

# Clinical Application of the Theory of Preventive Treatment of Disease in Digestive Diseases

Bingyan Wu<sup>1</sup>, Yongpan Xu<sup>2,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xianyang 712046, Shaanxi, China

<sup>2</sup>Affiliated Hospital of Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xianyang 712000, Shaanxi, China

\*Correspondence Author

**Abstract:** Based on the core idea of the theory of “preventive treatment of disease” in the “Hungdi Neijing”. This paper discusses its application in the prevention and treatment of diseases in the digestive system. The article emphasizes the importance of preventing diseases, and also highlights the important position of the spleen and stomach in the theory of traditional Chinese medicine. It is believed that the soundness of spleen and stomach function is closely related to the health status of the human body. Through specific case analysis, the practical application of the “preventive treatment of disease” theory in digestive system diseases such as chronic gastritis, peptic ulcers, acute pancreatitis, irritable bowel syndrome, cirrhosis and functional indigestion is demonstrated. It highlights its value in improving clinical efficacy and reducing medical costs, and provides new ideas and methods for improving clinical efficacy and reducing medical costs.

**Keywords:** Preventive treatment of disease, Digestive system diseases, Spleen and stomach function, Prevention strategies.

## 1. Introduction

The “Hungdi Neijing” is a classic work of traditional Chinese medicine, and the concept of “preventive treatment of disease” has always occupied a central position in traditional Chinese medicine. In the “Suwen · Si Qi Tiao Shen Da Lun”, it is pointed out that: “In ancient times, people did not treat diseases that have already occurred, but prevent diseases that have not occurred... Diseases do not occur and use drugs...” This view highlights the importance of disease prevention, and lays a solid foundation for the theory that “prevention is more important than treatment” in traditional Chinese medicine. Among them, “the first redness of the jaw in patients with renal fever” mentioned in Suwen is a typical example of “preventive treatment of disease”. Even if the disease has not yet appeared, immediate measures should be taken to intervene, which is the practical application of “prevention of disease that does not occur”. In addition, “Lingshu Ni Shun” also emphasizes that smart doctors will carry out acupuncture prevention before the disease occurs. Slightly inferior doctors will be treated when the disease is not serious. This once again confirms that ancient traditional Chinese medicine has integrated the concept of “preventive treatment of disease” into the daily diagnosis and treatment practice. Later generations of doctors, such as Zhang Zhongjing, Sun Simiao and Ye Tianshi, have conducted in-depth research and expansion of the theory of “preventive treatment of disease”, which has gradually evolved into a broad and profound ideological system, and is still widely affecting the development of traditional Chinese medicine. The theory of “preventive treatment of disease” [1] is mainly composed of the following three aspects: “prevent before disease”, “prevent disease” and “prevent after illness”. This theory runs through many links such as health care, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of traditional Chinese medicine, and highlights the unique concept of “prevention-oriented” of traditional Chinese medicine.

## 2. The Content of the Theory of Preventing Non-diseases

### 2.1 Prevent Uneven Diseases First

Classic literature such as “Suwen’s Hot Theory” and “Lingshu Reverse Shun” show that the concept of “preventive treatment of disease” has long been deeply rooted in the clinical practice and acupuncture treatment of traditional Chinese medicine. Sun Simiao, a famous doctor in the Tang Dynasty, subdivided the disease into three stages: “not sick”, “may be sick” and “sick” [3], which emphasizes: “when the patient is not sick, treatment should be given first, and treatment should be done before the disease occurs, not after the disease occurs.” Zhu Danxi [2] clearly pointed out the foresight and importance of “preventive treatment of disease” in Danxi Xin Fa · Incurable Diseases. Ye Tianshi, a doctor in the Qing Dynasty, proposed in his book “Wenre Lun”: “Prevention before suffering from illness.” For the first time, he innovatively applied the transmission theory of “preventive treatment of disease” to the three-focal syndrome differentiation theory. It can be seen that the concept of “preventive treatment of disease” has not only been widely disseminated in the works of various generations of doctors, but also constantly practiced and innovated.

### 2.2 Disease Prevention

“Nanjing Qi Shi Qi Nan” [2] mentions: “The so-called treatment of the disease, when you see the disease of the liver, you know that the liver should be transmitted to the spleen, so treat the spleen first, and there is no order to suffer from the evil of the liver, so it is said that there is no disease.” This statement shows that while the disease is still in the hidden stage, traditional Chinese medicine has begun to implement preventive treatment to prevent the disease from further deteriorating or transforming. Zhang Zhongjing, a medical saint, integrated this concept into clinical practice and put forward the view that “doctors treat diseases that have not occurred, see liver diseases, and know that the liver to spleen, they should treat the spleen first”. This idea of “infection prevention” has added a new connotation to the theoretical system of traditional Chinese medicine prevention.

