

Treatment of Hypertension Complicated with Anxiety and Depression Based on the Thought of “Unblocking Collaterals and Regulating Spirit”

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Abstract: Hypertension is one of the common chronic diseases worldwide. The comorbidity with anxiety and depression, as a key risk factor, contributes to a high incidence of adverse outcomes. This comorbid condition falls into the category of “psychosomatic heart disease”. This paper summarizes the clinical experience of Professor Zhao in the treatment of hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression, with the “Unblocking Collaterals and Regulating Spirit” as the guiding ideology and core therapeutic principle. Professor Zhao proposes that the fundamental pathogenesis lies in the dysfunction of liver collaterals and the injury of spirit due to collateral damage. Three specific pathogeneses are summarized as follows: stagnation of qi blocking collaterals, transforming into fire and disturbing spirit; stagnation of qi leading to fluid retention, accumulating into phlegm and clouding spirit; deficiency and stagnation of collaterals, producing blood stasis and causing spirit exhaustion. Corresponding therapeutic methods are adopted, including purging fire, dispersing collaterals and tranquilizing spirit; resolving phlegm, unblocking collaterals and refreshing spirit; and removing blood stasis, smoothing collaterals and nourishing spirit. Meanwhile, the corresponding clinical proven prescriptions are summarized.

Keywords: Hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression, Unblocking collaterals and regulating spirit, Collateral disease theory, Syndrome differentiation and treatment.

1. Introduction

Hypertension is defined as a cardiovascular syndrome characterized primarily by elevated systemic arterial blood pressure (systolic and diastolic blood pressure), and it is one of the important risk factors for cardio-cerebrovascular diseases. In China, the awareness rate, treatment rate, and control rate of hypertension among patients are 51.6%, 45.8%, and 16.8%, respectively [1]. Data have shown that the incidence of mental and psychological problems in hypertensive patients is 2.69 times higher than that in non-hypertensive patients [2]. Relevant domestic surveys indicate that the prevalence rates of hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression are 11.6%–38.5% and 5.7%–15.8%, respectively [3]. Hypertension and anxiety-depression interact reciprocally: long-term hypertension can induce anxiety and depressive emotions, while emotional fluctuations caused by anxiety and depression may lead to unstable blood pressure control, resulting in a protracted and refractory course of the disease [4, 5]. Currently, Western medical treatment mainly involves antihypertensive drugs combined with anti-anxiety and antidepressant medications, or in conjunction with psychological and behavioral interventions [1]. However, long-term use of Western medicines in patients is associated with problems such as low overall acceptance and a high risk of adverse reactions, leading to poor disease control [6]. In recent years, with the in-depth research on traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), an increasing number of clinical practices have demonstrated that TCM possesses unique advantages in the treatment of hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression. Particularly characterized by syndrome differentiation and treatment based on collateral disease theory, Professor Zhao Mingjun has originally proposed the “Unblocking Collaterals and Regulating Spirit” approach for the treatment of psychosomatic heart diseases, achieving remarkable clinical

efficacy.

Professor Zhao is a Distinguished TCM Physician of Shaanxi Province, Chief Physician, Master's Supervisor, Academic Leader of the National Key Specialty of Cardiovascular Diseases under the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine. He has been engaged in clinical practice, teaching, and scientific research in the field of integrated TCM and Western medicine for cardiovascular diseases for more than 30 years. In recent years, his team has been committed to the clinical and basic application research of collateral disease theory in psychosomatic heart diseases, and put forward the “Unblocking Collaterals and Regulating Spirit” thought for the treatment of such diseases. This thought is inherently consistent with collateral disease theory, taking “collateral obstruction leading to spirit unease” as the core pathogenesis and “unblocking collaterals and regulating spirit” as the core therapeutic principle. Hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression falls into the category of “psychosomatic heart diseases”, and Professor Zhao has achieved excellent clinical results in the diagnosis and treatment of this condition based on the “Unblocking Collaterals and Regulating Spirit” thought. Having studied with Professor Zhao for more than one year, the author summarizes his clinical experience in the syndrome differentiation and treatment of hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression as follows.

