

# ***Research Progress on Acupuncture Treatment of Mental Disorders Based on the Theory of "Regulating the Mind and Treating with Theology"***

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**Abstract:** In recent years, the incidence of mental disorders has been increasing, and related diseases such as insomnia, anxiety, depression, and stroke have consistently accounted for a high proportion. Conventional clinical treatment often involves oral medication to treat such diseases, but long-term drug use not only increases the liver and kidney metabolic burden, liver and kidney toxicity, but may even result in adverse situations such as drug resistance and withdrawal reactions. Zhi Shen acupuncture therapy can not only achieve significant therapeutic effects but also reduce the side effects of oral medication when treating such diseases. This article reviews the literature on Zhi Shen acupuncture therapy for mental disorders in recent years, summarizes the characteristics of the acupuncture techniques and the key points of acupoint selection, and aims to provide reference for the diagnosis and treatment of such diseases.

## **1. Overview of "God"**

In modern society, as people's pace of life accelerates, social competition intensifies, the pressure of work, life and study increases, and mental diseases emerge in endlessly, the incidence rate rises like mushrooms, and the rate of injury, disability and death increases, gradually becoming more and more important. Compared to general oral medication treatment, long-term use increases the burden on liver and kidney metabolism, and only has a symptomatic effect. After stopping the medication, it is easy to experience relapse and even withdrawal symptoms. Acupuncture and moxibustion therapy, supported by the theory of zang fu organs and meridians, achieves the ultimate goal by regulating the overall "spirit". It is more optimal to treat such diseases without toxic and side effects. This article provides a review of the clinical efficacy and characteristic techniques of treating various types of mental disorders with the Shen zhi acupuncture method in the past 5 years, providing a basis for future research on mental disorders.

In traditional Chinese medicine, there are two definitions of "spirit". One is the broad sense of 'god', and the other is the narrow sense of 'god'. In the book "Ling Shu: The Essence", it is recorded that "being born is called a spirit, and the struggle between two spirits is called a god". Therefore,

human life comes from the struggle (union) between male and female spirits, and "god" runs through the entire process from beginning to end. The so-called generalized god refers to the master of the entire human life activity; In a narrow sense, God refers to human consciousness, thinking, spirit, emotional activities, and personality tendencies<sup>[1]</sup>. Similarly, there is a record in the "Ling Shu · Ben Shen" of the narrow definition of gods, which states that "the soul that follows the gods and deals with things due to concerns is called wisdom", and corresponds to the heart, liver, lungs, spleen, and kidneys of the five organs in sequence, and is hidden in the five organs, forming a union with the gods and then becoming human. This is the Five Organs God <sup>[2]</sup>, which indirectly illustrates the close relationship between human spirit, emotions, and thinking activities and the five organs.

The brain is the highest level of 'God' and is the body of God<sup>[3]</sup>. Zhang Zhongjing's "Jin Kui Yu Han Jing, Volume 1. General Principles of Diagnosis and Treatment" states: "The head is the head of the body, and it is annotated by the gods and humans." It refers to the head as the most important organ in the human body, where the gods gather and annotate. The Spring and Autumn Annals of the Yuan Dynasty also recorded that 'the head is the dwelling place of the gods'. Wang Qingren proposed that "the memory of spiritual machines does not lie in the heart, but in the brain", which theoretically clearly put forward the viewpoint that the brain is the main element of the spirit, and the brain is the generalized god. The heart is a secondary 'god' and is used by gods<sup>[4]</sup>. The "Ling Shu: Evil Guests" says: "The heart is the master of the five organs and six viscera, and the place where the spirit is sacrificed. It indicates that the relationship between the heart and the activities of the gods is the closest, and it is a narrow definition of the gods. The five viscera are the lowest level of 'gods', which is the transformation of gods<sup>[5]</sup>. In the "Su Wen · Xuan Ming Wu Qi" chapter, it is mentioned that "the heart stores the spirit, the lungs store the soul, the liver stores the soul, the spleen stores the will, and the kidneys store the will, which is called the storage of the five viscera

