

Exploration of the Clinical Idea of Treating Chloasma based on the Theory of Phase Fire

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Abstract: *Melasma is prevalent in women and is a refractory pigmentary disorder caused by multiple factors. Chinese medicine has certain efficacy and advantages in treating chloasma. Most medical practitioners conclude that chloasma is mostly dominated by qi, blood, meridians and so on. The 'phase fire theory' focuses on the liver and kidneys. Proposing that the treatment of chloasma should be based on regulating the liver, nourishing the blood and tonifying the kidney, supplemented by external treatment to invigorate blood circulation and remove blood stasis. It provides new treatment ideas and methods for the typological diagnosis and treatment of melasma.*

Keywords: Theory of mutual fire (TCM), Chloasma, Clinical thought.

1. Introduction

Chloasma is characterised by irregularities in facial skin pigmentation. It occurs most often in young and middle-aged women, but can also be seen in men. The main manifestation is the formation of brown or greyish-brown patches, symmetric distribution, Irregular shape, Isolated and scattered or fused into patches with clear borders. There are often no conscious symptoms. In Chinese medicine, it is called 'sallow spot' and 'face dust'. Its pathogenesis is complex, and Western medicine believes that it is mainly related to ultraviolet (UV) irradiation, genetic susceptibility, hormones, etc [1]. Western medical treatment is mostly applied to the Kligman formula, or oral tranexamic acid (TXA), etc. [2], as well as a wide range of medical and cosmetic interventions, but there are certain side effects such as: impaired skin barrier, excessive pigment loss, and unintentional pigmentation. In recent years, Chinese medicine has a unique advantage in the treatment of chloasma, which is related to the imbalance of the liver, spleen and kidneys, the failure of qi and blood to glorify the face, and the loss of nourishment of the skin, resulting in chloasma. This article explores the clinical application of chloasma based on Zhu Danxi's 'phasic fire theory'. From the fact that phasic fire 'resides in the liver and kidney', it emphasises the pathogenesis of chloasma by the liver and kidney, especially for those who have persistent symptoms and do not get well, the pathogenesis of chloasma is mostly due to the insufficiency of the liver and kidney. In particular, for those with persistent symptoms that do not heal, it is mostly due to 'insufficiency of the liver and kidney' as the pathogenesis, and treatment is advocated to replenish deficiency and eliminate reality. In this way, the scope and therapeutic ideas of the phase fire in this disease are analysed.

2. Phase Fire Theory and Chloasma Related Discussions

2.1 Overview of the 'Phase Fire Theory'

'Phase fire' was first recorded in the "Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine", which in the "Su Wen - Tian Yuan Ji Da Lun" said: "the king's fire to the bright, phase fire to the position". But here the king fire mainly refers to the

heart fire, on behalf of the body's life activities of the master and the core power; and phase fire mainly refers to the heart fire in addition to the fire of the other organs, especially with the liver, kidney, triple jiao, etc. Closely related. The main point is that the presiding role of the fire of the king is normal, the role of the phase fire can be normal; phase fire to follow the command of the king's fire, in order to play a normal physiological role; that is to say, the king's fire is the core of vital activities, is the master and commander; phase fire is a specific implementer, the two complement each other; the king's fire is normal or not directly affect the function of the phase fire, and the phase fire of the peace and quiet or not will affect the king's fire to play.

Zhu Danxi is the master of phase fire theory [3]. In 'Ge Zhi Yu Lun - Phase Fire Theory', it is proposed that the phase fire 'resides in the liver and kidney', with the liver blood and kidney essence as the material basis; it is also proposed that 'the Lord of Heaven is the living creature, so it is constant in motion; people have this life, also constant in motion; the reason why it is constant in motion is that it is all the result of the phase fire,' and it is pointed out that 'constant motion' makes the biochemistry of all things in nature and the continuity of human life possible. The constant movement of 'phase fire' makes the biochemistry of all things in nature and the continuity of human life possible, so it can be concluded that the gas of wood and the gas of water are the forms of phase fire in nature, and if implemented into the body, it is in the liver and kidneys [4]. It further confirms that the phasic fire is the driving force of the human body's vital activities, and that there is phasic fire in the yin of the liver and the kidney, and that human beings are the same as heaven and earth. Zhu Danxi [5] believes that the phase fire is divided into physiological and pathological two, physiological that 'the kidney is the main closure of the hidden, the liver Division of excretion,' to the liver and kidney yin essence as the material basis, yin essence can be sufficient to control the fire, so that the gentleman phase of the position of the fire, water and fire, that is, the human peace and harmony; pathology that 'the phase fire has changed', the phase fire away from its position is the cause of the occurrence of disease. Pathologically, it is believed that 'change of phase fire' is the reason for the occurrence of diseases. Clinical treatment found that the 'phase fire theory' and the 'liver and kidney' have a lot of