2. The Connotation of the Thought of “Unblocking Collaterals and Regulating Spirit”

The theory of Restraining and Regulating Equilibrium serves as the core of the thought of Unblocking Collaterals and Regulating Spirit, and also constitutes the theoretical

foundation of collateral disease theory. Based on the Yin-Yang and Five Elements Doctrine, it expounds the physiological and pathological states of vital activities, and finally implements intervention in accordance with the principle of Collaterals Function by Unblocking in the regulatory stage, so as to restore the human body to the state of Yin-Yang Harmony and Tranquility [7]. The theory of Restraining and Regulating Equilibrium exerts crucial significance in the treatment of collateral and qi-collateral disorders under the framework of collateral disease theory [8]. Unblocking Collaterals refers to the unobstruction of meridional collaterals, including vessel collaterals and qi-collaterals. Ye Tianshi, a distinguished physician in the Qing Dynasty, put forward the propositions of Prolonged illness enters collaterals and Prolonged pain enters collaterals in Case Records of Clinical Guidance, and established the therapeutic principle of Collaterals Function by Unblocking. Regulating Spirit was first documented in Suwen·Chapter on Regulating the Spirit in Accordance with the Four Seasons, revealing that the spirit is interconnected and responsive to the natural qi. As stated in Lingshu·A Healthy Person Abstaining from Grains: When the five zang-organs are stable, blood vessels are harmonious and unobstructed, the spirit resides therein. The five zang-organs correspond to the four seasons and communicate with the five qi; the harmonious circulation of qi in the five zang-organs and the unobstruction of qi-collaterals and vessel collaterals are the prerequisites for mental and emotional calmness. Meanwhile, mental stability further promotes the harmony of the five zang-organs and the unobstruction of qi and blood, thereby preventing the onset of diseases. Therefore, Professor Zhao takes Unblocking Collaterals and Regulating Spirit as the guiding ideology for the treatment of psychosomatic heart disease. True Transmission of Medicine records that: Unobstruction relieves pain, which is an inherent principle... Tonify deficiency to facilitate unblocking, warm cold to achieve unblocking; all these are the methods of unblocking. It is thus clear that the methods of unblocking collaterals are not unitary, and Professor Zhao selects the appropriate method according to the pathogenesis in clinical practice. Suwen·Chapter on the Essential Truth of the Ultimate Principles states that: Examine carefully the location of Yin and Yang and regulate them, with equilibrium as the ultimate goal and First identify the preponderance of the five zang-organs, dredge qi and blood to make them unobstructed and reach a state of harmony. This clarifies that in the treatment of psychosomatic heart disease by unblocking collaterals, the Yin-Yang attribute of the disease should be differentiated; once the disease location is confirmed, the inter-restraining and preponderant relationship among the five zang-organs should be distinguished. Through the intervention based on Collaterals Function by Unblocking, the body can achieve Yin-Yang harmony, sufficient and unobstructed qi and blood, and mental harmony. Unblocking Collaterals and Regulating Spirit is the core ideology of Professor Zhao's clinical diagnosis and treatment of psychosomatic heart disease for decades. In recent years, based on the theories of Restraining and Regulating Equilibrium, collateral disease, five zang-organs storing spirit, and the holistic concept of body and spirit, the research team has been gradually conducting a comprehensive and systematic elaboration on the summary and arrangement of TCM etiology, pathogenesis, syndrome differentiation and

treatment of this thought in psychosomatic heart disease, such as chronic heart failure complicated with anxiety and depression, cardiovascular neurosis and other diseases [8,9].

3. Exploring the Etiology and Pathogenesis of Hypertension Complicated with Anxiety and Depression Based on the Thought of “Unblocking Collaterals and Regulating Spirit”

