

Clinical Practice of Danzhi Xiaoyao Powder

Ying Luo¹, Yao Yao¹, Fang Xiang¹, Defen Wang^{2,*}

¹*Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xianyang, Shaanxi, 712046, China*

²*Xi'an Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Xi'an, Shaanxi, 710021, China*

*Corresponding author: wangdefen69@sohu.com

Keywords: Danzhi Xiaoyao Powder, Homotherapy for Heteropathy, Liver Depression Transforming into Heat

Abstract: Damaged by excess of seven emotions always result in failure of liver-energy to convey and disperse, disorder of movement of qi, damaged viscera function as well as disorder of qi and blood, thus triggering various diseases. Danzhi Xiaoyao powder has the effect of clearing heat and relieving liver depression, strengthening the spleen and qi blood, and is the main treatment of liver depression and heat, as well as the spleen-qi deficiency syndrome, as one of the classic medical prescriptions commonly used in clinical practice, in the past few years, the clinical application range of Danzhi Xiaoyao powder has been continuously expanded, and the efficacy is remarkable. Here are five typical medical cases regarding the analysis of the essence of Danzhi Xiaoyao powder, experiencing the subtlety of the homotherapy for heteropathy so as to give a reference for clinical prescriptions.

1. The Source of Danzhi Xiaoyao Powder

Danzhi Xiaoyao powder comes from the *Summary of Internal Medicine* by the Ming Dynasty physician Xue Ji, the main treatment of syndrome of liver depression transforming into heat [1], it is an extensively used medical prescription that is effective in clinical practice, also known as Xiaoyao powder, tracing back to the source, it is dispensed by Xiaoyao powder, peony peel and gardenia fructus, because of it includes eight ingredients, so it is also known as eight-ingredient Xiaoyao powder. This medical prescription is rigorous in formulation and profound in effect, as one of the derivative prescriptions of Xiaoyao powder, physicians of the past dynasties have made many discussions on this prescription. Since the Ming Dynasty, the clinical application of this prescription has been expanded constantly. It is now widely used in the treatment of internal medicine, gynecology, dermatology, ophthalmology and otorhinolaryngology, psychiatry as well as various other diseases [2], with remarkable curative effect. For the traditional Chinese medicine treatment, the emphasis is not lied on the similarities and differences of diseases, but on the essential differences of the disease mechanisms, as long as the disease mechanism is in line with the syndromes of liver depression transforming into heat, spleen weakness and blood deficiency, then Danzhi Xiaoyao powder can be used for treatment [3], which fully embodies the principle of “homotherapy for heteropathy”.

2. Recipe Explanation on Danzhi Xiaoyao Powder

The major and subsidiary effects for the ingredients in medical prescription were not illustrated explicitly in the work of *Summary of Internal Medicine*, in light of the pathogeny, pathogenesis as well as the principle of “facilitating the stagnant liver” proposed in the work of *Internal Medicine*, the root of Chinese thorowax should be used as the major ingredient to disperse stagnated liver-energy to relieve depression, thus making the liver-energy smooth; Because of another theory of “the root of Chinese thorowax can damage the liver yin”, then coupled with Chinese angelica to nourish yin and promote blood circulation, white peony root to nourish and smooth liver for the purpose of nourishing the liver body and strengthening the liver functions; Long stagnated liver-energy transforming into heat, using cortex moutan to soothe the heat in blood, gardenia fructus to soothe heat and disperse depression as well as clear heat and dampness;

Liver depression damages the spleen, thus resulting in dampness in spleen for a long term, coupled with *atractylodes macrocephala koidz*, *glycyrrhiza uralensis* and *poria cocos* to replenish qi and invigorate the spleen, clear heat and disperse dampness, the integration of various medical ingredients can recover the function of liver, nourish the liver body, strengthen the spleen circulation, enhancing the coordination of liver and spleen as well as the cooperated function of qi and blood.

