

Progress in the Treatment of Chronic Urticaria with Traditional Chinese Medicine

Xinyue Yang¹, Tingting Dou¹, Liwen Wang^{2,*}

¹Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xianyang 712046, Shaanxi, China

²Affiliated Hospital of Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xianyang 712000, Shaanxi, China

*Correspondence Author

Abstract: *Chronic urticaria is a common clinical allergic skin disease, which has long been a serious problem for patients and dermatologists. In this paper, we will summarize the common causes of urticaria and clinical treatment experience by reviewing the ancient and modern literature, from the perspectives of urticaria onset, dialectic, and treatment and medication, so as to analyze the role and efficacy of traditional Chinese medicine in the treatment of urticaria, and to broaden the ideas for the clinical treatment of urticaria.*

Keywords: Chronic urticaria, Etiology and mechanism of disease, Physiques, Chinese medical treatment.

1. Introduction

Urticaria, is the skin and mucous membranes due to a temporary increase in vascular permeability and the occurrence of limited edema, the clinical manifestations of the wind, accompanied by intense itching, and the lesions recurring and the duration of the disease more than 6 weeks is known as chronic urticaria [1]. In ancient literature, it's known as "Nettle-Rash" [2]. The General Treatise on Causes and Manifestations of All Diseases [3] said: "Evil Qi is present on the skin, and when combined with wind and cold, it can cause wind itching and hidden rashes." It is pointed out that chronic urticaria is caused by the invasion of evil Qi into the skin, combined with the interaction of wind and cold evil. Nowadays, due to the influence of diet, society, natural environment and many other factors, the incidence rate of chronic urticaria in China has been increasing. Western medicine often uses antihistamines, corticosteroids, etc. in treatment, but they have certain side effects, are prone to drug resistance when used for a long time, and the condition is prone to recurrence [4]. However, traditional Chinese medicine focuses on a holistic approach and syndrome differentiation in the treatment of chronic urticaria. Implementing individualized treatment for patients can ensure efficacy while reducing the recurrence rate of chronic urticaria. Therefore, the demand for traditional Chinese medicine treatment from patients is increasing day by day. This article has reviewed relevant literature and compiled the clinical treatment experience and research data of multiple medical professionals. The summary is as follows.

2. The Etiology and Pathogenesis of Chronic Urticaria

2.1 Wind-evil in the Pathogenesis

Record of Zhengzhi Zhunsheng [5]: "People with wind hidden rashes, due to the presence of evil Qi on their skin and the combination of wind and cold, are called hidden rashes." Synopsis of Golden Chamber Records [6]: "Wind and essence Qi conflicting, When the wind is strong, it can lead to hidden rashes and itching in the body." The wind is a yang evil, with a variable number of good deeds. Its nature is light and loose, and if the surface is weak and the pores are not firm, the wind

evil will take advantage of the deficiency and enter, affecting the muscle surface and disrupting the balance of the Ying and Wei, it is prone to skin lesions. Chronic urticaria has pathological characteristics of unpredictable changes and abnormal itching in clinical practice, which fully reflects the characteristic of wind pathogen's good behavior. Therefore, traditional Chinese medicine believes that chronic urticaria is a typical wind syndrome [7]. Professor Qu Xing believes that the basic pathogenesis of chronic urticaria includes endowment weakness, wind pathogen fighting on the skin, and dysfunction of the Ying and Wei [8]. So, throughout the entire treatment process of chronic urticaria, dispelling wind plays an important role in eliminating pathogenic factors and ultimately preventing disease recurrence [9].

