WANG Zhi-zhong’s Academic Feature on Acupuncture and Moxibustion

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Zhenjiu Zishengjing (针灸资生经 Classic of Experiences of Acupuncture and Moxibustion on Treatment) written by WANG Zhi-zhong (王执中) in the Southern Song Dynasty makes a great contribution to the science of traditional Chinese medicine, especially to inheriting moxibustion, and exerts a considerable influence on the descendants. This book contains four parts. It collects acupuncture literatures in previous dynasties, has textual study on the points of the human body with a rigorous scientific approach; advocates accessory treatment of formulary drugs; stresses the introduction to the theory and techniques of moxibustion; and records acupuncture treatment for complicated cases with a lot of therapeutic experiences. Quote copiously to support one’s thesis, be well documented quote copiously from many sources.

WANG Zhi-zhong styled himself Shu Quan, a native of Ruian in Zhejiang Province, wrote the book Zhenjiu Zishengjing (针灸资生经 Classic of Experiences of Acupuncture and Moxibustion on Treatment) in 1220. In the book, he made textual research on the disputed points of the human body and initiated the viewpoint of combined use of acupuncture, moxibustion and herbal medicines. Therefore this book is said to be a great one of selecting points, moxibustion and herbal medicines in accordance with the treatment of diseases. As stated by XU Zheng-qing (徐正卿) in Song Dynasty that “this book is the one with a complete strategy, with which, patients can survive.”

This book consists of seven volumes. The first one gives an introduction to the points. The second one expounds the acupuncture techniques. The 3rd–7th ones respectively describe the points-selecting and treatment of 195 diseases of various specialties, with an attachment of selecting points for different syndromes. At the same time there are quotations from ancient books and records, prescription books and many practical formulas. An analysis on WANG’s academic ideas of acupuncture and moxibustion in the book is as follows.

Making Textual Study on the Acupoints with a Rigorous Scientific Approach

Volume One gives an introduction to acupoints. This book describes the acupoints of head, chest, spine and abdomen according to body parts and the acupoints of four limbs according to distribution of meridians, referring to Zhenjiu Jiayijing (针灸甲已经 Systematic Classic of Acupuncture and Moxibustion) compiled by HUANG Fu-mi (皇甫谧) in Western Jin Dynasty and Tongren Yuxue Zhenjiu Tujing (铜人腧穴针灸图经 Illustrated Manual on Acupoints for Acupuncture and Moxibustion on the Bronze Figure) written by WANG Wei-yi (王惟一) in Song Dynasty. WANG Zhi-zhong, the author, confirmed acupoints based on the ancient books Mingtang Kongxue Zhenjiuzhiyao (明堂孔穴针灸治要 Mingtang Essentials of Acupoints on Acupuncture and Moxibustion), Huangdi Neijing (黄帝内经 Yellow Emperor’s Internal Classic), and Nanjing (难经 Classic of Medical Problems), etc. He also added some effective extra acupoints.
When explaining Dantian point he mentioned: “Shimen (CV 5), also termed Liji and Lujing, is located 2 cun below the umbilicus. Mingtang Kongxue Zhenjiuzhiyao (明堂孔穴针灸治要 Mingtang Essentials of Acupoints on Acupuncture and Moxibustion) and Zhenjiu Jiayijing (针灸甲已经 Systematic Classic of Acupuncture and Moxibustion) state: Jinglu, Dantian, or Mingmen is inserted 0.8 cun, with fugacious retaining of the needle, meaning reducing applied on getting the qi. Again: moxibustion with 7 moxa cones is suggested. Again: moxibustion can be applied for the infertility patients, needling is 0.5 cun in depth. The point, 2 cun below the umbilicus, is named Shimen (CV 5). As stated in annotated Suwen (素问 Plain Questions) again that Dantian is located 2 cun bellow the umbilicus. Physicians pointed Shimen (CV 5) as Dantian in mistake and applied moxibustion on it. Dantian is located 3 cun below the umbilicus, which is clearly explained in Nanjing (难经 Classic of Medical Problems). The location of Dantian in Nanjing should be taken as a correct one. Guanyuan (CV 4) is Dantian, which is located 3 cun below the umbilicus. There is location description of this point in ancient books. Only Nanjing says that Dantian is 3 cun below the umbilicus. Based on this, acupuncturists applied moxibustion, thousands or hundreds of moxa cones, to patients. Who knows how many of them could survive from it? But, frequent application of moxibustion should be done on it. That is why, ‘if you want to be healthy, often needle Sanli (ST 36) and Dantian.’ Many strict confirming examples based on his clinical experience can be found in this book.