3.1 Qi Stagnation in Collaterals and Transformation into Fire Disturbing the Spirit

When hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression involves the liver and heart as the lesion locations, it is more prevalent in young patients and associated with living environments, with the pathogenesis characterized by qi stagnation in collaterals and transformation into fire disturbing the spirit. As recorded in Xuezhen Lun: “The liver pertains to wood; when wood qi is harmonious, smooth and unobstructed without stagnation, blood vessels remain patulous”. Lesions of the liver qi collaterals affect collateral disorders throughout the body. Under physiological conditions, the qi of the liver collaterals is dredged in an orderly manner, ensuring unimpeded collaterals and balanced qi and blood. However, long-term factors such as patients' inherent irritability, propensities for anger, and work-related stress impair the liver's qi-dredging function, leading to qi stagnation in the liver collaterals. Over time, prolonged stagnation transforms into fire, and qi stagnation in the liver collaterals contributes to the development of anxiety and depression. Meanwhile, in accordance with the Five Elements theory of “mother-organ disease affecting the child-organ” (the liver is the mother organ of the heart) and the heart's attribution to fire, these pathological changes can induce secondary impairments in the heart collaterals. The heart's function of governing blood vessels is also disrupted by unsmooth liver qi, resulting in obstructed circulation of qi and blood in the collaterals and impairment of its function of governing the spirit. Suwen·Chapter on the Essential Truth of the Ultimate Principles delineates the pathogenic features of fire pathogen: “All heat-induced dizziness and convulsions are attributed to fire... All restlessness, mania and frantic behavior are attributed to fire”. Prolonged qi stagnation in the liver and heart collaterals transforms into fire, which spreads systemically along the collaterals. Fire is prone to generating wind and stirring blood, thereby elevating blood pressure; additionally, fire pathogen tends to upwardly perturb the brain collaterals. Li Shizhen noted in Bencao Gangmu that “the brain is the mansion of the spirit”, so clinical manifestations including dizziness, headache, irritability, easy anger, restlessness, insomnia with vivid dreams, anxiety, depression, a red tongue with a thin white or yellow coating, and a wiry and rapid pulse are likely to manifest. In summary, unsmooth liver and heart collaterals, qi stagnation in collaterals, and prolonged transformation into fire can induce hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression. Yang Tian et al. [11] proposed that qi mechanism disorder, disharmony of qi and blood, and visceral dysfunction constitute the core pathogenesis of hypertension complicated with depressive syndrome. They also presented a validated case of liver depression transforming into fire and heat disturbing the heart

spirit. The treatment regimen included invigorating the spleen, soothing the liver, clearing the heart to alleviate vexation, and calming convulsions to tranquilize the spirit. Following treatment, the patient's symptoms improved, blood pressure stabilized, and mood gradually returned to normal.

3.2 Qi Stagnation Leading to Fluid Retention and Phlegm Accumulation Clouding the Spirit

Professor Zhao argues that when hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression involves the liver and spleen as the lesion sites, it is more prevalent in middle-aged patients and associated with dietary patterns, with the pathogenesis characterized by qi stagnation leading to fluid retention and phlegm accumulation clouding the spirit. As documented in *Xuezheng Lun ·On Zang-Fu Organ Pathogenesis*: “The nature of wood is to govern dredging and dispersing; when food qi enters the stomach, it is entirely dependent on the qi of liver wood for dredging and dispersing, thereby enabling the transformation of grain and water”. Middle-aged patients often have a predilection for fatty, sweet and rich foods. Under physiological conditions, the qi within the liver collaterals remains unobstructed, which can assist the spleen and stomach in accomplishing food digestion as well as the absorption and transportation of nutrient substances. However, once the dredging and dispersing function of the liver collaterals is impaired, resulting in qi stagnation in the collaterals and obstructed circulation of qi and blood in the meridians, the spleen collaterals will be implicated. This impairs the transportation and distribution functions of the spleen, disrupts the normal metabolism of body fluids, and subsequently leads to the condensation of phlegm. *Danxi Xinfa* records that “no phlegm, no vertigo”, and *Zhengzhi Zhunsheng·Miscellaneous Diseases* states that “internal injury caused by seven emotions induces stagnation and phlegm generation”. Once phlegm-fluid is formed, it not only obstructs the circulation of qi and blood, causing collateral obstruction, but also clouds the spirit when ascending to block the cerebral collaterals, inducing symptoms such as dizziness, heavy-headedness, vertigo, and mental lassitude. In addition, phlegm obstruction of the spleen collaterals impairs the ascent of clear qi; the spleen is associated with “thought” in emotional activities, and excessive contemplation leads to qi stagnation, resulting in listlessness. Phlegm blocking the liver collaterals affects the patency of the liver qi collaterals, leading to clinical manifestations such as mental depression or hypochondriac distension and pain in patients. Meanwhile, dysfunction of the spleen and stomach in transportation is accompanied by digestive symptoms including poor appetite, abdominal distension, and loose stools. In summary, hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression can be induced by “unsmooth liver-spleen collaterals”, qi stagnation leading to fluid retention, and phlegm accumulation clouding the spirit. *Zhang Ling et al. [12]* drew a conclusion from a clinical observation on the modified *Xiaoyao Powder* for the treatment of hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression of liver depression and spleen deficiency type: the combined administration of amlodipine besylate tablets and tandospirone exerts a definite clinical effect in elderly patients with hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression, achieves satisfactory blood pressure control, and can alleviate the negative emotions of anxiety and depression in patients.