compatibility, the liver belongs to wood, the kidney is water, the phase fire in the liver and kidney to play a warm and stimulate the role of the liver and kidney, all to 'liver and kidney' as the main! On this basis, chloasma can be treated by moving qi and relieving depression, removing blood stasis and eliminating spots, with remarkable curative effects.

2.2 Analysis of the Disease Mechanism of Chloasma by 'Phase Fire Theory'

Chloasma is mostly called 'sallow spot' in Chinese medicine. The Complete Book of Surgical Evidence and Treatment says: 'The colour of the face is like dust and dirt, which is black in colour over a long period of time, and the shape of the face is withered and not glossy. Or the size of the black spots, and the skin of the face is flat.' Traditional Chinese medicine believes that the formation of chloasma is closely related to the liver, spleen and kidney, and that the stagnation of the three organs and the inability of qi and blood to glorify the head and face is the overall pathogenesis. However, 'Ling Shu - Meridian Veins' says: 'The veins of the kidney foot Shaoyin..... do not want to eat when they are hungry, and the face is like lacquer wood.' Liver and kidney are closely related to women's appearance. In order to solve the mechanism of chloasma, we must first analyse the disease mechanism produced by the phase fire away from the position. Therefore, the author believes that the stagnation of qi and blood caused by insufficiency of liver and kidney is the intrinsic pathological mechanism that induces chloasma. When kidney yin is insufficient, it can cause liver yin insufficiency, and if water does not contain wood, it can lead to hyperactivity of liver yang; on the contrary, liver blood insufficiency can lead to deficiency of kidney essence, and excessive liver fire can also rob kidney yin, which can lead to pathological changes of kidney yin insufficiency, thus blocking qi and blood in the head and face and giving rise to chloasma; which can be attributed to the two aspects of 'insufficient water, and not strong fire'. Therefore, the author believes that the basic pathogenesis of chloasma is mainly based on the deficiency of liver and kidney yin, with the imbalance of qi and blood as the foundation.

3. Ideas for Treating Chloasma Using the Phase Fire Theory

3.1 Liver Depression and Fire-heat, Loss of Storage

The main clinical manifestation of chloasma is flaky pigmentation spots on the face, which are mostly symmetrically distributed, varying in size, with clear borders or fused into patches, and accompanied by capillary dilatation around the patches. On local examination, the lesions are mostly clearer greenish-brown patches. Yin and Yang eleven pulse moxibustion Jing' said: 'foot Shaoyin pulse..... do not want to eat, face dull, if the candle stub colour.' Zhang's Doctor's Guide says: 'Dusty and discoloured face is a loss of glory for the liver and wood'; The Spiritual Pivot says: 'When the kidneys are diseased, the cheekbones and the face are black'. 'Phase fire' from the life gate, originating from the transformation of the body's vital energy, and then through the San Jiao, scattered in the internal organs, meridians, limbs and bones, to maintain the internal organs ascending and descending turbidity [6]. At this time, if the liver and qi

