

# “All Dampness and Swelling belong to the Spleen” Guiding the Treatment of Eczema

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**Abstract:** *Eczema is a common acute and chronic skin inflammatory disease, its pathogenesis is complex, involving a variety of internal and external factors, and traditional Chinese medicine classifies it as “eczema”. Traditional Chinese medicine theory believes that the root cause of eczema lies in dampness, especially spleen deficiency and damp accumulation eczema. Based on the theory that “all eczema and swelling belong to the spleen” in the inner meridian, this paper discusses its guiding role in the treatment of eczema, analyzes its application in the treatment of eczema, and combines modern medical research to explore the clinical efficacy and possible mechanism of traditional Chinese medicine in the treatment of eczema.*

**Keywords:** Neijing, Nineteen pathogenesis, Eczema, Spleen.

## 1. Introduction

Eczema is a common skin disease characterized by skin inflammation, itching, and lesions, usually with a long course of illness and prone to recurrent attacks, which can seriously affect the patient's daily life. Traditional Chinese medicine believes that the occurrence of eczema is closely related to the dysfunction of the spleen, and the spleen mainly transports water and dampness. This article will discuss the application of “all eczema and swelling belong to the spleen” in the treatment of eczema from the perspective of internal meridian theory, and analyze its clinical guiding significance.

## 2. The Connotation of “all dampness and swelling belong to the spleen”

In the “Selected Readings of the Inner Canon”, the “Suwen Zhizhen Yao Da Lun” annotates nineteen articles of pathogenesis, among which the annotation on “all dampness and swelling belong to the spleen” is “the spleen is damp, and the main muscles are damp, and the muscles are swollen and full, so they belong to the spleen. If the earth's energy is excessive, dampness will prevail, and the disease will suddenly appear, and the method should be to divide and distribute. The two are easy to treat, compared to the blade. “It better explains the mechanism of “dampness”, “swelling” and “fullness”, the process of the organs involved from dampness to swelling, the two results of excessive and insufficient spleen and the two results of real and deficient, and the treatment methods for them.

## 3. TCM Syndrome and Treatment of Eczema

### 3.1 Damp-heat Accumulation Syndrome

The onset is fast, the course of the disease is short, manifested as skin lesions flushing and burning, papules, endless itching, scratching exudate and juice, accompanied by body heat, irritability, thirst, dry stools, and short and red urine. The treatment is mainly to clear heat, relieve dampness and relieve itching, and use Gentian Xie Liver Decoction combined with Xiang Xiang Xi Damp Decoction to add or subtract

### 3.2 Spleen Deficiency and Dampness Accumulation Syndrome

The onset is slow, the skin lesions are flushed, there are papules, itching, erosion oozes after scratching, and scales can be seen. With less companionship, abdominal distension and loose stools, easy fatigue, fat tongue white or greasy, and slow pulse. The treatment is mainly to strengthen the spleen, relieve dampness and relieve itching, and use dehumidifying Weiling Decoction or Shenling Baizhu Powder to add or subtract.

### 3.3 Yin Deficiency and Damp Love Syndrome

The course of the disease is long, and the skin lesions can be seen infiltrated and thickened, dry and scaling, severe itching, and slight watering. The tongue is red and the moss is shiny, and the pulse is thin and smooth. The treatment is mainly to nourish yin and dehumidify, and the prescription is to add or subtract from yin nourishing and dehumidifying decoction.

## 4. Clinical Research Progress

### 4.1 Single-flavor Traditional Chinese Medicine for the Treatment of Eczema

#### 4.1.1 Purslane

The efficacy of purslane in the treatment of eczema has long been recorded in the “Evidence Materia Medica”: “suffering from eczema, white baldness, take horse's tooth ointment is good”, Ge Yiman et al. found that purslane can down-regulate H1R and PAR-2 levels, inhibit the expression of TRPV1 protein, and down-regulate Ca concentration, thereby controlling itching, inhibiting inflammatory factors, and repairing the skin barrier.

