

# Depression

Qi, Blood and Body Fluids illnesses

## References

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## Synonyms

Mei-He Qi = Plum-Pit feeling

## Introduction to Qi, Blood and Body Fluids illnesses

Illnesses resulting from imbalanced of Qi, Blood and Body Fluids are of two origins: invasion of external pathogens and internal injuries. These two factors trigger abnormal distribution of Qi, Blood and Body Fluids and lead to insufficient nourishment of different parts of the body, thus this type of illnesses.

Many illnesses in TCM internal medicine have a close relationship with Qi, Blood and Body Fluids. The insufficient production of Qi, Blood and Body Fluids and its abnormal distribution are the main causes for illnesses in this category.

Qi and Blood are important moving forces for the maintenance of the human life. They are the product of the Zhang-Fu activity. The physiological activities and the pathogenesis of the Zhang-Fu are based on Qi and Blood.

Body Fluids is the collective name for all Fluids in the body. The abnormal metabolism of the Body Fluids could trigger illnesses in the Zhang-Fu or make an already illness in the Zhang-Fu more severe.

The illnesses related to Qi, Blood and Body Fluids include Stagnation of Qi resulting in depression, the abnormal flow of Blood resulting in Blood-Illnesses, the accumulation of Water and Dampness resulting in Phlegm, the over-consumption of Yin-Fluids resulting in Xiao Ke, the over-elimination of Body-Fluids resulting in sweating. Fever, fatigue or tiredness could also be the consequence of Qi, Blood, Body Fluids overconsumption. Excess in Body Fluids in the form of Phlegm or / and Dampness manifest as obesity.

Cancer, in TCM point of view, is an imbalance of Qi, Blood and Body Fluids.

To treat Qi, Blood and Body Fluids illnesses, the basic rules are to tonify the deficiency, adjust the abnormal Qi, Blood and Body Fluids distribution.

For example to tonify Qi for Qi-deficiency, move the Qi in case of Qi-Stagnation, correct the Qi movement in case of the rebellions Qi, tonify and nourish Blood in case of Blood deficiency, invigorate Blood in case of Blood-Stasis, tonify Yin in case of Body-Fluids over-Consumption.

It is essential to make a differentiate diagnosis when treating illnesses in this category.

## **Depression**

### **Characteristic Symptoms**

The patients are mostly adults and in their middle ages. Most patients have a history of emotional injuries due to over-worrying, sadness, fear, etc.

The main clinical complains of Depression are feeling emotionally repressed, unstable, fullness and pain in the chest area or in the hypochondriac or both, getting angry easily and crying easily or feeling a foreign object in the throat (Mei He Qi).

When such symptoms are present, illnesses identified as burn out, menopausal syndrome and hysteria in the western medicine are within the scope of Depression in TCM.

### **Aetiology**

Being emotionally hurt is the main cause for Depression.

The dysfunction of the Liver, the Spleen or the Heart can lead to an imbalance of Qi, Blood and the Body Fluids of the Zhang-Fu, and eventually cause Depression in some patients.

1. Anger  
Liver being the commander of Qi likes the free flow of Qi and dislikes Qi-Stagnation. Anger can block the Liver Qi and result in Liver-Qi-Stagnation. This is one of the main causes for Depression. As Qi is the commander of Blood, long standing Qi Stagnation can lead to Blood-Stasis and eventually turn into Fire, the so called Liver-Fire, in the case of Depression, Fire-depression.  
Qi-Stagnation can also lead to Body Fluids' transportation being blocked, the blockage can be in the Zhang-Fu organs or in the Channels. If the Body Fluids accumulate in the form of Phlegm, it is then called Phlegm Depression.  
The combination of Phlegm with Fire consumes Yin and Blood. This can result in Liver-Yin Deficiency syndrome.
2. Over-worries  
Over-worries, stress can block the Spleen-Qi. Liver-Qi-Stagnation can attack the Spleen as well and inhibit the Spleen-transportation function.  
When Spleen cannot digest the food this can result in food-accumulation, when Spleen cannot transform and transport Water and Dampness, this can result in Dampness accumulation, eventually Phlegm-accumulation. Spleen being injured, food-intake reduce, Qi and Blood supply will be insufficient, this can lead to Heart and Spleen deficiency.
3. Unhappiness  
When a woman or a man cannot realise what they want to do in life, this causes injury to the Heart Yin. When the Heart is under-nourished, Shen has no place to hide, Heart and Shen become agitated.  
Heart-Yin over-consumed, Heart-Fire becomes predominant and influence the Kidneys-Water resulting in Kidneys-Yin deficiency.