### 2.3 Post-illness Prevention

“Shanghan Lun” points out that in the late stage of a major illness or when the disease has just been cured, the external evil in the body may not be completely eliminated, and the righteous qi has not yet recovered to its best state. Therefore, during this critical period, special attention should be paid to physical conditioning to prevent the recurrence of the disease. The book records: “The patient’s pulse has been calm and the evil qi is relieved, but eating too much leads to heat in the stomach, so it’s annoying. Patients don’t take medicine at this time, just take less. This shows that the recovery of the body should be promoted by nourishing the spleen and stomach after illness. When “the gastrointestinal function has not recovered, the food cannot be digested”, a small amount of food should be eaten to avoid excessive burden on the spleen and stomach, thus damaging the spleen and stomach function. Through proper rest and recuperation, it is conducive to the recovery of the spleen and stomach, and then achieve the dual purpose of curing and recuperating. All of these fully emphasize the importance of post-disease recuperation.

## 3. The Clinical Application of Huangdi Neijing’s Theory of Preventive Treatment of Disease in the Digestive System

### 3.1 Chronic Gastritis

Chronic gastritis is a very common type of digestive diseases. Its incidence is related to *Helicobacter pylori* infection, poor diet, emotional disorders and other factors. In the treatment of chronic gastritis, in addition to the treatment of the etiology, attention should also be paid to the application of the theory of “preventive treatment of disease”. In addition, for cancer-prone diseases such as chronic atrophic gastritis, we should pay more attention to the application of the theory of “preventive treatment of disease” and take timely intervention measures to prevent the occurrence of cancer. In the “Lin Zheng Zhi Nan Yi An”, Ye Tianshi proposed that for digestive diseases such as chronic gastritis, attention should be paid to “in the early stages of disease development, timely measures should be taken to protect those parts or systems that have not yet been affected by the disease, so as to prevent further deterioration and spread of the disease” [7], that is, to take At the same time, he also stressed the need to take into account the conditioning and protection of the spleen and stomach during the treatment process. Professor Lu [9], when treating chronic gastritis, spleen and gastric dampness and heat syndrome, stressed that priority must be given to removing dampness and dialysis of heat in the body. To this end, he will assist in the use of drugs to strengthen the spleen, transport the spleen and quell the spleen. At the same time, he also pays great attention to protecting and nourishing yin liquid, and often adds medicinal herbs such as sand ginseng and wheat winter that have the effect of nourishing yin. Such a treatment strategy aims to delay, block or even reverse the transition from chronic gastritis to cancer, so as to avoid further deterioration of the condition.

### 3.2 Peptic Ulcer

Peptic ulcer is treated by Western medicine. Although the ulcer can heal quickly, it has the problem of poor healing

quality and high recurrence rate. Traditional Chinese medicine believes that the patient does not immediately reach a healthy state in the initial recovery stage, but is in a recovery period of pathological constitution. At this time, the qi and blood are weak, and the physical strength is not fully recovered, which can easily lead to recurrence. Many studies have shown that traditional Chinese medicine has a significant effect in eliminating ulcer damage factors and enhancing the protection of gastric mucosa. While curing ulcers, it can regulate digestive disorders, thus improving the quality of healing and reducing the risk of recurrence [12]. Professor Deng Tietao, a famous traditional Chinese medicine scientist, pointed out that the treatment should not be limited to the relief of symptoms, but should continue to strengthen the spleen and nourish qi or nourish yin for 2-4 months before the drug can be stopped. In order to prevent the patient’s recurrence after the disease, after the condition improves or the clinical symptoms basically disappear, Chen Lin and others often use Chai Shao Liujunzi Decoction for 3-6 months, and suggest that patients pay attention to dietary restraint, life rules, prevent external evil attacks, regulate emotions, avoid overwork, and appropriately participate in sports activities. Years of clinical observation have proved that these measures can effectively prevent post-disease recurrence and reduce the recurrence rate. Du Yuan [10] et al. used the addition and subtraction of self-made to nourish Qi and Huoxue prescription to treat peptic ulcers on the basis of Western medicine. Tao Yanli [11] and others combined with Lingshu Jianpi Qingwei Decoction and acupuncture and moxibustion, all achieved good results. Modern medical research has found that the proper use of traditional Chinese medicine decoction can help patients recover their physical strength, regulate spleen and stomach functions, and eradicate etiology at the macro level. At the same time, at the micro level, that is, at the molecular level, traditional Chinese medicine decoction can quickly relieve symptoms, eliminate *Helicobacter pylori*, accelerate the healing of ulcers, prevent disease recurrence, and reduce the body’s resistance to antibiotics.