3. Examples of Medical Cases

3.1. Irregular Menstruation

The patient Hou, female, 22 years old, her first consultation was on November 23rd of 2020. The patient had stated to have less menstrual blood volume for two years, the menstruation was irregular, the cycle was 21 to 35 days, the menstrual period was 2 to 3 days, less menstrual volume, accompanied by blood clot, acnes often occur on the face, the front of the chest and the back, often feeling fatigued in ordinary days, bitter taste in mouth, having meals properly, poor sleep, dreaminess, as well as having normal bowel movements and urine. The tongue was dark red with yellow coating, having the small and wiry pulse. Last menstrual time: October 21st of 2020, small amount, pale color, no history of dysmenorrhea. Diagnosis: irregular menstruation (the syndrome of liver depression and spleen deficiency). Treatment: soothing the liver and relieving depression, as well as strengthening the spleen and stomach. The medical prescription can be dispensed as Danzhi Xiaoyao powder, and increasing or reducing the amount according to the actual situation. Medical prescription: Chinese angelica 15g, white peony root 15g, *poria cocos* 20g, *atractylodes macrocephala koidz* 15g, the root of Chinese thorowax 10g, peony peel 10g, *fructus gardeniae praeparatus* 10g, *glycyrrhiza uralensis* 6g, *radix rehmanniae preparate* 15g, *ligusticum chuanxiong hort* 15g, *semen ziziphi spinosae* 30g, conducting return visit after taking 6 packs, the patient had stated that her spirit improved compared with before after taking the medicine, and her fatigue improved significantly. After taking 6 more packs, the menstruation arrived, menstrual volume increased and blood clots decreased. For follow-up visit after 3 months, the patient had stated that the menstrual flow was normal and there was no blood clot, so the medicine was discontinued.

Comments: Irregular menstruation mainly refers to changes in menstrual cycle, menstrual volume, and menstrual quality for a woman. As a common and frequently-occurring disease in clinical gynecology, menstrual irregularities are mainly manifested by abnormalities in the menstrual cycle, of which the late menstrual period is more than the premenstrual period, and the incidence of menstrual irregularities during puberty and menopause is higher than that in the reproductive period [4]. It is a common gynecological and endocrine disease, which is closely related to emotions, therefore, the syndrome of liver-energy stagnation is very common, mainly

because long-term emotional depression leads to qi stagnation, if it does not disperse, the blood stasis will result in blocked channels, thus triggering diseases [5]. The traditional Chinese medicine believes that the liver stores blood, regulating and dredging the activity of qi, as well as adjusting the emotions; The spleen takes blood and regulates circulation. Liver wood and spleen soil are in the relationship between mother and child, so menstruation is closely related to liver and spleen. The disease of this patient was differentiated as liver depression and spleen deficiency. The medical prescription can be dispensed as Danzhi Xiaoyao powder, and increasing or reducing the amount according to the actual situation, the Chinese thorowax root in the prescription can soothe the liver and relieve depression, making the liver-energy smooth; Peony peel and gardenia can clear heat and cool blood; Chinese angelica, white paeony root, radix rehmanniae preparate and ligusticum chuanxiong hort can nourish and activate the blood, smooth the live and nourish yin; The semen ziziphi spinosae can nourish blood and tranquilize mind; Poria cocos and atractylodes macrocephala koidz can invigorate spleen for eliminating dampness; The integration of these herbs can replenish qi and enrich the blood, circulating the qi and activating the blood, soothing the liver and nourishing the blood, as well as strengthening the spleen and qi in an all-round way.

