

# Professor Zhang Weihua "Three-layer Three Adjustment Method" Treatment of Insomnia Experience

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**Abstract:** Summarize the experience of Professor Zhang Weihua's application of "three-layer and three adjustment method" to treat insomnia. Professor Zhang Weihua thinks the responsibility of "brain-heart-liver", with brain loss, restless, liver depression, as the basic depression, clinical "three talent, three acupuncture method", "three talent", namely three (three parts), all on the two sides, people, the earth and Yin, the place, Yin and Yang peace, clinical results to achieve good effect.

**Keywords:** Insomnia, Three-layer three adjustment method, Sleepless, Famous doctor experience, Zhang Weihua.

## 1. Introduction

Sleepless is common and common in clinical practice, which belongs to insomnia in Western medicine. It is characterized by frequently and continuously difficulty in falling asleep and / or difficulty in maintaining sleep and dissatisfaction with sleep feeling [1]. Its prevalence rate is 10%~48%, and the increasing trend [2], and the disease has different effects on people's physical and mental health, quality of life, work and study. Western medicine mostly used sedative sleeping pills (mainly benzodiazepines) treatment, due to the existence of addiction dependence, withdrawal reaction, daytime awakening quality decline and other side effects [3,4]. Chinese medicine to balance Yin and Yang, reconcile qi and blood, syndrome differentiation and treatment, so that the body fundamentally restore normal and peaceful [5]. Acupuncture is widely used in the disease because of its definite [6] and non-toxic side effects.

Professor Zhang Weihua is the academic technology inheritor of Guo Chengjie, the second master of Chinese medicine, director of the Institute of Academic Thought and Clinical Experience of Guo Chengjie, a master of Chinese medicine, famous Traditional Chinese Medicine in Shaanxi Province, Outstanding Traditional Chinese medicine in Shaanxi Province, chief physician and master tutor. He has been engaged in clinical, teaching and scientific research of traditional Chinese acupuncture and moxibustion for 40 years. He is willing to practice and learns from others, good at summary, diligently thinking and innovative in tradition. he treats this disease many years, with unique understanding of sleepless, and formed a unique thinking and treatment of personal characteristics, which have achieved a good temporary curative effect. And now its "three-layer three adjustment method" treatment of sleepless clinical experience is introduced as follows.

## 2. Understanding of the Etiology and Pathogenesis

Professor Zhang Weihua believes that shen is the whole embodiment of life activities, which is based on qi and blood.

Insomnia is a variety of reasons caused by Yang too much, or Yin deficiency, deficiency partial Yang Kang, Yin does not collect Yang, Yang not into Yin, Yin and Yang disorder, so that mind is disturbed and disease, at the same time insufficient nourishment of the liver, blood deficiency, kidney essence deficiency, loss of brain, mental disturbance related. As "Jing yue Encyclopedia" said: "God is calm, god is not awake". "Peace of mind" throughout the sleepless, its total pathogenesis is Yang Sheng Yin decline, Yin and Yang lost [7]. The treatment is from the "spirit is this god" "all the law of stabbing, must first be in god", to "adjust the mind and calm the mind" as the key and legislation, through the heaven and earth, the three talent division parts, brain heart and liver three god tune.

The brain is the marrow sea and called by unusual internal organs. Modern medicine believes that the brain is the center of the nervous system, dominates the rest of the nervous system, and is an important regulatory hub of life activity [8]. "The generation of the five zang-organs": "all belong to the brain" [9], "Compendium of Materia Medica": "the brain is the house of yuan gods", emphasizing the dominant position of the brain in life activities [10]. Human sleep, its center is in the brain, sleep is the advanced neural activity of the brain and the more important life activity, that is, the brain dominates sleep and awakening [11]. Insomnia is a brain disorder.

The heart of the Lord blood, the main mind, for the master of the viscera. "The secret book": "the heart is the sovereign organ, from which the spirit emerges" Blood syndrome theory lying sleep ":" heart does not sleep, heart hidden god, blood deficiency fire move, is restless, tired and sleepless [9,12]. Heart Yin blood is insufficient, heart Yang is not contain, Yang-Kang (excessive or hyperactive state of yang) and false fire, manic and easy insomnia ", insufficient blood, false fire disturbance to the heart have nothing to support, lost in the god and make god have no place to rely on, restless, hair for sleepless [13].

