



Science

## **ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE TREATMENT WITH TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE**

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### **Abstract**

Alzheimer’s disease is a brain neurodegenerative disorder, which is characterized with coordinative and cognitive dysfunctions with significant loss of memory. By the terms of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) the Alzheimer’s disease may occur because of: spleen or liver Qi deficiency with phlegm, spleen and kidney yang deficiency, Qi and blood stagnations and others. With the use of Ginkgo biloba the stagnated energy, the excretion of the mucus and blocked blood can be mobilized and the blood circulation can be promoted to the brain. This study includes 5 patients, 4 women and 1 man, aged from 55 to 78. All patients have the disease for more than 2 years and main symptom in all is dementia. All patients have done certain number of acupuncture treatment and were prescribed Ginkgo biloba 1g per day. After starting the treatment all patients have stated that their health condition is improved, their memory is better and are feeling warmth and circulation to the head and neck. For a chronic and lifetime disease like Alzheimer’s, the treatment with Ginkgo Biloba is also for lifetime and it is shown to be successful in its aim to slow down the progression of the disease and release the symptoms.

**Keywords:** Traditional Chinese Medicine; Acupuncture; Ginkgo Biloba; Treatment; Alzheimer.

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### **1. Introduction**

Alzheimer’s disease is a brain neurodegenerative disorder, which is characterized with coordinative and cognitive dysfunctions with significant loss of memory. The disease usually occurs in older people aged over 60. It is considered that from the age of 85, every 5<sup>th</sup> person suffers from Alzheimer’s disease. [1] Alzheimer’s disease is the most usual found form of dementia. [2] The disease is chronic and progressive causing damage and functional disorders of the memory, language, cognition, character, emotions and behavior in the older people. There are multiple factors involved in the progress of Alzheimer’s disease: inflammatory responses,

oxidative stress, apoptosis, mitochondrial dysfunction, and disturbance of the energy metabolism homeostasis. [3] [4]

The first symptom is always loss of short-term memory. Other symptoms are: problems with dressing, moving objects, speech disturbances, problems with abstract thinking and etc. The disease have 3 stages: mild, middle and severe dementia. According to the Western medicine the disease can't be cured and the treatment is only symptomatic.

By the terms of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) the Alzheimer's disease may occur because of: spleen or liver Qi deficiency with phlegm, spleen and kidney yang deficiency, Qi and blood stagnations and others. According to TCM, the brain is nourished by the kidney as it provides its substance and the cognitive functions of the brain is regulated by the heart. If the heart is disturbed or there is blockage by phlegm obstruction of the heart channels, then memory, cognition, and wisdom disorders may occur. [4] The energy from the kidney i.e. kidney essence is able to produce marrow including bone marrow, cerebral marrow and spinal cord. The cerebral marrow is nourishing the brain and keeps the physiological functions of the brain. If the essence of the kidney is insufficient, the production of cerebral marrow is reduced and it leads to variety of symptoms, such as mental blockages amnesia and dizziness. All prolonged diseases can be associated with phlegm. Phlegm-dampness and turbidity blocking the orifices (the body openings) are pathogenesis of Alzheimer's disease. When the sea of marrow is blocked by the static phlegm-turbidity, it becomes turbid, the Qi movement fails in its function and the original spirit and the spirit of the brain lose nourishment and get blocked, while the intelligence and memory get damaged. As a result, dementia arises. [3]

Ginkgo biloba in TCM is used for circulatory problems, age-related cognitive and physical disorders. The extract from Ginkgo biloba shows positive and beneficial effects on the cerebral circulation and neuronal cell metabolism and shows antioxidant activities. With the use of Ginkgo biloba the stagnated energy, the excretion of the mucus and blocked blood can be mobilized and the blood circulation can be promoted to the brain. [1] [5] [6]

## **2. Material and Methods**

This study includes 5 patients, 4 women and 1 man, aged from 55 to 78. All patients were diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease for more than 2 years.

All patients have done certain number of acupuncture treatment and were prescribed Ginkgo biloba 1g per day, every day. Treatment with Ginkgo biloba is lifelong. Acupuncture treatments were done in a clinic for TCM and acupuncture, in Skopje, Macedonia by a doctor specialist in acupuncture. Treatments were done on points on both sides of the body with duration of 30-45 minutes. Treatments were done indoor, on a room temperature. In the treatment were used fine sterile disposable needles with dimensions 0.25x25mm manufactured by Wuijiang City Medical & Health Material Co.,

Acupuncture points used in the treatment are: Baihui (GV 20), Shenting (GV 24), Wangu (GB 12), Fengchi (GB 20), Qihai (CV 6), Zhangwan (CV 12), Danzhong (CV 17), Xuehai (SP 10), Zusanli (ST 36) and Ashi points on the neck and occipital side of head.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The details for treated patients are shown on table 1. The table shows data for gender, age, duration of the disease and number of acupuncture treatments.

Table 1: Gender, age, duration of the disease and number of acupuncture treatments in the treated patients with Alzheimer's disease.

Gender	Age	Duration of disease	Number of treatments
Female	63	2 years	3 treatments
Male	78	8 years	3 treatments
Female	73	4 years	5 treatments
Female	73	2 years	1 treatment
Female	55	7 years	8 treatments

Main symptom in all patients is dementia. Other accompanied symptoms are: insomnia, dizziness, tiredness, mucus from the nose, allergies and etc.

After starting the treatment all patients have stated that their health condition is improved, their memory is better and are feeling warmth and circulation to the head and neck.

In TCM it is considered that elderly people tend to have copious phlegm and kidney deficiency. Kidney deficiency tends to mind insufficiency, while dementia tends to have copious phlegm. Therefore, dementia is treated by resolving the phlegm. In TCM it is also considered that Alzheimer's disease is a holistic and may involve multiple causes. Although the pathological location of Alzheimer's disease is in the brain, it is highly correlated to the abnormal functions of the kidney, heart, liver and spleen. For example, the patients who initially have kidney deficiency are also possible to develop stagnation of phlegm, which will leads to Alzheimer's disease. Therefore, weakness of kidney-essence and phlegm stasis are the most important pathogenesis for Alzheimer's disease in TCM. [3]

In these patients, acupuncture is used more like additional treatment that can increase the effect of ginkgo biloba and significantly can promote the blood circulation, benefit the Qi, regulate the mind, improve the intelligence, cognition, the overall function and activities of daily life in the Alzheimer's disease patients. [7] [8]

The Ginkgo biloba leaf extract EGb761 is a mixture of organic acids, flavonoids and terpenes, which possesses the capacity to treat a variety of neurological diseases, including age-related dementia and Alzheimer's disease. [4] [9] The use of Ginkgo biloba can help in reducing mental health problems and emotional stress, improve the memory, improve the ability of the patients to manage their daily life activities, diminish depression and hallucinations, protect nerve cells, improve blood circulation and many other benefits. [10]

#### 4. Conclusion

For a chronic, progressive and lifelong disease like Alzheimer's, the treatment with Ginkgo Biloba is also lifelong and it is shown to be successful in its aim to slow down the progression of the disease and release of the symptoms.

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