#### 4.1.2 Comfrey

Comfrey has the effects of promoting blood circulation and cooling blood, penetrating rash and detoxifying, and its pharmacological active substance comfrey can down-regulate the expression level of inflammatory factors in the skin lesion

tissue of DNCB-allergic mouse eczema model and reduce the inflammatory response.

#### 4.1.3 The bitter and dry properties of tripterygium

Vesteria Tripterygium dispel dampness, kill insects and relieve itching, tripterygium is the active ingredient of tripterygium, which has anti-inflammatory, analgesic, immunomodulatory, anti-tumor and other effects, and can down-regulate the levels of IFN- $\gamma$  and IL-4 in DNCB-allergic eczema mice, and regulate T and B lymphocytes to achieve therapeutic effects.

#### 4.1.4 Phellodendron

Huangbai is bitter and cold, belongs to the kidney and bladder meridians, can clear away heat and dampness, drain fire and remove steam, detoxify and treat sores, alkaloids and flavonoids in Hundra have the effects of inhibiting immune response, antibacterial, anti-infective, anti-inflammatory, etc. [1], and studies have shown that it can inhibit the release of serum inflammatory factors in rats with acute eczema, inhibit the adhesion of inflammatory cells on the vascular endothelium and reduce skin damage.

#### 4.1.5 Bitter ginseng

Bitter ginseng has the effects of clearing away heat and dampness, killing insects and relieving itching, dispelling wind and relieving pain, etc., and can significantly improve the inflammatory manifestations of eczema skin lesions, and matrine can down-regulate the levels of TNF- $\alpha$  and IL-6 in the serum of DNCB-sensitive eczema mice, and down-regulate the level of PAR-2 in ear tissue, which can inhibit non-histamine-dependent signaling and exert an antipruritic effect [2].

#### 4.1.6 Danbipol

Danbipol is a bioactive ingredient extracted from peony bark and Xu Changqing, and it has been found that Danbipol can down-regulate the levels of SP and NK1R in eczema models of DNCB-allergic mice, inhibit mast cell activation, and alleviate skin inflammation and damage in animals.

#### 4.1.7 White fresh skin

White fresh skin is bitter and cold, belongs to the spleen, stomach, and bladder meridians, and has the effect of dispelling wind and detoxifying, clearing away heat and dampness. The targets of some components in the volatile oil of white fresh skin can play an anti-allergic effect through 5-HT, regulating the irritation response and inflammatory response of foreign substances [3].

#### 4.1.8 Poria

Poria is sweet in taste and flat, returning to the heart, lungs, spleen, and kidney meridians, and has the effect of strengthening the spleen and infiltrating dampness, calming the heart and calming the nerves. Its active ingredient, poria acid, has the effect of inhibiting inflammatory factors and enhancing protease activity, and has good efficacy in the

treatment of chronic diseases [4].

#### 4.1.9 Kochia

Kochia is bitter in taste and cold in nature, belongs to the kidney and bladder meridians, and has the effects of clearing heat and cooling blood, diuresis and reducing swelling. Triterpene saponins and kochia alcohol in kochia extract have anti-inflammatory and anti-itch effects, and have a certain therapeutic effect on eczema [5].

#### 4.1.10 Coix seeds

Coix seeds are sweet and light in taste, cool in nature, enter the spleen, stomach, and lung meridians, and are conducive to water infiltration, strengthening the spleen and stopping diarrhea. Some of the ingredients in its extract, coix seed oil, such as lactams and fatty acids, have analgesic and anti-inflammatory effects [6].