## 2. The theory of regulating the mind

Master of Chinese Medicine Shi Xuemin believes that the mind is responsible for the consciousness, which is included in the functional category of the brain being responsible for the gods<sup>[6]</sup>. All human thinking activities are closely related to the brain, and a healthy brain leads to clear consciousness; On the contrary, if the brain is damaged, the divine mechanism will be lost, and there will be abnormalities in consciousness, consciousness, spirit, and thinking<sup>[7]</sup>. The brain dominates the entire life activity and is the dominant force in the process of life activity. Therefore, in the treatment and regulation of mental disorders, the main treatment is in the brain, which combines and regulates the function of organs and even injects nutrients into the brain, thereby achieving the effect of awakening the brain, opening the mind, and regulating the mind. Sun Shentian, a master of traditional Chinese medicine, believes that depression is located in the brain, and most patients have emotional difficulties. Treatment should mainly focus on soothing the liver and regulating the mind, and regulating the mind should be implemented throughout the entire acupuncture process <sup>[8]</sup>. The technique of regulating the mind should be combined with neurology and neuroanatomy, and combined with scalp and abdominal acupuncture to regulate the mind in multiple positions. It has achieved good results in the treatment of mental disorders, various pains, and motor dysfunction<sup>[9-11]</sup>. According to Zhang Zhiyuan, a master of traditional Chinese medicine, the syndrome of depression is related to the internal injuries of the seven emotions and the stagnation of internal qi, and the treatment mainly focuses on calming the nerves in important towns<sup>[12]</sup>.

### 3. Zhishen Needle Technique

#### 3.1 Ning Shen Needle Technique

The "Tiaogan Ningshen Acupuncture Method" is used to treat insomnia of liver depression and fire syndrome type <sup>[13]</sup>. The acupuncture treatment method is based on clearing the liver and purging fire, soothing the liver and regulating qi, nourishing yin and softening the liver, and calming the mind and regulating qi. The main acupoints are selected as Xingjian, Shaofu, Sishen Cong, and Shenmen, accompanied by Qimen, Taichong, Danzhong, Yongquan, and Ququan. The two acupoints, Xingjian and Shaofu, belong to the element of fire. Therefore, during the operation, these two acupoints are used for laxative therapy, while the other acupoints are treated with conventional acupuncture and not with needles. After treatment, the sleep quality of 30 patients improved, and their irritability and anxiety significantly improved, with a total effective rate of 93%.

#### 3.2 Anshen Needle Technique

The "He Tiao Du Ren An Shen Acupuncture Method" is used to treat mild to moderate depression<sup>[14]</sup>. This acupuncture technique uses the method of harmonizing yin and yang, and directly treats the disease by needling the acupoints on the head's Du meridian. The selected acupoints on the Ren meridian and liver meridian regulate qi, while other acupoints stabilize the mind and spirit. Acupoint selection: Baihui, Yintang, Shenting, Danzhong, Zhongwan, Shuangtaichong, Shuangneiguan, Shuangshenmen, Ningshen three acupoints, and Sun's abdominal area one. The Baihui, Yintang, Shenting, and Ningshen acupoints are treated with twisting and turning therapy, while the Danzhong, Zhongwan, and Sun's abdominal areas are treated with twisting and turning therapy. The remaining acupoints are treated with flat tonifying and laxative methods, with an effective frequency of 93.33% after treatment.

The "Jianpi Anshen Acupuncture Method" is used to treat insomnia of spleen stomach disharmony type <sup>[15]</sup>. The treatment aims to regulate the spleen and stomach, harmonize the stomach and calm the nerves. The selected acupoints include Baihui, Shenting, Zhongwan, Jianli, Shuangtianshu, Shuanghegu, Shuangneiguan, Shuangzusanli, Shuanggongsun, and Shuangyinbai. Baihui and Shenting are pricked flat towards the nose tip, while Neiguan, Gongsun, and Yinbai are directly pricked, all using the technique of tonifying and purging. Zhongwan is pricked uniformly, Jianli, Tianshu, Hegu, and Zusanli are directly pricked with the technique of lifting, inserting, and twisting. Local Qi can be obtained, and the effective rate of treatment is 93.3%.

#### 3.3 Awakening Needle Technique

Adopting the technique of awakening the mind through the opening of the body <sup>[16]</sup> to treat post-stroke aphasia. Acupoint selection: Si Shen Cong, Shen Ting, Ben Shen, Shen Tang, Shen Dao, Ling Dao, Lian Quan, Xin Yu. The method of inserting needles into acupoints on the head is flat needling, which quickly twists and turns after obtaining qi. Puncture the Lianquan acupoint at a 0.5-inch mark on its left and right sides, with all three needle insertion directions towards the base of the tongue, until the patient feels a tingling sensation radiating to the base of the tongue. Heart Yu, Shentang, and Shendao practice the technique of lifting, inserting, twisting, and supplementing, while the spiritual path chooses the healthy side. After obtaining qi, they use the technique of lifting, inserting, twisting, and purging. According to statistics, patients with fluent aphasia have improved language, reading, and retelling abilities before and after treatment, and this acupuncture technique has a good therapeutic effect on this disease.

