

Two Case Reports - Acupuncture for Hand and Wrist Pain

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Abstract : *Arthralgia is a medical term which means pain in joint. Wrist joint is very complex, therefore it is very often exposed to injuries. Many conditions which affect the wrist joint cause problems like pain, stiffness and swelling in the joint and it can reflect in the fingers, hands and forearm. Hand pain can impede important daily tasks if hand pain is accompanied by tingling, numbness, or weakness. Wrist pain can be caused by injuries, rheumatoid arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, gout and etc. According to the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the etiological factors for muscle/sinew pain are: Bi, Qi and blood vacuity due to spleen Qi vacuity, Blood stasis, Liver depression, Qi stagnation, combined factors and etc. Acupuncture as part of the Traditional Chinese Medicine, is effective treatment for wrist pain. Our patients are 51 and 65 years old females with wrist pain, treated with acupuncture on Ashi i.e. trigger points. One patient had only one treatment and the other three treatments. The treatments were made in a clinic for TCM and acupuncture in Skopje, Macedonia by a doctor specialist in acupuncture, on a room temperature, with fire and normal needles.*

Key words: *Arthralgia, wrist, injury, traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture, treatment*

Introduction

The hand and forearm are connected with wrist joint. It is a complex joint which include the distal ends of the radius and ulna, carpal bones (eight small bones arranged in two rows) and the bases of the 5 metacarpals. There are 3 degrees of freedom in the wrist joint: (1) flexing and extending, (2) pronating and supinating, and (3) deviating ulnarly or radially. Our wrist bones and our forearm bones are surrounded by a fibrous capsule and connected with bands of ligaments. [1][2] Wrist pain is often caused by fractures from sudden injuries, but it can also result from long-term problems, such as repetitive stress, arthritis, flexor tenosynovitis, gout, carpal tunnel syndrome and etc. Many daily activities can also lead us to develop painful hand problems. The repetitive stress can cause tendinitis

in the hand and wrist. It can pass into a chronic inflammation, if tendons and muscles are aggravated over and over again. Then the muscles do not receive enough oxygen and other nutrients from the blood and are unable to flush lactic acid and other metabolic wastes. One of the features of the joint inflammation is pain. [3-6] According to the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the etiological factors for muscle/sinew pain are: Bi, Qi and blood vacuity due to spleen Qi vacuity, Blood stasis, Liver depression, Qi stagnation, combined factors and etc. Bi or blockage pattern is used to indicate obstruction of Qi and blood in the channels and collaterals. The spleen is the organ of transformation of Qi and blood and due to spleen Qi vacuity can be caused Qi and blood vacuity too. If the spleen is weak it may not be able to transform enough Qi and blood. Because the spleen rules the muscles and flesh and the four limbs, when its function is weak it will result with pain in wrist, hand, and/or arm. Blood stasis may cause muscle or sinew pain anywhere in the body including wrist, hand and arm pain. Liver depression Qi stagnation usually is caused by emotional stress. Because the liver governs the sinews and movement, its dysfunction results with hand/wrist/arm pain and dysfunction. Pain in the wrist can also be caused by a combination of some of these factors. [7]

Material and methods

Our patients are 51 and 65 years old females with wrist pain. Both patients are treated in our clinic in the period of April-May 2017. The treatments were done in the clinic for Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture in Skopje by a doctor specialist in acupuncture. Acupuncture was done indoor on a room temperature. In the treatment was used fire needle acupuncture on Ashi i.e. trigger points, located on the most painful places on the hand and wrist area.

Case 1

Female, age 51, translator

The patient had numbness and pain on the right wrist for two months, much worse on certain

movements and worse with work. She is also diabetic and use tablets for heart issues. One year ago she had a broken arm and 30 years ago she had car accident. Her digestion, elimination, blood pressure, and sleep were normal. The patient works as translator and she works for extended hours on a computer. This is the probable reason for her condition. The Western medicine doctors assumed the condition as gout or osteoarthritis. The patient has done one treatment on trigger i.e. Ashi point - the most painful places on the right wrist. The treatment was made on 04.04.2017 with fire needle acupuncture. She had control on 11.04.2017 and she said she was having small pain on certain movements but that the main problem – the unbearable pain is gone for now. Her condition is good for now, but however in this case we will make future follow ups to ensure the condition was treated on a long-term. With the only one treatment we succeeded to release the pain, relax the tensed tendons and the strained muscles. If the remained small pain doesn't go away for a while, with few more treatments we will be also able to release it and improve the condition of the hand completely.

Case 2

Female, age 65, unemployed

This patient was diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome, 2 months ago. She experienced pain in the wrist, loss of strength and numbness especially in the right hand. She could not bend the index finger and middle finger. The patient is with high blood pressure. Her digestion, elimination, blood sugar, and sleep were normal. The patient has done three treatments, first and second treatments were made on trigger i.e. Ashi point on the wrist with hot needle, third treatment was made with normal (cold) needles. The treatments were made on 12.05, 16.05 and 20.05.2017. After second treatment the patient experienced great improvement. She had no pain and numbness in the fingers was reduced. In the third treatment we used normal sterile needles to relax the muscles of the hand.

Discussion

Wrist pain typically occur after injuries, repetitive strain disorder, trauma. The most common cause of pain in the wrist is repetitive stress that leads to inflammation of the surrounding tendons. Without rest and treatment, the tendons and muscles succumb to inflammation. Pain may be localized in any part of the wrist region and can be reflected in the hand, even in the forearm. Pain can be increased by certain movements. Other symptoms that may occur are burning, tiredness, soreness, stiffness, numbness, tingling, hot or cold feelings.

[1][2] Wrist pain can be successfully treated with acupuncture. Acupuncture reduces inflammation and eases movement restrictions. It can release blocked Qi in the body and stimulate function, improves circulation and relaxes spasms, brings fresh blood and oxygen to the affected area. According to TCM, pain results when there is blockage for the flow of Qi. Acupuncture promotes and restores the balance of energy. [8] First, the acupuncturist should identify the cause of the pain. Then with palpation the most painful points are found and treated with acupuncture. These points can be treated with normal or with fire needles. Usually in our clinic, for wrist pain we use fire needle acupuncture. For this technique we use special needle which is heated on fire and after we insert it in affected area very quickly. Fire needle acupuncture enhances the blood circulation, improves the Qi energy in the meridians, regulates the function of the Zang Fu organs and etc. From pathological view, fire needle removes the exudate which is harmful for body very quickly, thus reduces the inflammation, edema and improves the physical movements. [9]

Conclusion

Acupuncture as part of the Traditional Chinese Medicine can effectively relieve the wrist pain and give excellent and very satisfying results for a very short time.

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