

The Application of the Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic in the Clinical Treatment of Gastric Cancer

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Abstract: *This paper conducts a detailed study of the relevant theories of the Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic (Neijing) and closely integrates the practical achievements of modern clinical treatment for gastric cancer. It comprehensively analyzes the important guiding significance of the Neijing's health preservation concepts, etiology and pathogenesis theories, and treatment principles for the prevention and treatment of gastric cancer. Research indicates that the relevant theories of the Neijing play a prominent role in enhancing the body's vital qi and protecting stomach qi. They play a significant role in prolonging survival, alleviating complications of radiotherapy and chemotherapy, improving quality of life, and improving prognosis.*

Keywords: Gastric Cancer, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic.

1. Current Status

Gastric cancer refers to a malignant tumor originating from the epithelial cells of the gastric mucosa. As one of the common and seriously harmful malignant tumors worldwide, its incidence and mortality rates have remained at high levels. With changes in lifestyle, deterioration of food safety conditions, the high-pressure state of modern fast-paced society, the influence of environmental factors, and the exacerbation of population aging, the incidence of gastric cancer is becoming increasingly concerning [1]. Epidemiology shows that the incidence rate of gastric cancer in developing countries is increasing year by year, especially prevalent in China where diets are characterized by heavy oil and salt consumption.

Most gastric cancer patients have no significant clinical symptoms in the early stage, or only exhibit some manifestations similar to common gastric diseases, such as upper abdominal discomfort, dull pain, belching, dysphagia, and bloating [2]. These symptoms may be masked by the application of medications such as antacids and proton pump inhibitors. Precisely for this reason, early gastric cancer is difficult to detect, and the diagnosis rate is extremely low. In the middle and late stages, gastric cancer patients usually experience noticeable stomach pain, particularly in the epigastric region. The pain is irregular and cannot be relieved by eating. By the time they seek medical attention, the optimal treatment window has often been missed, thereby affecting the prognosis. Most gastric tumors are located in the pyloric antrum. As the tumor burden increases, patients in the middle and late stages may develop symptoms of pyloric obstruction [3], manifesting as nausea, regurgitation, belching, and vomiting. They may experience poor appetite, weight loss, and progressive emaciation, leading to decreased tolerance for treatment and shortened survival time.

2. Etiology of Gastric Cancer

Physicians throughout the dynasties of Traditional Chinese

Medicine (TCM) have held that the etiology of gastric cancer primarily includes: invasion by external pathogens, where cold pathogens congeal in the spleen and stomach, leading to stagnation of spleen and stomach qi movement and resulting in accumulation; improper diet, such as excessive intake of raw, cold, fatty, or sweet foods, which readily damages the spleen and stomach, causing dysfunction in transportation and transformation and leading to phlegm-dampness; and emotional imbalance, where anxiety and overthinking injure the spleen [4], affecting the physiological functions of the stomach. Damage from overexertion and fatigue consumes qi; qi deficiency then impairs spleen and stomach transportation and transformation.

Modern medicine posits that *Helicobacter pylori* infection triggers chronic inflammation of the gastric mucosa. Long-term infection can induce gastric mucosal atrophy, predisposing to carcinogenesis. Long-term consumption of high-salt foods leads to excessive intake of nitrites, which are converted into nitrosamines in the body, damaging the gastric mucosa. Gastric polyps, gastric ulcers, and chronic gastritis also increase the possibility of malignant transformation [5]. Heavy metals, chemical pollution, radiation, and genetic factors are also significant contributors to the development of gastric cancer.

3. TCM Understanding

There is no record of "gastric cancer" in ancient TCM texts; it corresponds to TCM categories such as "dysphagia-occlusion" (Ye Ge), "accumulations and gatherings" (Ji Ju), "regurgitation" (Fan Wei), and "stomach duct pain" (Wei Wan Tong) [6]. Medical Insights: Dysphagia-Occlusion mentions: "All cases of dysphagia-occlusion do not go beyond the four characters 'stomach duct dryness.' Dryness in the upper duct allows water and fluids to pass but makes food difficult to enter, termed dysphagia (Ye). Dryness in the lower duct allows food to enter but causes it to be regurgitated after a long while, termed occlusion (Ge)." The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic states: "When wood depression erupts, the

people suffer from stomach duct pain corresponding to the heart, pain in the upper limbs and rib sides [7], dysphagia-occlusion with blockage, and inability to ingest food or drink.” These ancient texts reflect the understanding of ancient physicians regarding gastric cancer. In the clinical treatment process of gastric cancer, the profound wisdom contained in classical works of traditional medicine cannot be ignored. As the cornerstone of TCM theory, the Inner Classic, with its rich medical thought and diagnostic and treatment experience, provides profound insights for the clinical application in gastric cancer.

