

AN INTERESTING CASE HISTORY

by Steve Clavey

This was one of the most interesting acupuncture cases I saw in China during my training. It is also probably relevant in the current climate in Australia, where "Qigong Masters" are suddenly "a dime a dozen".

A 40 year old lady who suffered from bronchitis decided to learn qi gong, but instead of finding a good teacher, she tried to teach herself from books on the subject.

After practising for a while, she found that rather than increasing, her energy became worse. Even more worrying, she could not sleep because at night her skin - especially that on her face - became very hot and burning. Her back, on the other hand, was very cold from top to bottom.

She had not concentrated her qi with her qi gong practice, but dispersed it! Lacking the guidance which an experienced qi gong teacher could provide at the first sign of any problems, she had fouled up the circulation of the Du and Ren channels. Yin and yang were both deficient by this stage.

Looking for relief, she tried Chinese herbs for more than a year, without success. Finally she ended up at our Outpatients Clinic at the Zhejiang TCM College.

Questioning her history soon revealed that this was a channel problem - Du and Ren - rather than a zang-fu condition. Thus the points chosen were restricted to these channels:

Dazhui DU-14 Shao Shan Huo (Burning Mountain method)
Mingmen DU-4 Shao Shan Huo (Burning Mountain method)
Guanyuan REN-4 even method

Within two treatments she felt better than she had at any time during the herbal treatment: the cold sensation over the back was relieved even after the first treatment, her energy improved, and she could now sleep without feeling hot.

Comment

The case is notable for the precision of diagnosis, and elegance of the selected treatment. My teacher at the time was the head of the Zhejiang TCM College's acupuncture needle manipulation section, Dr. Zhu Ming-Qing (since famous internationally for his dramatic scalp needling techniques). He commented laconically that practicing qi gong without a teacher was crazy, "but Guanyuan helps to open the Xiao Zhou Tian (Minor Heavenly Orbit)".

He also pointed out that this case illustrated the fallacy of the proposition that "mild stimulation equals tonification, and heavy stimulation equals reduction". Expanding upon this, Dr. Zhu explained that "Bu and Xie" refer to both

- a) the needle manipulation method, and
- b) the effect achieved

In this case, for example, Burning Mountain achieved a tonifying effect, even though it is a strong technique. On the other hand, he said, locally acute pain will either be needled very lightly or not be needled at all, opting instead for distal points. He explained:

"In Western medicine locally acute pain is called 'spasm', in Chinese medicine it is called 'cold'. Heavy needling or even heavy massage will cause more spasm. Light needling can relieve the pain, so the effect is 'xie': reduction. Although the stimulation is light, the 'xie' is the expulsion of the cold."

Therefore, he concluded, most practitioners when recording a case and the technique used will write "tonification (light stimulation)", "tonification (Burning Mountain)" and so on, so that everyone knows exactly what was done.

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