### 3.3 Acute Pancreatitis

The onset of acute pancreatitis is usually related to a variety of factors, including biliary system diseases (such as biliary tract stones, infections, etc.), irregular diet, hyperlipidemia, physical trauma (such as ERCP surgery), mood swings and external evil spirits. Actively diagnose and treat acute pancreatitis at an early stage, and prevent the outbreak of acute pancreatitis is usually related to a variety of factors, including biliary system diseases (such as gallstones, infections), improper diet, hyperlipidemia, physical trauma (such as ERCP), external invasion and emotional stress. In order to effectively deal with acute pancreatitis, the key is early diagnosis and treatment to prevent the disease from deteriorating. Zhou Ying and others took Pancreatic Decoction No. I orally, aiming to soothe the liver and regulate qi. Professor Jiang Jian [14] uses Dachaihu decoction to relieve heat. For patients with Yang Mingfu’s empirical evidence, Chengqi decoction may be used, or emergency use of mang saltpet, rhubarb and other drugs for internal and external treatment. In addition, prescription drugs with the effect of activating blood circulation and removing blood stasis, clearing heat, detoxification and promoting dampness are usually used in the treatment, such as Longdan Xiegan

Decoction, Coix Fuzi Decoction, Rhubarb Peony Decoction, etc. Modern pharmacological studies show that these traditional Chinese medicines can remove endotoxins from intestinal fluids and protect the pancreas and related organs. Traditional Chinese medicine for clearing heat and detoxification can not only inhibit bacteria and antiviral, but also relieve pain and improve microcirculation, thus reducing the occurrence of pancreatic pseudocysts and peripancreatic abscess. Studies have shown that the use of large doses of dandelion, barley kernels or money grass (30g to 60g) can eliminate scabs and dissolve knots, relieve heat, which can help remove accumulated fluid in the gastrointestinal tract, improve immunity, and inhibit inflammatory reactions. Traditional Chinese medicine that activates blood and dissolves stasis helps to shrink pancreatic masses [13]. During the recovery period of acute pancreatitis, patients often have insufficient righteous qi and evil qi, showing a state of righteousness and evil love. Traditional Chinese medicine nourishes qi, generates fluid, and nourishes stomach yin. The principle of "preventive treatment of disease" of traditional Chinese medicine emphasizes prevention from two aspects: (1) "Prevention of disease" requires that the disease deteriorate further deteriorate on the basis of visceral treatment. (2) "Prevention" focuses more on treating viscera, so as to prevent the recurrence of the disease.

### 3.4 Irritable Bowel Syndrome

IBS-D is a common digestive disease, and its pathogenesis is not fully clear. Kui Jiwu put forward a new point of view, which provides a new idea for the treatment of IBS-D. Through treatment with Changning prescription, Weng Mianwei and others effectively relieved the patient's abdominal pain and diarrhea symptoms and improved the overall condition [17]. It compared with the Western medicine group, the prescription showed higher total efficiency in the treatment of liver depression and spleen deficiency type IBS-D, while having good effects of strengthening spleen stagnation, stopping dampness and stopping diarrhea, warming the kidney and helping yang. Wang Ting studied the results of Wenyang Jianpi prescription for the treatment of spleen and kidney yang deficiency type IBS-D, and found that this prescription can significantly reduce the symptoms caused by liver qi stagnation and reduce the recurrence rate. Through clinical observation of the safety and curative effect of pain and diarrhea in the treatment of IBS-D [16], Lin Feng found that Wenyang and strengthening the spleen can reconcile the heart and kidney, soothe the liver and strengthen the spleen, and the curative effect of IBS-D in the medium-term soil deficiency hyperfunction is better than that of pivitammonium bromium tablets. Chen Huanzhao and others used the combination of Western medicine Bifidus Triplet Live Bacteria Capsule (trade name: Peifeikang) and the self-made drug Tongxie Shenling Baishu Decoction to treat irritable bowel syndrome diarrhea (IBS-D). The results showed that the total efficiency reached 100% [15], which was significantly better than the treatment group that used traditional Chinese medicine alone, and the difference between the two groups was of significant statistical significance. This treatment method of combining traditional Chinese and Western medicine makes full use of the respective advantages of traditional Chinese and Western medicine, organically combines diseases and syndromes,

takes into account specimens, and realizes early intervention of the disease and blocking the course of the disease, so as to achieve the purpose of early treatment and prevention of lesions. At present, this treatment has been widely used in clinic. Peng Yingjie et al. found that patients with irritable bowel syndrome have significant clinical effects after receiving systematic "preventive treatment of disease" theoretical education and health education models. The number of hospitalizations and days of patients decreased, and the incidence of diarrhea, mucus stool and constipation in the experimental group was significantly lower than in the control group. The significant difference between the two groups was statistically significant.