4. Treatment Principles from the Inner Classic and Gastric Cancer Treatment

4.1 Treating the Middle Jiao Requires Balance

The Suwen: Treatise on Communication with Heaven Qi discusses: “When yin is calm and yang is secure, the spirit is well governed; when yin and yang separate, the essential qi is exhausted.” Yin-yang balance maintains the stability of the internal and external environment of the body to ensure life and health; imbalance may lead to disease. TCM experts believe the etiology and pathogenesis of gastric cancer are essentially related to two aspects: deficiency of vital qi and exuberance of pathogenic factors. Based on the principle “Treating the Middle Jiao Requires Balance,” supporting yang to preserve health, suppressing yin to eliminate obscurity, and correcting yin-yang imbalance to maintain a stable immune environment have become choices in TCM.

4.2 Application of Chinese Medicine in Comprehensive Treatment

4.2.1 Chinese Medicine Adjuvant During Chemotherapy

For patients with middle and late-stage gastric cancer, comprehensive treatment methods such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy are often employed [23]. Chemotherapy is an important treatment method for gastric cancer, but chemotherapeutic drugs often have strong toxic side effects, such as nausea, vomiting, alopecia, and myelosuppression. During this process, combining TCM treatment can effectively alleviate the side effects of chemotherapy. For instance, using herbal formulas that fortify the spleen, harmonize the stomach, and direct rebellious qi downward to stop vomiting can relieve nausea and vomiting; using herbs that boost qi, nourish blood, and enrich the liver and kidneys can alleviate adverse reactions like myelosuppression and alopecia.

4.2.2 Chinese Medicine Enhancing Efficacy During Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy also has applications in gastric cancer treatment but may cause complications such as radiation enteritis and gastritis. Chinese medicine can, through actions like clearing heat, resolving toxins, invigorating blood, and resolving stasis, reduce the inflammatory response caused by radiotherapy and enhance its efficacy. For example, using herbs with blood-invigorating and stasis-resolving effects can improve blood circulation in the irradiated area, increase oxygen supply to the tumor tissue, and enhance radiosensitivity.

4.2.3 Synergistic Effects of Chinese Medicine in Targeted Therapy and Immunotherapy

In targeted therapy and immunotherapy, Chinese medicine can also play a synergistic role. Some Chinese herbs can regulate the tumor microenvironment and enhance the efficacy of targeted and immunotherapeutic drugs; simultaneously, Chinese medicine can alleviate the adverse reactions caused by these treatments.

5. Health Preservation Concepts from the Inner Classic

5.1 Dietary Regimen

The importance of dietary balance is emphasized. Regarding diet, the Inner Classic advocates: “The five grains provide nourishment; the five fruits provide support; the five animals provide benefit; the five vegetables provide fullness. When flavors and qi harmonize and are consumed, they replenish and augment the essential qi.” Grains like rice, broomcorn millet, foxtail millet, wheat, and beans serve as the primary food source, providing the majority of necessary carbohydrates and protein for basic energy. Fruits like jujube, plum, chestnut, apricot, and peach are rich in vitamins and minerals. Meats from ox, dog, sheep, pig, and chicken provide essential amino acids and trace elements crucial for growth, development, and maintaining normal physiological functions and activities. Vegetables like mallow, soybean leaves, scallion, wild onion, and chive are rich in dietary fiber, aiding intestinal motility [8]. The combination of cold, hot, warm, and cool natures with sour, bitter, sweet, pungent, and salty flavors consumed appropriately can replenish the body’s essence, qi, blood, and fluids. This aligns with modern dietary guidelines, highlighting the crucial principle of dietary diversity and balance [9]. This concept emphasizes the synergistic role of various foods in nutritional provision and bodily regulation. The Suwen: Treatise on Communication with Heaven Qi states: “The generation of yin essence originates from the five flavors; yet the five yin organs are also damaged by the five flavors. Thus, if the sour flavor is excessive, liver qi becomes overly abundant and spleen qi is exhausted. If the salty flavor is excessive, the bones are strained, muscles wither, and heart qi is suppressed. If the sweet flavor is excessive, heart qi becomes stuffy and full, the complexion blackens, and kidney qi becomes unbalanced. If the bitter flavor is excessive, spleen qi fails to be moistened, and stomach qi becomes thick and stagnant. If the pungent flavor is excessive, sinews and vessels become slack and spirit is impaired.” Yin essence is generated from the five flavors of food and drink, but excessive intake of any flavor damages the five viscera. Furthermore, research has found that smoking, irregular eating, overeating, eating quickly, preference for smoked foods, dry and hard foods, spicy foods, hot foods, pickled foods, fried foods, high-salt diets, alcohol consumption, skipping breakfast, eating leftovers, drinking untreated water, consuming large amounts of red and processed meat [10], exposure to secondhand smoke, and depression increase the risk of gastric cancer. Conversely, regularly consuming fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, and soy products, frequently drinking tea, regularly consuming milk and dairy products, regularly eating onions and garlic, drinking treated water, having a daily water intake of

