

Research Article

Clinical Observation on Skin Pruritus Treated by Blood-Letting Puncture and Cupping on Auricular and Shu-Back Acupoints

Xiu Li^{1*}

Department of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Pharmacy, School of Medicine, Hexi University, Ganshu, China

*Corresponding author: Xiu Li, Department of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Pharmacy, School of Medicine, Hexi University, Ganshu, China. Tel: +86-13909360199; Email: xiaoding061218@163.com

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Abstract

Aim: To observe skin pruritus treated by blood-letting puncture and cupping on auricular and Shu-back acupoints.

Methods: 60 patients were divided into two groups randomly: Loratadine group (n=30) and Auricular and Shu-Back Acupoints Group (A & SB group, n=30). Oral Loratadine tablets was 20 mg /tablet, 1 tablet /time, once a day, 3 to 7 days. 30 patients in the A & SB group, about 3 auricular acupoints and 3~5 pairs of Shu-back acupoints were selected for blood-letting and cupping immediately, 3~5 days /time, 3~5 times for total treatments.

Results: In Loratadine group, 15 cases were cured, 5 were markedly effective, and 10 were ineffective. Total effective rate was 66.7%. A & SB group: 25 cases were cured, 3 were markedly effective, and 2 were ineffective. Total the effective rate was 93.3%.

Conclusion: Blood-letting puncture and cupping on auricular and Shu-back acupoints was effective for treatment of skin pruritus. The therapy was easy to operate, safe to apply, and suitable for clinical promotion.

Keywords: Auricular Points; Blood-Letting Puncture and Cupping; Shu-Back Acupoints; Skin Pruritus

Case data

General Information

Sixty cases diagnosed with skin pruritus were selected and randomly divided into two groups at the Second Affiliated Hospital of Medical College of the Xi University from 2013 to 2016. There were 30 cases in each group. In the Loratadine group, there were 14 males and 16 females. The oldest was 54 years old, the youngest was 18 years old (average: 35.5 years old). The longest course of disease was 5 years while the shortest was 2 months (average: 3 ~ 4 years). In the A & SB treatment group, there were 12 males and 18 females, the maximum age was 55 years old, the youngest was 17 years old, (average: 36.5 years old). The longest course of disease was 5 years, and the shortest for 3 months, (average: 3 ~ 4 years) (Table 1). The following conditions need to be excluded:

- Skin pruritus with bacterial and fungal infections

Introduction

Pruritus is a common concomitant symptoms of various skin diseases in clinic, which usually present in conjunctival, skin of the extremities, intolerable systemic itching, skin redness and swollen, incessant scratching and even blisters, affecting the life quality of patients seriously [1]. The symptom is very hard to be prevented due to the unknown pathogeny and recurrent attacks. The common Chinese and western medicine treatments are not effective, hard to recover. Blood-letting puncture and cupping is one of the ancient acupuncture treatments, which mainly used in treating madness, headache, sudden depressive disorder, heat asthma, and epistaxis. In recent years, the author has applied this method to treat pruritus. The clinical observation of effectivity and experience were summarized.

- Severe endocrine, heart, lung, liver and kidney diseases
- Low immunity or psychosis
- Women with pregnant and lactating

Symptom Classification

According to the Diagnosis and Curative Effect Standards of Traditional Chinese Medicine [2] and the chief complaints of the patients, with reference to classification and treatment of neurodermatitis, cases with pruritus were classified into three syndrome differentiations. There was no significant difference between the two groups ($P>0.05$), as shown in (Table 1).

Classification	Pathogenic fire derived from stagnation of liver-QI	Wind and dampness stored in the skin	Blood deficiency and wind-dryness
Loratadine group (n=30)	9 (30.00%)	10 (33.33%)	11 (36.67%)
A&SB group (n=30)	10(33.33%)	8 (26.67%)	12 (40.00%)
Classification	Pathogenic fire derived from stagnation of liver-QI	Wind and dampness stored in the skin	Blood deficiency and wind-dryness
Loratadine group	9	10	11
A&SB group	10	8	12
Item	Loratadine Group (n=30)		A&SB* Group (n=30)
Age (mean±SEM, y)	14~54 (35.5±)		17~55 (36.5±)
Male	14		12
Female	16		18
Course of Disease	3~4 ()		3~4 ()
Syndrome Differentiation			
Fire Derived from Stagnation of Liver-QI	9		10
Wind-Damp	10		8
Blood Deficiency and Wind-Dry	11		12

Table 1: Baseline Characteristics of Patients.

Treatments

Loratadine Group

Each patient had oral Loratadine 20 mg / tablet, one tablet at a time, once a day, 3-7 days continuously as a course of treatment.

A & SB group (Figure 1 & Table 2)

Blood-letting puncture on auricular acupoints: Choose one ear for auricular puncture. First, hand manipulations such as kneading, rubbing, twisting for 2~3min were used in order to make the whole auricle hyperemia, ruddy, clearly capillaries discernible. Then the routine sterilization of the auricle was carried out, and the areas of auricular Shenmen, ear tip, Sanjiao, kidney, endocrine and lung were selected. The 0.5 cun of intradermal needle were used to puncture the ear and extrusion bleeding with sterile gloves immediately. Once a week, two ears were alternative. The auricular Shenmen and the endocrine acupoints should be selected during the treatment. The amount of bleeding at each point was about 3 ~ 5 drops (1-1.5 ml). After the manipulation, the sterilize tapes were used to stop bleeding.

