

Clinical Experience of Yan Changhong in the Treatment of Acne with Modified Loquat Qingfei Decoction Combined with Bloodletting and Cupping at Special Acupoints

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Abstract: Acne is one of the common and frequent diseases in clinic, Prof. Yan Changhong is a famous traditional Chinese medicine practitioner in Baotou City with rich clinical experience. He believes that the key organs of acne are in the lungs and the disease is in the skin, it is also related to the spleen and the stomach. The main mechanism is that the lungs and the stomach are full of heat, the heat and toxin are embedded in the skin, and the main pathological factors are toxicity, heat, dampness, phlegm, and blood stasis. Prof. Yan Changhong often applies the modified Loquat Qingfei Decoction combined with bloodletting and cupping at special acupoints.

Keywords: Yan Changhong, Loquat Qingfei Decoction, Bloodletting, Cupping, Acne, Clinical experience.

1. Introduction

Acne is a chronic inflammatory skin disease of pilosebaceous units that occurs in adolescence, favorably on the face, chest and back, with pimples, papules, pustules, nodules and cysts as the main manifestations [1]. The incidence of adolescents is as high as 80%-90% [2]. The disease has a long course, recurrent episodes and is prone to leave pigmentation, which seriously affects the patient's appearance and increases psychological pressure. The pathogenesis of acne is mainly due to a combination of increased sebum secretion caused by androgens, hyperkeratosis of the hair follicle duct, colonization of hair follicles by *Propionibacterium acnes* and inflammation [3]. Topical medications for acne in Western medicine include retinoic acid, benzoyl peroxide, and antibiotics, and oral medications include antibiotics, isotretinoin, and anti-androgen drugs, as well as physicochemical therapies such as phototherapy and chemical peels [4-5]. At present, there are many kinds of clinical external drugs for acne, however, most drugs have large side effects and limited efficacy, which need long-term medication, so it is urgent to seek safer and more effective drugs [6]. Evidence has pointed out that acupuncture combined with herbal compounding for acne can improve clinical efficacy [7], which is an effective method for clinical treatment of acne with good efficacy and low toxic side effects.

Yan Changhong is a famous traditional Chinese medicine practitioner in Baotou City, who has been engaged in clinical, scientific research and teaching work for more than 30 years, with rich experience in the clinical treatment of acne. Prof. Yan believes that the root cause of acne lies in the lungs, and should be treated from the perspective of the lungs, which is why he often applies the Loquat Qingfei Decoction combined with bloodletting and cupping at special acupoints are often used to treat acne, with good clinical effect. Prof. Yan's treatment experience is shared as follows in order to provide some reference for clinical treatment.

2. Etiology and Pathogenesis

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, acne belongs to the category of "pulmonary wind acne" and "pimples" [8]. "Su Wen - Shenqi Tongtian" records 'After sweating, encounter moisture, acne will appear' 'When laboring and sweating, encounter wind-cold evil, gathered in the skin coupling to form acne' is considered to be the earliest record of acne, that after the activity of sweating the sweat pore open, the wind evil, moisture, cold evil to take advantage of the invasion, the internal heat can not be leaked, and the skin is impregnated with the disease. It is believed that wind, dampness and cold invade the skin after activity and internal heat is not allowed to escape, thus causing the disease. "Pulmonary wind acne" first appeared in "Waike Zhengzong", described as 'lung wind, acne, rosacea three of the same species, acne belongs to the lungs, rosacea belongs to the spleen, all occur to blood heat stagnation caused by not dispersed', suggesting that acne occurs in the lungs, lung blood heat congestion, stagnation, not dispersed, internal heat penetrates the skin as acne. Internal heat penetrates the skin externally as the pathogenesis of acne. In Sui Dynasty Chao Yuan Fang's "General Treatise on the Cause and Symptoms of Diseases" records: "This is from drinking alcohol, heat rushing face, and meet the wind and cold, cold and hot strike and the disease was born." The Northern Song Dynasty's "Sheng Ji Zong Lu" states that "wind and heat fight each other, and acne is born when the stagnation is not dispersed". It also indicates that wind-heat stagnation is the cause of the disease. Wu Qian of the Qing Dynasty, "Yi Zong Jin Jian" says "Pulmonary wind acne with heat in the lung meridian, with red, swollen and painful bumps on the face and nose, breaking out into powdery juice or caking flakes". It clearly pointed out that lung meridian blood heat was its disease mechanism and recorded its symptoms. Ming Dynasty Shen Douyuan "Waike Qixuan" says: "lung gas is not clear, when we hit the wind and disease, or use cold water to wash the face, hot will concrete the blood." It suggests that the disease occurs in the lungs, the internal cause of lung qi is not clear, the external cause of wind and cold evil invasion, heat and evil congest, qi and

blood are disharmonious, then the disease occurs.