3.2. Thyroid Nodule

The patient Lei, female, 41 years old, her first consultation was on October 7th of 2021. The thyroid nodule of patient was diagnosed in the medical examination of 2019, the B ultrasound of thyroid presents: a low echo area of about 9 times 7 mm in size can be observed in the right lobe of the thyroid gland, with clear boundaries, regular morphology, and uneven distribution of internal echoes. Diagnosis: thyroid nodules (right), TI-RADS3 type. The patient had stated to have poor mood in ordinary days, irritable, which was aggravated in recent days, coupled with annoyance, bitter taste in mouth, hypochondriac pain as well as breast distention before menstruation. Poor sleep, difficult to fall asleep, poor stools, yellowish urine. The tongue was red with yellow coating, and excessive pulse. Western medical diagnosis: thyroid nodule, Chinese medicine diagnosis: thyroid disease (the syndrome of strong liver-heat). Treatment: subduing pathogenic heat in liver, as well as reducing thyroid nodules and resolving mass. The medical prescription can be dispensed as Danzhi Xiaoyao powder, and increasing or reducing the amount according to the actual situation. Medical prescription: peony peel 15g, fructus gardeniae praeparatus 10g, Chinese angelica 12g, white paeony root 10g, vinegar bupleurum chinense DC 15g, poria cocos 12g, glycyrrhiza uralensis 6g, mentha haplocalyx briq 6g (decocted later), prunella vulgaris 10g, salty litchi seed 12g, fritillaria thunbergii miq 12g, ligusticum chuanxiong hort 10g, rhizome pinelliae preparata 10g. After taking the medicine for 1 week, if the discomfort symptoms of patient are significantly reduced, then increasing or reducing the amount dose to consolidate the effects. In the follow-up visit after three months, the patient is advised to have a repeat thyroid ultrasound. Avoid eating kelp, seaweed and other foods, and lessening iodine diet.

Comments: it was recorded in the work of *Medical Prescription Collection* that Nanxing powder can treat thyroid nodules, big or small, hurt does not itch, it can be told that there were records of thyroid nodules in ancient Chinese medicine works, which were similar to thyroid nodules in modern medicine and can be referred to as “thyroid tubercle” or “thyroid disease” [6]. Belonging to the category of “thyroid disease” in traditional Chinese medicine, it is now generally believed that qi stagnation, phlegm coagulation, and blood stasis are the key points of the differentiated treatment of the disease, which takes qi stagnation as the first, due to long-term anger, annoyance or anxiety, the liver-energy becomes unsmooth, and the qi stagnation coupled with phlegm condense in front of the neck to form a thyroid nodule, which is the cause of thyroid disease. The patient in this case was a middle-aged woman, who was irritable in ordinaries days, resulting in stagnation of liver-energy,

which laid foundation for the subsequent syndrome of stagnated qi transforming into heat. The liver has the physiological characteristics of being strong and irritable, benefiting from optimistic emotion and mood, accumulating heat, if the heat in liver cannot be dispersed, it will lead to liver-energy stagnation, and then transforming into condensed phlegm, the phlegm qi blocked in front of the neck and form thyroid disease. As it was illustrated in the work of *Different Kinds of Diseases* that the thyroid disease occurs in front of the neck, and the nodules can be at any place, such syndrome was aroused by the five internal organs, and the main cause was liver. Clinical symptoms: nodules occur in front of the neck, most of them are smooth and soft, the temper can be irritable and annoyed, bitter taste and feeling dry in mouth, the tongue is red with yellow coating, excessive pulse. Adhering to the treatment principle of soothing the liver and circulating the qi, as well as dissolving the phlegm, softening and eliminating the nodules, using Danzhi Xiaoyao powder to cool and sooth the liver, coupled with the medical herb of *prunella vulgaris* and *fritillaria thunbergii* miq for treatment.

