Thirty Cases of Chronic Cholecystitis Treated by Acupuncture and Oral Administration of Da Chai Hu Tang

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Chronic cholecystitis is a common disorder of the digestive system, with the symptoms of distension or vague pain in the right hypochondriac region, dry mouth with bitter taste, poor appetite, and anorexia for greasy food. Traditional Chinese medicine may show better effects than that of western medicine. So, acupuncture and herbal medication were adopted for the treatment, with the effects compared to the therapy with herbal medicine used alone.

CLINICAL DATA
The 50 cases in this series were randomly divided into a treatment group and a control group. In the treatment group of 30 cases, 12 were male and 18 female, aged from 22-65 (mean 43.27±1.40) years, with the duration of illness from 3 months to 11 years (mean 51.87±5.79 months). Of the 20 cases in the control group, 9 were male and 11 female, aged from 21-62 (mean 41.95±1.77) years, with the duration of illness from 1 month to 12 years (mean 50.65±3.71 months). The data were comparable with no significant difference in age and duration of illness between the two groups (P>0.05).

METHODS

For the treatment group
1. Oral administration of Da Chai Hu Tang (大柴胡汤). The ingredients of the decoction: Chai Hu (柴胡 Radix Bupleuri) 12g, Yin Chen (茵陈 Herba Artemisiae Capillaris) 15g, Huang Qin (黄芩 Radix Scutellariae) 12g, Sheng Bai Shao (生白芍 Radix Paeoniae Alba) 15g, Zhi Qiao (枳壳 Fructus Aurantii) 12g, Jin Qian Cao (金钱草 Herba Lysimachiae) 30g, Yan Hu Suo (延胡索 Rhizoma Corydalis) 10g, Chuan Lian Zi (川楝子 Fructus Toosendan) 10g, Tao Ren (桃仁 Semen Persicae) 12g, Add Xuan Fu Hua (旋覆花 Flos Inulae) 15g and Zhi Ban Xia (制半夏 Rhizoma Pinelliae) 10g for nausea and vomiting; Da Huang (大黄 Radix et Rhizoma Rhei) 10g decocted later for constipation; and Tai Zi Shen (太子参 Radix Pseudostellariae) 20g and Bai Zhu (白术 Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae) 10g for both qi and blood deficiency due to long-term illness. The above herbs were decocted in water to be taken one dose a day, with 4 weeks as one therapeutic course.

2. Acupuncture treatment. The main points selected were Qimen (LR 14), Zhigou (TE 6), Yanglingquan (GB 34), Sanyinjiao (SP 6), Sanyinjiao (ST 36), Dannangxue (the Gallbladder point) and Taichong (LR 3). Add Zhongwan (CV 12) for nausea and vomiting; Neiguan (PC 6) and Zhongwan (CV 12) for bitter taste with damp-heat. The 30° filliform needles were used for acupuncture treatment, which was given once daily for one month, with 10 sessions as one therapeutic course and a 2-day interval between courses.

For the control group
Da Chai Hu Tang (大柴胡汤) was used alone for oral administration.

The therapeutic effects were evaluated after one-month treatment for patients of the two groups.

Criteria for therapeutic effects
Clinically cured: The clinical symptoms and signs disappeared, no abnormalities were found by the B-ultrasonic and contrast examinations of the gallbladder, and with no recurrence in a period over one year. Markedly relieved: The main symptoms and
signs disappeared, with marked improvement shown by the B-ultrasonic and contrast examinations; but recurrence was found in some cases within 1 year.

Improved: Most of the symptoms and signs disappeared, with certain improvement shown by the B-ultrasonic and contrast examinations. Failed: Although the symptoms and signs were somewhat relieved during the treatment, it would recur if the treatment was suspended.

RESULTS

Of the 30 cases in the treatment group, 18 cases were clinically cured, 6 cases markedly relieved, 4 cases improved, and 2 cases failed, with a cure and marked relief rate of 80% and a total effective rate of 93.3%. In the control group of 20 cases, 8 cases were clinically cured, 2 cases markedly relieved, 5 cases improved, and 5 cases failed, with a cure and marked relief rate of 50% and a total effective rate of 75%. The cure and marked relief rate in the treatment group was much higher than that of the control group \( (P<0.05) \).

DISCUSSION

TCM holds that chronic cholecystitis is caused by accumulation of bile due to dysfunction of the liver. The normal function of the gallbladder in storing and secreting bile is closely related with the condition of the liver’s free flow of qi. A long-term stagnancy of qi in the liver may cause accumulation of bile, with damp-heat blocking the collaterals, forming blood stasis and leading to pain in the right hypochondriac region. In modern medicine, the pathogenesis of the disorder is thought to be closely related with the fat dysbolism and failure of the gallbladder in evacuation; and it may be caused by chronic bacterial infection or by chemical stimulation of the concentrated bile or the refluent pancreatic fluid entering into the gallbladder.

The TCM principle of treatment should be soothing the liver and gallbladder, regulating qi and removing stagnancy, and stopping pain by activating the blood circulation. In the prescription of Da Chai Hu Tang (大柴胡汤), Chai Hu (柴胡 Radix Bupleuri), Yin Chen (茵陈 Herba Artemisiae Capillaris) and J in Qian Cao (金钱草 Herba Lysimachiae) were used to soothe the liver and remove stagnancy, and clear damp-heat from the gallbladder; Yan Hu Suo (延胡索 Rhizoma Corydalis), Chuan Lian Zi (川楝子 Fructus Toosendan) and Zhi Qiao (枳壳 Fructus Aurantii) were used to regulate qi, and remove stagnancy for checking the pain; Tao Ren (桃仁 Semen Persicae) had the action of activating blood circulation and removing blood stasis; Bai Shao (白芍 Radix Paeoniae Alba) may tonify the blood, soften the liver and stop pain; and Huang Qin (黄芩 Radix Scutellariae) may show the effect of removing heat from the liver and gallbladder.

In the acupuncture treatment, Qimen (LR 14), Yanglingquan (GB 34) and Taichong (LR 3) were used to regulate qi of the liver and gallbladder so as to improve circulation of qi and blood for checking the pain; Zusanli (ST 36) may regulate the function of the stomach in descending qi for relieving the distension; Sanyinjiao (SP 6) may promote qi and blood circulation and improve the functions of the spleen and stomach to reinforce the source of qi and blood; and Dannangxue (the Gallbladder point), an extra point, may help to clear heat and soothe the gallbladder, dredge the collaterals, and it may show the effect of removing the gall stones. All the above points used with the herbs administered may bring satisfactory therapeutic results for chronic cholecystitis.

(Translated by Zhu Hanting 朱函亭)