

Three Cases of Burning Mouth Syndrome Treated from the Perspective of Heart and Spleen

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Abstract: *Burning mouth syndrome is a common clinical oral mucosal disease, with an increasing incidence in recent years. Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has unique advantages in treating this disease, which can significantly relieve patients' tongue discomfort. This article discusses the treatment of burning mouth syndrome from the perspective of heart and spleen, and presents 3 effective cases treated with modified Daochi Powder combined with Gancao Xiexin Decoction. It analyzes the experience of Professor Gao Rong in treating burning mouth syndrome, aiming to provide new therapeutic ideas for the treatment of this disease.*

Keywords: Burning mouth syndrome, Heart and spleen, Daochi Powder, Gancao Xiexin Decoction, Medical cases.

1. Introduction

Burning mouth syndrome (BMS), also known as glossalgia, is a syndrome characterized by recurrent burning pain in the tongue mucosa, or accompanied by symptoms such as numbness and discomfort of the tongue and mouth, and taste disorders. However, there is no obvious organic damage or histopathological change in examination [1]. At present, its epidemiology, etiology and pathogenesis are still not fully clear, and it is often considered to be related to factors such as mental and endocrine disorders. Therefore, symptomatic treatments such as oral psychotropic drugs, vitamin supplementation, and psychological adjustment are used [2], but the efficacy is unsatisfactory.

In the category of TCM, burning mouth syndrome can be attributed to "tongue numbness", "tongue pain", "wooden tongue", "dry tongue", and "fox confusion disease" (a disease characterized by ulceration of the mouth and genitals). Physicians of past dynasties mostly believed that the pathogenesis of this disease is the obstruction or upward invasion of damp-heat evil toxins, leading to qi and blood imbalance and tongue discomfort, and prescribed appropriate prescriptions accordingly. Professor Gao Rong is a famous TCM expert in Sichuan Province, who has been engaged in TCM clinical work for many years. Through long-term observation, collection and sorting, she has extremely rich clinical experience in the treatment of burning mouth syndrome with TCM. She proposes that burning mouth syndrome is mainly related to the heart and spleen, and the treatment should be based on clearing heat and resolving dampness, using modified Daochi Powder combined with Gancao Xiexin Decoction. Daochi Powder clears and reduces heart fire, makes heart fire descend to the small intestine, provides a way for evil qi to go out, and leads heat evil out through urine. Gancao Xiexin Decoction has both tonifying and purging effects, which can clear heat and purge fire, and regulate the qi movement of the middle jiao to resolve dampness and turbidity. The combination of the two prescriptions strengthens the effect of clearing and draining, and often achieves good results in the clinical treatment of burning mouth syndrome. I am fortunate to study with the teacher, and this time, through the analysis of medical cases, I summarize the relevant treatment experience of burning

mouth syndrome. I select 3 cases of burning mouth syndrome with significant short-term efficacy treated with modified Daochi Powder combined with Gancao Xiexin Decoction as the basic prescription, and share them with colleagues.

2. TCM Understanding of Burning Mouth Syndrome

"Su Wen·Zhi Zhen Yao Da Lun" states: "All pain, itching and sores are related to the heart". The heart is a fire organ, located in the upper jiao, in the exterior, and governs the blood vessels. The occurrence of various pain syndromes, itching, sores and other diseases is related to the dysfunction of the heart. Moreover, "Yi Xue Zhai Cui" says: "The pain, heat and swelling of the tongue are specially attributed to the hyperactivity of the monarch fire (heart fire)". If heart fire is too hyperactive and flaring upward, heat toxin will accumulate in the tongue, burn the blood vessels, and cause tongue diseases. This indicates that tongue pain is related to the heart. "The diseases caused by the spleen include pain at the root of the tongue". "Ling Shu·Jing Mai" records: "The spleen's Foot-Taiyin Meridian starts from the tip of the big toe... connects to the root of the tongue and spreads under the tongue". "Ling Shu·Mai Du" says: "The qi of the heart connects to the tongue; when the heart is harmonious, the tongue can distinguish the five flavors; the qi of the spleen connects to the mouth; when the spleen is harmonious, the mouth can distinguish the five grains". It can be seen that this disease is also inseparable from the spleen. The tongue is the seedling of the heart, and the mouth is the orifice of the spleen. Diseases of the tongue and mouth are closely related to the heart and spleen.

