

# Case Report on Acupuncture Point Implantation Therapy for Eczema

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**Abstract:** *Objective: To analyze the clinical efficacy of acupoint embedding therapy for eczema. Methods: A case report of acupoint embedding therapy for eczema was presented, and relevant literature was reviewed to retrospectively analyze the pathogenesis and treatment protocols. Results: Acupoint embedding alleviated eczema by enhancing patients' immunity through regulating the body's immune mechanisms. Conclusion: Acupoint embedding demonstrates significant clinical efficacy in treating eczema.*

**Keywords:** Acupoint implantation, Eczema, Back-shu points.

## 1. Definition of Eczema

Eczema, termed “damp sores” in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), is an inflammatory skin disorder with exudative tendencies caused by multiple internal and external factors. Its clinical features include polymorphic, symmetrical skin lesions with exudation, subjective itching, recurrent episodes, and a tendency toward chronicity. It exhibits no distinct seasonal or age-related patterns and shows no significant association with gender. Traditional Chinese medicine employs numerous therapeutic approaches for this condition. Oral herbal formulas are selected based on syndrome differentiation and classification. External treatments include commonly used topical ointments, acupuncture, and autologous blood therapy [1].

Subacute eczema represents a critical transitional phase between acute and chronic eczema. This case report details a clinician's use of acupoint thread implantation therapy for subacute eczema, supplemented by relevant literature to explore clinical acupoint selection principles and treatment protocols. This aims to enhance understanding of managing this condition and improve clinical diagnostic proficiency.

## 2. Clinical Data

Patient, female, 37 years old, presented with scattered papules on the skin for over 4 years.

Over the past four years, intermittent treatment at local hospitals with oral Chinese herbal medicine and topical applications provided short-term symptom relief. However, symptoms recurred after exertion, persisting without resolution. The patient sought treatment at the acupuncture department. Presenting symptoms included scattered papules on the skin, predominantly on the elbows and knees, appearing dark red and accompanied by itching. Additional complaints included poor appetite, light sleep, loose stools, and normal urination.

Physical examination: Pale red tongue with swollen body and teeth marks on edges; thin yellow coating with slight greasiness; fine pulse.

Past Medical History: Denies other chronic conditions.

Treatment Process: The instructor employed acupoint thread implantation therapy. Selected points: Local Ashi points, Quchi (LI11), Shousanli (LI10), Xuehai (SP10), Yinlingquan (SP9), Zusanli (ST36), Jiaji points, Dazhui (GV14), Feishu (BL13), Jueyinshu (BL18), Diaoshu (BL17), Pishu (BL20), Ganshu (BL18), Shenshu (BL23), and Yaoyangguan (BL32). Treatment frequency: Once every 2 weeks, with 4 sessions constituting one course. Follow-up after each course revealed the patient reported improved coloration of the eczema areas and significantly reduced itching. The processing process is shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.



Figure 1: Back Legs Elbow posterior



Figure 2: Elbow 1 and Elbow 2

## 3. Discussion

The patient's condition falls under the category of damp sores in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Based on the dark red skin color and itching, it was in the subacute stage. Poor appetite, pale red tongue with a swollen body, thin yellow greasy coating, and loose stools indicated a pattern of damp-heat accumulation in the skin. The prolonged nature of the condition represented a pattern of underlying deficiency with

superficial excess, with spleen deficiency as the root and dampness obstructing the collaterals as the branch. Treatment focused on strengthening the spleen, dispelling dampness, and harmonizing ying and wei qi. The pathogenesis of eczema primarily involves damp-heat obstructing the skin, leading to skin malnutrition. Blood deficiency combined with wind exposure causes itching. The principle “Treat wind by first treating blood; when blood flows, wind ceases” guides clinical selection of the “Blood Sea” (SP10) and “Elbow Crook” (LI11) points. Blood Sea (SP10), belonging to the Foot Taiyin Spleen Meridian, promotes blood circulation and nourishment, harmonizing qi and blood while dispelling wind and dampness. Quchi (LI11), belonging to the Hand-Yangming Large Intestine Meridian, is the convergence point of the Large Intestine Meridian. It unblocks meridians and harmonizes qi and blood, facilitating the flow of qi and blood near affected areas and expelling wind pathogens.