### 3.4 Qi Shen Needle Technique

Tongdu Qishen Acupuncture Treatment for Mental Disorders <sup>[17]</sup>. Based on Professor Li Zhigang's years of experience in treating mental illnesses, his method of promoting the circulation of blood vessels and regulating the organs to nourish the brain and activate the mind is aimed at treating such diseases. The main acupoints are Baihui, Yintang, Renzhong, and the bilateral dorsal shu acupoints with liver, heart, spleen, lungs, and kidneys, as well as the bilateral Wuzhi acupoints (Soul Gate, Shentang, Yishe, Poku, Zhishi). To enhance the efficacy of awakening the mind, Baihui acupoint is often subjected to dual targeted needling, with bilateral acupoints of the Five Organs Back Shu and Five Zhi acupoints being sequentially punctured from bottom to top. The acupoint is obliquely punctured 0.3-0.5 inches towards the nasal septum, with slightly higher stimulation intensity, and the degree of blinking and slight pain experienced by the patient is considered. The clinical treatment of mental disorders has significant therapeutic effects.

### 3.5 Divine Adjustment Needle Technique

Tongdu Tiaoshen Acupuncture Treatment for Insomnia <sup>[18]</sup>. The main syndrome is insomnia, accompanied by palpitations, forgetfulness, fatigue, and lack of appetite. The tongue is red and yellow, and the pulse is thin. The acupoints are selected to sandwich the spine on both sides of the chest, including chest 5, chest 9, chest 10, chest 11, and chest 12. After 3 days of treatment, Baihui, Taiyang, Anmian, Shenmen, Qihai, Shenmai, and Zhaohai are used, along with Neiguan, Taichong, and Sanyinjiao. After treatment, 84 clinical patients showed significant improvement in symptoms, with an effective rate of 95.24%.

The acupuncture method of relieving depression and regulating spirit is used to treat insomnia of liver depression and qi stagnation type <sup>[19]</sup>. The treatment is aimed at regulating the liver and soul, promoting the use of Ren Du, and selecting Baihui, Shenting, Shuigou, Shuangneiguan, Shuanghegu, Shuangyangfu, and Shuangtaichong. Baihui and Shenting should be pricked 0.5 inches towards the back, while the other acupoints should be 0.2-0.8 inches from the previous treatment. Hegu and Taichong should use the twisting and turning laxative method, while the rest should use the twisting and turning tonifying method. By comparing the scores of the scale before and after treatment, the acupuncture method has an effective rate of 96% for insomnia of liver depression and qi stagnation type.

### 3.6 Clearing the South and Supplementing the North Method

Liu Yi<sup>[20]</sup> et al. used the principles of clearing and benefiting the head, nourishing water and purging fire, nourishing qi and nourishing blood, and regulating essence as treatment principles. They used the technique of purging the south and tonifying the north, selecting the Baihui method, and stabbing 10-20mm backwards, 5-10mm straight at the Double Divine Gate, and 20-25mm straight at the Double Three Yin Intersection. After obtaining qi, they used the technique of tonifying and purging; The Shuangshen meridian is directly penetrated by 10-20mm, and the Shuangxinshu meridian is penetrated by 5-10mm from here. After obtaining qi, it is twisted and diarrhea occurs; Double shining sea straight needling 10-20mm, double kidney shu straight needling 5-10mm, after obtaining qi, twist and supplement method. After treatment, the symptoms of 49 patients with heart kidney non overlapping chronic insomnia improved significantly, and their sleep structure was repaired.