1000-1500mL, eating seaweed, and using a refrigerator to store food can reduce the risk of gastric cancer.

5.2 Preventive Treatment of Disease

The concept of “treating disease before it arises” (Zhi Wei Bing) first appeared in the Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic and continues to hold significant guiding importance in clinical practice today. The *Suwen: Great Treatise on Responding to the Four Seasons’ Qi* states: “Therefore, the sage does not treat those who are already ill but treats those not yet ill; does not govern what is already in chaos but governs what is not yet in chaos. This is the meaning. To administer medicine after the disease has formed, to govern after chaos has erupted, is like digging a well when thirsty, or forging weapons when the battle has begun—is it not too late [11]?” Superior physicians intervene against potential diseases before they occur. Remedial treatment only delays recovery and fails to maximize patient benefit. The *Suwen: On Stabbing Heat* says: “In liver heat and kidney heat, the chin first becomes red. Although the disease has not yet erupted, seeing this red heat, one should needle it. This is called treating disease before it arises.” Before disease onset, there are often precursor signs. Warm-heat diseases often present with flushed face and red ears; pricking Shixuan points to let blood can alleviate symptoms. Therefore, based on the TCM concept of treating disease before it arises, summarizing the current application of TCM in gastric cancer prevention and treatment shows that TCM has achieved favorable outcomes in preventing gastric cancer occurrence, preventing and treating complications from gastric cancer therapies, controlling disease progression, maintaining survival with tumor, and preventing gastric cancer recurrence and metastasis.

5.3 Abundant Qi and Blood Prevent All Diseases

The *Lingshu: Ben Zang* states: “The essence, qi, and spirit of a person are what sustain life and circulate throughout the body.” The *Suwen: Treatise on Regulating the Channels* says: “What a person possesses is merely blood and qi.” The vital activities of the human body depend on the normal circulation of qi and blood. The *Suwen: Treatise on the Generation of the Five Viscera* states: “When the liver receives blood, it can see; when the feet receive blood, they can walk; when the palm receives blood, it can grasp; when the fingers receive blood, they can hold.” The *Suwen: Treatise on Regulating the Channels* points out: “When qi and blood are disharmonious, all diseases arise from the changes.” Qi is fundamental for maintaining the body’s life activities; qi generates blood, and blood carries qi. Where qi moves, blood moves. Sufficient qi and blood keep diseases at bay. Original qi (Yuan Qi) sustains the primal life activities, transformed from kidney essence, and plays a major role in immune regulation. Research shows that qi-tonifying herbs that enhance immunity play an important role in gastric cancer treatment. Qi-tonifying herbs can regulate anti-inflammatory activity and are applied at various stages of gastric cancer. Examples include *Atractylodes macrocephala* (Bai Zhu) for protecting the gastric mucosa, among others.