Constitutional weakness or a very strong Liver or introverted personality, these are pre-conditions for Depression. Unstable emotions are often the reasons for a Depressive episode or recurrence episode.

Depression starts mostly with excess condition, with the time, the illness can turn into deficiency condition, or excess and deficiency at the same time.

The onset of the illness can be quick or slow. Depression due to external emotional causes can have a strong and a quick onset, mostly related to Liver-Qi Stagnation.

### **Differentiate Diagnosis**

1. Deficiency Fire throat-Bi  
Mei-He-Qi feeling in Depression has to be distinguished from Deficiency Fire throat-Bi. Mei-He-Qi occurs mostly in adults, mostly middle-age women patients due to repressed emotions, they have the feeling of a foreign object in the throat, but there is no difficulty in swallowing, there is a strong relationship with the emotional disturbance. When the patient is in a happy state the symptom reduce or disappear. When the patients are depressed, the illness is worse. Deficient Fire throat Bi mostly happen after a common cold, smoking, consumption of alcohol, spicy food, other than the feeling of having a foreign object in the throat, the patients compliant of dry throat, with burning sensation and itchy feeling. This has nothing to do with the emotional state of the patient, but overwork or external pathogens might make the illness worse.
2. Dysphagia  
Mostly by middle-aged or older men, feeling of blockage and pain behind the chest-bone, with close relationship to intake of food. The patients have difficulties in drinking and in taking in food, the patient might not be able to swallow when the condition gets severe.
3. Epilepsy  
Zhang organ agitation Depression has to be distinguished from epilepsy. Zhang organ agitation Depression mostly happens in middle aged women from emotional injury, the attacks occurs in episodes, the patients behave normally outside the episode. Epilepsy occurs in young adult patients with no differentiation of gender and has normally a long illness history.

### **TCM-Differential Diagnostic**

In TCM, the main cause for Depression is Qi-Stagnation. Depression starts with excess mostly, Stagnation in Qi, Blood and Fire levels are closely related to the Liver. Stagnation in Food, Dampness and Phlegm are closely related to the Spleen.

In excess state, symptoms include being emotionally repressed, pain in the hypochondriacs, Mei He Qi. The pulse is slippery and tight.

When the illness turns into deficiency state, it is closely related to the Heart, sometimes involving also Spleen and Kidneys. The symptoms include being not awake, restlessness, agitation, sadness and crying easily, sleeping disturbances. The pulse is thin or thin and quick.

#### 1. Liver-Qi-Stagnation

Symptoms: being emotionally repressed, restlessness, pressure on the chest, like to rest, pain in the hypochondriacs, pressure above the abdomen, bloating, abnormal bowel movement, thin tongue coating, tight pulse.

Analyses: Emotional injuries disturb the function of the Liver, therefore symptoms such as repressed emotion, restlessness, pressure in the chest. Liver Qi Stagnation blocks the movement of Blood, this could lead to pain in the hypochondriac. Liver Qi attacks the Stomach, this blocks the Qi above the abdomen. Liver-Qi attacks the Spleen, which inhibits the transportation function of the Spleen, resulting in bloating, abnormal bowel movement. The thin and greasy tongue coating with tight pulse are signs of the Liver and Stomach disharmony.

#### 2. Liver-Qi Stagnation transforms into Fire

Symptoms: choleric, fullness in the hypochondriac region, bitterness in the mouth and dry mouth, headache, red eyes, tinnitus, acid reflux, constipation, red tongue with yellow coating, tight and fast pulse.

Analyses: Liver Stagnation transforms into Fire, in other words inflammation, therefore fullness in the hypochondriacs, headache, red eyes, tinnitus. Liver-Fire attacks Stomach, Stomach and large Intestine are Biao-Li related, accumulated Heat in Stomach and large Intestine give bitterness in the mouth, dry mouth, acid reflux and constipation. Red tongue and yellow coating, tight and fast pulse are signs of Liver Fire.