3.3. Cyclomastopathy

The patient Zhang, female, 34 years old, her breast masses increase or shrink with menstruation and mood fluctuations. The mammary B ultrasound presented: blurry shadows with increased density, variable number, and varying lump sizes. Diagnosis: cyclomastopathy. After treatment with Western medicine, the efficacy was not good. In the first visit on May 7th 2021, the patient had stated to have multiple lumps in both breasts, feeling that the lumps had enlarged in the past 1 month, being annoyed and irritable, bitter taste in mouth, and had a 1-week delay in menstruation. The tongue was in dark red and there were petechiae on the margin of tongue, with yellow coating, excessive pulse. Western medical diagnosis: breast hyperplasia, Chinese medicine diagnosis: mastosis (hepatic depression and blood stasis). Treatment: soothing the liver, resolving the depression, clearing the heat, activating the blood and eliminating the plumps. The medical prescription can be dispensed as Danzhi Xiaoyao powder coupled with decoction of four ingredients including peach kernel and safflower, and increasing or reducing the amount according to the actual situation. Medical prescription: peony peel 10g, fructus gardeniae praeparatus 10g, Chinese angelica 10g, radix Paeoniae rubra 10g, the root of Chinese thorowax 10g, poria cocos 15g, atractylodes macrocephala koidz 15g, glycyrrhiza uralensis 6g, mentha haplocalyx briq 6g, fried semen persicae 10g, carthamus tinctorius 5g, ligusticum chuanxiong Hort 10g, radix Rehmanniae Preparata 10g, laminaria japonica aresch 10g, marine algae 15g, oyster 15g (being decocted for 30min first), vinegar rhizoma cyperi 15g, fructus Aurantii fried with bran 15g. Second visit, the menstruation arrived, with proper menstrual volume and red color. Feeling that the nodules in the breasts were smaller than before, the breast swelling before menstruation was reduced, but still feeling annoyed and bitter taste in mouth. The tongue was reddish with thin and yellow coating, excessive pulse. Adding *scutellaria baicalensis georgi* 5g to the former medical prescription, and continuing to take it for 1 month. All symptoms improved in the third visit.

Comments: Breast hyperplasia refers to the simultaneous or unilateral successive appearance of lumps in both breasts in women, the swelling before menstruation is aggravated and it is reduced after menstruation. It is a common clinical disease [7], which belongs to the category of “mammary lump” in traditional Chinese medicine. Breast hyperplasia, also known as mammary dysmorphism, Western medicine believes that this disease is non-inflammatory and non-neoplasiaous in the structural degeneration and progressive changes of the meatus and lobules of the breast. It is caused by ovarian dysfunction and an imbalance in the ratio of progesterone to estrogen. Studies have suggested that Danzhi Xiaoyao powder can regulate endocrine and have the effect of regulating the secretion of the pituitary-ovarian axis to make it regular. The case was caused by hepatic depression

stagnation, damage to the liver and kidneys, imbalance of Chong channel and Ren channel, stasis in the channels of breasts, as well as lacking of nourishment for the breasts. The medical prescription can be dispensed as Danzhi Xiaoyao powder coupled with decoction of four ingredients including peach kernel and safflower, and increasing or reducing the amount according to the actual situation. Danzhi Xiaoyao powder is effective in clearing the liver-heat, resolving the liver depression as well as nourishing the spleen, the root of Chinese thoroughwort in the medical prescription can soothe the liver and resolve depression, the Chinese angelica can nourish and activate the blood, the white peony root can nourish the blood and smooth the liver, the integration of these three herbs can nourish the liver body and strengthen the liver functions, poria cocos and *Atractylodes macrocephala* Koidz can strengthen the spleen and eliminate dampness, making the qi and blood circulate smoothly, the *Glycyrrhiza uralensis* can reinforce the spleen to replenish qi as well as relieve and stop the pain, the *Mentha haplocalyx* Briq can soothe the liver and regulate the qi as well as resolve the accumulated heat in liver channels, the peony peel can eliminate the heat in blood, the *Fructus gardeniae* can clear the liver heat as well as lead it downward. The addition of *Glycyrrhiza uralensis* to Chinese medicine compounds can play a role in alleviating the medicinal properties of other materials. It is a common basic prescription for the treatment of mammary lump in the traditional Chinese medicine. The decoction of four ingredients including peach kernel and safflower can be used to remove stasis and nourish the blood, coupled with the ingredient for softening the lumps and resolving the nodules, aiming at the pathogenesis and good curative effects can be obtained.