5.4 Therapeutic Exercises (Daoyin)

TCM Daoyin techniques such as Five-Animal Frolics (Wu Qin Xi), Eight Brocades (Ba Duan Jin), Six Healing Sounds (Liu Zi Jue), and Twenty-Four Solar Terms Health Preservation Methods can be used as exercise modalities for preventing gastric cancer. Complying with the four seasons—working at sunrise, resting at sunset—and sleeping before the Zi hour (11 pm) helps yang qi enter the viscera [12]. Yin is on the outside, yang stores within. The internal safeguarding of the body’s yang qi is key to sleep, allowing the body’s yang qi to be cultivated and nurtured, a necessary condition for the next day’s life activities. Modern medicine considers falling asleep between 10 and 11 pm as most effective in reducing the incidence of cardiovascular disease and delaying the aging process.

6. The Inner Classic’s Etiology and Pathogenesis Theory and Understanding Gastric Cancer

6.1 Spleen Deficiency

Li Dongyuan pointed out: “Internal damage to the spleen and stomach harms their qi.” Patients with inherent constitutional deficiency, affected by external contraction, diet, or fatigue, suffer damage to middle yang. Insufficiency of middle jiao yang qi leads to dysfunction in ascending and descending, preventing the stomach from decomposing and ripening food and water. Many scholars recognize spleen-stomach deficiency as the primary pathogenesis of gastric cancer.

6.2 Phlegm Accumulation

The *Danxi’s Heart Methods* records: “Whenever a person has lumps above, in the middle, or below, they are mostly phlegm. Phlegm as a pathogenic entity moves unpredictably.” The ancients believed phlegm-induced diseases could occur throughout the body and affect all five viscera. The tendency of tumors to occur in various locations and easily metastasize is quite similar to phlegm diseases; hence the approach of “dissipating phlegm and dispersing nodules” is proposed for treating gastric cancer [13].

6.3 Stasis and Stagnation

Disharmony between spleen and stomach leads to middle jiao qi stagnation. Over time, this generates stasis, eventually forming lumps that transform into accumulations and gatherings, then developing into tumors. Domestic scholars advocate treating by invigorating blood and resolving stasis, draining turbidity, and guiding out stagnation. Blood stasis resulting from spleen deficiency is more common clinically; the Four Gentlemen Decoction (Si Jun Zi Tang) with added *Chuan Xiong* (Ligusticum) and *Wu Ling Zhi* (*Troglodytes*) is applied to fortify the spleen and resolve stasis.

6.4 Emotions

The middle jiao serves as the pivot for qi transformation. Low mood leads to inhibited qi movement, causing stomach dysfunction. This then impairs the spleen’s transportation and transformation, resulting in poor digestion. These two factors

reinforce each other. Prolonged depression damages yang, leading to yang qi depletion and internal generation of phlegm-dampness, which can eventually develop into cancer. Modern medical research also increasingly emphasizes emotions, even proposing the concept of the stomach as an emotional organ [14].