### 3. Phlegm Stagnation

Symptoms: repressed emotions, fullness in the chest and hypochondriac area, Mei He Qi. The patients have normally white and greasy tongue coating with slippery and tight pulse.

Analysis: Spleen attacked by Liver, leads to Dampness accumulation and becoming Phlegm, concentrated in the throat. The tongue and pulse show the existence of Phlegm.

### 4. Heart and Shen under-nourished

Symptoms: repressed emotion, restlessness, suspicious, easily scared and sad, crying easily, sighing, uncontrolled screaming. Pale tongue, thin and white coating, thin and tight pulse.

Analysis: this is the Zhang Organ agitation Depression, the Heart and Blood deficiency lead to Shen without root.

### 5. Heart and Spleen Deficiency

Symptoms: Thinking a lot and being suspicious, lack of courage, insomnia, forgetfulness, dizziness, tiredness, pale face, no appetite, pale tongue, thin and white tongue coating, thin and weak pulse.

Analysis: The main emotional cause is worry, this injures the Spleen and the Heart.

### 6. Heart and Kidneys Yin Deficiency

Symptoms: „having enough“, too little sleep, lot of dreams, fear, dizziness, tinnitus, forgetfulness, lower back and knee weakness, five palm heat, night-sweating, dryness in mouth and throat, red tongue with little or no coating, thin and fast pulse.

Analysis: When the Stagnation turns to Fire, this will consume the Kidneys and Heart Yin, thus all symptoms related to Heart and Kidneys deficiency.

## **TCM Treatment**

Move the Qi, resolve Stagnation ensure the free-flow of Qi, stabilise the emotions are the main principals of treatment for Depression.

Excess and deficiency should be distinguished.

At the beginning, excess is treated by moving the Qi, resolving the Stagnation. Blood-Stasis, Fire-Stagnation, Dampness Stagnation, Phlegm Stagnation and Accumulation of Food should be treated by applying methods such as invigoration of Blood, clearing Fire, transformation of Dampness, elimination of Phlegm, helping to digest the accumulated food.

When the illness turns into deficiency, use the tonification method. Deficiency in Zhang-, Fu-, Qi-, Yin-, Yang, Blood should be distinguished so that appropriate tonification methods can be used.

For cases where excess and deficiency both exist, both should be treated simultaneously.

## A. Herbal Treatment

## 1. Liver-Qi Stagnation

Method: pacify the Liver, resolve Stagnation, move the Qi and harmonise the centre.

Prescription: Chai Hu Shu Gan San.

Chai Hu, Xiang Fu, Zhi Ke, Chen Pi pacify the Liver, move the Qi, resolve Stagnation and harmonise the centre.

Chuan Xiong moves Qi and invigorates Blood.

Shao Yao and Gan Cao pacify the Liver.

Variations:

- If Liver-Qi attacks Stomach, resulting in blockage over the abdomen, add Xuan Fu Hua, DaiZhiShi, Fa Ban Xia, Su Gen to stop reverted Stomach-Qi.
- If the pain at the hypochondriac is severe, add Yu Jin, Qing Pi, Fo Shou.
- If accumulated food with bloating, add Shen Qu, Mai Ya, Shan Cha, Ji Nei Jin to help digesting the accumulated food.
- If Liver-Qi attacks Spleen with fullness in the abdomen, pain in the abdomen or diarrhoea, add Cang Zhu, Hou Po, Fu Ling, Wu Yao to tonify the Spleen, transform the Dampness, move the Qi and stop pain.
- If Blood Stasis causes pain at the hypochondriac, tongue with red spots, add Dang Gui, Yu Jin, Dan Shen, Hong Hua to invigorate Blood and resolve Stasis.

## 2. Liver Qi Stagnation turns into Fire

Method: pacify Liver, eliminate Stagnation, clear and drain Liver Fire

Prescription: Dan Zhi Xiao Yao San (Jia Wei Xiao Yao San)

Chai Hu, Bo He, Sheng Jiang pacify the Liver, resolve Stagnation.

Dang Gui, Bai Shao nourish the Blood and soften the Liver.

Bai Zhu, Fu Ling strengthen the Spleen, transform the Dampness.

Zhi Gan Cao strengthens the Spleen.

Mu Dan Pi, Zhi Zi clear and drain Liver Fire.