Ancient medical literature has a long history of discussing the etiology and pathogenesis of burning mouth syndrome. "Jin Kui Qi Yao·On Tongue Diseases" says: "The tongue is the seedling of the heart and also belongs to the spleen system. Heart and spleen heat accumulation leads to tongue diseases", believing that the heart and spleen are in a mother-child relationship in the five elements. If heart fire is hyperactive, it involves the spleen, which is called "mother disease affecting the child"; if there is damp-heat in the spleen meridian, the damp-heat of the spleen invades upward along the meridian,

which is called “child disease affecting the mother”; if heat is extremely abundant, it becomes fire, which fumigates the tongue and mouth, resulting in tongue diseases [3]. “Guide to Tongue Diagnosis·Differentiation and Treatment of Tongue Syndromes” records: “Tongue numbness is stiffness and numbness, which is caused by emotional disturbance, worry, anger, qi stagnation, phlegm and fire”, pointing out that the cause of tongue numbness is emotional imbalance [4]. “Chishui Xuanzhu” (a TCM classic) says: “Tongue numbness or tingling is caused by phlegm and qi stagnation in the pericardium”, believing that phlegm turbidity blocks the meridians, leading to obstruction and tongue numbness. In modern times, many doctors have also pointed out many pathogenic factors that cause tongue and mouth diseases. For example, Liang Wenxin et al. believe that the pathogenesis of BMS patients is mostly spleen qi deficiency, accompanied by damp-heat and stomach yin deficiency, and the basic treatment principle should be invigorating spleen qi, combined with clearing damp-heat and nourishing stomach yin [5]. He Ruoping et al. believe that BMS is caused by dysfunction of the zang-fu organs, leading to internal fire flaring upward along the meridians, fumigating the oral cavity and burning the tongue collaterals, and the treatment should be to nourish yin and reduce fire, clear heat and resolve dampness [6], etc.

Based on TCM classics and the thoughts of many medical experts, Professor Gao Rong believes that the occurrence of burning mouth syndrome is related to multiple zang-fu organs, but the main location is in the heart and spleen. The etiology and pathogenesis are complex and changeable, but the root cause is dampness and heat, and the pathogenesis is hyperactivity of heart fire and fumigation of damp-heat. The spleen is the “earth of the middle”, which transforms essence to nourish the five zang organs. The spleen governs dampness; if its transportation function is impaired, water and dampness metabolism is disturbed, water turbidity accumulates, and over time, dampness turns into heat, leading to damp-heat blocking the middle jiao, dysfunction of the spleen and stomach in ascending and descending, excess in the middle jiao, heart fire failing to descend and flaring upward. In addition, the spleen opens into the mouth, so damp-heat floats upward along the meridians, fumigating the oral mucosa for a long time. Dampness is sticky and stagnant, obstructing qi movement; heat is a yang evil, consuming qi and damaging body fluids. “Qi is the one that moves blood”; qi stagnation leads to poor blood circulation, causing tongue lesions, such as local numbness, tingling and pain in the tongue and mouth. Daochi Powder is used to clear the heart, promote diuresis and nourish yin. “Supplemented and Annotated Comments on Famous Doctors’ Prescriptions” states that it “guides the heat of the heart meridian out through the small intestine... to promote diuresis without damaging yin, and purge fire without attacking the stomach”; Gancao Xiexin Decoction clears heat and dries dampness, invigorates the spleen and benefits the stomach. “Synopsis of the Golden Chamber” (a classic TCM work) says that it “not only promotes the movement of middle jiao qi and resolves damp-heat by itself, but also uses a combination of bitter and acrid flavors, which is sufficient to kill parasites”. The modified Daochi Powder combined with Gancao Xiexin Decoction is used to treat burning mouth syndrome, which can clear damp-heat in the middle jiao, regulate qi movement, and reduce heart fire,

allowing heat to be discharged with urine and providing a way for evil qi to go out. It treats both the root and the branch, and has definite clinical efficacy.