7. Syndrome Differentiation and Application of Chinese Herbal Formulas

Gastric cancer clinically presents with manifestations of “dual deficiency of qi and yin, and spleen-stomach deficiency,” combined with signs of “qi stagnation, blood stasis, toxin congestion, and dampness obstruction.” Deficiency of the upright and exuberance of the pathogenic are intertwined. Shen Shuwen identified “intermingled toxin and stasis obstruction” as the key pathogenesis running through the entire disease course. Treatment emphasizes the simultaneous use of “supporting the upright and dispelling pathogens,” supplementing qi and nourishing yin while concurrently addressing toxins and stasis. Methods and herbs for clearing heat and resolving toxins, invigorating blood and resolving stasis are used. The method of clearing heat and resolving toxins focuses on eradicating *H. pylori*; the method of invigorating blood and resolving stasis focuses on dissipating congealed stasis in the stomach collaterals. Shen Shuwen believes animal-derived Chinese medicines excel at resolving toxins and dispersing nodules, invigorating blood and resolving stasis, and attacking hardness and breaking accumulations. He applies *Jiu Xiang Chong* (*Aspongopus*), which has antibacterial and antitumor properties, to treat fixed, needle-prick or knife-cutting-like stomach pain, achieving effects of rectifying qi, stopping pain, warming the kidney, and assisting yang. He uses *Shou Gong* (*Gekko*), which attacks toxins and disperses nodules, in the treatment of various tumors including esophageal cancer and rheumatic pain. He uses *Ci Wei Pi* (*Erinaceus Corium*), which resolves stasis, stops pain, astringes to stop bleeding, and secures essence to reduce urination, for treating stomach pain, hemorrhoids, and enuresis/spermatorrhea [15]. He applies *Wu Zei Gu* (*Sepiae Endoconcha*), which is astringent, salty, and slightly warm, for treating hematemesis, epistaxis, damp sores, and eczema. He uses the feces of *Fu Chi Shu* (complex-toothed flying squirrel) combined with *Ji Nei Jin* (*Gizzard Lining*), *Chai Hu* (*Bupleurum*), *Yan Hu Suo* (*Corydalis*), and *Sheng Pu Huang* (*Cattail Pollen*) to treat intestinal metaplasia and dysplasia. *Mu Li* (*Ostreae Concha*), characterized by a salty, astringent taste and slightly cold nature, primarily contains minerals like calcium sulfate, making it excellent for harmonizing the stomach and controlling acid. For cases of gastric discomfort with acid regurgitation and stomach duct pain, Mr. Shen uses *Wa Leng Zi* (*Arcae Concha*) to resolve stasis and disperse nodules for patterns of liver-stomach heat stagnation. *Zhen Zhu Mu* (*Margaritifera Concha*), recorded in the *Illustrated Classic of Materia Medica*, clears the liver, improves vision, calms the liver, and anchors the spirit; Mr. Shen cautions its use in patients with qi and blood deficiency or spleen-stomach cold deficiency. *Feng Fang* (*Vespa Nidus*), from the *Shennong's Classic of Materia Medica*, is shown by modern pharmacological research to promote antipyretic, analgesic effects and gastrointestinal motility. *Wu Gong* (*Scolopendra*) is clinically used for tetanus, infantile convulsions, chronic

rheumatic pain, hemiplegia, facial paralysis, scrofula, sores, and carbuncles; Mr. Shen also applies it for patterns of intermingled toxin and stasis. Mr. Shen believes *Quan Xie* (*Scorpio*) can open the knots of qi and blood, and small doses are quite effective for stomach pain. *Bai Jiang Can* (*Bombyx Batryticatus*), combined with *Wu Mei* (*Mume Fructus*), can resolve phlegm, disperse nodules, and eliminate gastrointestinal polyps [16].

8. Application of TCM External Therapies

8.1 Traditional TCM External Treatment Methods for Tumors

8.1.1 Poultice Application Method (Plaster Method)

Poultice (*Bao Tie*) is the ancient term for medicinal plaster. Applying plasters externally to acupoints can fortify the spleen, harmonize the stomach, free the collaterals, stop pain, dispel stasis, resolve toxins, reduce swelling, and disperse nodules. TCM poultice application is a method of administering medicine via the body surface. Drugs with aromatic, orifice-opening, blood-invigorating, collateral-freeing, and pain-relieving properties are often selected. Absorbed through the skin and penetrating to the tumor's surface blood vessels, they can improve microcirculation in tumor tissue and inhibit tumor growth. Furthermore, this method avoids the first-pass effect of oral drugs in the body and the gastrointestinal reactions some drugs may cause. It is particularly convenient and effective for late-stage cancer patients whose upright qi is already depleted, who cannot tolerate aggressive therapies, and whose spleen and stomach functions are weak, rendering oral medication less effective.

8.1.2 Constraining and Dispersing Method

This method involves mixing medicinal powder with a liquid to form a paste, which is then applied to the affected area. The medicine acts to constrain, gather, and restrain sores and toxins, causing mild sores to dissipate, or in severe cases, concentrating the toxins, shrinking the lesion, limiting inflammation, and promoting early suppuration and rupture. Even after rupture, if residual swelling persists, the paste can still be applied to reduce swelling and pain, eliminating remaining toxins. Clinically, pastes like *Jin Huang San* (*Golden Yellow Powder*), *Chong He Gao* (*Harmonizing Paste*), and *Hui Yang Yu Long Gao* (*Yang-Returning Jade Dragon Paste*) are often applied externally to help dissipate ulcers.