3.3 Deficiency Stagnation in Collaterals, Stasis Generation and Spirit Exhaustion

Based on the holistic concept of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), Professor Zhao proposes that when hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression involves the liver and kidney as the lesion sites, it mostly occurs in elderly patients. He emphasizes the crucial role of constitutional factors in the occurrence and progression of the disease, and argues that deficiency stagnation in collaterals, stasis generation and spirit exhaustion is one of its key pathogeneses. Based on the doctrine of “all diseases are associated with stasis”, Professor Weng Weiliang suggests that at a certain stage or in the advanced stage of the disease, it is mostly manifested as varying degrees of “blood stasis” [13]. As recorded in *Zhangshi Yitong*: “If qi is not consumed, it returns to the kidney to form essence; if essence is not excreted, it returns to the liver to transform into clear blood”, which profoundly illustrates the relationship of “*Yigui Tongyuan*” (liver and kidney sharing the same origin) between the liver and kidney. The essence and blood of the two organs mutually generate and transform, and nourish each other. *Wang Qingren* documented in *Yilin Gaicuo*: “When primordial qi is deficient, it cannot reach the blood vessels; without primordial qi, blood will stagnate in the vessels and form stasis”, and also pointed out that blood stasis can induce irritability in individuals. Elderly patients are mostly suffering from liver and kidney deficiency. The kidney is the root of qi; if kidney essence is deficient, essence deficiency will lead to qi decline, and qi collaterals will consequently become weak. Qi deficiency results in insufficient propulsive force, slowing down blood circulation and further leading to the formation of blood stasis, which causes collateral stasis. Meanwhile, insufficient essence and qi leads to spirit exhaustion, affecting the patient's emotional state and presenting symptoms such as dizziness, soreness and weakness of the waist and knees, mental lassitude or irritability. “Stagnant blood accumulates and rushes upward in reverse, also causing vertigo” (*Yizong Bidu*). Blood stasis blocking the collaterals leads to increased blood pressure; if it rushes upward and obstructs the cerebral collaterals, symptoms such as vertigo, stabbing headache, dark tongue with ecchymoses will occur. In summary, hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression can be induced by “unsmooth liver-kidney collaterals”, deficiency stagnation in collaterals, stasis generation and spirit exhaustion. *Gu Ning*'s team pointed out that the etiology and pathogenesis of patients with hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression are wind, fire, phlegm and stasis as the superficial factors, and zang-fu organs, qi, blood, yin and yang as the fundamental factors, and proposed treatment experiences such as consolidating the root, tonifying the primordial qi and resolving stasis [14].

4. Treatment of Hypertension Complicated with Anxiety and Depression Based on the Thought of “Unblocking Collaterals and Regulating Spirit”

4.1 Purging Fire, Dispersing Collaterals and Tranquilizing the Spirit

Mingyi Zazhu (Miscellaneous Works of Famous Physicians) states: "When liver qi is unobstructed, heart qi is harmonious; when liver qi is stagnant, heart qi is depleted", and Shenzhai Yishu records: "The heart is inherently the sovereign fire. The tranquility of the sovereign fire relies on the harmony of liver wood". These clearly reveal the correlation between the liver and the heart. Professor Zhao argues that the "fire" in hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression originates from stagnation; thus, treating fire must first target the liver. When the liver and heart collaterals are unblocked, fire is eliminated and the spirit is tranquilized. Clinically, soothing the liver, clearing the heart, and purging fire should be implemented to unblock the collaterals, thereby achieving the effect of tranquilizing the spirit. Professor Zhao commonly employs the modified self-formulated Soothing Liver, Clearing Heart and Dispersing Collaterals Decoction, which consists of Bupleuri Radix, Charred Gardeniae Fructus, Moutan Cortex, Poria Cocos, Stir-fried Ziziphi Spinosae Semen, Albiziae Cortex, Prepared Polygalae Radix, and Stir-fried Paeoniae Radix Alba. Taiping Huimin Heji Ju Fang mentions that Xiaoyao Powder uses Bupleuri Radix to regulate the imbalanced dredging function of the liver and qi stagnation, making it particularly suitable for patients with qi stagnation in collaterals accompanied by anxiety and depression. Yixue Qiyuan describes that Gardeniae Fructus has the effects of "treating exogenous heat in the heart meridian, relieving restlessness, removing deficient heat in the upper jiao, and addressing wind". Fire pathogen generates wind, stirs blood, and disturbs the spirit; therefore, Gardeniae Fructus is used to clear the heart and tranquilize the spirit. Charred Gardeniae Fructus exhibits a superior effect in cooling blood and stopping bleeding. The combination of these two herbs can be used for the treatment of hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression. Moutan Cortex clears heat and purges fire, enhancing the efficacy of Gardeniae Fructus. Poria Cocos invigorates the spleen and calms the heart; Stir-fried Ziziphi Spinosae Semen nourishes the heart and tranquilizes the spirit; Albiziae Cortex relieves stagnation and tranquilizes the spirit; Prepared Polygalae Radix connects the heart and kidney. These four herbs act synergistically to achieve the effects of soothing the liver, clearing the heart, and tranquilizing the spirit. Stir-fried Paeoniae Radix Alba soothes and softens the liver, contributing to lowering blood pressure and alleviating anxiety and depression, while also astringing the yin damaged by fire pathogen. The entire formula collectively exerts the effects of purging fire, dispersing collaterals, and tranquilizing the spirit. Modern pharmacological and clinical studies have demonstrated that Danzhi Xiaoyao Powder can assist in blood pressure reduction and possesses anti-anxiety and anti-depressant properties [15-17].

