (LU 9), Quchi (LI 11), and Hegu (LI 4). The yuan (source) points are the places where the genuine qi pours into the zang organ. Taiyuan (LU 9), a yuan (source) point of the Lung Channel, is used for removing the nasal obstruction. Belonging to the Bladder Channel and located near the lungs, Feishu (BL 13) is used for regulating and reinforcing the lung-qi. Fengchi (GB 20) can give the effect of removing the nasal obstruction by giving warmth. Yinxia (LI 20) is used in combination for enhancing the effect of removing the nasal obstruction. Quchi (LI 11) and Hegu (LI 4) are added for clearing away the pathogenic heat from the lung channel.

Illustrative case: A male patient, 39 years old, had been diagnosed to have allergic rhinitis three years before. He was improved by oral administration of some anti-allergy drugs. However, there would be recurrence when he stopped the medication. Recently, the medication didn’t help at all. The examination at the moment found that he had dark-red nasal mucosa, dull-purple inferior nasal concha, with a little watery nasal discharge from the bottom of the nasal cavity, red tongue proper with yellow coating, and rapid pulse. The diagnosis was allergic rhinitis of the pattern due to heat accumulated in the lung channel advancing upward to the nose. The above-mentioned method of treatment was adopted. After one course of treatment, the symptoms were alleviated. All the symptoms disappeared after 3 courses of treatment with a 3-day interval in between, and the follow-up for one year showed no recurrence.
Supplementary Therapies

1. Auricular seed-embedding:
The main auricular points used Internal Nose and External Nose. The adjunct auricular points include Adrenal, Endocrine, Ear-Shenmen, Lung, Spleen, and Kidney. In each treatment, the main points must be selected, added with 1–2 adjunct points according to the actual condition. A vacaria seed is put on a plaster 0.7 cm × 0.7 cm in size, which is then stuck onto the sterilized ear point. In each treatment, one side of the ear is treated with ear seed-embedding. Pressing is conducted on the points already stuck with the seeds till the auricle becomes red. The patient is asked to press the ear points over 3 times daily, 30 pressings with moderate force each time. The auricular seed-embedding is applied on both ears alternately every 3–4 days, 4 sessions forming a treating course with a 3-day interval between two courses is suggested.

2. Microwave irradiation on acupoints:
The points selected are Yingxiang (LI 20), Hegu (LI 4), Zusanli (ST 36), Fengchi (GB 20), and Pishu (BL 20). The method of treatment: Each time 2–3 points are selected to be irradiated by microwave apparatus with an output power of 20–30w. The irradiating direction should be same as that of the traditional needling. For instance, the irradiation should be given in an angle of 45°–55° for Yingxiang (LI 20); directed toward the opposite eye for Fengchi (GB 20); and the vertical direction for Hegu (LI 4), Zusanli (ST 36) and Pishu (BL 20). Generally, 15–20 minutes of irradiation is applied for each point. The treatment is given once daily, 10–12 sessions constituting a treatment course.

(Translated by WANG Xin-zhong 王新中)