The occurrence of acne is also related to the spleen and stomach. “*Su Wen - Jing Mai Bie Lun*” records that “drink is in the stomach, overflowing essence, up to the spleen, spleen qi is scattered essence, up to the lungs at the end”, the spleen and stomach malfunction of transportation and transformation, the accumulation of water and grains essence and micro-accumulation of dampness and heat, dampness and heat steamed in the face through the meridian, ultimately leading to acne. Chen Shigong of the Ming Dynasty described in “*Waikē Zhengzong*” as: “Skin ulcer depends on the spleen”, and “*General Treatise on the Cause and Symptoms of Diseases*” as: “The spleen is the master of muscles, and when internal heat is high, the spleen qi is warm, and when the spleen qi is warm, heat is generated in the muscles, and dampness and heat fight with each other, therefore, head, face, and body are all covered with sores”, suggesting that acne is also related to the spleen.

To summarize, acne is caused by the lung, spleen and stomach, the internal cause of lung wind and acne is rich Yang of the body and blood heat, and the external cause is wind, heat, cold and dampness, or dietary irregularities. The expert consensus on Chinese medicine diagnosis and treatment of acne classifies the basic types of acne into lung wind-heat syndrome, damp-heat syndrome, blood stasis and phlegm coagulation syndrome, and Chong Ren disorders syndrome, and its treatment principles are that heat should be cleared, dampness should be dispelled, phlegm coagulation should be transformed, stagnation should be passed, and Chong Ren should be regulated [9]. Some scholars have summarized the views of ancient and modern medical doctors and found that the etiology of acne is no more than “heat” and “stagnation” [10].

Based on the concept of “lung associates with skin and hair”, Prof. Yan believes that acne is related to the lungs and the spleen, and that the origin of the disease lies in the lungs, while the location of the disease is in the skin, the skin, hair and the lungs are homologous, they interact with each other, and the pelage is not only limited to the skin, but also includes the hair, the sweat glands, the sebaceous glands, the skin, and the nails, etc. [11]. The main pathologic factors are toxicity, heat, dampness, phlegm and stasis. Lung administers the skin and hair, opens the orifices in the nose, when lung heat is upward, and feels the wind, cold and external evil, so that the lung heat can not be exuded, closed to the surface of the muscle, resulting in facial pimples, pustules and other symptoms. Or eating and drinking without temperance, the spleen is not healthy and transportation, the depression of the long time to generate dampness and heat, spleen and stomach is heat, dampness and heat fumigate in the face, can also be triggered by acne. Or Invested by wind, cold and humidity evils, or the long time to not heal the phlegm and stagnation of the internal stagnation of the heat, heat and evil will reach the surface of the muscle and the development of acne, acne for a long time to not be healed. If acne is left untreated for a long time, the local qi and blood are out of balance, and phlegm and stagnant phlegm are intertwined with each other, then it is manifested as nodules and cysts. Prof. Yan believes that the treatment of acne can refer to the ideas of “blood is solid and should be resolved”, “stagnation is stale and removed”, and

“when it is affected by evil Qi, it is swollen and hot, so it is necessary to acupuncture and shoot it”. A small amount of blood can be released by needling a specific part of the body to clear heat and detoxify the toxin, reduce swelling and relieve pain. Loquat Qingfei Decoction is also suitable for treating facial acne because of its ability to clear heat from the lungs and stomach.