Acupuncture thread implantation therapy targets points like Quchi and Xuehai to harmonize the Qi of the Hand Yangming and Foot Taiyin meridians, while simultaneously fortifying the body's defenses and expelling pathogens. Zusanli and Yinlingquan strengthen the spleen and drain dampness, supplemented by paravertebral points to unblock the Governor Vessel's Qi and blood, thereby balancing Yin and Yang. The instructor emphasizes integrating pattern differentiation with disease diagnosis during treatment, achieving favorable outcomes through holistic regulation. Compared to previous literature, this approach demonstrates greater efficacy in alleviating itching and skin lesions, though long-term regulation of spleen deficiency as the root cause warrants further investigation. This case highlights the critical importance of comprehensive pattern differentiation and individualized treatment in chronic dermatology.

#### 4. Emphasis on Integrating Zang-fu Organs with Meridians

TCM pattern differentiation emphasizes both zang-fu organ and meridian analysis. Internal medicine conditions tend toward zang-fu differentiation, while surgical conditions lean toward meridian differentiation. Skin diseases are fundamentally zang-fu disorders, as TCM states, “What manifests internally must also manifest externally.” To treat the root cause, one must address the zang-fu organs. Meridians serve as pathways throughout the body, connecting upper and lower regions, linking internal and external systems, circulating qi and blood, and nourishing the entire body. By regulating meridians, we modulate the body's qi mechanisms and promote qi and blood circulation in affected areas. Back-shu points (BL) are acupoints where the qi of zang-fu organs is transmitted to the back, reflecting the vitality of these organs to some extent. The anatomical localization of back-shu points provides theoretical support for treating diseases of the five zang organs via these points. Thus, acupuncture at back-shu points can regulate the qi and blood of the five zang organs.

The Bladder Meridian of Foot-Taiyang, to which these points belong, is characterized by abundant qi and sparse blood. Through pathways such as the meeting points, meridian interior-exterior relationships, and the Eight Extra Meridian meeting points, the Bladder Meridian directly connects with

numerous meridians including the Governor Vessel, Kidney Meridian, Liver Meridian, Gallbladder Meridian, Heart Meridian, and Yin-Yang Conjugate Vessels. These meridians are closely associated with brain regions involved in emotional regulation. Selecting the Bladder Meridian thus regulates the body's overall qi mechanism. The Master emphasizes the Five Zang Shu Points to prioritize the regulation of the spirit by the Five Zang Organs.

#### 4.1 The Selection of the Lung Shu Point is Based on the Theory That “The Lung Governs the Skin and Hair”

The Ling Shu: Treatise on Paralysis states: “The lung governs the skin and hair.” The skin and hair encompass tissues including the epidermis, sweat glands, and body hair, forming the body's surface. They regulate body temperature, manage fluid metabolism, defend against external pathogens, and assist respiration. As the body's outer barrier, the skin and hair resist external pathogens—a function consistent with the skin's barrier role. The Ling Shu: Origin of Hundred Diseases notes: Therefore, when pathogenic factors invade the body, they first affect the skin. When the skin becomes lax, the pores open; once open, pathogens enter through the hair follicles.” This indicates that the skin and hair serve as the first line of defense against external pathogens. If the skin pores become loose, the protective function of the skin and hair diminishes, allowing external pathogens to invade [2, 3]. The Ling Shu: Decision on Qi states: “The upper burner opens and disperses the flavors of the five grains, perfuming the skin, nourishing the body, moisturizing the hair like mist or dew.” This illustrates how lung qi, through its functions of dispersion and descent, distributes the essence of grains and body fluids to the skin and hair. This nourishes the skin, moistens the hair, disperses defensive qi outward to the skin and hair, fortifies the pores, regulates sweat gland activity, and defends against external pathogens. It ensures the normal physiological functions of the skin and hair, preventing pathogens from penetrating inward to the lungs. When lung qi fails to diffuse properly, the protective function weakens, making the body susceptible to invasion by external pathogens such as wind, dampness, heat, parasites, and toxins. Insufficient lung qi cannot expel these pathogens, leading to symptoms of impaired skin barrier function—including sensitivity, redness, dryness, scaling, tightness, and burning sensations [4].