3.4. Neurosis

The patient Xie, female, 51 years old. The patient had stated that due to excessive work pressure, coupled with family conflicts, in the past 3 months, she had felt palpitations, chest distress, sweaty, bitter taste in mouth, swelling and pain in both ribs, irritable, poor mood, upset and sad. Poor appetite, insomnia, easy to wake up at night, and normal defecation. Diagnosed at the local hospital as: anxiety disorder. No abnormal situations can be found in the related examinations. Western medicine suggested to take the given flupentixol and melitracen tablets orally, but the efficacy was not good, and the first visit was made on June 7th of 2021. The patient had stated that the panic was aggravated in recent days, accompanied by sweating, less appetite, annoyed, sour taste in mouth, insomnia, constipation, yellow urine, and irregular menstruation. The tongue was red with yellow coating, fine and weary pulse. Western medical diagnosis: anxiety disorder, Chinese medicine diagnosis: syndrome of depression (syndrome of qi depression transforming into heat and malnutrition of heart blood). Treatment: relieving depression and heat in the liver, nourishing the heart and tranquilizing the mind. The medical prescription can be dispensed as Danzhi Xiaoyao powder coupled with ganmai dazao decoction, and increasing or reducing the amount according to the actual situation. Medical prescription: peony peel 15g, *Fructus gardeniae praeparatus* 15g, vinegar *Bupleurum chinense* DC 15g, Chinese angelica 10g, *Radix paeoniae rubra* 10g, poria cocos 15g, *Atractylodes macrocephala* Koidz 12g, *Mentha haplocalyx* Briq 6g (decocted later), *Glycyrrhiza uralensis* 6g, *Triticum aestivum* 15g, 5 pieces of Chinese date (the size of thumb), *Polygala tenuifolia* 12g, Poria with hostwood 15g, *Semen Ziziphi spinosae* 20g, *Cortex albiziae* 15g, cuttlebone 12g. Six packs in total, conducting subsequent visit after taking the medicine for 1 week, the patient stated to have better appetite, and the mood and sleep was improved. The prescription remained unchanged and continuing to take it.

Comments: neurosis is a set of symptoms regarding a series of neurological disorders and somatic discomforts caused by various factors [8], which can be classified as “the syndrome of depression”, “insomnia” and “hysteria” in Chinese medicine according to the clinical manifestations. Chinese medicine believes that anxiety disorders are related to the liver, spleen, kidneys and other

organs, if the liver-energy is depressed for a long time, it will result in excessive anxiety, and the treatment should adhere to the principle of soothing the liver-energy and resolving the depression. The patient in this case has long been unsettled, depressed and sad, resulting in liver depression transforming into heat, stagnation of qi and blood stasis, restlessness, and chest distress, shortness of breath, panic and insomnia, irritable and sweating, multiple symptoms accumulated, and unspeakable sufferings. The ingredients of Danzhi Xiaoyao powder have the effects of detoxification and heat clearing, liver soothing and depression, blood and qi nourishment, as well as regulating endocrine with high safety [9], The peony peel in the medical prescription can eliminate heat and adjust qi, the fructus gardeniae can discharge the strong heat of organs; The Chinese angelica can nourish and harmonize the blood; The root of Chinese thorowax can relieve liver depression; The white paeony root can nourish blood and soften liver; The poria cocos and rhizoma atractylodis macrocephalae can strengthen the spleen and qi, dispel dampness and phlegm; The mentha haplocalyx briq can evacuate the depression; The glycyrrhiza uralensis can strengthen the middle warmer and benefit vital energy. The integration of all these herbs can play the roles of soothing the liver and relieving the depression as well as regulating qi and blood. Using Danzhi Xiaoyao powder to relieve liver depression; The sweet ganmai dazao decoction to relieve pain, nourish the heart and tranquilize the mind; Adding polygala tenuifolia, polygala tenuifolia and semen ziziphi spinosae to tranquilize mood and relieve convulsion, cortex albiziae to resolve depression, and cuttlebone to suppress acid. If the differentiation is accurate, aiming at the pathogenesis and good curative effects can be obtained. Modern medicine has confirmed that Danzhi Xiaoyao powder has obvious anxiolytic, hypnotic, sedative and analgesic effects, and can inhibit the central nervous system stimulant [10,11]. In summary, Danzhi Xiaoyao powder has a good effect in the treatment of anxiety disorders, it can improve the condition faster and better, alleviate anxiety symptoms, shorten the treatment time and have less adverse reactions and high safety compared with the treatment of flupentixol and melitracen tablets alone.