stagnation, emotional and emotional discomfort, the qi is not unimpeded, the liver and kidney excretion and sealing and storage is not in order, the loss of essence can not be full of head and face, face and face qi and blood disharmony, the 'phase fire away from the position', the skin is mainly manifested as a greenish-brown spots, accompanied by dark, distributed in front of the ears, temporal, and the two cheekbones, and so on [7]. The San Jiao is the channel for the qi to run, and it is also the channel for the phasic fire to play its function, and the axis of 'emotion - San Jiao - phasic fire' is the axis of the pathogenesis of emotional diseases. If the seven emotions are expressed excessively, the San Jiao passes through unfavourably, and the phasic fire moves away from its position, which leads to the deficiency of yin in the liver and kidney that cannot constrain the phasic fire, the San Jiao is stagnant, and the phasic fire does not rise in excessive grief. Unfavourable phase fire stagnation and excessive sadness do not raise phase fire [8]. At this time, the patient often manifests as emotional depression, chest distension and fullness, good breath, etc., and even more due to too much emotional expression will appear red face and eyes, impatient and irritable, dizziness and vertigo and other symptoms. The liver is the main blood, if the liver loss of excretion or liver fire hyperactivity, the blood does not return to the liver, part of the insomnia and dreams and other symptoms will occur. Therefore, Yin deficiency of the liver and kidney is an important mechanism for the development of chloasma, which is also a fundamental part of the 'phase fire theory'. When kidney water is insufficient, the skin is not moisturised; when fire cannot be controlled and the fire is inflamed, there will be dizziness, tinnitus, irritability of the heart, red tongue with little fur and stringy pulse. Liver and kidney insufficiency, water and fire are not helpful, the fire is generated within the body, consuming essence and blood, long-term disease damages the essence of the liver and kidney, and the blood is weak and can't be used for flesh, which will ultimately lead to chloasma.

3.2 Blood Stasis and Internal Obstruction of the Veins and Channels (TCM)

The Origin and Criteria of All Diseases states, 'Qi and blood are not in harmony, or astringent or turbid, and they cannot glorify the skin, so they become black.' 'Fire is the root of yang qi, water is the root of yin qi, and the total root of fire and water, the two kidneys between the dynamic gas is also.' Women more thinking, easy to anger, so easy to move the liver gas, the course of the disease for a long time will hurt the kidney, the Yin and Yang loss of internal organs rooted in the fire of the life of the door is insufficient, the phase fire does not live in its place, it causes gas and blood disharmony or dysfunction of the internal organs. If the triple jiao qi is not smooth, the blood line is stagnant and stagnant, and the qi and blood do not reach the face, the qi and blood of the internal organs are depleted and injured, so the face can be seen to be yellowish and the description is withered. The colour of the spots is mostly dark purple, and the face is green and obscure, accompanied by emotional impatience, or depression. Qi and blood are not replenished, and yin and fluid are insufficient, so the menstrual flow is low and dark; essence and blood are depleted, and there is imbalance between the flushing and the terminating organs, so new blood is not produced and blood stasis is retained, and some patients have dysmenorrhoea, and

their tongues are pale and dark or there are petechiae, and the moss is thin and white, and the pulse is stringy; therefore, cultivating and replenishing water and fire of the gate of the destiny is the key.

4. Discussion on the Treatment of Melasma Based on the 'Phase Fire Theory'

4.1 Nourishes the Liver and Kidneys, and Has the Ability to Store and Store

Ye Tianshi proposed that 'the disease of the liver, more than other organs, and especially in women.' This disease is closely related to emotional factors, 'Medical Compendium' said: 'a woman a few years thirty, worrying, dietary disorders, spleen and stomach injury, sallow face, not Ze.' Women love beauty, face into the spot after the increase in mental stress, 'due to depression and disease, due to disease and depression', in this vicious circle, gradually aggravated. Liver depression for a long time affects the lifting and lowering of the spleen and stomach; sadness injures the spleen and diet is not in order, thus the camp blood is darkly depleted and the liver blood is insufficient; liver qi is stagnant and there is a lack of source of qi and blood biochemistry, which makes one's face sallow. This kind of chloasma is mainly greenish-brown in colour, and the treatment should regulate the liver and qi, so that qi and blood can be combined and harmonised. At the same time, if there is sufficient kidney essence and kidney qi, then there is a source of blood production, and at the same time, promoting the function of transportation and digestion of the spleen and stomach will help the production of blood, and the meridians will be dredged to get rid of the blood stasis, so it can be done at the same time by tonifying the liver and kidneys. Clinically, we can use the addition and subtraction of the generation of Easy San and Tao Hong Si Wu Tang, in which Angelica sinensis nourishes the blood and blood, nourishes the liver body and helps the liver, so that the liver can be nourished and the blood can be enriched [9]. It can also be added with motherwort, which is called 'the holy medicine of the blood family' in Compendium of Materia Medica, it goes to the liver meridian and has the effect of activating blood circulation and regulating menstruation, and modern research has shown that [10], motherwort has antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and other pharmacological effects.