Modern medicine refers to this as the skin barrier, which has broad and narrow definitions. Broadly, it encompasses physical, immune, pigment, and neural barriers. Narrowly, it primarily denotes the physical skin barrier—the skin barrier itself. The physical barrier is composed of the sebum film, keratin in the stratum corneum, lipids, the “sandwich” structure, brick-and-mortar structure, and dermal mucopolysaccharides. It defends against external harmful irritants and sunlight while providing hydration and regulating anti-inflammatory responses [5]. Modern research indicates that the skin and lungs form the body's first line of defense, directly exposed to the external environment and susceptible to pathogenic factors. Each possesses its own independent immune system, rich in immune cells such as macrophages, lymphocytes, mast cells, fibroblasts, and Langerhans cells. Together, they execute immune responses. The lungs inhale oxygen. After gas exchange, oxygen-rich blood is transported through the heart to the dermal capillary

network throughout the body. Following tissue gas exchange, the skin receives oxygen-enriched blood while metabolic waste products are removed [6]. This aligns with the concept that “the lungs govern the skin and hair” [7].

#### **4.2 The Selection of Heart-related Acupoints is Based on the Theory That “All Pain, Itching, and Sores belong to the Heart”**

Ancient Chinese texts extensively document the relationship between the heart and skin diseases. The Suwen states: “All pain, itching, and sores belong to the heart.” The Shuowen Jiezi defines “itching” as: “Itching is a sore.” “This indicates that pain and itching are key symptoms of sores and ulcers, closely aligning with the typical progression of eczema: initial itching, followed by ulceration and pus formation from scratching, then scabbing and pain as the condition develops into sores and ulcers. Liu Wansu elaborated in Suwen Xuanji Yuanbing Shi: “All pains, itches, and sores belong to heart fire.” while Gao Shizong’s Qing dynasty work Suwen Zhijie (Direct Explanation of the Suwen) bluntly states, “All belong to fire” [8]. Throughout history, medical authorities have predominantly framed ulceration within a fire-heat framework, positing that its onset arises when exogenous fire-heat pathogens become internally stagnant at local sites. This leads to obstruction of the meridians, stagnation of qi and blood, and the subsequent eruption of ulcers. For instance, the Medical Canon states: Boils and abscesses originate from fire toxins; meridian obstruction causes qi and blood stagnation.” Tang Rongchuan’s Essentials of Medical Classics emphasizes that “stagnant qi and blood obstruct the flow of qi, causing both pain and itching.” Treatment often relies on heat-clearing and toxin-resolving formulas like the Life-Saving Decoction [9].

Emotional states not only affect the mind but also disrupt the flow of meridians. The Yellow Emperor’s Inner Canon states: “The heart is the sovereign of the five viscera and six bowels, the abode of spirit and essence.” Shen Douwen’s Ming Dynasty text Outline of Surgical Mysteries records: “Generally, all sores and ulcers arise from disharmony among the five zang organs and stagnation in the six fu organs, obstructing the meridians and giving rise to these conditions” (Volume One: Conclusions on Sores, Ulcers, and Constipation [10].

Clinical observations reveal that eczema patients often develop emotional disturbances like anxiety and depression due to prolonged illness. The subjective sensations of pain and itching in eczema fluctuate with emotional states. Severe itching exacerbates restlessness, anxiety, and sleep disturbances, creating a vicious cycle of “itching → emotional imbalance → worsening condition” [11]. The Ling Shu of the Huangdi Neijing states: “The heart houses the blood vessels, and the blood vessels house the spirit.” The heart generates blood vessels and houses the spirit; abundant blood provides the material foundation for the spirit’s stability. Chronic eczema is often caused by invasion of wind-damp-heat pathogens, leading to stagnation and transformation of damp-heat. This depletes yin blood and impairs nourishment of the heart spirit, resulting in manifestations of mental disturbance such as absent-mindedness, emotional fluctuations, and sleep disorders. simultaneously, deficiency

of yin blood leads to inadequate nourishment of the skin, manifesting as dry, flaky skin, papules, darkened lesions, intense itching accompanied by scratch marks and hyperpigmentation. A red tongue with scant coating and a thin, slippery pulse are characteristic signs of yin blood deficiency and internal accumulation of damp-heat [12].