The liver is esteemed as the crown of the generals, primarily responsible for storing blood and promoting free flow, favoring smooth and unrestrained conditions while avoiding

depression. Among internal injuries and miscellaneous diseases, emotional factors rank foremost, with liver stagnation being the most prominent. The liver governs the smooth flow of qi, facilitating the circulation of blood and regulating emotional activities. When emotional depression occurs, it inevitably affects the heart and impairs mental tranquility. When emotional excesses reach an extreme, such as violent anger injuring the liver, or qi stagnation transforming into fire, the spirit and soul lose their abode [14], leading to insomnia."

### 3. "Three-layer Three Adjustable Needle Method"

"Three-layer and three adjustable acupuncture method" is composed of three acupoint acupuncture method and dialectical acupoint acupuncture method.

The "Three-layer and Three Regulations Acupuncture Technique" involves targeting specific acupuncture points based on the three realms of heaven, human, and earth [15]. This includes selecting five points from three acupuncture points located in the "heaven" realm: Baihui, Sishencong, and Yintang; points in the "human" realm: Shenmen and Neiguan (both bilateral), and points in the "earth" realm: Sanyinjiao and Taichong (both bilateral). Depending on the tissue structure where the acupuncture points are located, different manipulation techniques are employed. The acupuncture points in the "heaven" realm are used to calm the brain and regulate the spirit, those in the "human" realm are used to soothe the heart and regulate the spirit, and those in the "earth" realm are used to disperse liver qi and regulate the spirit to treat insomnia.

The acupuncture method of dialectical point selection involves selecting corresponding acupuncture points according to different clinical syndromes differentiated by Traditional Chinese Medicine, and applying reinforcing and reducing techniques based on whether the syndrome is deficient or excessive.

#### 3.1 The Theoretical Basis of "Three Only and Three Adjustment Method"

"The combination of qi from heaven and earth gives rise to human life," as stated in the "Plain Questions: Discussion on Preserving Life and Maintaining Physical Integrity." Professor Zhang believes that the human body is a microcosm, and its functional activities are the manifestation of the communication of yin and yang qi between heaven and earth and the unity of human and nature, which embodies the academic thought of the Three Talents (heaven, human, and earth). The application of this thought to acupuncture point selection in clinical practice was first seen in the "Golden Needle Treatise" by Xu Feng, a Ming Dynasty acupuncture expert [16]. Wang Qingqi and others proposed that based on the concept of the human body as a microcosm, acupuncture should be performed by selecting one point each from the upper, middle, and lower parts of the body to facilitate communication between the upper and lower parts, balance yin and yang, and regulate the body [17]. This approach has gradually developed, characterized by precise and limited point selection, the unity of heaven and human, and

significant therapeutic effects [18]. Inspired by this, Professor Zhang adopts the Three Talents point selection method, selecting several points each from the upper, middle, and lower parts of the body for acupuncture. At the same time, he emphasizes the use of acupuncture techniques and dialectical point selection to achieve the therapeutic effect of balancing yin and yang. Additionally, he applies layered and multiple acupuncture techniques in point manipulation [19], achieving good clinical results.

#### 3.2 Acupoint and Stab Method

##### 3.2.1 Regulating the Mind and Calming the Brain through Three Acupuncture Points in the Upper Region of the Body.

The acupoints of upper are five points: Baihui, SiShencong and Yintang. Baihui is at the top of the brain shell, "A B Classic of Acupuncture and Moxibustion" called "SanYang Wu hui" [20], which belongs to the Governor Vessel (Du Mai). The Governor Vessel is known as the "Sea of Yang Meridians," overseeing and regulating the yang qi throughout the body.

Needle this meridian can supplement qi and rise Yang, the human body blood on the brain and nourish the brain, to regulate the function of the brain, make its brain god nourish and tranquilize the brain and spirit.

Acupuncture for Life Sustainance states that Baihui is mainly used to treat "lack of vitality and motivation, forgetfulness of the past and neglect of the future," and also alleviates "excessive contemplation leading to anxiety and palpitations, or feelings of self-pity and melancholy." [21].