Variations:

- If Heat predominates, bitterness in the mouth, constipation, add Da Huang, Long Dan Cao to drain the Heat and clear the Fu-Organs.
- If Liver Fire attacks Stomach with pain in the hypochondriacs, bitterness in the mouth, acid reflux, hiccup, vomiting, add Huang Lian, Wu Zhu Yu to clear and drain the Liver-Fire, stop rebellious-Qi and vomiting.
- If Liver-Fire arises upwards with inflammation: the patient has headache, red eyes, tinnitus, add Gou Teng, Ju Hua, Ci Ji Li, to clear Heat and pacify the Liver.
- If the excess Heat injures the Yin with red tongue and little coating thin and fast pulse, remove Dang Gui, Bai Zhu, Sheng Jiang from the prescription (theses are warm and drying) add Sheng Di, Mai Men Dong and Shan Yao to tonify the Yin and strengthen the Spleen.

## 3. Phlegm Stagnation

Method: move the Qi to resolve Stagnation, transform the Phlegm, resolve nodules

Prescription: Ban Xia Hou Po Tang

Hou Po, Zi Su Ye move the Qi, open the thorax.

Ban Xia, Fu Ling, Sheng Jiang transform the Phlegm, resolve the nodules, harmonise the centre and stop the rebellious Qi.

Variations:

- If Dampness accumulates and Qi stagnates in the Chest area with hiccup, thick coating, add Xiang Fu, Fo Shou, Cang Zhu to move the Qi, transform the Dampness.
- If the Phlegm Stagnation transforms into Heat, with agitation, red tongue with yellow tongue coating add Zhu Ru, Gua Lou, Huang Qin, Huang Lian to clear and transform Phlegm Heat.
- If the patient is with long standing illness and the illness is entering the Luo channels with symptoms of Blood Stagnation such as: sharp pain in the hypochondriacs, dark and purple tongue with red spots, tight pulse add Yu Jin, Dan Shen, Jiang Huang to resolve Blood Stagnation and invigorate Blood.

#### 4. Heart and Shen undernourished

Method: nourish the Heart, calm the Shen

Prescription: Gan Mai Da Zao Tang

Gan Cao lubricates the Heart and calms the Shen.  
Fu Xiao Mai tonify the Heart Qi.  
Da Zao strengthens the Spleen, nourishes the Blood.

Variations:

- If insomnia with fear, red tongue with little coating, these are Heart Yin deficiency symptoms, add Bai He, Sheng Di, Bai Zi Ren, Suan Zao Ren, Fu Shen to nourish the Blood, to calm the Shen.
- If Blood deficiency triggers Wind, with hand and feet involuntary movement or cramps, add Dang Gui, Sheng Di, Zhen Zhu Mu, Gou Teng to nourish the Blood, to eliminate the Wind.
- If Blood deficiency with symptoms such as dry stools, add Hei Zhi Ma, Sheng He Shou Wu to lubricate the intestines and facilitates the bowel movement.
- If shortness of breathing with Qi rebellion, combine with Wu Mo Yin Zi to move the Qi and open the chest.

#### 5. Heart and Spleen deficiency

Method: strengthen the Spleen, nourish the Heart

Prescription: Gui Pi Tang

Dang Shen, Fu Ling, Bai Zhu, Gan Cao, Huang Qi, Dang Gui, Long Yan Rou benefit the Qi, strengthen the Spleen, nourish the Blood.  
Suan Zao Ren, Yuan Zhi calm the Heart and the Shen.  
Mu Xiang moves the Qi, awakens the Spleen.  
Sheng Jiang, Da Zao harmonise the Spleen and the Stomach.

Variations:

- If the Stagnation is concentrated in the chest area, add Yu Jin, Fo Shou to move the Qi, resolve the Stagnation.
- If headaches, add Chuan Xiong, Bai Ji Li to eliminate the Wind, invigorate Blood and stop pain.

#### 6. Heart and Kidneys Yin Deficiency

Method: Nourish the Heart and the Kidneys

Prescription: Tian Wang Bu Xin Tang + Liu Wei Di Huang Wan

Tian Wang Bu Xin Tang tonifies the Yin, removes the Fire, nourishes the Heart, calms the Shen.

Liu Wei Di Huang Wan nourishes the Kidneys Yin.

The two combined nourish the Yin and the Blood, benefit the Heart and the Kidneys.