### 4.2 Proprietary Chinese Medicine for the Treatment of Eczema

#### 4.2.1 Cypress snake eczema cream

Cypress snake eczema cream is composed of four traditional Chinese medicines, such as cypress cypress, snake bed, purslane, honeysuckle, etc., which has the effect of clearing heat and drying dampness, draining fire and detoxifying, and the study shows that cypress snake eczema ointment can down-regulate the levels of IL-10 and IL-4 in the serum of SD rat eczema models, and up-regulate the levels of inflammatory factors such as INF- $\gamma$  and inhibit the inflammatory response.

#### 4.2.2 Compound comfrey oil

Compound comfrey oil is composed of traditional Chinese medicines such as comfrey, bitter ginseng, and cypress, which has the effect of clearing away heat and dampness, detoxifying, and can inhibit the expression of inflammatory factors, and its mechanism of action may be related to inhibiting the activation of T lymphocytes.

#### 4.2.3 Comfrey baby ointment

Comfrey baby ointment is composed of comfrey bark and safflower traditional Chinese medicine, which has the effect of clearing heat and cooling blood, invigorating blood and detoxifying, and studies have shown that comfrey baby ointment can reverse the immune imbalance in eczema guinea pig models, reduce the infiltration of inflammatory cells, and improve skin pathological morphology.

#### 4.2.4 Fuyuekang lotion

Fuyuekang lotion is composed of bitter ginseng, white fresh skin, alum, nepeta, bauhinia bark and other traditional Chinese medicines, which can up-regulate the levels of IL-2 and IFN- $\gamma$  in DNCB-allergic guinea pig eczema models, down-regulate the expression levels of IL-4 and IL-17, inhibit inflammatory responses, and have obvious therapeutic effects.

#### 4.2.5 Snake yellow ointment

Snake yellow ointment is composed of snake bed, cypress, etc., which can lower the level of inflammatory factors in ear tissue of DNCB-allergic mouse eczema models, improve the course of skin swelling, reduce skin lesion symptoms, and reduce the number of itching.

#### 4.2.6 Eczema stain formula

Eczema stain formula is composed of bitter ginseng, nepeta, burnet, snake bed, white fresh bark, yellow cypress, windbreak, purslane and other drugs, which have the effect of clearing heat and drying dampness, dispelling wind and relieving itching, and improving the condition of eczema by regulating the proportion of T lymphocyte subsets and the disorder of cytokine secretion.

#### 4.2.7 Twenty-five flavors of catechu ointment

Tibetan medicine twenty-five flavors of catechu ointment from the “Four Medical Classics”, its effect is to strengthen the spleen and relieve dampness, clear heat and dispel wind, nourish blood and moisturize the skin, and its gel preparation can down-regulate the expression of serum CCL17 and CCL18 in rats with chronic eczema model, thereby regulating the cellular immune imbalance.

#### 4.2.8 Stubborn soup

Rescue stubborn soup comes from the Qing Dynasty's “Syndrome Differentiation Record”, which is composed of angelica, astragalus, fried atractylodes, licorice and other drugs, which can nourish qi and blood. Jiu Wan Decoction could increase the level of CORT in the serum of model rats and promote the expression of glucocorticoids, thereby playing an anti-inflammatory and anti-allergic effect.

### 4.3 Traditional Chinese Medicine External Treatment Methods for Eczema

#### 4.3.1 Wet stain therapy

Wet stain therapy is a collective name for wet method and stain method, “wet” is a wet compress, suitable for areas that cannot be soaked; “Stain” is impregnation, and external washing, sitz baths, etc. are all wet stain therapy. Wet stain therapy can directly penetrate the skin and directly to the lesion through external drug use, increase the concentration of local drugs, and then activate blood circulation and dissolve blood stasis, promote qi and blood circulation, and have the effects of anti-inflammatory, dissipating swelling, relieving itching, inhibiting exudation and astringency, and is one of the effective methods for treating acute eczema with more exudation.