3. Brief Analysis of the Classical Formula Gancao Xiexin Decoction

3.1 Daochi Powder

Daochi Powder is a classic prescription highly praised by physicians of past dynasties, which can be traced back to “Key to Children’s Medicine” written by the famous Song Dynasty physician Qian Yi. Qian Yi recorded in the book that this prescription “treats children’s heart heat. Observe their sleep: if the breath in the mouth is warm, or they sleep with their face covered, or they arch upward and grind their teeth, it is all heart heat. If heart qi is hot, the chest and heart are also hot, making them unable to speak and wanting to be in a cool place, so they sleep with their face covered. Daochi Powder can be used. Ingredients: raw Rehmanniae Radix, Glycyrrhizae Radix (raw), Akebiae Caulis (equal parts). Grind into powder together, take 3 qian (a traditional Chinese weight unit, about 3 grams) each time, add a cup of water, put in Lophatheri Herba and fry until 5 fen (a traditional Chinese unit of volume, about 1/10 of a cup), and take it warm after meals.” That is, the original prescription consists of raw Rehmanniae Radix, Akebiae Caulis, Glycyrrhizae Radix, and Lophatheri Herba. It is mainly suitable for treating symptoms such as chest and heart heat, oral erosion, tongue sores, red face, thirst with a preference for cold drinks caused by excessive heat in the heart meridian, or short, red and hot urine caused by heart fire descending to the small intestine. In the prescription, raw Rehmanniae Radix is the monarch drug, which is sweet and cold, nourishing yin and cooling blood to restrain heart fire. Modern pharmacological studies have shown that raw Rehmanniae Radix has anti-inflammatory, immune regulatory, hemostatic, hypoglycemic, anticoagulant, neuroprotective, anti-tumor and anti-aging effects [7-8]. Akebiae Caulis is bitter and cold, entering the heart and small intestine meridians. It can clear heat in the heart meridian upward and clear heat in the small intestine downward, with the functions of inducing diuresis and treating stranguria, and promoting qi and blood circulation. “Ben Cao Qiu Zhen” (a TCM materia medica work) states that it “has a light taste and infiltrating property, can purge monarch fire... so that fire evil in all meridians can descend along with heart water”. Liu Yuechao et al. believe that Akebiae Caulis has anti-inflammatory, bacteriostatic, diuretic, antioxidant, neuroprotective, cardioprotective, anti-thrombotic and anti-depressant effects [9]. Lophatheri Herba is the minister drug, which is sweet, light and cold, can clear heart fire, relieve restlessness, promote diuresis, and guide heart fire downward. Raw Glycyrrhizae Radix (the tip part) is the assistant drug. As “Yangke Gangmu” (a classic on external diseases) says: “Glycyrrhizae Radix can treat external ulcers because sweetness is the proper taste of earth, and all toxins are transformed when entering the earth, so Glycyrrhizae Radix can eliminate toxins in external diseases”, it can clear heat and toxins, stop pain in the penis, and harmonize the effects of various drugs, invigorate the spleen and tonify deficiency, preventing drugs such as Akebiae Caulis and Rehmanniae Radix from being too cold and damaging the spleen and stomach of the middle jiao. The combination of the

four drugs exerts the effects of clearing the heart, promoting diuresis, nourishing yin and generating fluid, so that purging fire does not damage the spleen and stomach, promoting diuresis does not damage yin fluid, and nourishing yin does not retain evil [10]. Experimental results show that Daochi Powder can significantly reduce inflammatory reactions and greatly shorten the healing time and recurrence time of oral mucosal diseases [11].