8.1.3 Corrosion Method

The corrosion method involves applying potent, corrosive Chinese medicinals such as *Nao Sha* (*Sal Ammoniac*), *Hong Pi* (*Xin Shi, Arsenolite*), *Zhu Sha* (*Cinnabar*), *Huo Xiao* (*Saltpeter*), and *Jiang Dan* (*Precipitated Powder*) directly to the tumor surface to corrode the tumor body. This aims to vent cancerous toxins, dissipate or slough off the tumor mass, and eliminate decay to generate new tissue. For tumors that have already ulcerated with putrid, eroded flesh, this method can also be used to remove necrotic tissue and promote granulation and wound healing. However, due to its strong corrosive power and toxicity, this method must be used under

strict control of indications and dosage, administered by experienced physicians, with extreme care taken to avoid damaging normal tissues, major blood vessels, or causing systemic poisoning.

The medicated thread method can also be categorized under corrosion methods. It involves making thread-like medicinal strips by mixing corrosive drugs with excipients and inserting them into small sores, fistulas, or sinuses to drain pus and remove decay, promoting healing. It is often used for fistulas or sinuses occurring post-tumor surgery.

1) Insertion Method

The insertion method involves pounding herbs or grinding them into fine powder, then forming them into appropriate shapes like suppositories, pills, strips, or powders for placement into body cavities. It exerts effects of invigorating blood, resolving stasis, clearing heat, resolving toxins, astringing, and stopping bleeding. This method is primarily used for tumors near the body surface, such as vaginal, cervical, or rectal cancers.

2) Ironing Method

The ironing method has a long history, with records of medicinal ironing and hot compresses appearing as early as the Inner Classic. In practice, heated drugs wrapped in cloth or specially designed ironing devices are applied to the body surface. The warmth achieves effects of invigorating blood, resolving stasis, warming and freeing meridians, warming and activating the spleen and stomach, dispelling dampness and swelling, and rectifying qi to stop pain. This method is commonly used to treat cancer pain, tumor-associated diarrhea, or local tumor masses.

3) Fumigation and Washing Method

TCM fumigation and washing therapy, also known as TCM aerosol transdermal therapy, involves decocting herbs and using the hot liquid to fumigate, rinse, or soak the tumor site or ulcerated area. Leveraging the combined effects of medicinal power and heat, it promotes the opening of the interstices and free flow of qi and blood, achieving effects of boosting qi and invigorating blood, warming yang and promoting urination, and warming channels and freeing collaterals. This method is commonly used to prevent and treat chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy, hand-foot syndrome, and tumor-related lymphedema.

4) Enema Method

Cancer patients typically use the retention enema method, where herbal preparations are made into liquid forms and instilled into the rectum via an enema syringe. The liquid exerts local effects such as reducing swelling, stopping pain, resolving toxins, killing parasites, astringing sores, promoting tissue regeneration, and clearing heat and relieving pain. It is often used to treat constipation, intestinal obstruction, etc. Additionally, TCM rectal drip, a specific form of herbal enema, involves dripping herbal decoction directly into the rectum to achieve systemic or local therapeutic effects.

5) Acupuncture Method

Acupuncture treatment for tumor-related conditions utilizes reinforcing and reducing stimulation at channel points and conduction through the meridians to achieve dredging meridians, harmonizing qi and blood, and warming and freeing channels. For diseases manifesting as deficiency and detriment of visceral qi and blood, acupuncture aims to boost qi, nourish blood, enrich yin, and assist yang. Points like Geshu (BL 17), Gaohuang (BL 43), Zusanli (ST 36), Xuehai (SP 10), Sanyinjiao (SP 6), Shenshu (BL 23), and Xuanzhong (GB 39) are commonly selected. For cancer pain caused by qi stagnation and blood stasis in tumor patients, acupuncture aims to invigorate blood, resolve stasis, free the channels, and stop pain, often using points like Taichong (LR 3), Hegu (LI 4), Zhangmen (LR 13), and Xuehai (SP 10).

6) Moxibustion Method

Moxibustion is a traditional TCM specialty therapy widely used clinically. It has effects of warming and freeing meridians, invigorating blood and resolving stasis, supporting yang and relieving prolapse, fortifying the spleen and harmonizing the stomach, and warming and tonifying qi. The Compendium of Materia Medica states: "Taken orally, Mugwort Leaf travels through the three yin and expels all cold-dampness, transforming harsh, killing qi into harmonious energy. Used for moxibustion, it penetrates the channels to treat hundreds of pathogenic evils, raising those with chronic illness to health and longevity. Its merit is indeed great." Moxibustion warms and frees the channels, rectifies qi, and activates the spleen. In oncology, moxibustion is often used for symptoms like nausea, vomiting, poor appetite, diarrhea, and cancer pain associated with spleen-stomach cold deficiency.