The core pathogenesis of skin diseases essentially revolves around the following points: (1) Impaired blood circulation deprives the skin of nourishment, predisposing it to sores and itching. (2) Emotional disturbances disrupt qi flow, causing recurrent skin lesions. (3) As the heart governs fire, excessive heart fire readily induces pain and itching. (4) Prolonged illness depletes qi, leading to phlegm and blood stasis accumulation, resulting in protracted conditions. The Suwen: Lingnan Secret Canon states, “The heart is the sovereign organ; divine clarity emanates from it.” The Essential Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Gold: Volume 13, Heart Formulas, Chapter 1 on Heart Pulse Theory notes, “The heart governs spirit. Spirit is the essence of the five viscera. It reigns supreme over the four directions, flourishing during summer’s seventy-two days. Its position is in the south, the palace of fire.” The heart serves as the central commander of both physiological and psychological activities in the human body. It governs the five zang organs. When the spirit is normal, all organs coordinate harmoniously, maintaining health and order. If the sovereign fails to fulfill its role, the ministers become leaderless, and the state collapses—that is, the heart fails to store the spirit, leading to ineffective command and coordination, resulting in recurrent and intractable disease [13]. The Inner Canon states, “When nutritive qi fails to follow its course and rebels against the skin texture, boils and swellings arise,” indicating that obstructed blood circulation leads to stagnation beneath the skin, fostering acne. Similarly, when the wind pathogen invades a deficient person, it clashes with qi and blood, manifesting as skin disorders. Thus, skin diseases involving “blood” and “vessels” are closely linked to the “heart” [14].

#### **4.3 Diaphragm Shu (CV17) is the Blood Convergence point among the Eight Convergence Points, Possessing Effects of Invigorating Blood and Unblocking Vessels**

The name Diaphragm Shu signifies: Diaphragm refers to the diaphragm membrane located beneath the thoracic cavity, below the heart and above the spleen. Shu means convergence. It is named the Blood Meeting Point because this point connects upward to the heart and lungs, governing blood vessels and the convergence of all meridians; downward to the spleen, stomach, liver, and gallbladder. The spleen is the source of qi and blood generation, transporting and distributing the essence of food and drink, and is the vital site for transforming and transporting qi and blood. The spleen governs blood. The liver is the organ that stores blood and is a crucial site for regulating the body’s qi and blood. Traditional Chinese medicine holds that the Diao Shu point has the effects of regulating qi, broadening the chest, promoting blood circulation, and unblocking meridians. Clinically, it is frequently used to treat hiccups and other digestive system disorders. “To treat blood disorders, first address wind; when blood flows, wind subsides.” Combining Diaphragm Shu with Blood Sea (SP10), Elbow Curve (LI11), and Stomach Three Mile (ST36) can nourish and promote blood circulation.

Clinical studies [15] demonstrate that needling Diaphragm Shu can treat shingles by unblocking meridians, accelerating circulation, and regulating immune function. Combining Diaphragm Shu with the Five Zang Shu points mobilizes qi and blood circulation throughout the body, also improving somatization of depression [16]. Reports indicate bee venom therapy effectively dispels wind and dampness, promotes blood circulation to remove stasis, and regulates immune function [17].

#### **4.4 Liver Shu Points Regulate Liver Qi and Emotional Well-being**

The liver houses the soul and governs the free flow of qi throughout the body. When liver qi flows smoothly, the entire body's qi circulation is unimpeded, ensuring unobstructed blood flow and nourishment of the meridians. The liver, as the general of the body, is prone to generating fire. When liver fire becomes excessive, it can cause qi and blood to flow in the wrong direction, leading to symptoms like bleeding. Over time, this depletes yin and blood. In individuals with pre-existing blood deficiency, meridian obstruction can result in blood stasis, and inadequate nourishment of the skin may manifest as itching [18]. Therefore, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) attributes blood disorders to stagnant blood obstructing the collaterals, excessive qi and fire, yin deficiency with fire excess, and qi failing to retain blood. The three fundamental principles for treating blood disorders are regulating fire, regulating qi, and regulating blood. As stated in Medical Compendium: Treatise on Blood Disorders: "Blood follows qi; thus, to treat blood, one must first regulate qi." The Liver Shu point excels at treating liver-related visceral disorders, soothing the liver, regulating qi, and balancing emotions [19].

### **5. Emphasize the Concept of Consolidating the Foundation and Nourishing the Root**

When the body's vital energy is abundant, pathogenic factors cannot invade. Therefore, the fundamental approach to treating disease lies in consolidating the foundation and nourishing the root [20]. The Essential Readings of Medical Orthodoxy states: "The kidneys are the root of the innate, and the spleen is the root of the acquired." In today's technologically advanced society, people often suffer from deficiency of yang qi due to dietary and environmental influences. Since life depends on movement, deficiency of yang qi leads to impaired qi transformation. The Complete Works of Jingyue states: The fire of the Gate of Life is termed original qi." Thus, warming kidney yang and tonifying spleen earth embody the contemporary essence of consolidating the foundation and nurturing the root. Against the backdrop of modern fast-paced lifestyles, widespread stress prevents proper emotional release, causing qi stagnation internally and generating various pathological states. Through extensive clinical practice, the mentor integrates the One-Qi Circulation Theory of Xin Yuan Medical School [21] and Huang Yuanyu's theory of One Qi Circulation [22]. Whether in formula composition or acupuncture point selection, emphasis is placed on protecting the spleen and stomach, elevating and supplementing yang qi, and regulating emotions. This has formed a therapeutic philosophy centered on "consolidating the foundation and nurturing the root, with regulating the