3.2 Gancao Xiexin Decoction

The 158th article of “Synopsis of the Golden Chamber” written by the famous Eastern Han Dynasty medical scientist Zhang Zhongjing mentions: “Erosion in the throat is called confusion, erosion in the genitals is called fox... Gancao Xiexin Decoction is the main treatment”, believing that Gancao Xiexin Decoction can effectively treat burning mouth syndrome. It also records the original text: “4 liang (a traditional Chinese weight unit) of Glycyrrhizae Radix, 3 liang of Scutellariae Radix, 3 liang of Ginseng Radix, 3 liang of Zingiberis Rhizoma, 1 liang of Coptidis Rhizoma, 12 jujubes, and half a sheng (a traditional Chinese volume unit) of Pinelliae Rhizoma. Decoct the seven ingredients with one dou (a traditional Chinese volume unit) of water, take 6 sheng, remove the dregs, decoct again, and take 1 sheng warm, three times a day.” In Gancao Xiexin Decoction, Coptidis Rhizoma and Scutellariae Radix are bitter and cold, directly reducing heat, eliminating heat toxins in the upper and middle jiao, and both have antiviral effects; Pinelliae Rhizoma is acrid and warm, “its body is slippery, taste is acrid and nature is warm; the slippery saliva can moisten, and the acrid warmth can disperse and also moisten”, acrid can promote dispersion, warm can dry dampness, making it an essential drug for resolving dampness. The combination of Pinelliae Rhizoma and Coptidis Rhizoma promotes the qi movement of the spleen and stomach; smooth qi movement leads to harmonious blood, and unobstructed meridians. Ginseng Radix and jujube are assistant drugs, sweet and warm to support healthy qi and benefit the spleen and stomach. Zingiberis Rhizoma is acrid and hot, warming the middle jiao and resolving dampness, with various pharmacological effects such as anti-hypoxia, sedation, and bacteriostasis [12]; here, Glycyrrhizae Radix is the monarch drug with a large dosage, and processed Glycyrrhizae Radix can clear fire in the upper jiao, relieve the adverse flow of exogenous qi, benefit the deficiency of the middle jiao, warm the stomach and protect it, which not only has the effect of “tonifying earth to subdue fire”, but also prevents excessive bitter and cold from damaging stomach qi. Modern pharmacology has found that processed Glycyrrhizae Radix contains more flavonoids than raw Glycyrrhizae Radix, which plays a major role in treating arrhythmia, analgesia, and antioxidation [13]. Among them, Zingiberis Rhizoma is yang within yang, which can warm the middle jiao and dispel cold; Pinelliae Rhizoma dries dampness and stops vomiting; the two drugs are acrid in nature, promoting dispersion and relieving stuffiness; Scutellariae Radix and Coptidis Rhizoma are bitter and cold, clearing heat, resolving dampness and detoxifying. The four drugs together fully reflect the treatment method of acrid opening and bitter descending, and balancing cold and heat. “Direct Explanation of Treatise on Febrile Diseases” records: “Yin and yang, water and fire are located above and below, while earth is in the middle; the communication between

upper and lower must go through the middle earth.” Therefore, Gancao Xiexin Decoction regulates the spleen and stomach, smooths qi movement, tonifies the deficiency of the middle jiao, and at the same time makes the five zang organs ascend and descend normally, qi movement smooth, and the middle jiao unobstructed and harmonious, leading to warmth below and clarity above [14]. Gancao Xiexin Decoction has both tonifying and purging effects, which can regulate the qi movement of the middle jiao to resolve dampness and turbidity, and also has the effect of clearing heat and purging fire, treating both the root and the branch, with definite efficacy in treating tongue numbness.

4. Introduction to Cases

4.1 Case 1

Deng, male, 59 years old, first visit on July 16, 2024. The patient complained of mouth and tongue pain for more than 3 years, with a burning pain at the tip of the tongue, sticky mouth, occasional irritability, and normal urination, defecation, and diet. Tongue and pulse examination: red tip of the tongue, white and slightly greasy coating, thready pulse. The prescription was modified Gancao Xiexin Decoction. Prescription: Pinellia ternata 12g, Scutellaria baicalensis 12g, Coptis chinensis 3g, Dried ginger 3g, Jujube 9g, Roasted licorice 15g, Codonopsis pilosula 10g, Rehmannia glutinosa 10g, Curcuma aromatica 12g, Paeonia lactiflora 9g, Acorus tatarinowii 12g. 5 doses, 1 dose a day, decocted in water to get 450 mL, taken warmly 3 times a day after meals. The patient was advised to keep a good mood, exercise properly, and have a light diet. Second visit on July 22, 2024: The patient reported that the mouth and tongue pain and occasional irritability had slightly improved after taking the medicine, but the stool was shapeless. Red tip of the tongue, white and greasy coating, thready pulse. The prescription was adjusted on the basis of the previous one: removed dried ginger, rehmannia glutinosa, acorus tatarinowii, etc., added talc to clear heat and promote diuresis, Poria cocos and Coix seed to invigorate the spleen and resolve dampness, Fritillaria thunbergii to clear heat and resolve phlegm, Cyperus rotundus (a qi medicine in blood) to strengthen qi movement here, Bletilla striata and Arnebia euchroma to relieve pain, and Lily bulb to clear the heart and calm the mind. 5 doses, taken in the same way as before. Third visit on July 28, 2024: The patient reported that the tip of the tongue pain and irritability had significantly reduced after taking the medicine, and now felt numbness at the tip of the tongue. Red tip of the tongue, white coating, thready pulse. Prescription: Roasted licorice 15g, Scutellaria baicalensis 10g, Coptis chinensis 5g, Pinellia ternata 15g, Lily bulb 30g, Jujube 10g, Talc (wrapped in cloth) 20g, Poria cocos 15g, Curcuma aromatica 12g, Adzuki bean 15g, Forsythia suspensa 9g, Salvia miltiorrhiza 12g. 5 doses, taken in the same way as before.