7) Cupping Method

Cupping acts on the skin and meridians through negative pressure, achieving effects of invigorating blood, resolving stasis, reducing swelling, relieving pain, and regulating immunity. Modern clinical research shows that cupping, especially blood-letting cupping, is widely used in managing tumor complications.

8) Ear Acupoint Seed Pressing Method

Ear acupoint seed pressing, also known as pressing beans or pressing pellets, is a simple therapeutic method developed from ear acupuncture. It involves applying small, hard, smooth plant seeds (usually Wang Bu Liu Xing [Vaccaria seed]) or medicinal pills onto ear acupoints to prevent and treat diseases. The ear is closely related to the zang-fu organs. The Suwen: Great Treatise on the Correspondences of Yin and Yang states: "The kidney governs the ear... its orifice is the ear." The Lingshu: Treatise on Seas says, "Insufficiency of the sea of marrow leads to vertigo and tinnitus," and "The heart sends its orifice to the ear." The Lingshu: Questions on the Mouth states: "The ear is where the ancestral vessels converge." TCM considers the ear akin to an inverted fetus, containing reaction points corresponding to hundreds of acupoints from head to toe. Ear acupoint seed pressing is

commonly used to alleviate symptoms like pain, nausea and vomiting, myelosuppression, insomnia, constipation, and diarrhea.

9) Gargling Method

The gargling method involves holding a decoction of Chinese herbs in the mouth. It is primarily indicated for oropharyngeal tumors and oral mucosal reactions caused by radiotherapy and chemotherapy, exerting effects of clearing heat, resolving toxins, reducing swelling, and relieving pain.

10) Blood-Letting Therapy

Blood-letting therapy is one of the traditional TCM external treatment methods. By pricking specific acupoints or superficial venules to release a small amount of blood, it achieves effects of clearing heat, draining fire, invigorating blood, resolving stasis, resolving toxins, reducing swelling, and alleviating numbness. Before applying this therapy, the patient's coagulation function must be strictly evaluated, and aseptic technique must be ensured to prevent infection. Clinically, pricking the Shixuan points (EX-UE 11) to release blood is often used to relieve finger numbness caused by the neurotoxicity of platinum-based chemotherapy drugs like oxaliplatin.

11) Acupoint Catgut Embedding Therapy

TCM believes meridians are pathways for the circulation of qi and blood, and acupoints are key nodes on these pathways. Physiologically, meridians maintain the connection between viscera and limbs. Therapeutically, embedding a suture material into an acupoint provides continuous stimulation to the meridian's qi and blood flow, achieving effects of dredging meridians, harmonizing viscera, supporting the upright, and dispelling pathogens. The process of the suture being gradually absorbed within the body acts like a sustained "needling sensation" stimulus, alleviating muscle and vessel spasms, regulating visceral functions, and balancing yin-yang disharmony. It is often used to treat cancer pain, alleviate cancer-related fatigue, and regulate gastrointestinal function.

12) Tuina Massage and Scraping (Guasha)

Tuina massage and scraping, as physical external therapies, play a positive role in symptomatic support and functional rehabilitation in cancer care. Examples include using gentle techniques to relieve muscle tension pain and tumor-related lymphedema, improving limb numbness post-chemotherapy, and aiding joint function recovery after surgery. Scraping also shows some efficacy in treating post-chemotherapy fatigue, cancer-related fever, and drug-induced constipation.

8.2 Modern TCM External Treatment Methods for Tumors

8.2.1 Aerosol Inhalation Method

The aerosol inhalation method uses compressed air to transform TCM compound preparations into aerosol particles 1-5 micrometers in diameter, which are then inhaled through the respiratory tract into the bronchi and alveoli. This method

allows for uniform mucosal administration over a large absorption area, with drugs easily entering mucosal epithelial cells and acting quickly. It is often used for lung and nasopharyngeal tumors, as well as for preventing radiation pneumonitis. However, due to the specific route of administration, its application scope is somewhat limited.