3. Loquat Qingfei Decoction

Loquat Qingfei Decoction from the Qing Dynasty famous doctor Qi Kun's “*Waikē Dacheng - Volume III*”: “lung wind is from the lung meridian blood heat stagnation, and is born wine thorns, it is appropriate to Loquat Qingfei San”, and later Qi Hongyuan compiled the “*Yizong Jinjian - Waikexinfayaojue*”: “Pulmonary wind acne with lung meridian heat, the face and nose pimples red swelling and pain, broken out of the powder juice or exuvium, loquat upside down and works”. The dosage form was changed, it's Loquat Qingfei Decoction, and was included in the first formula for the treatment of pulmonary wind acne [12]. The formula consists of loquat leaf, Sang Bai Pi, Rhizoma Coptidis, Phellodendri Chinensis Cortex, Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng and liquorice. The loquat leaf enters the lung and stomach meridians, which can lower lung qi, clear lung heat, and lower stomach qi, and moisten the lung and stop cough after honey-roasted. Sangbaipi releases water qi in the lungs, so that the lung heat is out from the urine, which can help loquat leaf to clear the lung heat, loquat leaf and Sangbaipi are monarch drug in a prescription, which can clear lungs, expel heat and promote qi and lower the fire. Rhizoma Coptidis weakens the fire of the middle Jiao, and clears the heat in the intestines and stomach. Phellodendri Chinensis Cortex enters the lower Jiao, which clears the lower Jiao of damp-heat, and the Rhizoma Coptidis and Phellodendri Chinensis Cortex are the ministerial herbs, which are bitter, cold and direct in order to remove fire and detoxification, and the herbs also enter into the middle Jiao of yangming, yangming administers the face, and the lungs and intestines can be cleared and clear heat in the lung. Sangbai Pi, Rhizoma Coptidis, Phellodendri Chinensis Cortex can be used to clear and leak San Jiao's heat, and to strengthen the efficacy of clearing the lungs and draining heat. Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng replenishes the weakness and strengthens the spleen, and can pull the toxin out, which is the adjuvant. Licorice can clear away heat and detoxify the toxins, replenish the spleen and enrich the qi, and adjust the nature of the herbs. Phellodendri Chinensis Cortex and licorice can strengthen spleen and tonify lung, liberate the toxin out, support the righteousness and dispel the evil without harm the righteousness. Prof. Yan believes that Loquat Qingfei Decoction has both tonicity and excretion, while clearing the lungs and stomach, it can also take care of the positive qi, so as not to attack too much, at the same time, the formula can clear the fire of the San Jiao, attacking the lower part of the body without leaving the evil. The whole formula has the function of clearing the lungs and stomach of heat without hurting the spleen and stomach, and is suitable for patients with various acne constitutions.

Modern research has found that Loquat Qingfei Decoction has important effects such as anti-inflammatory, antibacterial and endocrine regulation [12]. Experimental studies have confirmed that the addition and subtraction of Loquat Qingfei

Decoction can inhibit the local inflammatory reaction of rat auricular acne by regulating the expression of inflammatory factors, and improve the symptoms of acne model rats [13]. By inhibiting the activation of NLRP3 inflammatory vesicles and the secretion of its downstream factor IL-1 β , Loquat Qingfei Decoction can effectively improve the inflammation and sebaceous gland hyperplasia of acne, and achieve the purpose of acne treatment [14]. The prescription of loquat leaf (total flavonoids), Sang Bai Pi (flavonoids), licorice, and Phellodendri Chinensis Cortex (phellodendrine) can regulate the expression of inflammatory factors to a certain extent, and exert anti-inflammatory and antibacterial effects [15-18]. The total alkaloids of Rhizoma Coptidis can reduce the inflammatory response in acne mice [19]. The acne cream prepared by utilizing the extract of Rhizoma Coptidis provides a new reference for the clinical treatment of acne [20]. Ginsenoside CK has a variety of cosmetic and skincare aspects such as photoprotection, anti-aging, moisturizing and anti-inflammation, and the saponin conversion products, Rh6, R4, and R13, can affect NO synthesis by decreasing tyrosinase activity, which helps to reduce melanin deposition. It is suitable for the treatment of acne in facial skin [21].

Clinical studies have confirmed that the treatment of adolescent acne patients with lung meridian wind-heat syndrome with modified Loquat Qingfei Decoction is conducive to the improvement of skin lesions and skin physiological functions, and improves the levels of sex hormones and immune functions, with better clinical efficacy [22]. It can be seen that it is the right choice to use Loquat Qingfei Decoction in the treatment of acne.

4. Bloodletting and Cupping at Acupoints

Acupuncture bloodletting therapy refers to the use of various types of needles to puncture certain specific parts of the human body, releasing a small amount of blood to achieve the effect of releasing heat and detoxification, activating blood circulation and removing blood stasis, clearing the channels and relieving pain, and dispelling wind and relieving itching [23]. Stabbing and bloodletting cupping therapy is a kind of therapy combining "stabbing and bloodletting therapy" and "cupping therapy". By microstimulation and bloodletting at specific acupoints, it can promote the smoothness of meridians and collaterals, activate blood circulation, remove blood stasis, regulate qi and blood, improve local circulation, and help to dissipate inflammation. In treating acne, Professor Yan often uses acupuncture points on the back, such as Dazhui, Lingtai, Feishu, Geshu, Pishu, Weishu, Dachangshu etc., in order to clear away heat and fire, activate blood circulation, remove blood stasis, and harmonize qi and blood.