Variations:

- With insomnia, a lot of dreams, being overwhelmed, "incapacity to accept exterior inputs", spermatorrhea, add Huang Lian, Rou Gui to facilitate the communication Heart - Kidneys and Qian Shi, Lian Xu and Jin Ying Zi to astrinogen the sperms and consolidate the Kidneys.

- If deficiency Fire with low grade fever, five palm heat, add Yin Chai Hu, Bai Wei, Mai Men Dong to clear deficiency Heat.

- If Headaches with dizziness, red face, add Ci Ji Li, Ju Hua, Gou Teng, Shi Jue Ming to pacify the Liver and calm the rising Liver-Yang.

- With menstruation problem, add Xiang Fu, Ze Lan, Yi Mu Cao to move the Qi, resolve Stagnation, invigorate Blood and harmonise the menstruation.

## **B. Acupuncture treatment**

### **Basic points combination**

Liv 14, Pc 6, He 7, Bl 15, Li 4, Liv 3, use even method.

Variations:

- If Liver Qi Stagnation adds Sj 6 (Zhi Gou), Gb 34 (Yang Ling Quan), use sedation method.

- If Qi Stagnation turns into Fire: Liv 2 (Xing Jian), St 44 (Nei Ting), SJ 6 (Zhi Gou) clear the Liver Fire, resolve Stagnation, harmonise the Stomach, use sedation method.

- If Phlegm Stagnation with nodules: Ren 22 (Tian Tu), Lu 7 (Lie Xue), Kn 6 (Zhao Hai), use sedation method.

- If Heart and Shen are undernourished add He 5 (Tong Li), St 36, (Zu San Li), Sp 6 (San Yin Jiao), use tonifying method.

- If Heart and Spleen deficiency, add Bl 20 (Pi Shu), Sp 6 (San Yin Jiao), St 36 (Zu San Li), Ren 10 (Zhong Wan), strengthen the Spleen, nourish the Blood, calm the Shen, use tonification method with moxa.

- If Kidneys and Heart Yin deficiency, add Ki 3, Du 20 (Bai Hui), tonify the Yin, clear Heat, calm the Heart and Shen, use tonification method.

## **C. Others:**

- Ear acupuncture: Shen Men, Heart, Endocrine, Temple, Liver, Spleen, Kidneys, Sub cortex, "NAO", choose 3 to 5 points, use electro-acupuncture or short needles on both sides, 20 minutes, every second day. When permanent needles or Wang Bu Liu Xing seeds are used, alternate left and right ears, advise the patients to do massage two to three times per day. Change side every 3 to 5 days.

## **Modern Research**

There are many modern TCM researches regarding Depression done in China and elsewhere.

Dr. Wang Qing Ren (王清任) uses Xue Fu Zhu Yu Tang to treat chronic Depression patients in particular for patients with Phlegm and Blood Stagnation condition.

Dr. Shi Xue Ming (石学敏) uses Pc 6, Yin Tang, Du 20, Du 23, "Ren Zhong" as basic points to treat Depression patients in the first teaching hospital of TianJin.

The modern researches confirm the following:

- To differentiate deficiency from excess is important.
- The emotional balance of the patients is essential for recovery. Advise the patients to avoid fatty, hot food, cigarettes and alcohol.
- When using TCM-Herbs, it is important to use bitter pungent cold herbs to move the Qi, avoid using dry and warm herbs because they injure the Yin.

### **Conclusion and Summary**

Depression patients are common in the clinics.

Depression, with disharmonies in Heart, Liver, Spleen, is caused mainly by emotional disturbance.

Depression starts with excess condition mostly, with Qi-Stagnation as the most frequent disorder.

Excess condition might turn into deficiency condition after some time, deficiency could be found in Heart, Spleen, Liver, Kidneys, Qi, Blood, Yin.

In the clinics, often excess and deficiency conditions both exist in the same patient.

When treating the excess condition, one should pay attention to move the Qi but not to waste Qi, to invigorate Blood but not to break Blood, to clear heat but not to harm the Stomach, to eliminate Phlegm but not to harm the upright Qi.

When treating the deficiency condition, one should not over-tonify, as it would lead to Stagnation.

For cases of deficiency and excess at the same time, one should pay attention to both.

Depression patients can be treated by TCM methods with good results.