

CHINESE MEDICINE FOR MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, auto-immune disease that destroys the myelin sheath around nerve cells, primarily attacking cells of the brain and spinal cord. When MS is diagnosed, there is no cure for it. A number of drugs are being used to control or minimize symptoms, but most are not consistently effective. While conventional Western medicine continues to search for ways to diagnose and treat MS, Chinese medicine can be extremely useful as an alternative method for managing symptoms. In our experience, traditional Chinese medicine can effectively reduce flare-ups, reduce disease progression, and improve quality of life for MS sufferers.

Here are some cases we have seen in our clinic, and discuss the Chinese medicine approach to these cases. Our belief that acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine are effective modalities to control the progress and reduce the discomfort of MS is based on the positive results we have experienced with many cases we have seen in recent years.

A 40-year-old woman has a progressively worsening MS started five years ago. The initial numbness and weakness of her arms developed into an inability to write words. Her eyes were affected. She had some trouble pronouncing words clearly, and sometimes wrote strange symbols when she meant to write words or numbers. She couldn't concentrate on more than one thing at a time, and became extremely agitated if her train of thought was interrupted.

When she came to us, we evaluated her by taking her history and then looking at her tongue and checking her pulse. Her pulse was slippery and rapid, and her tongue was red with a yellow-slimy coating. In traditional Chinese medicine, these signs were classified as a pattern of Phlegm/Dampness Blocking the Meridians. Chinese herbs that open the meridians and counteract damp conditions are commonly used for this pattern. After a course of acupuncture treatments with Chinese herbs she noticed that she writes better, and her coordination is improved. She feels that she handles her job better, now, and is happy that she can continue to work.

Two years ago, a 26-year-old woman began to experience numbness in her arms, hand and leg weakness, and muscle spasms. Loss of coordination and balance, dizziness and fatigue followed. She was diagnosed with progressive multiple sclerosis. Her regular physician prescribed a variety of medications such as oral corticosteroids and interferon, and also suggested that she see an acupuncturist for her further treatment. When we looked at her tongue, it was purple. In traditional Chinese medicine, her case falls into the category of Blood Stasis in the Meridians. We prescribed Chinese herbal medicine, and began giving her two times of acupuncture treatments per week. After a few weeks of treatments, she no longer woke up at night with muscle spasms. Because she can rest well and sleep through the night, she feels that she has benefited from Chinese medicine.

A 38-year-old woman had severe and constant numbness on the right side of her body, and difficulties with sight and hearing on that side. She was frustrated by her inability to do daily life tasks. She also experienced slurred speech, blurred and diminished vision, dizziness, ear ringing, forgetfulness, and confusion. When she came to our clinic, her tongue was red and her pulse was thin and rapid. This is a very typical pattern of Kidney/Liver Deficiency in traditional Chinese medicine, and the treatment goal is to nourish her Kidneys and Liver with acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine. After two-month treatments, she could do house-work, speak fluently, and had a better sight.

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