2.2 Constitution and Disease

The Ling Shu·On Pain records [10]: "The strength of muscles and bones, the firmness of muscles, the thickness of skin, and the density of pores are all different. . . The thickness, firmness, and brittleness of the gastrointestinal tract also vary. From this, it can be seen that innate endowments play a decisive leading role in the formation of physical constitution. At the same time, differences in social living environment, personal dietary habits, or personal psychological states can also lead to differences in physical constitution. Therefore, Professor Wang Qi proposed the classic discourse of "physical constitution can be divided, and physical diseases are related" [11]. Doctors such as Zhou Junlin [12] conducted a questionnaire survey on the population with chronic urticaria, this survey involved 150 patients and analyzed their traditional Chinese medicine constitution. The results showed that a total of 9 types of constitution were involved in this survey, among which patients with Yang deficiency constitution and damp heat constitution were correlated with fluctuations in environmental temperature. Patients with special constitution were related to their intake of drugs, food, daily exposure to animals and plants, and lighting conditions. Patients with Qi depression constitution are closely related to changes in stress in daily life and work. Patients with Yin deficiency constitution have a greater relationship between illness and emotional fluctuations. Patients with Yin deficiency constitution and damp heat constitution are related to their spicy and spicy eating habits. Patients with phlegm dampness constitution and damp heat constitution are related

to their sweet and sweet eating habits.

2.3 Zangfu Pathogenesis

2.3.1 Liver

The occurrence of chronic urticaria is closely related to “wind evil”. Suwen·Yin Yang Big Classification of Natural Phenomena records: “Wind Qi Communicating with Liver”. Therefore, there is an inherent relationship between the occurrence and presentation characteristics of chronic urticaria and the liver [13]. Suwen records: “Blood Storage in Liver”. If the liver’s function of storing blood is disrupted, it can be seen as liver blood deficiency. Liver blood deficiency can cause the skin to lose nourishment, leading to itching or worsening of the condition. liver governing soothing. On the one hand, the function of “liver governing smoothing” is to promote the effective operation of blood or body fluids by unblocking and regulating the Qi of the whole body, which plays an important role in controlling and regulating changes in emotional activities; On the other hand, many people’s abnormal changes in emotions can also cause an imbalance in the movement of their Qi. In today’s fast-paced society, the enormous pressure of life, work, and other aspects can easily lead to impatience, tension, and irritability, resulting in liver Qi stagnation. When chronic urticaria occurs, bright red wheals will appear accompanied by severe itching, which not only affects appearance, but also greatly affects rest and sleep due to itching throughout the body, leading to emotional distress and worsening of the condition.

2.3.2 Heart

“All painful itchy sores originate from heart”. Suwen [14] records “The heart is a monarch fire, but when it enters the skin, it becomes an hidden rash” clearly indicating the relationship between the heart and the onset of chronic urticaria. If the heart Yang is deficient and the transformation of the heart Qi is insufficient, the warm energy is ineffective, the meridians are clear and cold, the circulation of Qi and blood is slow, and there is no ability to nourish the skin, resulting in dry skin, internal wind, or external wind, causing symptoms such as redness and itching that are difficult to endure, and leading to chronic urticaria that is lingering and difficult to cure [15]. The heart governs the blood vessels, and the heart Qi can promote the circulation of blood, transport various nutrients throughout the body, and effectively ensure the healthy and moisturized skin. If there is insufficient heart blood, it can lead to blood deficiency, wind dryness, and skin loss of nourishment. Specific clinical manifestations may include chronic urticaria symptoms such as itching and dry skin.

2.3.3 Spleen and stomach

Danxi Xinfu records [16]: “Nettle-Rash Resulting from the Spleen.” Yang Yanan et al. [17] believe that the spleen and stomach are the foundation of human development and the source of Qi and blood transformation. Due to the weakness of the spleen and stomach, the ability of Qi and blood to transform will correspondingly weaken, resulting in Qi deficiency and blood deficiency; Qi deficiency and weak external defense can easily cause external wind pathogens to

linger on the human skin; Blood deficiency cannot effectively moisturize and nourish the skin, and it is prone to dryness, which may lead to chronic symptoms such as hives and itching; spleen governing transportation and transformation, If the spleen Qi in the human body is weak and the spleen’s function in transformation and transportation is disrupted, it can lead to the loss of nourishment in the skin and ultimately cause the onset of chronic urticaria. At the same time, many patients with chronic urticaria suffer from unbearable skin itching, which affects their sleep, mood, and diet, ultimately leading to a decrease in spleen deficiency diet, which exacerbates or recurs the condition. Modern traditional Chinese medicine treatment for chronic urticaria is based on the principle of regulating the spleen and stomach, and has achieved some good clinical results, thus demonstrating the correlation between the occurrence of chronic urticaria and the strength of spleen and stomach function [18].