SiShencong points are extraordinary points outside the main meridians. According to Illustrated Classified Classic of Acupuncture (Leijing Tuyi), "They are mainly used to treat stroke and epileptic seizures" [22]. The Integrated Acupuncture states that "They are indicated for headaches, dizziness, wind pain, and mania" [23]. Modern research has found that these points are effective in treating insomnia [24, 25], optimizing sleep structure, and are particularly good at calming the spirit. The Yintang point communicates with the yuan-shen (primary spirit), excels at calming the nerves, promotes the opening of orifices, and is a key point for regulating the spirit and calming the mind [26]. Needling this point can promote the circulation of qi and blood in the head, enrich the marrow, and restore the function of the yuan-shen. When the brain marrow is full, the jing-qi (essential qi) is utilized, the spirit is harmonized, yin and yang are balanced, and then the nutritive qi and defensive qi are in equilibrium, leading to the natural occurrence of sleep [27]. Studies have shown that acupuncture at the SiShencong points and Baihui point can significantly improve cerebral blood flow velocity, induce the synthesis of amino acid neurotransmitters, calm the nerves, aid sleep, improve sleep quality, and restore various functional levels [25, 28]. The combined use of these three points achieves the effects of calming the spirit, nourishing the brain, and regulating the spirit.

Needling Technique: Use a 0.30mm × 25mm filiform needle and perform routine sterilization. For Baihui and the Four Shencong points, employ the flying needle technique with a

straight insertion, rapidly inserting the needle until the needle tip touches the galea aponeurotica, producing a crisp "snap" sound. Then, gently perform mild lifting and thrusting manipulations 10-12 times]. Retain the needle for 30 minutes. During this time and before needle withdrawal, perform mild lifting and thrusting manipulations once more at the five acupuncture points (two points of Baihui and three points of the Si Shencong) in the same manner (gently lifting and thrusting 10-12 times). Yintang, insert the needle 1.2-1.3 inches inward and downward at a 10°-15° angle, to the point where the needle tip touches the bone membrane at the upper end of the nasal bone, causing the needle to become stuck. No further needle manipulation is required.

### 3.2.2 Calm the mind and regulate the spirit with two acupuncture points on the middle of human body

The human department has the divine door, the internal customs (both sides). The Shenmen is the part of Shu (Transporting) point and Yuan-Source point of Hand Shaoyin Heart Meridian, and the qi and blood. "where the original qi of the zang-fu organs resides and qi-blood is relatively abundant. According to "Lingshu - Nine Needles and Twelve Yuan-Source Points," "When there is a disease in the five zang organs, the twelve Yuan-Source points should be selected for treatment" [29]. Stimulating Shenmen can effectively regulate the qi-blood of the Heart Meridian, nourish the mind, and play a role in governing mental activities and emotions. Modern research has found that Shenmen point can regulate brain waves, optimize sleep structure, and effectively improve the functional activities of the cerebral cortex [30]. Neiguan is the Connecting point of the Pericardium Meridian, excelling in connecting and regulating the functions of the Triple Burner. Studies have shown that this point can significantly inhibit the excitability of the cerebral cortex and promote sleep [31]. Liu found that acupuncture at Shenmen and Neiguan can increase the level of inhibitory neurons in the brain, thereby achieving a dynamic balance between excitation and inhibition and optimizing sleep structure [32].

**Needling Technique:** Use a 0.30mm × 25mm filiform needle and perform routine sterilization. Both Shenmen and Neiguan points are needled with the two-layer, three-direction technique.

**Two-layer needling:** Insert the needle straightly for 0.3-0.4 inches, perform twisting manipulation to obtain qi, then insert the needle straightly again for another 0.3-0.4 inches, and perform twisting manipulation once more to obtain qi.

**Three-direction needling:** Withdraw the needle to the subcutaneous layer, and then insert it obliquely at a 30°-40° angle towards the anterior superior, posterior superior, and superior direction along the meridian respectively for 0.8-0.9 inches, performing twisting manipulation to obtain qi in all directions. At this point, the local needle sensation is significantly enhanced and often conducts towards the elbow joint.

Both points are retained with needles for 30 minutes. During the retention period and before needle withdrawal, perform needle manipulation once as described.