It is written in Taiping Shenghui Fang that 'a sallow colour on the face and ringing in the ears are indicative of kidney deficiency'. This disease is also known as 'sallow black spot', and sallow is interpreted as 'black' in 'The Jade Book', and the black colour corresponds to the kidney in 'The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine'. The black colour corresponds to the kidney in the Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine. It occurs in young and middle-aged women, 'the woman's heavenly capricorn arrives, the Ren pulse passes through, and the Taichong pulse flourishes.' It is closely related to the loss of function of the internal organs, especially the liver and kidneys, as well as the aging of the skin. The Origin and Criteria of All Diseases' says, 'The face is black and dull, or the internal organs have phlegm and drink, or the skin is subject to wind, all the qi and blood imbalance..... Liver and kidney insufficiency, head and face loss of glory, or yin does not system yang, false fire on the inflammation, smoldering face.' Liver and kidney are of the

same origin, i.e. essence and blood are of the same origin. Insufficiency of essence in the kidneys will affect the liver in the long run, and loss of liver yin will result in loss of blood, and the qi and blood will not be able to glorify in the face, so the face will be sallow and black. This kind of chloasma is mainly brownish-black in colour, and the treatment should nourish the liver and kidney, nourish the blood and dispel the spots. Clinically, Six-flavoured Di Huang Pill can be used to reduce the number of pills. In the formula, ripened dihuang belongs to the liver and kidney meridians, and is used to nourish yin and replenish blood. Pharmacological research has found [11] that dihuang has the functions of regulating immunity and antioxidant, and can be used with cornelian cherry and yam to nourish the liver and blood and replenish the spleen and fluid, to treat the insufficiency of true yin and the deficiency of essence and blood.

4.2 Activating Blood Circulation and Removing Blood Stasis, Clearing the Veins

At the same time, 'activating blood circulation and removing blood stasis' is also an important point of view throughout the treatment of chloasma. Chloasma is a chronic cosmetic disease with a long course of illness, which is easy to deplete the vital energy of the internal organs, and the face is the place where the qi and blood of twelve meridians converge, and the 'face is the Hua of the five viscera', which is inseparable from the nourishment of qi and blood and the smooth operation of the meridians. Skin blood is the tangible skin coupling channels, is the path of the visceral lesions to the skin, has the function of infiltration and irrigation moisturising, liver and kidney disorders, affecting the transmission of qi and blood, the loss of blood less, and blood stasis, Jinluo loss of nutrients, the skin is dry and light [12]. The 'Clinical Guide to Medical Cases' says: 'For a long time, the blood is injured into the complex', pointing out that most of the disease is from the meridian into the complex, from the gas and blood, damage to the qi and blood, phlegm and blood stasis in the mutual obstruction in the complex, resulting in the loss of face glory into the spot, the lesions expand the size of the skin [13]. Therefore, in clinical treatment, no matter what type of chloasma is identified, emphasis should be placed on 'no blood stasis, no spot', and the use of medicines to promote qi and blood circulation, such as peach kernel and safflower, etc., should be added to regulate qi and blood circulation and eliminate blood stasis.

5. External Therapies

Chloasma belongs to the category of easy-to-diagnose and difficult-to-treat diseases, and external treatment of Chinese medicine is a traditional method of treating chloasma with high safety, and internal and external treatments should be combined in the clinic so as to further improve the clinical efficacy of chloasma.