Blood-letting puncture and cupping on Shu-back acupoints: The bilateral acupoints of Feihu (BL 13), Geshu (BL 17), Ganshu (BL18), Pishu (BL 20) from the Bladder Meridian of Foot-Taiyang, and Dazhui (DU 14) of Governing Meridian were selected. After routine sterilization, the triangle-edged needle pricked quickly several times to show the bleeding spot, and then followed by cupping at the same area. The amount of bleeding at each point was about 1~2ml.

Local pricking blood therapy: If the skin pruritus occurred at

the upper or lower extremities, two more local acupoints should be added in addition to the above acupoints. Bilateral Weizhong (BL 40) the Bladder Meridian of Foot-Taiyang were selected if the skin pruritus on the lower limbs, while Chizhe (LU 5) from the Lung Meridian of Hand-Taiyin acupoints were selected if the skin pruritus on the upper limbs. The amount of bleeding at each point was about 1~2ml.



Figure 1: A & SB Treatment. **A:** Blood-Letting Puncture On Auricular Acupoints: 0.5 Cun of Intradermal Needle Were Used to Puncture the Ear and Extrusion Bleeding After Sterilization. **B:** Blood-Letting Puncture and Cupping On Shu-Back Acupoints: After Routine Sterilization, The Triangle-Edged Needle Pricked Quickly Several Times to Show the Bleeding Spot, And Then Followed by Cupping at The Same Area. The Amount of Bleeding at Each Point Was About 1~2ml.

Acupoints	Location	Meridian	Efficacy and indications
Auricular acupoint			
Shenmen	Area 4 of auricular triangle		Tranquilizing mind, relieving inflammation, relieving itching, relieving cough, relieving asthma, anti-allergy, lowering blood pressure and stopping diarrhea
Erjian	The tip of the auricle		Lowering blood pressure, relieving acute conjunctivitis, keratitis, whole eye red, painful and swollen
Sanjiao	Auricular area 17		Transformation of the body liquids, nutrition, and adjust the whole body gasification
Kidney	Auricular area 10		Tranquilizing mind, relieving inflammation, relieving itching, relieving cough, relieving asthma, anti-allergy, lowering blood pressure and stopping diarrhea
Endocrinology	Auricular area 18		Neurodermatitis, urticaria, eczema, allergic dermatitis, allergic rhinitis, allergic gastroenteritis, allergic colitis, allergic disease
Lung	Auricular area 14		Urticaria, anaphylactic dermatitis
Body acupoint			
Feishu (BL 13)	T3 spinous process, 1.5 cun aside	The Bladder Meridian of Foot-taiyang	Dispersing lung, reinforcing deficiency, clearing away heat, tranquilizing the mind, stopping bleeding, resolving phlegm and dampness

Geshu (BL 17)	T7 spinous process, 1.5 cun aside	The Bladder Meridian of Foot-taiyang	Adjust the abdomen, broaden the chest, stop bleeding, fill deficiency, treat Qi, clear heat, soothe the liver and manage the side.
Ganshu (BL18)	T9 spinous process, 1.5 cun aside	The Bladder Meridian of Foot-taiyang	nourishing deficiency, clearing away heat, dispelling wind, spasmodic convulsant, regulating abdomen and soothing the liver
Pishu (BL 20)	T11 spinous process, 1.5 cun aside	The Bladder Meridian of Foot-taiyang	Invigorating spleen and stomach, eliminating jaundice, regulating heat, clearing heat, relieving swelling, invigorating deficiency, and tranquilizing the nerves
Dazui (DU 14)	The depression beneath of the 7th cervical spine	Du Meridian	Relieving superficies by cooling; Cessation of convulsions and antieclampsia
Weizhong (BL 40)	At the midpoint of the popliteal crease	The Bladder Meridian of Foot-taiyang	Dredging the back and regulating the muscles, dispelling wind, clearing away heat, clearing away heat, removing sore, eliminating carbuncle, strengthening kidney and diuresis
Chizhe (LU 5)	The hollow of the radial side of the biceps brachii in the elbow	The Lung Meridian of Hand-taiyin	Dispersing lung, strengthening spleen and stomach, tranquilizing the mind, dispelling wind, dispersing cold, clearing away heat, removing paralysis and spasmodic effect

Table 2: Acupoints used for the treatment of itch.

Results

Evaluation criteria of curative effect

Cured: pruritus of the lesion completely subsided.

Effective: pruritus occasionally, skin lesion recedes above 30%.

Invalid: itching remained, skin lesions have subsided less than 30%.

Curative effect

Patients were treated once or twice a week for 3-5 times as a course of treatment. Among 30 patients, the shortest effective period was one week and the longest was five weeks. The average effective period was 1.5 course of treatment (times). As shown in (Table 3), in the Loratadine group, 15 cases were cured, 5 cases were effective, 10 cases were ineffective. The total effective rate was 66.7%. For the A & SB group treatment, 25 cases were cured, 3 cases were effective and 2 cases were ineffective. The total effective rate is 93.3%.