3.2.3 The two acupoints in the "Di" (earth) level are used for soothing the liver and regulating the spirit.

The two acupoints in the "Di" (earth) level are Taichong and Sanyinjiao, both located bilaterally. Sanyinjiao is the converging point of the liver, spleen, and kidney meridians. The Classic of Questions and Answers on Medicine (Jiayi Jing) states, "For those who are startled and cannot sleep, Sanyinjiao is the main acupoint to treat." Needling this acupoint can invigorate the spleen and qi, regulate the body's qi and blood, as well as yin and yang, and it is recognized as a highly effective and commonly used acupoint in clinical treatment for insomnia. Taichong is the shu-point and yuan-source point of the Foot Jueyin Liver Meridian, where the original qi of the liver meridian gathers. Research has found that needling Taichong can activate brain regions responsible for emotions [24]. According to the Ling Shu - The Channels and Collaterals, "It connects with the eye system, ascends out of the forehead, and meets the Governor Vessel at the vertex of the head." Therefore, it can treat head and mental disorders, and has significant effects in soothing.

**Needling Technique:** Use a 0.30mm × 25mm filiform needle and perform routine disinfection. For Sanyinjiao, employ a three-layer and four-direction needling technique corresponding to the three levels of heaven, earth, and humanity [25]: Insert the needle vertically to a depth of approximately 0.4 cun (shallow layer, corresponding to the heaven level), perform twisting to obtain qi, then advance the needle by another 0.4 cun (middle layer, corresponding to the humanity level); advance the needle further by about 0.4 cun (deep layer, corresponding to the earth level), and perform twisting to obtain qi. Progressively insert the needle from the shallow layer with deep and heavy force, mimicking the movement of a hunting eagle or dog. Retain the needle for 30 minutes, during which and before withdrawing the needle, manipulate the needle once according to the method, following the sequence of earth-humanity-heaven-earth, repeated three times, combining twisting with slight lifting and thrusting techniques. For Taichong, use a two-layer and three-direction needling technique: Insert the needle straightly to a depth of approximately 0.4 cun, perform twisting to obtain qi, then advance the needle straightly downwards by another 0.4 cun and perform twisting to obtain qi (two layers); withdraw the needle to the shallow layer, and then insert it obliquely at a 30°-40° angle upwards and outwards, upwards and inwards, and along the meridian direction for a depth of 0.8-0.9 cun, respectively, performing twisting to obtain qi in each direction. Retain the needle for 30 minutes, and manipulate the needle once during retention and once before withdrawal according to the method.

## 4. Dialectical Point Selects

For insomnia, Professor Zhang Weihua commonly selects acupuncture points based on clinical syndrome differentiation: for deficiency of both heart and spleen, he chooses Xinshu (BL15), Pishu (BL20), and Zusanli (ST36); for disharmony between heart and kidney, he selects Xinshu (BL15), Shenshu (BL23), and Taixi (KI3); for liver fire disturbing the heart, he picks Xingjian (LR2), Taichong (LR3), and Xiaxi (GB43); for disharmony of spleen and stomach, he chooses Fenglong (ST40), Zhongwan (CV12), and Zusanli (ST36); for qi

deficiency of heart and gallbladder, he chooses Xinshu (BL15), Danshu (BL19), and Xuehai (SP10). All selected points are located on both sides of the body. The needle manipulation involves lifting, thrusting, and twisting movements to reinforce deficiency and reduce excess.

The needles are retained for 30 minutes, with one manipulation of each point during that time. Treatment is administered every other day, with four sessions constituting one course of treatment. There is a rest period of 3-5 days between courses.

## 5. Example of Medical Case

Mr Zhao, male, 40 years old, was first diagnosed on February 14, 2022.

**Chief Complaint:** Difficulty falling asleep for more than four years. Since 2017, the patient has experienced intermittent difficulty falling asleep, often falling asleep after 12 to 2 AM even after taking one tablet of eszopiclone. The patient wakes up 3-4 times a night, experiences multiple dreams and early awakening, and feels significantly fatigued and sleepy the next day. Accompanying symptoms include lumbar soreness and weakness, blurred vision, tinnitus, inability to concentrate, slow reaction, and decreased memory. The tongue is red with thin, white, slightly yellowish, and greasy coating, and the pulse is thin and weak.