2.3.4 Lung

When chronic urticaria occurs, the wheals are visible on the skin, while the lungs are responsible for the skin and hair. Therefore, it is believed that the causes and treatment of chronic urticaria should first focus on the lungs [13]. Yang Jie et al. [19] believe that the lungs governing skin and hair, then their function is to protect the human muscle surface and defend against external pathogens; The lungs control Qi and have the physiological function of promoting defensive Qi. Therefore, when wind pathogens invade, they first attack the lungs, and when they attack the skin and hair, it can lead to the occurrence of chronic urticaria. The occurrence of various types of urticaria in clinical practice is closely related to external wind pathogens or environmental changes, exposure to allergens, etc., all of which are related to the patient’s Qi deficiency of lung or Qi depression of lung, weak external defense, and the fact that the lungs governing skin and hair. Therefore, treating chronic urticaria from the lungs is also one of the commonly used methods in traditional Chinese medicine.

2.3.5 Kidney

Suwen records: “Shaoyin excess leads to the onset of urticaria.” This is the earliest record of the traditional Chinese medicine disease name for urticaria [17]. Moreover, the kidneys are responsible for storing essence, while essence and blood share the same origin, so the kidneys also have varying degrees of nourishing effects on the skin and hair.

3. Clinical Treatment of Chronic Urticaria

3.1 Internal Treatment Method

Mahuang Guizhi Geban Decoction is commonly used for the treatment of wind-coldness binding exterior in chronic urticaria. Among them, Guizhi has the functions of warming Yang, promoting blood circulation, and relieving pain; Mahuang has the functions of dispelling coldness, expelling coldness, dispersing lung and relieving cough; Shengjiang has the functions of warming middle to dispel coldness and dispelling coldness to relieve exterior; Ganciao has the functions of strengthening spleen, harmonizing stomach, benefiting Qi and removing toxin. These Chinese medicinal

herbs work together to help dispel coldness evil, warm meridians, and activate collaterals, which can improve the discomfort caused by cold in patients [20]. Research by Guo Yepeng [21] shows that the treatment of cold urticaria with traditional Chinese medicine Mahuang Guizhi Geban Decoction is similar to that of Western medicine, but traditional Chinese medicine has higher safety and lower recurrence rate. Research by Zhu Xiaotao [22] found that Mahuang Guizhi Geban Decoction is more effective in treating chronic urticaria than Western medicine. It has outstanding effects in relieving symptoms and reducing recurrence rates, and has a good application effect. The study by Fu Yao et al. [23] showed that the application of Ma Huang Gui Zhi Ge Ban Tang in the clinical treatment of chronic urticaria has better therapeutic effects than conventional Western medicine, which can effectively alleviate symptoms and reduce the risk of disease recurrence in patients.