8.2.2 Acupoint Injection Method

Acupoint injection involves injecting medication into specific acupoints or body areas to treat disease. This method organically combines meridian and acupoint theory with modern drug delivery techniques, significantly enhancing clinical efficacy. Acupoint injection allows for slow release of the drug, prolongs its action time, and promotes drug absorption and metabolism. It is applicable for neurotoxicity from chemotherapy and radiotherapy, intractable hiccups caused by tumors, cancer pain, etc. Common acupoints include Zusanli (ST 36), Guanyuan (CV 4), Sanyinjiao (SP 6), Neiguan (PC 6), and Hegu (LI 4). Attention should be paid to injection depth based on acupoint anatomical features, slow injection speed, and appropriate post-injection massage.

8.2.3 Chinese Medicine Iontophoresis Method

Chinese medicine iontophoresis involves soaking gauze or filter paper in herbal liquid, placing it on the body surface between an electrode pad, and using electric current to introduce drug ions through the skin, mucous membranes, and orifices to the target site. As an improved transdermal drug delivery method, it innovatively utilizes the directional penetration effect of a direct current electric field to establish therapeutic drug concentrations locally. It enables non-invasive drug delivery for superficial and deep tumors, while simultaneously stimulating superficial acupoints, representing an organic combination of TCM syndrome differentiation and local treatment. It is currently widely used clinically for treating skin metastases from various cancers, pain from bone metastases, and malignant pleural or peritoneal effusions.

8.2.4 Ultrasound-Targeted Drug Delivery Technology

Ultrasound-targeted drug delivery refers to using mechanical vibrations, cavitation effects (generation and collapse of microbubbles), and thermal effects from ultrasound to temporarily alter the structure of the skin's stratum corneum, significantly enhancing the skin permeability of drugs, allowing them to reach the affected area directly. It avoids the hepatic first-pass effect and liver metabolism damage, facilitates easy drug absorption and rapid onset, provides sustained and stable drug effects, avoids gastrointestinal discomfort, and also offers thermal physiotherapy benefits and reduced systemic toxicity. Combined with meridian theory, it can stimulate acupoints to dredge meridians and regulate qi and blood. It has been applied in treating targeted therapy-related hand-foot syndrome, lymphedema, cancer pain, and radiation dermatitis.

8.2.5 Intraperitoneal Perfusion Method

Intraperitoneal perfusion of Chinese medicine involves directly instilling herbal preparations into the peritoneal

cavity. This allows the drug to directly contact the diseased site, increasing local drug concentration and enhancing therapeutic efficacy. This method features small dosage requirements, high local efficacy, and minimal systemic toxicity, significantly reducing toxic side effects compared to systemic chemotherapy. Intraperitoneal perfusion of Chinese medicine is clinically used primarily for malignant ascites and peritoneal effusions.

8.2.6 Acupoint Magnetic Field Therapy

Acupoint magnetic field therapy combines Chinese medicine with magnetic therapy technology and meridian-acupoint theory, applied in specific ways to the human body for therapeutic purposes. Acupoint magnetic field therapy can utilize the magnetic field's potential adsorption or guiding effect on herbal components, allowing drugs to act more concentratedly in the diseased area, prolonging the duration of drug efficacy, and simultaneously promoting the absorption and utilization of active ingredients in Chinese medicine.

In summary, TCM external treatment methods for tumors, as an integral part of the comprehensive treatment system, demonstrate unique advantages in improving patients' quality of life and alleviating treatment-related toxic side effects. With the ongoing shift in medical paradigms, the integration of Chinese medicine with modern treatment modalities represents a vital research direction in oncology. Leveraging advancements in technologies like wearable smart devices and multi-modal combined interventions, TCM external therapies hold promise for innovative diagnostic and treatment models, offering new hope to cancer patients.

9. Conclusion

By fully drawing upon the health preservation concepts, etiology and pathogenesis theories, and treatment principles of the Inner Classic, we can prevent and treat gastric cancer more effectively, significantly improving patient survival rates and substantially enhancing their quality of life [17]. However, when applying the theories of the Inner Classic to the clinical practice of gastric cancer, it is imperative to closely integrate the latest research findings of modern medicine, continuously engaging in exploration and innovation to forge new pathways and methods for the prevention and treatment of gastric cancer [18]. Only in this way can we better integrate the strengths of traditional and modern medicine, bringing greater hope and well-being to patients afflicted with gastric cancer.

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