**Western Medical Diagnosis:** Insomnia.

**Traditional Chinese Medicine Diagnosis:** Sleep Disturbance - Disharmony between Heart and Kidney.

**Treatment Principle:** Harmonize Heart and Kidney, Nourish Brain and Calm Spirit.

**Prescription:** Main Acupoints - Baihui (GV20), Sishencong (EX-HN1), Yintang (GV29), Neiguan (PC6) on both sides, Shenmen (HT7) on both sides, Sanyinjiao (SP6) on both sides, and Taichong (LR3) on both sides. Auxiliary Acupoints - Xinshu (BL15), Shenshu (BL23), and Taixi (KI3).

**Procedure:** The patient sits in an upright position. The acupoints are routinely disinfected. Filiform needles of 0.30mm×25mm, 0.30mm×40mm, and 0.35mm×50mm are selected and inserted into the relevant acupoints according to the aforementioned method. Shenshu (BL23) and Taixi (KI3) are needled straightly with a depth of 0.8-1.2 inches, and twisting reinforcement manipulation is applied to obtain qi. Xinshu (BL15) is needled obliquely towards the spine with a depth of 0.5-0.8 inches, and twisting reduction manipulation is applied to obtain qi. Treatment is administered every other day for 30 minutes each time, with needle manipulation performed every 10 minutes. Four treatments constitute one course of treatment, with a rest period of 3-5 days between courses.

**Outcome:** After two courses of treatment, the difficulty falling asleep improved, and blurred vision and tinnitus significantly decreased. After three courses of treatment, sleep, tinnitus, and lumbar soreness and weakness symptoms significantly improved, with no dreams and only one occasional awakening

during the night. An additional course of treatment was administered in the same manner, resulting in nearly normalized sleep and disappearance of remaining symptoms. The patient was advised to pay attention to lifestyle and emotional regulation. Follow-up three months later confirmed consolidated treatment effects.

**Commentary:** The patient has long suffered from insomnia and sought medical attention after finding limited effectiveness from taking Eszopiclone (1 tablet per night). Due to prolonged illness, the patient experiences renal yin deficiency, which fails to nourish the heart yin, leading to insufficiency of heart yin, excessive heart fire, and disturbance of the heart chamber. This results in the disharmony between heart and kidney, as well as yin and yang imbalance. "Fire is inherently hot...excessive heat consumes yin." Renal essence deficiency manifests as lumbar discomfort, blurred vision, tinnitus, inability to concentrate, slow reaction, and poor memory. A red tongue with thin and rapid pulse indicates a syndrome of yin deficiency and fire excess. The patient is diagnosed with insomnia due to disharmony between heart and kidney, and the treatment approach is to nourish yin, reduce fire, and harmonize heart and kidney. In this case, the "Three Talents and Three Regulations Acupuncture Method" is selected for acupuncture therapy, along with the acupuncture points Heart Shu, Kidney Shu, and Taixi based on syndrome differentiation. The aim is to nourish renal yin, reduce heart fire, and harmonize heart and kidney. Professor Zhang Weihua often provides psychological counseling and health education to insomnia patients while conducting acupuncture therapy, achieving good efficacy and reducing recurrence.

## 6. Summary

Insomnia is a common and frequently occurring condition, with an increasing incidence and a tendency to affect younger individuals. Professor Zhang Weihua believes, from the perspective of the integration of traditional Chinese medicine and modern medicine, that insomnia is often related to disorders of cerebral neuroregulatory function, and is closely associated with mental state and emotions. Malnutrition of the brain, disturbance of the mind, and difficulty in relaxing liver qi can lead to insomnia. Therefore, treatment should focus on regulating the brain, heart, and liver simultaneously. The "Three Talents Acupuncture Method," which involves selecting acupuncture points based on the division of the body into three parts (heaven, human, and earth) and combining them with syndrome differentiation, is adopted. Additionally, a layered and multi-directional acupuncture technique is applied according to the anatomical structure of the acupuncture points [25]. This approach calms the brain, stabilizes the mind, relieves emotional distress, and regulates qi, thereby ensuring that the brain is at ease, the mind is tranquil, liver qi is smooth, and yin and yang are harmonized. This brings the body back to a balanced state of "yin and yang in harmony," thus ensuring restful sleep [26]. Meanwhile, acupuncture avoids the adverse effects of medications, is highly effective, and is easily accepted by patients. When combined with psychological counseling and appropriate exercise, the therapeutic effect is even better. Professor Zhang Weihua has achieved good clinical results in treating insomnia through this therapy, providing a valuable reference

for clinical practice.

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