#### 4. Traditional and modern medicine's understanding of selecting acupoints for the Tiaoshen acupuncture method

The various acupuncture methods mentioned above mainly select acupoints on the head, Du meridian, and Bei Shu acupoint. Modern medical research suggests that the mechanism of acupuncture at acupoints on the head is mainly related to the functional localization of the cerebral cortex. The distribution of nerves and vascular networks in the head is dense. Acupuncture on the scalp can obtain a good neural response. At the micro level, nerves transmit information into the brain, generating equipotential stimulation on the corresponding cerebral cortex, regulating cerebral cortex function, and resulting in a series of reactions at the macro level to achieve the corresponding therapeutic effect. At the same time, mental disorders mainly occur in the brain. Compared with other drug treatments, acupuncture can be directly applied to the scalp, which can reach the disease site more quickly and effectively. This is also in line with the traditional Chinese medicine theory of "selecting acupoints nearby". Traditional medicine believes that the brain is a sea of marrow, which is formed by the transformation of essence and qi. The "Lingshu · Hai Lun" states: "The brain is a sea of marrow, and its transmission lies in its lid, while its transmission lies in the wind mansion; The "Compendium of Materia Medica: The Invention of Xinyi" states that "the nasal qi flows through the heavens... and the nine orifices are not conducive to it; For the wise mansion, "Su Wen · Mai Yao Jing Wei Lun" mentions: "The head is the wise mansion"; For the "meeting of various yang", it is a place where the twelve meridians intersect and converge, and there are many acupoints attached to it, especially the Baihui acupoint, which is a place where the qi of various yang gathers. Therefore, needling the head can not only have a local therapeutic effect, but also regulate the whole body, and has a good therapeutic effect on various diseases. In the treatment of mental diseases with acupuncture and moxibustion, the head acupoints are the first choice.

The Du meridian gathers many organs and meridians here. In addition, the Du meridian ascends into the brain, maintaining the relationship between the organs and the brain, and has also become an important meridian for regulating the mind<sup>[21]</sup>. In the Huangdi Neijing, Su Wen Kong Gu Lun Pian, the price was also raised to: "For those who supervise the pulse, it starts from the central part of the bone below the lower abdomen... the upper part of the ring lip is connected to the central part below the two eyes. God comes from nature, and the essence of the kidney is the essence of nature. The essence of the kidney is transformed into kidney qi through transformation and travels along the Du meridian, nourishing the brain from bottom to top. The Governor General of the Governor's Vessel has the Yang Meridian, and all six Yang Meridians intersect with the Governor's Vessel at the Great Vertebrae. The Governor's Vessel has the function of regulating the Qi and blood of the Yang Meridian, hence it is called the "Sea of Yang Meridians". The Du meridian generates yang energy throughout the body, and its acupoints have the function of transmitting and infusing yang energy. Therefore, the main function of the Du meridian is to regulate the body's yang meridian qi and blood, reflecting the functions of the brain and kidneys. Under the derivation of kidney qi, the qi of the other four organs is also infused upwards into the brain. Modern medical research has shown that needling the Si Shen Cong acupoint can protect brain nerve cells, inhibit brain cell apoptosis, and improve memory and learning<sup>[22]</sup>. The combination of Shenting and Yintang also has a certain protective effect on the brain, playing a calming and calming role<sup>[23]</sup>. Therefore, in terms of regulating mental illness, maintaining the guidance and smoothness of the Du meridian plays a bidirectional regulatory role, connecting the upper and lower levels. On the one hand, it can promote the upward flow of qi from the five organs to nourish the brain, and at the same time strengthen the connection between the brain and the five organs, thus making the head clear and clear, the mind concentrated and the brain awakened<sup>[24]</sup>.

In the "Ling Shu", it is mentioned that "the blood and qi have been merged, the camp and