**Combined Use of Acupuncture with Herbs**

Supported by his clinical practice, WANG Zhi-zhong thought that acupuncture, moxibustion and herbs should be used in combination. Through ages many famous physicians, such as BIAN Que (扁鹊), HUA Tuo (华佗), ZHANG Ji (张机) and SUN Zhen-ren (孙真人), who were good at using acupuncture and herbs, always used acupuncture, moxibustion and herbs in combination.

As states in Zhenjiu Dacheng (针灸大成 Great Compendium of Acupuncture and Moxibustion) that “in case qi in the body is not in balance, acupuncture combined with herbs should be given to restore the balance. There is disease in the superficial part of body, in the blood vessels, or in the gastro-intestines. For those in gastro-intestines, no other methods but herbs can reach. For those in blood vessels, no others but acupuncture can reach. For those in superficial part of body, no other ways but moxibustion can reach. Doctors should use acupuncture, moxibustion and herbs with none of them missed.”

The fourth volume, Abdominal Fullness, of Zhenjiu Zishengjing (针灸资生经 Classic of Experiences of Acupuncture and Moxibustion on Treatment), highly appraised the herbal use: the fullness in epigastrium and abdomen was relieved. The effect of acupuncture and moxibustion, compared with it, is not so quick. WANG Zhi-zhong, an acupuncturist, said that acupuncture was not as good as herbs for some diseases in his book. This shows his broad-mindedness and noble thought.

**Proficient in Moxibustion Therapy**

WANG Zhi-zhong made contribution to inheriting from the past and carrying on for the future in moxibustion therapy. This book lists an abundance of moxibustion therapies and experienced cases. Moxibustion, same as acupuncture and herbs, is effective in treatment. He used moxibustion for complicated and severe cases and gynecological patients. In the chapter of epilepsy, WANG said: “Those who with mental disorders should be treated with moxibustion. The illness could be relieved.”

Again he said: “The patient with epilepsy falls to the ground and revives after a long period of time. This is because the disease attacking the heart. Moxibustion on Baihui (GV 20) is suggested. If it is due to blockage of phlegm, moxibustion on Zhongwan (CV 12) could be applied. The symptoms can be relieved.
but the disease not cured. Fengchi (GB 20) is effective, said in a book on pulse. An epilepsy person can be cured with moxibustion on Fengchi (GB 20) till soreness is felt.”

Most acupuncture books of later generations quoted from his book. Zhenjiu Juying (针灸聚英 A Collection of Gems of Acupuncture and Moxibustion) written by GAO Wu (高武) in Ming Dynasty, Zhenjiu Dacheng (针灸大成 Great Compendium of Acupuncture and Moxibustion) written by YANG Ji-zhou (杨继洲) in Ming dynasty, and Zhongguo Zhenjiu Zhiliaoxue (中国针灸治疗学 Therapeutics of Chinese Acupuncture and Moxibustion) written by CHENG Zhan-an (承谵安) in Qing Dynasty quoted from his book on moxibustion. From this we know how far-reaching the influence of his moxibustion therapy is.

Broadening Clinical Application

This book records many experienced cases, more than any other acupuncture books of later generations, especially “insanity with emotional depression”, “depressive-maniac insanity”, “chronic convulsion due to epilepsy”, “epilepsy”, wind-stroke, reddish leukorrhea, and infantile diseases. The author explained the moxibustion therapy in detail in addition to acupuncture and herbal treatment.

In short, the feature of WANG Zhi-zhong’s theory is strict attitude and following the ancient but not sticking rigidly to it. A higher goal is put forward for young acupuncturists. Acupuncture and moxibustion are methods to treat diseases. A good physician should be a master of acupuncture, moxibustion and herbs in combination. At the end, the author stressed the importance of moxibustion and fire needle, just as the statement in Lingshu (灵枢 Miraculous Pivot) that “the disease should be treated by moxibustion while it is not suitable to acupuncture”, and “moxibustion should be used when the patient tends to respond poorly to herb and acupuncture “ in Yixue Rumen (医学入门 Elementary Medicine).

(Translated by ZHU0 Han-ting 朱函亭)