Xiaofeng Powder is a representative formula for dispelling wind, nourishing blood, clearing heat, and removing dampness [24]. It is commonly used for the treatment of wind-heat external syndrome in chronic urticaria. In the formula, Jingjie has the functions of dispelling wind to relieve exterior, and promoting eruption; Used in combination with Fangfeng, it has a stronger effect on dispelling wind evil and relieving itching; Chantui and Niubang Zi can dispel wind heat, rash, relieve itching, help Jingjie and Fangfeng dispel wind, and can also disperse wind heat and eliminate evil; Kushen can clear heat and dry dampness, Cangzhu can strengthen spleen to eliminate dampness, Mutong can promote dampness and heat, combined with Shigao and Zhimu to clear heat; Huma Ren, Shengdi Huang, Danggui can nourish Yin, moisten dryness, nourish blood, and promote blood circulation; Shenggan Cao has the effects of clearing heat and removing toxin, Shenggan Cao can clear heat and detoxify, and when used in combination with other medicines, it has the effects of dispelling wind, nourishing blood, clearing heat, and removing dampness. There is a meaning of "Treating Wind by Treating Blood First, and Eliminating Wind by Flowing Blood Smoothly" [25]. Mr. Zhu Renkang is very fond of using Xiaofeng Powder and has adjusted it according to the characteristics of chronic urticaria. Based on different combinations, he has self formulated prescriptions such as Liangxue Xiaofeng Powder and Huoxue Xiaofeng Decoction for the treatment of different types of chronic urticaria [26]. Lin Chunguo et al. [27] selected 70 patients with wind heat invasion phenotype of urticaria and divided them into a control group and an observation group according to a simple random method, with 35 patients in each group. On the basis of routine treatment with cetirizine oral solution in both groups, the observation group was treated with Xiaofeng San modified formula. After 14 days of continuous treatment, multiple evaluations were conducted. The research results showed that the total effective rate of the observation group was significantly higher than that of the control group after treatment, indicating that the combination of Xiaofeng San modified formula and levocetirizine oral solution can effectively alleviate urticaria, and its therapeutic effect is better than that of levocetirizine oral solution alone.

Fangfeng Tongsheng Powder is commonly used for the treatment of stomach and intestine dampness-heat. Mahuang, Fangfeng, Jingjie and Bohe in the prescription has the effects

of inducing sweating to expel evils and dispelling wind to relieve exterior; Huangqin, Shigao has the effects of clearing lung stomach and purging heat; Lianqiao, Jiegeng has the effects of dispersing upper-Jiao, removing toxin and relieving sore throat; Zhizi, Huashi has the effects of clearing heat and eliminating dampness; Mangxiao, Dahuang has the effects of purging intestinal and heat; Danggui, Shaoyao and Chuanxiong has the effects of nourishing blood; Baizhu and Gancan has the effects of strengthening spleen and harmonizing middle; Adding Shengjiang during decoction can harmonize stomach and prevent stomach damage caused by bitter-coldness drugs [28]. A study [29] selected 86 children with urticaria for clinical treatment observation, and the results showed that the relief time of skin itching symptoms and the disappearance time of rash in the treatment group were significantly shorter than those in the control group, and the IgE levels of the children were also significantly lower than those in the control group. This reflects the safety and effectiveness of Fangfeng Tongsheng Powder.

Danggui Yinzi is commonly used for the treatment of chronic urticaria with blood deficiency and wind dryness syndrome. Danggui in the prescription is used to nourish blood; Shengdi Huang is used to nourish blood and liver Yin; Baishao is used to nourish blood, nourish Yin, soften the liver, and extinguish wind; Fangfeng has the effect of dispelling wind and relieving itching. The above medicines, when combined with each other, embody the principle of "Treating Wind by Treating Blood First, and Eliminating Wind by Flowing Blood Smoothly" [30]. Liu Kun et al. [31] observed 80 patients with blood deficiency and wind dryness in clinical practice and found that the treatment of chronic urticaria with Danggui Yinzi in addition to conventional Western medicine can effectively improve clinical symptoms, reduce adverse reactions and recurrence rates.

3.2 External Therapy

3.2.1 Acupuncture

Acupuncture has the functions of dredging meridians and collaterals, supporting vital Qi, expelling evils, and adjusting Yin and Yang [32]. Ancient medical practitioners believed that "Treating Wind by Treating Blood First, and Eliminating Wind by Flowing Blood Smoothly" To treat diseases caused by feeling wind evil, the first step should be to start with "treating blood". When the body's Qi and blood are sufficient and running smoothly, the wind syndrome gradually disappears and even recovers. Many doctors believe that the occurrence of chronic urticaria is mostly due to the combination of wind and blood, so acupuncture is widely used in the clinical treatment of chronic urticaria. Xie Changcai et al. [33] selected 60 patients with chronic urticaria and divided them into two groups on average. Both groups received routine treatment with oral administration of mizolastine, while one group received treatment with acupuncture at the bilateral Quchi and Xuehai acupoints; Guo Yuhua et al. [34] selected 128 pediatric patients and divided them into two groups. On the basis of routine treatment in both groups, one group was selected and treated with acupuncture at SiFeng acupoints. The results of two clinical treatment observations indicate that the addition of acupuncture treatment can

significantly improve the effectiveness of chronic urticaria treatment and reduce the risk of disease recurrence. Based on the above research, it is believed that in the treatment of chronic urticaria, the combination of acupuncture therapy may be able to compensate for the difficulty in ensuring efficacy and high recurrence rate caused by the use of Western medicine alone in clinical practice.