After three visits, the patient basically recovered. Follow-up after 1 month showed no recurrence of tongue pain.

Analysis: The patient was an elderly male with decreased zang-fu function, and long-term illness led to spleen qi deficiency. Qi deficiency then caused fluid retention and abnormal transportation and distribution, spleen deficiency with dampness accumulation, which over time transformed

into heat, leading to red tongue, sticky mouth, and thready pulse. “The tip of the tongue corresponds to the heart and lungs”; the red tip of the tongue and burning pain were caused by the patient’s emotional irritability, excessive heart fire flaring upward, heat toxins gathering in the tongue, insufficient nourishment of the tongue, and burning of blood vessels. Diseases of the heart and spleen lead to tongue diseases. Therefore, the pathogenesis of this disease was diagnosed as spleen and stomach qi deficiency, internal accumulation of water and dampness, long-term dampness transforming into heat, Fumigated qi and blood, heart fire flaring upward, qi blockage and blood stasis, and pain due to obstruction. Western diagnosis: Burning Mouth Syndrome. TCM diagnosis: Tongue numbness, syndrome of spleen deficiency with dampness accumulation and exuberant heart fire. The treatment was to invigorate the spleen and resolve dampness, clear heat and subdue fire. The modified Gancuo Xiexin Decoction was selected. At the first visit, patient Deng complained of obvious burning pain at the tip of the tongue, sticky mouth, occasional irritability, red tip of the tongue, white and slightly greasy coating, and thready pulse. The patient had obvious damp-heat, so Gancuo Xiexin Decoction was modified to clear heat, detoxify, resolve dampness, and regulate spleen and stomach function. In addition, rehmannia glutinosa was added to clear heat and cool blood, curcuma aromatica to clear the heart, cool blood, and promote qi circulation to relieve depression, paeonia lactiflora to nourish blood and relieve pain, and acorus tatarinowii to dispel dampness and eliminate phlegm with its pungent and aromatic nature, so as to reduce tongue pain. At the second visit: the patient reported that the mouth and tongue pain and occasional irritability had slightly improved after taking the medicine, and the stool was shapeless. The tip of the tongue was red, the coating was white and greasy, and the pulse was thready. On the basis of the previous prescription, adjustments were made: dried ginger, rehmannia glutinosa, acorus tatarinowii, etc., were removed; talc was added to clear heat and promote diuresis, poria cocos and coix seed to invigorate the spleen and resolve dampness, fritillaria thunbergii to clear heat and resolve phlegm, cyperus rotundus (a qi medicine in blood) to strengthen qi movement here, bletilla striata and arnebia euchroma to relieve pain, and lily bulb to clear the heart and calm the mind. At the third visit: the patient reported that the tip of the tongue pain and irritability had significantly reduced after taking the medicine, and now felt numbness at the tip of the tongue, and the stool condition had improved compared with before. The tip of the tongue was red, the coating was white, and the pulse was thready. Therefore, on the basis of the previous prescription, bletilla striata, arnebia euchroma, cyperus rotundus, coix seed, and atracylodes lancea were removed, and adzuki bean was added to clear heat and reduce turbidity, promote diuresis to firm the stool, forsythia suspensa to clear fire in the upper energizer, and salvia miltiorrhiza to clear the heart and relieve pain.