spirit as paramount." One distinctive technique within the Consolidating Foundation and Regulating Spirit Acupuncture is the Five Zang Shu Points paired with Diaphragm Shu Points using a left-right cross-needling method. This involves crossing the needle handles left and right at the aforementioned points to achieve self-harmonization and balance of yin and yang. The selection of Spleen Shu (BL21) and Kidney Shu (BL23) reflects treatment from the root. As stated in "On the Spleen and Stomach": "All diseases arise from the decline of the spleen and stomach," and further: "Sores entirely depend on the spleen earth." Eczema manifests as spleen deficiency failing to transport fluids, leading to fluid overflow and accumulation in the skin. Treatment focuses on strengthening the spleen, invigorating spleen qi, and promoting the transformation of dampness [23]. The Kidney Shu point belongs to the Foot-Taiyang Bladder Meridian. Classical texts document its diverse therapeutic properties: nourishing kidney yin, warming and supplementing kidney yang, and benefiting essence and marrow. Chronic illness leads to deficiency, causing inadequate nourishment of the zang-fu organs. As the foundation of the five zang organs, although the Kidney Shu point has no direct therapeutic relationship with skin diseases, treating the root cause is essential. This point can simultaneously regulate kidney essence through the kidney-bone-marrow sea mechanism [24]. The combination of these two points achieves the effect of consolidating the foundation and nourishing the root. Combined with Yaoyangguan (BL32), it enhances the warming effect on the kidneys and nourishes essence, thereby boosting the patient's immunity.

### **6. Emphasis is Placed on Long-term Regulation**

As the patient resides out of town and cannot attend hospital appointments according to the treatment schedule, the instructor selected acupoints for thread implantation based on the patient's condition. This approach reduces the number of required visits while maintaining therapeutic efficacy. Conventional acupuncture produces therapeutic effects within a certain timeframe. Clinically, needles are typically retained for 30 minutes. The duration of post-needling effects remains debated; some researchers suggest 3-4 hours, but without standardized measurement protocols, the precise duration remains unclear [25]. Acupoint thread implantation is a modern acupuncture technique that combines physical, chemical, and biological stimulation to regulate the immune system. Protein threads, absorbable by the human body, are implanted into acupoints. The gradual breakdown and absorption of these threads by local tissues provide sustained stimulation over an extended period. The protein threads are completely metabolized and absorbed within approximately three weeks, meaning they deliver continuous stimulation for this duration [26]. This prolonged therapeutic effect significantly outperforms conventional acupuncture [27]. For chronic diseases, their persistent and recurrent nature is a defining challenge for patients. While modern medicine continues to explore the mechanism of acupuncture thread implantation, studies by Wang Ting [28] and others suggest that acupoint thread implantation can reduce skin barrier damage caused by sodium dodecyl sulfate (SDS) stimulation. Research indicates that acupoint thread implantation can

improve localized hyperpigmentation, hypopigmentation, or depigmentation, enhance skin condition, and promote its development toward the most ideal neutral skin state [29]. Thread implantation not only prolongs the sensation of acupuncture, enhances acupoint excitability and conductivity, and improves therapeutic efficacy, but also avoids the adverse local reactions caused by repeated needling, thereby reducing patients' fear of acupuncture [30].

## 7. Summary

The mentor specializes in using acupoint thread implantation to treat chronic diseases, characterized by a heavy reliance on back-shu points. This approach leverages the efficacy of the five zang-fu shu points in treating corresponding zang-fu organ disorders, as well as diseases related to the five zang-fu organs, the five senses and nine orifices, skin, flesh, tendons, and bones. By addressing the five zang organs to regulate their qi and blood, unblocking the meridians connecting these organs, and integrating zang-fu organ function with meridian pathways, this approach yields significantly superior therapeutic outcomes compared to localized acupoint selection.

## 8. Conclusion

For patients with chronic eczema, acupoint thread implantation not only alleviates symptoms but also regulates systemic balance—aligning with TCM's fundamental principles of holistic perspective and syndrome differentiation.

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