Groups	Cured	Effective	Ineffective	Total effective rate
Loratadine group (n=30)	15 (50.00%)	5 (16.67%)	10 (33.33%)	66.70%
A&SB group (n=30)	25 (83.33%)	3 (10.00%)	2 (6.67%)	93.30%

Table 3: Curative effect in Loratadine group and A&SB group.

Follow-up observation

Relapse within 3 months: Loratadine group (n = 3) and A&SB group (n = 0);

Relapse within 6 months: Loratadine group (n = 6) and A&SB group (n = 0);

Relapse after one year: Loratadine group (n=10) and treatment group (n=5).

Conclusion

Pruritus, mainly caused by various allergic dermatitis, contact dermatitis or sunlight dermatitis, is always due to autoimmune deficiency [3]. 30 patients in the A&SB group included not only the pruritus with long-term recurrent attacks, but also the pruritus with newly attacks. Some patients could clarify their allergens, such as sunlight, seafood, climate changes, pollen, clothing, etc. On the contrary, some had no obvious illness history, no contact history or no life changes, suddenly occurred of itching symptoms, or even unbearable itching in whole day and night. Especially in recent decades, various skin inflammations with skin and mucosal pruritus as the main clinical manifestation were also increased due to the deterioration of environment and the ravage of haze [4]. After suffering from the disease, the general treatment included the western medicine or traditional Chinese medicine decoction treatment, usually supplemented with ointment for external use. In Western medicine, pruritus was mainly treated by oral antihistamine drugs, stress relief, and staying away from allergens. But the body could resist to drug and have side-effects. The effect was uncertain and easy to reoccur.

In the traditional Chinese medicine, pruritus (skin itching), redness and even detritus are the symptoms of blood deficiency and wind-dryness [5]. The disease locates in the blood. The main treatment principle is to dispel wind and activate blood circulation, and particularly emphasizes the preventive of disease and the concept of wholism. The treatment of pruritus is based

on differentiation of symptoms and signs. Blood-letting Puncture and Cupping is one of important treatments in acupuncture and moxibustion of traditional Chinese medicine. The selection of auricular points emphasized the concept of global and local interaction and interrelationship. Since the disease is in the blood, the relationship between “blood” and “Qi” is like the relationship between “Yin” and “Yang”. When “Qi” moves, blood follows. Blood flows, wind will dissipate. Pruritus in the skin is highly related the theory of “lung governs Qi”, dominating of the skin and fur. Therefore, selection of auricular acupoints such as lung and kidney, Shenmen, lung, ear tip, Sanjiao and other acupoints with one ear or two ears each time, local bleeding 3-5 drops could adjust the immune function of the whole body.

Once the external immune function was strengthened and improved, it could fundamentally correct the susceptible constitution [6]. As for the body acupoints, the first choice was Geshu (BL 17) of the Bladder Meridian of Foot-taiyang. Because Geshu (BL 17) is the dominant point for blood according to the theory of “the eight cavern” from the classic Nan Jing (Canon On Eighty-One Difficult Issues). Blood-letting puncture and cupping could regulate the blood, promoting wind out of blood. The reason for the selection of Ganshu (BL18, liver), Feishu (BL13, lung), Pishu (BL20, spleen) was the lung masters skin and fur, promoting the flow of Qi and water. Liver ensured the smooth flow of Qi and regulate the activities of Qi; spleen was in charge of holding the blood together, controlling the transformation and movement of fluids, Qi and blood coordinate well, then the wind would be dissipated. Blood flows smoothly, the body will be in good health. In the treatment of local skin pruritus, Wei Zhong (BL 40) on the legs, Chize (LU 5) on the arms were added for blood-letting puncture and cupping. Since pruritus is the internal dampness, which is obstructed in the body and appears on the surface of skin. Chize (LU 5) is the sea point of lung meridian.

The Lung meridian regulates physical activities and the water passages of the body up and down; adjusting the lung, the spleen and the kidney to promote the transportation of fluids. Wei Zhong (BL 40) is also the sea point of bladder meridian. The

Bladder meridian runs through the body from top to the bottom of the surface. Stimulating these points promoted the regulation of activities of “Qi” so that “Qi” could transport water. If there is no more dampness and turbidity in the blood, the skin could not be itchy or irritable. Dazhui (DU 14) is the very important acupoint of Governing vessel, which can regulate body temperature in bi-directional benign regulation, promoting metabolism of the skin. When treating of skin diseases, it is priority to choose Dazhui (DU 14) to balance “Yin” and “Yang” [7]. Therefore, combination of various acupoints could improve the autoimmune function, remove water and humidity from blood, restrain the attack of skin inflammation, and finally remove the itch to achieve the purpose of treating pruritus caused by unknown allergens. In summary, pruritus treated by blood-letting puncture and cupping on auricular and Shu-back acupoints was proven effective, long-lasting, safe and convenient, which is suitable for clinical application.

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