4.2 Resolving Phlegm, Unblocking Collaterals and Awakening the Spirit

Suwen·Chapter on Treasuring Life and Preserving Form records: "Earth attains smoothness through wood", which clarifies the mutual relationship between liver wood and spleen earth. Only when the dredging function of the liver is normal can it assist the spleen in the transportation and transformation of grain and water. Meanwhile, Ye Tianshi in the Qing Dynasty proposed: "Tonifying the spleen must involve soothing the liver, and soothing the liver is equivalent

to tonifying the spleen", emphasizing the synergistic physiological functions of the liver and spleen. Professor Zhao holds that the "phlegm" in hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression is produced by the spleen; the transportation function of the spleen depends on the patency of liver collaterals. Treating phlegm must first regulate qi; when qi flows smoothly, phlegm will naturally dissipate. In clinical practice, regulating the liver, invigorating the spleen, resolving phlegm, and unblocking collaterals should be adopted to refresh the spirit. Professor Zhao commonly uses the modified self-formulated Regulating Liver, Invigorating Spleen and Unblocking Collaterals Decoction, composed of Gastrodiae Rhizoma, Pinelliae Rhizoma Preparata, Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium, Citri Sarcodactylis Fructus, Stir-fried Ziziphi Spinosae Semen, Prepared Polygalae Radix, Acori Tatarinowii Rhizoma, Alpiniae Oxyphyllae Fructus, and Stir-fried Raphani Semen. In the formula, Gastrodiae Rhizoma serves as the sovereign herb; it is sweet in taste and neutral in nature, capable of both regulating the liver and unblocking collaterals, and has a confirmed effect on blood pressure regulation. Zhang Zhongjing used Banxia Houpo Decoction in Jin Kui Yao Lve to treat "plum pit qi", which is currently widely used for anxiety and depression. Thus, Pinelliae Rhizoma Preparata is employed to treat the spleen collaterals in the middle jiao, descending adverse qi, resolving phlegm, and dispersing qi stagnation. The combination of these two herbs is used for the treatment of hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression. Both Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium and Citri Sarcodactylis Fructus regulate the liver, unblock collaterals, invigorate the spleen, and resolve phlegm; Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium invigorates the spleen, resolves phlegm, promotes qi circulation, and unblocks collaterals, while Citri Sarcodactylis Fructus regulates the liver, unblocks collaterals, and resolves phlegm. Stir-fried Ziziphi Spinosae Semen, Prepared Polygalae Radix, Acori Tatarinowii Rhizoma, and Alpiniae Oxyphyllae Fructus act as assistant herbs. Stir-fried Ziziphi Spinosae Semen nourishes the heart and tranquilizes the spirit; Prepared Polygalae Radix connects the heart and kidney, tranquilizes the spirit, and enhances intelligence; Acori Tatarinowii Rhizoma induces resuscitation and awakens the spirit; Alpiniae Oxyphyllae Fructus warms the spleen and stops diarrhea, targeting symptoms such as loose stools caused by spleen collateral weakness. These four herbs work together to achieve the effects of awakening and tranquilizing the spirit. Stir-fried Raphani Semen protects the spleen and stomach. The entire formula exerts the effects of resolving phlegm, unblocking collaterals, and awakening the spirit. A clinical observation indicated that Banxia Baizhu Tianma Decoction can improve the symptoms of hypertension patients with phlegm-turbidity obstruction type [18].