Leijingtuyi says: "Dazhui, the main treatment of five labors and seven injuries, fatigue, wind and labor, cough for a long time." Dazhui is an acupuncture point of the human body's Du Meridian, master the Yang of the body. Pro. Yan took the Dazhui to release blood to drain the evil heat of the yang, to clear heat and fire, dredge the meridians and activate the channels, detoxification and elimination of swelling, and to penetrate the evil out of the body. Lingtai point, also known as lung bottom, is located in the sixth thoracic vertebrae spine under the depression. Clinically, it is mostly used to treat a variety of diseases such as cough, asthma, stiff neck, spinal

pain, body heat, furunculosis and so on [24], and it is an empirical point for clearing heat, detoxifying and eliminating sores. Back-shu acupoints can regulate the function of the corresponding internal organs, remove the internal organs of the fire, to achieve the efficacy Feishu point can relieve wind and clear heat, promote Yang's relief of the epidermis, and enhance the function of clearing the lungs and draining heat. Geishu is one of the eight points that is a point where blood assembles, which has the effect of regulating blood and activating blood circulation, eliminating blood stasis and generating new blood, nourishing Yin and nourishing blood. Pishu strengthens the spleen, transforms dampness, and reduces turbidity. Weishu point, when stabbed and released blood to clear stomach heat, can also commediate the stomach and spleen. Lung and large intestine are mutually exclusive. Dachangshu can clear the heat of the lung and intestinal tract, facilitate the intestinal tract, so that the heat and toxin can come out from the bowels, and prevent heat and toxin from inflaming the face. There is evidence that the efficacy of Back-shu acupoints to puncture and bleed in treating acne is better [24]. Clinical trials have confirmed that the efficacy of Loquat Qingfei Decoction combined with corresponding acupoint puncture and bloodletting cupping therapy in treating lung and stomach heat-containing acne is significantly better than that of Loquat Qingfei Decoction alone [25].

Professor Yan often instructs patients to wear loose clothes before treatment, and the operation is to fully expose the operation site and routinely disinfect it, then take three-pronged needles and rapidly puncture the selected acupoints or places where the blood stasis and collaterals are obvious for several times, and then quickly pull a fire cupping pot on the punctured site, and the general retention time of the cupping pot is 5-10 minutes. Treatment 1-2 times a week, 4 weeks for a course of treatment.

5. Clinical Experience

According to the clinical practice, Prof. Yan combined with the evidence to be modified Loquat Qingfei Decoction. For those with spleen deficiency and dampness, add Radix Astragali, Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae, Rhizoma Alismatis, Semen Coicis, Poria to strengthen the spleen and promote dampness. For those with dampness and heat congestion, redness and swelling of acne, and pus at the top, combine with the Wuweixiaoduyin (add Honeysuckle, Chrysanthemum, Dandelion, and Tokyo violet herb), and then add Spina Gleditsiae and Platycodon. For those with emotional disaffection, add Motherwort, Rhizoma Cyperi, Cortex Albizziae, Radix Chaihu and Flos rosae rugosae to promote circulation of qi and blood. For those with scarring of the skin, add red flower, peach kernel and Angelica to invigorate blood circulation and eliminate spots. For pimples forming hard nodules, add Xia Kucao, fried silkworms and pseudobulbus cremastrae seu pleiones to dissolve phlegm and disperse knots. For dryness of the mouth and nose and constipation, add Radix Rehmanniae Recens, Lily of the Valley, prepared rheum officinale with wine and semen cannabis to nourish yin, promote bowel movement and relieve heat. For acne bleeding, add Mudanpi, Paeonia lactiflora, the root of red-rooted salvia to cool and invigorate blood circulation. For more acne and more oil secretion on the skin,

add Hawthorn, rhizoma alismatis, Ligusticum wallichii, Cassia seed and coix seed to drive out wet and turbidity. If acne is red and swollen, with foul breath, red tongue and yellow fur, add Scutellaria baicalensis, Gardenia jasminoides, Zhi Mu, gupse, Cardamomum, Hou Pu to clear heat and dry dampness. If accompanied by dry mouth and thirst, add Ophiopogon, radix polygonati officinalis, Zhi Mu to nourish yin and promote the production of body fluid. Professor Yan emphasized that clinical treatment should not be confined to a single drug, but should be based on evidence-based treatment and rational use of drugs.

Pro. Yan's method of treating acne by modified Loquat Qingfei Decoction together with bloodletting and cupping at special acupoints has significant clinical effects. This method can rapidly remove heat and blood stasis from the body, improve local circulation and promote the regression of skin lesions. At the same time, by stimulating specific acupoints, it can regulate the balance of qi and blood in the body and enhance the immunity of the body. The method is simple, safe and reliable, and easy to be accepted by patients. Therefore, it is worth promoting and applying in the clinic. At the same time, attention should be paid to local cleaning and sterilization after treatment to avoid infection. Prof. Yan emphasized that in addition to the use of drugs and acupuncture, it should also be combined with lifestyle co-intervention, such as living a regular life, avoiding nervousness and mental stress, dietary moderation: less sweets, fat, thick, spicy and stimulating food, more vegetables and fruits, avoiding the intake of tobacco and alcohol, and at the same time, appropriate exercise, pay attention to the skin care and cleanliness.

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