4. Conclusions

Danzhi Xiaoyao powder is the best recipe for relieving liver depression, strengthening and nourishing the spleen, as well clearing the depression and heat. As long as the differentiation is accurate, the Danzhi Xiaoyao powder is flexibly used to increase and reduce the dose in accordance to the actual situation, giving full play to the advantages of dialectical treatment and homotherapy for heteropathy of the traditional Chinese medicine, good efficacy would be obtained all the time.

References

- [1] Liu Yifan, He Wenyan, *Danzhi Xiaoyao Powder*. Beijing: China Medical Science and Technology Press. 2009: 3.
- [2] Ni Xuejiao, Jin Guilan. *Clinical Application Progress of Danzhi Xiaoyao Powder*. *Modern Distance Education in Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2014, 12(13): 162-163.
- [3] Yu Yihan. *Experience in the Treatment of Miscellaneous Diseases in Internal Medicine Using Danzhi Xiaoyao Powder of Professor Du Jinxing [D]*. *Beijing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2016.
- [4] Xiong Shuya. *Clinical Effect of the Addition and Subtraction of Xiaoyao Powder in the Treatment of Hepatic Qi Stagnation Type Menstrual Irregularities [J]*. *Primary Chinese Medicine*, 2022, 1(01): 27-30.
- [5] Gan Di, Bao Yongxin, Gan Ziyi, et al. *Addition and Subtraction of Xiaoyao Powder Coupled with Acupuncture Treatment for Hepatic Depression and Spleen Deficiency Type Menstrual Irregularities [J]*. *Journal of Clinical Military Medicine*, 2017, 45(4): 401-404.
- [6] Zeng Mingxing, Chen Jidong, Zuo Xinhe, Pei Xun, Zhao Yong, Chen Ruquan, Xiang Nan. *Differentiation of Names for Nodular Thyroid Diseases in Traditional Chinese Medicine [J]*. *Beijing Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2017, 36(06): 525-528. DOI: 10.16025/J.1674-1307.2017.06.013.
- [7] Wen Pingkang. *Top Ten Famous Recipes for Xiaoyao Powder of Traditional Chinese Medicine [M]*, Beijing China Publishing House, 2003: 61.

- [8] Wen Pingkang. *Top Ten Famous Recipes for Xiaoyao Powder of Traditional Chinese Medicine [M]*, Beijing China Publishing House, 2003: 46.
- [9] He Shuling, Li Sixin, Cai Weibin, et al. *Analysis of the Medication Rules of Chinese Medicine Compound Treatment for Anxiety Disorders Based on Cluster Analysis [J]*. *Shandong Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2021, 40(3): 255-259.
- [10] Li Xiaoli, Liu Xiaomei, Shao Jun, et al. *Clinical Efficacy Analysis of the Intervention of Danzhi Xiaoyao Powder in Patients with Syndrome of Hepatic Depression Transforming into Heat Type Generalized Anxiety Disorder in the Community [J]*. *Beijing Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2017, 36(4): 359-361.
- [11] Shi Dan. *Clinical Study on the Treatment of Generalized Anxiety Disorder (Disturbance) with the Syndrome of Hepatic Depression Transforming into Heat by Dazhi Xiaoyao Powder [M]*. *Modern Distance Education of Chinese Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2018, 16(17) 106-108.