defense have been connected, the five organs have been formed, and the mind has miraculously given up". Some scholars <sup>[25]</sup> refer to it as the "Five Organs God", believing that the generation of Qi is due to the appearance of the five organs when they are formed, hidden in the heart, and dominated by the heart. However, it still requires the five organs to separately store five types of Qi, and through the joint regulation of the five organs, a series of spiritual activities can be completed. Life activities are governed by the heart, with the five organs performing their normal physiological functions. The mind and spirit are attached to the blood and nourish the brain and spirit. Only by ensuring the normal functioning of the heart can blood flow smoothly, the mind remain clear, and thinking respond quickly. In the Classic of Categories, it is mentioned that "the soul is spoken of as a dream, a dreamlike and trance like state, and a realm of ever-changing processions, all of which are also. The normal function of liver activity ensures that the human consciousness is attached to the blood and pushed upwards into the brain through the liver's drainage function. According to the "Sutra Regulation Theory" in Su Wen, "If there is excess blood, anger will arise." When the liver fire is intense, symptoms such as madness and anxiety will appear<sup>[26]</sup>. The physiological function of the spleen allows blood to flow normally within the bloodstream. If the spleen's function is abnormal, causing blood to flow outside the veins and resulting in insufficient blood supply, it will lead to symptoms of weakness such as mental exhaustion and fatigue. The lungs are the place where the qi in the human body environment exchanges with the clean air in nature, and are the acquired qi of the body. There are two main manifestations of the spirit of the lungs <sup>[27]</sup>. On the one hand, the lungs contain the soul, which relies on the existence of the human body form and cannot be separated from it. It is a series of response reactions that the human body responds to changes in the external environment and becomes immortal <sup>[28]</sup>. It is a function related to instinctual sensations and the control of movements in spiritual activities; On the other hand, the lungs are formed through the transformation of lung essence and lung qi, with a focus on sorrow (worry)<sup>[29]</sup>. Qi is transmitted by God, and God generates by Qi<sup>[30]</sup>. At this point, it plays a bidirectional regulatory role. Sadness (worry) is a normal emotional change in the human body, but excessive emotional accumulation can damage the essence of the lungs. At the same time, the decline in lung function can also lead to emotional changes of sadness and worry. If the function of the lungs is normal, the Qi will be vigorous, the Qi mechanism will be regulated, the heart will flow blood, and the spirit will be refreshed<sup>[31]</sup>; Abnormal breathing of the lungs not only affects the generation of vital energy and the generation of qi throughout the body, but also leads to insufficient qi throughout the body, known as "qi deficiency". Affects the circulation of qi throughout the body, causing imbalances in the movement of qi in various organs and meridians, resulting in symptoms such as fatigue and weakness. The kidney is the foundation of innate and sealed essence, and the spiritual activities of the human body depend on the essence of the kidney, which in turn transforms into marrow. As stated in the "Sutra and Meridian Chapter" of the "Su Wen", "When a person is born, they first become essence, and when essence becomes essence, the brain marrow is born." In the "Five Organs Generation" of the "Su Wen", it is mentioned that "all marrow belong to the brain"<sup>[32]</sup>. Therefore, the essence of the kidney is sealed in the kidney, and the marrow is transformed into the brain. There is a mother child relationship between the essence of the kidney and the brain. Abundant kidney essence not only makes the mind clear and agile, but also promotes human growth and development; If the kidney essence is insufficient and the marrow sea is empty, there will be abnormal mental conditions such as hair loss, hearing loss, tinnitus, anxiety, and lack of control.

The Back Shu acupoint is a point where the qi and blood of the organs are infused into the waist and back. From the perspective of meridian circulation, the bladder meridian and the Du meridian enter the brain and connect the kidneys. Studies have shown<sup>[33]</sup> that needling the Back Shu acupoint stimulates the incoming nerves, integrates them at the spinal nerve nodes, and then specifically transmits them to the corresponding organs. The acupoint is named after its therapeutic effects<sup>[34]</sup>.



The same Wuzhi acupoint must be the consciousness controlled by the five organs<sup>[35]</sup>. Acupuncture at the Wuzhi acupoint plays a dual role in regulating the qi and blood of the organs and the consciousness controlled by the organs<sup>[36]</sup>. The Beishu acupoint connects the organs of the human body with the surface, combining yin and yang to jointly regulate the functions of the organs and maintain the homeostasis of the internal environment<sup>[37]</sup>.

## 5. Conclusions

The book "Su Wen: The Complete Form of Precious Life" mentions that "every needle that pierces must first treat the spirit", and treating the spirit is the key to needling. The various types of acupuncture techniques mentioned above are inseparable from their roots, all of which involve selecting acupoints related to consciousness and stimulating them through different techniques to regulate the function of organs and feedback to the brain, thereby achieving the effect of regulating the mind. Although there are many causes and types of insomnia, treatment should also use multiple methods, accurate diagnosis, clear syndrome types, regulate yin and yang through multiple means, regulate organs and essence, stabilize consciousness, and improve sleep. Traditional medicine has unique advantages in treating mental illness related issues, with a focus on green treatment compared to modern medicine's drugs or other therapies. On the whole, the application of acupuncture and moxibustion in the treatment of insomnia can effectively improve the quality of sleep and improve the quality of life, with good clinical research value. In the future, we should further strengthen the research on acupuncture and moxibustion, optimize the treatment plan, open up scientific TCM characteristic therapy, provide the basis for future treatment of mental and psychiatric diseases, and further promote acupuncture and moxibustion to the world.

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