4.3 Resolving Stasis, Unblocking Collaterals and Nourishing the Spirit

Leijing (Classified Canon)·Zangxiang Section proposes: "The liver and kidney are mother and child organs, and their qi is interconnected", revealing the relationship between the liver and kidney. The qi collaterals of the liver and kidney are interlinked, with essence and blood sharing the same origin, mutually nourishing and restricting each other. Professor Zhao holds that the formation of "stasis" in hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression is closely associated

with liver and kidney qi deficiency. Deficiency of liver and kidney qi results in insufficient propulsive force, leading to slow blood flow and subsequent formation of blood stasis; qi deficiency fails to govern blood, causing unsmooth blood circulation and collateral obstruction, ultimately leading to the onset of the disease. Therefore, treating stasis must first tonify deficiency, regulate the liver to ensure smooth qi mechanism, and achieve tonification without causing stagnation. He advocates regulating the liver, tonifying the kidney, resolving stasis to unblock collaterals, and concurrently tonifying to nourish the spirit mechanism. Professor Zhao commonly uses the modified self-formulated Regulating Liver, Tonifying Kidney and Unblocking Collaterals Decoction, which includes Achyranthis Bidentatae Radix Preparata, Stir-fried Paeoniae Radix Alba, Gastrodiae Rhizoma, Uncariae Ramulus Cum Uncis, Eucommiae Cortex (stir-fried with salt), Taxilli Herba, Poria Cocos, Polygoni Multiflori Caulis, Angelicae Sinensis Radix, and Glycyrrhizae Radix Et Rhizoma Preparata. Achyranthis Bidentatae Radix Preparata has the effects of tonifying the kidney, resolving stasis, and unblocking collaterals; its property of regulating water metabolism can be utilized for blood pressure regulation. Stir-fried Paeoniae Radix Alba soothes and softens the liver to regulate liver function, nourishes blood, and resolves stasis. The combination of these two herbs achieves the effects of regulating the liver, tonifying the kidney, resolving stasis, and unblocking collaterals. Gastrodiae Rhizoma and Uncariae Ramulus Cum Uncis are derived from Tianma Gouteng Decoction, which is proficient in regulating the liver and unblocking collaterals, and has significant effects in lowering blood pressure and improving anxiety and depression symptoms. Both Eucommiae Cortex and Taxilli Herba tonify the liver and kidney, strengthen tendons and bones, and exhibit a good therapeutic effect on soreness and weakness of the waist and knees caused by kidney deficiency; among them, Taxilli Herba has been highly praised by physicians of all dynasties as an excellent medicine for lowering blood pressure. Poria Cocos, Polygoni Multiflori Caulis, and Angelicae Sinensis Radix are used in combination to regulate the liver, unblock collaterals, nourish blood, resolve stasis, and also nourish and tranquilize the spirit, for the treatment of insomnia caused by kidney deficiency. Polygoni Multiflori Caulis is a vine plant, and vines possess the property of unblocking collaterals; thus, Polygoni Multiflori Caulis is combined with Angelicae Sinensis Radix to promote adequate blood supply and smooth flow in the collaterals. Glycyrrhizae Radix Et Rhizoma Preparata harmonizes all herbs in the formula, enabling tonification combined with unblocking and avoiding stagnation caused by tonification. The entire formula exerts the effects of resolving stasis, unblocking collaterals, and nourishing the spirit. Zhang Yanyan et al. summarized that Tianma Gouteng Decoction has the effects of lowering blood pressure, protecting nerves, sedation, analgesia, and anti-inflammation [19].

5. Conclusion

The incidence of hypertension in China is progressively increasing. Blood pressure fluctuations are susceptible to emotional influences, making the treatment of hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression a topic worthy of attention and exploration by contemporary clinicians. Professor Zhao possesses extensive experience in treating

psychosomatic heart disease based on the thought of “Unblocking Collaterals and Regulating Spirit”. Guided by the core pathogenesis perspective of “unsmooth collaterals resulting in restless spirit”, combined with syndrome differentiation of zang-fu organs, qi, blood, and body fluids, he points out that in patients with hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression: when the lesion site involves the liver and heart, the condition is characterized by fire disturbing the spirit; when involving the liver and spleen, it is manifested as phlegm clouding the spirit orifices; when involving the liver and kidney, it presents as stasis formation leading to spirit exhaustion. Concurrently, corresponding therapeutic strategies have been proposed based on the core therapeutic principle of “Unblocking Collaterals and Regulating Spirit”, which have yielded favorable clinical outcomes. The authors summarize Professor Zhao’s clinical experience in the treatment of hypertension complicated with anxiety and depression, with the aim of providing novel ideas and approaches for clinical practice.

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