3.2.2 Moxibustion therapy

Yixue Rumen [35] pointed out: “When the efficacy of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture are not good, moxibustion is necessary.” Fire Characterized by Flaring up. Fire has the characteristics of being hot and warm. The warmth of moxibustion fire can dispel cold evil and assist Yang qi. Liao Fangrong et al. [36] believed that chronic urticaria is mostly related to “spleen and stomach weakness”, and moxibustion on the body’s meridians can warm and nourish the spleen and stomach. Therefore, 48 patients with refractory urticaria were treated with moxibustion on the Dai meridian and clinically observed for a total of 4 weeks. The efficacy was evaluated after 2 and 4 weeks of treatment, as well as 4 weeks after the end of treatment. Ultimately, it was found that moxibustion treatment can significantly improve the symptoms of refractory urticaria in patients, and although the patient had not received treatment for 4 weeks during follow-up, the probability of disease recurrence was extremely low. This also confirms that moxibustion plays an important role in the treatment of chronic urticaria.

3.2.3 External washing of traditional Chinese medicine

Ancient medical experts believed that “the principle of external treatment, also known as the principle of internal treatment, and the medicine for external treatment, also known as the medicine for internal treatment, are only different in terms of the method and route of administration. This sentence illustrates that traditional Chinese medicine has two methods for treating surgical diseases: internal treatment and external treatment, and the mechanisms of these two treatment methods are the same, except for differences in the specific administration methods. External treatment is a very unique method for treating surgical diseases, and traditional Chinese medicine external washing method is an important branch of external treatment. Hou Qigang et al. [37] selected 80 patients with urticaria and divided them into two groups to explore the therapeutic effect of traditional Chinese medicine external washing method. Both groups were given conventional Western medicine for symptomatic treatment. One group was treated with Aiye, Lulu Tong, and Shengjiang external washing, and the treatment effects of the two groups were continuously observed. It was found that the group treated with traditional Chinese medicine external washing had a significantly higher treatment efficiency than the other group, and the probability of disease recurrence was significantly lower than the other group. Therefore, it can be concluded that the unique external treatment methods of traditional Chinese medicine in the treatment of skin diseases can effectively solve the problem of difficulty in ensuring the recurrence of diseases in the treatment of Western medicine. Therefore, the treatment method of external washing with traditional Chinese medicine is highly worthy of promotion and application in the clinical treatment of urticaria.

4. Summary

Chronic urticaria is a common and frequently occurring clinical disease, and the clear causes of most cases are difficult to find. Modern medicine believes that various factors such as food, infection, medication, respiratory or skin contact may lead to the occurrence of urticaria, and the severe itching symptoms accompanying the onset often have a certain impact on the patient’s rest, mental health, and other aspects. Currently, chronic urticaria is mostly treated with antihistamines in clinical practice, but most cases have a tendency for disease recurrence; When taking medication for a long time, it can cause damage to the liver and kidney function of the human body. Considering the shortcomings of clinical application of antihistamines and other treatments in Western medicine, the treatment experience and experimental data of multiple doctors were collected, indicating that patients who receive traditional Chinese medicine treatment have a high overall effectiveness rate and low recurrence rate in the treatment of chronic urticaria. Moreover, traditional Chinese medicine emphasizes syndrome differentiation and treatment. When treating patients with different constitutions and causes, individualized medication can effectively improve clinical efficacy [38]. Therefore, traditional Chinese medicine has certain advantages in treating chronic urticaria and is worth promoting and applying in clinical practice.

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