4.2 Case 2

Luo, female, 73 years old, first visit on March 31, 2025. The patient complained of tongue numbness for more than 1 month, with a self-conscious feeling of tongue numbness and occasional anxiety. Tongue and pulse examination: red tongue body, yellow and greasy coating, string-like pulse. Prescription: Pinellia ternata 15g, Scutellaria baicalensis

tablets 12g, Coptis chinensis tablets 5g, dried ginger 3g, jujube 9g, roasted licorice 9g, Codonopsis pilosula 12g, lily bulb 30g, raw Rehmannia glutinosa 10g, Curcuma aromatica 12g. 5 doses, 1 dose per day. Decoct with water to obtain 450 mL of liquid, take warmly 3 times a day after meals.

Second visit on April 5, 2025: The patient reported that the tongue numbness had alleviated. The tongue body was red, with a yellow and slightly greasy coating, and the pulse was string-like. Prescription given: Pinellia ternata 15g, Scutellaria baicalensis tablets 12g, Coptis chinensis tablets 5g, dried ginger 3g, jujube 9g, roasted licorice 9g, Codonopsis pilosula 12g, lily bulb 30g, raw Rehmannia glutinosa 10g, Curcuma aromatica 12g, Salvia miltiorrhiza 15g. 5 doses, taken in the same way as before. Continue taking 5 doses of the second-visit prescription for consolidation treatment. Follow-up after 1 month showed no recurrence.

Analysis: The patient in this case is an elderly female. Due to old age and physical weakness, she has spleen deficiency. In addition, excessive mental exertion caused by worry and anxiety has internally damaged the spleen qi, affecting both the heart and the spleen. The spleen fails to transport and transform, leading to impaired water and dampness metabolism, which accumulates into phlegm-dampness. Phlegm-dampness blocks the flow of qi, preventing qi, blood, and body fluids from ascending, further aggravating tongue numbness. The stagnation transforms into heat, which is manifested in the tongue and pulse as a red tongue body, yellow and greasy coating, and string-like pulse. Western diagnosis: Burning Mouth Syndrome. Traditional Chinese Medicine diagnosis: Tongue numbness, syndrome of heat accumulation in the heart and spleen. The treatment principle is to invigorate the spleen and resolve dampness, clear heat and calm the heart. Phlegm-dampness is inherently a yin pathogen and can only be transformed by “warm medicines”. Therefore, the modified Gancuo Xiexin Decoction (Licorice Heart-Draining Decoction) was chosen, which contains dried ginger and Pinellia ternata to warm and resolve phlegm-dampness. Since internal heat pathogens and water turbidity are closely intertwined, heat-clearing medicines and warm medicines should be used simultaneously, with warming and clearing working together to enhance each other’s effects. At the first visit, the patient had obvious tongue numbness accompanied by occasional anxiety. Raw Rehmannia glutinosa was added to the original prescription. Yaoxing Fu (Ode to the Properties of Medicines) states that raw Rehmannia glutinosa has four functions: “cooling the blood heat of heart fire, draining the damp-heat of spleen earth, stopping the heat of nasal bleeding, and eliminating the vexing heat of the five centers” [15]. It clears heat and cools blood to relieve tongue numbness. Curcuma aromatica is cold in nature, bitter, and good at purging, so it can promote qi circulation, purge fire, and relieve stagnation. Lily bulb enters the heart meridian, is slightly cold in nature, and can clear and calm the heart. At the second visit, the patient’s tongue numbness was significantly alleviated, indicating the effectiveness of the prescription. Therefore, the previous prescription was retained, with the addition of Salvia miltiorrhiza to unblock collaterals, activate blood circulation, relieve pain, and cool blood to reduce heat in the heart meridian. As Wenre Lun (Treatise on Warm Heat Diseases) states: “As for pathogenic factors entering the blood phase... it

is necessary to cool the blood and disperse blood stasis directly, using substances such as raw *Rehmannia glutinosa*, Moutan bark, donkey-hide gelatin, and red peony root". After continued medication, the patient basically recovered, with a significant therapeutic effect.