5.1 Prick with a Needle

Acupuncture has a significant effect on improving chloasma symptoms, adjusting the function of related internal organs, dredging the meridians and collaterals, so that qi and blood have a source of biochemistry, thus moistening the face and making the pigmentation fade away. Xu Meimei [14] used

neck three needles to treat 30 cases of chloasma with gas stagnation and blood stasis; Jin's 'neck three needles' (i.e., Tianzhu, Neck Bairao, and Dai loom) and the facial A Yes point were selected; the needles were left in place for 10 min, and treatment was carried out twice weekly for a total of 3 months; the total effective rate of the treatment was 93. 3%. Tang Hongli et al. [15] treated 42 cases of chloasma patients with acupuncture combined with Beneficial Qi, Blood Activation and Stasis Dispelling Soup, the acupoints were selected as the main acupoints, such as Yangbai, Blood Sea, Ahshi point, Sanyinjiao, etc., and acupuncture was performed once every 2d for 2 consecutive months; the total effective rate of the treatment group was 95. 24%. Needling the focal points to loosen them achieves the effect of relieving the pressure of structural lesions and regulating the balance of qi and blood in the face.

5.2 Burying Sutures at Acupuncture Points

Continuous stimulation of the acupuncture points where the buried threads are located for a long period of time can enhance the stimulation of acupuncture points to bring about the dredging of the meridians, so that qi and blood can be harmonised. Xie Zhonglian et al. [16] treated 43 cases of chloasma using acupoint burrowing combined with cosmetic needling. Cosmetic needling was used for facial acupoints, and the needles were applied to the Yintang, solar plexus points, Yingxiang and Dicang. Local circumferential stabbing and scattered stabbing techniques were used to implement the row of needles. The acupuncture points were left for 30 min; 2 d/1 time; the course of treatment was 8 weeks. The total effective rate was 97. 67 per cent. Acupoint embedding therapy is a product of the combination of traditional meridian theory of Chinese medicine and modern medicine, which is an innovation based on acupuncture and moxibustion, and is a commonly used external treatment method of Chinese medicine in clinical practice. Integrating acupuncture, bloodletting, buried needles and other therapies, it can access the meridians and transport qi and blood to the face, and has a good effect on the treatment of chloasma [17].

5.3 Chinese Medicine Mask

Chinese medicine mask is a kind of Chinese medicine with appropriate preparation process made of mask in order to make the drug directly on the facial skin of the Chinese medicine external treatment method, has the effect of beauty and skin care, treatment of facial skin diseases. Liu Weiwei [18] used traditional Chinese medicine mask combined with expelling blood stasis soup to treat 150 cases of chloasma. The traditional Chinese medicine mask was composed of *Ampelopsis japonica*, *Paeonia lactiflora*, *Atractylodes macrocephala*, *Angelica dahurica*, and so on, and the above medicines were grinded into a fine powder and then stirred well, and then the medicinal powders were mixed with white vinegar, egg white, and melon juice to form a paste according to the ratio of 1:1:1 and then coated on the facial discoloration, and then the mask was washed off after 30 minutes, and the internal medicines were taken to expel blood stasis soup, and the treatment course lasted 30 days. A total of 3 courses of treatment were carried out. The total effective rate of treatment was 97.3%. *Atractylodes macrocephala* can strengthen the spleen and promote qi, dry dampness and

diuresis, which can help the skin's metabolism; *Angelica dahurica* dispels wind and relieves pain, reduces swelling and drains pus, and has a certain cosmetic effect on the skin; *Paeonia lactiflora* nourishes the blood and regulates the menstruation, astringes the yin and stops sweating, which can regulate the skin's condition; *Pseudostellaria japonica* can dispel wind and phlegm and fix convulsions, etc., which can improve the facial discoloration; *Ampelopsis glabra* can remove heat and detoxification, and eliminate carbuncle, dispersing knots, which can be helpful to the skin health.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, chloasma is associated with changes in liver, kidney, qi and blood. In clinical treatment, on the one hand, the 'phase fire theory' should be used as the main therapeutic idea, with the liver and kidney as the main therapeutic options, and also focusing on emotional regulation; on the other hand, it can be combined with external Chinese medicine to regulate the disease as a whole, so as to make the whole body's qi and blood run smoothly, and then improve the nutritional status of the facial skin and regulate the balance of qi and blood in the face. Therefore, an in-depth exploration of the therapeutic mechanism and application of the 'phase fire theory' will provide a reference for expanding the clinical application of the phase fire theory in melasma, which is of great practical significance in expanding the scope of clinical diagnosis and treatment of the phase fire theory.

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