#### 4.3.2 Acupuncture and moxibustion method

Acupuncture therapy refers to stimulating acupuncture points and meridians to promote the flow of qi and blood in local skin lesions to speed up the recovery of skin lesions, so as to achieve the purpose of treating diseases. Including acupuncture method, fire acupuncture method, acupoint

application method, acupoint thread embedding method, acupoint injection method, etc. Studies have shown that the eczema area and severity index scale, itch visual analogue score, and dermatological quality of life index score scores of patients with increased fire acupuncture therapy are lower than those of patients who use Western medicine alone to treat eczema [7].

#### 4.3.3 Rubbing method

The rubbing method is a treatment method that uses traditional Chinese medicine to make pastes, tinctures, oils, powders, etc., and apply them to the affected area. Due to the different dosage forms of drugs, the effects are also different. The application method generally includes 3 steps of drug application, massage, and wiping, that is, applying medicine first, and then applying massage or rubbing, with the help of medicinal power to achieve therapeutic effects such as moisturizing the skin, unblocking qi and blood, dispersing stasis and reducing swelling, and removing diseases and evils, and can nourish and enhance the body's ability to resist diseases. The indications of this method are relatively wide, and the skin topical drug has no gastrointestinal reaction, has little effect on liver and kidney function, and is convenient to administer. After the application is completed, under the action of the magnetic therapy device, it can dilate blood vessels, improve local blood circulation, promote drug molecules through the skin or mucous membranes, quickly enter the human body, act on the lesion, and achieve the therapeutic effect [8].

## 5. Examples of Medical Cases

Patient Zhang, male, 35 years old, had recurrent eczema for 3 years. At the time of initial diagnosis, the patient's limbs and torso were covered with red papules, the itching was severe, and he could not sleep at night. After dialectical treatment by traditional Chinese medicine, it was diagnosed as spleen deficiency and dampness accumulation eczema. The treatment is mainly to regulate the spleen and stomach, dispel dampness and clear heat, and use Shenling Baizhu powder to add or subtract, and at the same time use external eczema cream. After 1 month of treatment, the patient's eczema symptoms were significantly reduced, the itching was reduced, and the papules gradually subsided. After 2 months of continued treatment, the patient's eczema symptoms completely disappeared.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 The Relationship Between Eczema and the Spleen and Stomach

The onset of eczema is closely related to spleen and stomach dysfunction. The spleen and stomach are the source of qi and blood biochemistry, and their strong function helps the body to have sufficient righteousness, which has a positive effect on the prevention and relief of eczema. Spleen and stomach dysfunction not only affects the transport of water and dampness, but also leads to the lack of biochemistry of qi and blood, and the loss of nutrients in the internal organs, thus causing eczema. Therefore, regulating the spleen and stomach is the key to treating eczema.

## 6.2 The Importance of Dispelling Dampness and Clearing Heat

Removing dampness and clearing heat is an important means of treating eczema. Dampness and heat toxicity interact to form damp-heat stasis, which is an important pathogenesis leading to eczema. By removing dampness and clearing heat, it can remove dampness and heat toxins from the body and improve eczema symptoms. At the same time, dispelling dampness and clearing heat can also promote the recovery of spleen and stomach function, thereby accelerating the healing of eczema.

## 6.3 The Necessity of Comprehensive Treatment

The treatment of eczema should adopt a comprehensive treatment method, combined with various means such as regulating the spleen and stomach, dispelling dampness and heat, activating blood circulation and removing blood stasis, etc, to achieve the best treatment effect. Comprehensive treatment can comprehensively regulate the patient's physical condition, promote the healing of eczema, and reduce recurrence.

## 7. Summary

The theory of "all eczema and swelling belong to the spleen" provides an important theoretical basis and practical guidance for the treatment of eczema in traditional Chinese medicine. Through treatments such as strengthening the spleen and relieving dampness, clearing heat and relieving itching, it can effectively improve the clinical symptoms and quality of life of eczema patients. Future research should further explore the mechanism of action of traditional Chinese medicine in the treatment of eczema to provide more scientific basis for the treatment of eczema.

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