4.3 Case 3

Ms. Wen, female, 66 years old, first visit on September 4, 2024. The patient complained of burning pain at the tip of the tongue for more than 1 month, accompanied by dry mouth, bitter taste in the mouth, difficulty falling asleep, and slight dizziness and heavy-headedness. Tongue and pulse examination: red tip of the tongue, yellow and slightly greasy coating, thready pulse. Prescription: *Radix Rehmanniae* 12g, *Medulla Tetrapanacis* 3g, *Herba Lophatheri* 10g, *Radix Glycyrrhizae* (raw) 6g, *Rhizoma Pinelliae* 10g, *Radix Scutellariae* (sliced) 10g, *Rhizoma Coptidis* (sliced) 5g, *Rhizoma Zingiberis* 3g, *Fructus Jujubae* 9g, *Radix Glycyrrhizae* (processed with honey) 15g, *Radix Ophiopogonis* 15g, *Bulbus Lilii* 15g, *Radix Curcumae* 10g, *Radix Scrophulariae* 12g, *Bulbus Fritillariae Thunbergii* 12g, *Radix Bupleuri* 8g, *Radix Paeoniae Alba* 9g, *Radix Achyranthis Bidentatae* 12g, *Rhizoma Acori Tatarinowii* 10g, *Fructus Schisandrae Chinensis* (processed with vinegar) 12g, *Caulis Polygoni Multiflori* 15g. 5 doses, 1 dose per day, decocted in water to obtain 450 mL of juice, taken 3 times a day after meals while warm. The patient was also advised to have a light diet and regulate emotions. Second visit on September 10, 2024: The patient reported that the burning pain at the tip of the tongue had alleviated, with slight dizziness, dry mouth, and loose stools. The tip of the tongue was red, the coating was yellow and slightly greasy, and the pulse was thready and slippery. Prescription given: *Radix Rehmanniae* 12g, *Medulla Tetrapanacis* 3g, *Herba Lophatheri* 10g, *Radix Glycyrrhizae* (raw) 6g, *Rhizoma Pinelliae* 12g, *Radix Scutellariae* (sliced) 12g, *Rhizoma Coptidis* (sliced) 5g, *Rhizoma Zingiberis* 3g, *Fructus Jujubae* 9g, *Radix Glycyrrhizae* (processed with honey) 15g, *Bulbus Lilii* 30g, *Radix Scrophulariae* 12g, *Rhizoma Cyperi* 10g, *Radix Curcumae* 12g, *Semen Coicis* 30g, *Caulis Polygoni Multiflori* 15g, *Radix Salviae Miltiorrhizae* 10g, *Radix Trichosanthis* 10g, *Radix Polygalae* (processed with honey) 12g, *Rhizoma Acori Tatarinowii* 10g. Third visit on September 16, 2024: The patient stated that the pain at the tip of the tongue had lessened, with occasional chest tightness, dry mouth, formed stools, still poor sleep quality, and frequent dreams. The tip of the tongue was slightly red, the coating was yellow, and the pulse was thready and slippery. Prescription given: *Radix Rehmanniae* 12g, *Medulla Tetrapanacis* 3g, *Herba Lophatheri* 10g, *Radix Glycyrrhizae* (raw) 6g, *Rhizoma Pinelliae* 12g, *Radix Scutellariae* (sliced) 12g, *Rhizoma Coptidis* (sliced) 5g, *Rhizoma Zingiberis* 3g, *Fructus Jujubae* 9g, *Radix Glycyrrhizae* (processed with honey) 9g, *Radix Scrophulariae* 12g, *Rhizoma Cyperi* 10g, *Radix Curcumae* 12g, *Caulis Polygoni Multiflori* 15g, *Semen Sojae Preparatum* 10g, *Fructus Gardeniae* (stir-fried) 10g, *Radix Trichosanthis* 10g, *Radix Polygalae* (processed with honey) 12g, *Rhizoma Acori Tatarinowii* 10g. 5 doses, taken in the same manner as before. The patient did not return for a follow-up visit after taking the medicine. A telephone follow-up one month later revealed that she had recovered after taking the Chinese medicine and there was no recurrence.