### 3.5 Cirrhosis of the Liver

Cirrhosis is a serious chronic liver disease, and its development process is often gradual. From liver fibrosis to cirrhosis, to liver failure, every step has the possibility of reversal. Therefore, this theory has a very unique advantage in the prevention of cirrhosis. Significant progress has been made in the research on the treatment of viral hepatitis and anti-fibrosis drugs. Not only is it possible to achieve a complete reversal of liver fibrosis, but some studies believe that even early cirrhosis may reverse the course of the disease under timely anti-fibrosis treatment. From animal experiments to clinical practice, scholars generally believe that as long as effective antiviral and antifibrosis treatment is applied, liver fibrosis treatment is very likely to be reversed. Zhang Ruijuan confirmed the reversibility of cirrhosis from the perspective of the phagocytosis function of Kupffer cells in the liver [18]. Traditional Chinese medicine is often achieved by maintaining smooth stool in the prevention of hepatic encephalopathy. When treating cirrhosis, traditional Chinese medicine pays attention to the principle of syndrome differentiation and treatment. Dr. Han Lijuan uses traditional Chinese medicine to nourish qi and promote blood circulation for viscera treatment, which can excrete toxins and turbid matter from the liver, promote the excretion of toxic substances in the intestine, and provide a way out for evil qi, thus slowing down the progress of the disease and reduce the risk of complications [19]. The results confirm that tonifying qi and activating blood is an effective method to treat portal hypertension with cirrhosis. In addition, related studies have found that the number of mitochondria in liver cells in rats with spleen deficiency syndrome model has decreased, morphological swelling and deformation, vacuoles-like changes in the matrix and decreased metabolic capacity [20]. The method of strengthening the spleen and qi by using Chinese methods can repair mitochondrial energy metabolism disorders to a certain extent. The disease of patients with cirrhosis is difficult to cure, often accompanied by different degrees of depression and anxiety. Traditional Chinese medicine says that liver qi is depressed, cutting the spleen soil, and the spleen is not healthy, so that the camp guard is not nourished, which will affect the immune function, and then lead to neuro-immune system dysfunction. Therefore, for the treatment of patients with cirrhosis, the first task is to strengthen the spleen. When the spleen qi is sufficient and strong, there will be sufficient sources of blood and saliva, and the ability to resist foreign evils will also be enhanced. This plays a vital role in the treatment of cirrhosis and the improvement of disease prognosis.

### 3.6 Functional Dyspepsia

Functional dyspepsia (FD) is a common functional disease of the digestive system, which seriously affects people's quality of life. The ancients' emphasis on seasonal health preservation has provided us with valuable inspiration for the prevention and treatment of FD. The health principles such as "Spring March... Winter March..." mentioned in "Suwen · Si Qi Tiao Shen Da Lun" emphasize the harmonious coexistence of man and nature [22]. In spring, everything revives. People should sleep at night and get up early and walk widely in the court to nourish yang. In winter, they should sleep early and get up late to avoid the cold and keep warm to nourish yin. This kind of health care method that conforms to nature and nourishes the body and mind is of great significance for the prevention and treatment of FD. Modern studies have found that the amount of negative life event stimulation in FD patients is significantly higher than that of healthy people [21], thus pointing out that psychological factors play an important role in the onset of FD. Although external causes are conditions, internal causes are fundamental. Therefore, strengthening the cultivation of patients' physical and mental quality, popularizing health knowledge, and advocating a scientific, healthy and harmonious lifestyle are essential for the treatment and prevention of FD. "Suwen · Shang Gu Tian Zhen Lun" said that "People should cultivate a mentality of indifferent to fame and wealth and reduce desire, so that the truth inside the body can run smoothly and concentrate on the inside, so as to achieve the purpose of preventing diseases and maintaining health." The principles provide us with specific health care methods. We should follow the principle of balance between yin and yang and learn various health care methods. We should have a moderate diet, a living rule, and not overwork, and we should also avoid the invasion of the evil thief, maintain a calm and empty mentality, and make the true qi in the memory and the spirit insider, so that the disease will naturally not occur. In order to improve the therapeutic effect of FD, the medical model should be changed to interoperability between doctors and patients. Doctors should strengthen communication between doctors and patients, effectively enhance the trust of patients, improve patient compliance, and fully mobilize the enthusiasm of patients for treatment. At the same time, strengthen psychological education to help patients establish correct health concepts and master scientific health care methods, so as to better improve the symptoms and quality of life of FD patients.

### 4. Summary and Outlook

The theory of "preventive treatment of disease" in the "Huangdi Neijing" provides important guiding principles for the prevention and treatment of digestive diseases in traditional Chinese medicine. Preventing the occurrence and development of diseases by adjusting lifestyles, eating habits and mental state can not only improve clinical efficacy, but also reduce medical costs and improve the quality of life of patients. Therefore, we should deeply study and practice a theory to make greater contributions to the cause of people's health.

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