Analysis: This elderly female patient had obvious burning pain at the tip of the tongue, poor sleep, accompanied by dry mouth and bitter taste, which indicated that the pain was caused by hyperactive heart-fire attacking the tongue collaterals upward, disturbing the heart spirit and causing difficulty in falling asleep, and consuming body fluids, resulting in dry mouth and bitter taste. Her dizziness was caused by dampness ascending to the clear orifices along with heat pathogens. The red tip of the tongue, yellow and slightly greasy coating, and thready pulse were also indicative of the condition. Western diagnosis: Burning Mouth Syndrome. TCM diagnosis: Tongue Paralysis (pattern of hyperactive heart-fire and fumigation of damp-heat). The treatment principle was to invigorate the spleen, resolve dampness, clear the heart, and dissipate heat. The chosen formula was modified Daochi Powder combined with Ganciao Xiexin Decoction. During the first visit, since the patient suffered from severe burning pain at the tip of the tongue, *Radix Paeoniae Alba* was added to regulate nutrient blood and relieve pain; *Bulbus Fritillariae Thunbergii* to dispel heat with its pungent property; *Rhizoma Acori Tatarinowii* to eliminate dampness and unblock the nine orifices due to the presence of dampness indicated by dizziness and heavy-headedness. *Radix Bupleuri*, *Fructus Schisandrae Chinensis*, *Caulis Polygoni Multiflori*, and *Bulbus Lilii* were used to calm the heart and soothe the spirit, aiding sleep. For the patient's dry mouth, *Radix Ophiopogonis* was added to clear the heart and nourish yin to produce body fluids; *Radix Achyranthis Bidentatae* to clear the heart and spleen, and guide heat downward. During the second visit, the patient's burning pain at the tip of the tongue had alleviated, with slight dizziness, dry mouth, and loose stools. The condition had improved compared to before, so the previous formula was adjusted. *Bulbus Fritillariae Thunbergii* and *Bulbus Lilii* were removed. As stated in *Su Wen·Yin Yang Ying Xiang Da Lun* ("Plain Questions·Great Treatise on the Correspondence of Yin and Yang"), "Excessive dampness leads to diarrhea". Dysfunction of the spleen in transportation causes disordered digestion and absorption, resulting in the small intestine's failure to separate clear from turbid, and food and water entering the large intestine together, leading to diarrhea. Therefore, *Semen Coicis* was added to invigorate the spleen and resolve dampness; *Rhizoma Cyperi* to enhance qi movement and promote fluid distribution; *Radix Scrophulariae* to clear heat and cool blood; *Radix Polygalae* (processed with honey) to calm the mind and induce sleep; and *Radix Trichosanthis*. During the third visit, the patient's tongue pain had lessened, with occasional chest tightness, formed stools, and frequent dreams at night. The tip of the tongue was slightly red, the coating was yellow, and the pulse was thready and slippery. Further adjustments were made to the previous formula: *Radix Salviae Miltiorrhizae* was removed, and *Semen Sojae Preparatum* (light in nature, cold in qi, fragrant and dispersing, capable of clearing chest heat) and *Fructus Gardeniae* (stir-fried, bitter and cold, able to purge fire and detoxify) were added. The combination of these two herbs exerted the effect of "releasing stagnated fire".

5. Conclusion

Burning mouth syndrome is a common psychosomatic disease in clinical practice. With the acceleration of modern life rhythm, the increase of mental pressure, the

diversification of diet structure, the irregularity of work and rest, etc., the incidence trend is constantly rising. Through years of clinical practice, Professor Gao Rong believes that burning mouth syndrome is related to multiple zang-fu organs, but the main cause is the dysfunction of the heart and spleen. Therefore, the treatment should start from regulating the heart and spleen. With Daochi Powder combined with Gancao Xiexin Decoction as the basic prescription, modified and adjusted flexibly, the methods of clearing heat and drying dampness, and regulating yin, yang, qi and blood are adopted to tonify the spleen and stomach of the middle jiao, replenish the “postnatal earth” (referring to the spleen’s function of transforming and transporting nutrients), so as to generate qi and blood, smooth the circulation of body fluids, and at the same time clear away the heat of heart-fire. When the fire is purged, the blood will be calmed, and the blood vessels will be unobstructed, thus achieving the purpose of relieving pain by calming qi and blood. It has remarkable curative effect in the clinical treatment of burning mouth syndrome. Of course, as stated in Huangdi Neijing (Yellow Emperor’s Inner Canon), “When healthy qi is stored inside, pathogenic factors cannot invade”, we should pay attention to health preservation in daily life, such as having a light diet, living a regular life, keeping a happy mood, and taking proper exercise to improve our physical functions, so as to prevent diseases from invading and avoid getting sick.

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