Dysmenorrhea relief with acupuncture or how Chinese medicine can truly help when it comes to menstruation cramps. Today, I'm going to share the TCM views on dysmenorrhea, the causes, the TCM patterns, and symptoms, including treatments with acupuncture points, medical formulas, and treatments. And food, but stay till the end because I also have some really juicy treatment options you're going to love to add to your practice to help your patient.

Welcome to AcuPro, a show dedicated to making Chinese medicine and acupuncture easy to grasp and fun to learn. Hi, I'm your host Clara Cohen. I support practitioners and students like you in changing the world one patient at a time. My goal is to share my passion for TCM and empower you to achieve superior patient care.

I love to showcase the amazing benefits of acupuncture because after all, acupuncture rocks!

Dysmenorrhea is a debilitating condition commonly known as menstruation cramps, and a lot of women are affected by it.

And I remember growing up because this happened to me, I was told that I was unlucky to have bad cramps, and some women don't have cramps and they're lucky. I don't think luck has anything to do with it, and because of the bad luck, I was told you just have to live with it. And then I got some Chinese medicine treatment and I'll tell you all about that story coming up.

But when it comes to dysmenorrhea, there are two types, primary and secondary. Primary dysmenorrhea is what happens to teenage girls when they first get their period, so the first two years of their period, and it is very common. It's exactly what happened to me. Secondary dyspnoea is when it's associated with another condition like endometriosis, fibroids, or an infection or anything happening in disorder that's happening to the uterus that's creating maceration cramps.

The symptoms of dysmenorrhea can range from very mild to very severe, and it can range from low back pain, lower abdominal cramping, nausea, and vomiting. If the pain is so bad, the woman can vomit being nauseated. It can really take a lot of energy. Often a woman can't even get out of bed because she's in so much pain.

Pain affects a woman's life and her ability to live a normal life. Because I remember when I was a teenager and this happened to me, I could not do sports. I could not do school sometimes for two days every month. This is ridiculous, right? This is not right. So we need to be able to address this and not just brush it as, Oh, well, you're just When it comes to Western treatment for dysmenorrhea, the doctor will recommend either over-the-counter medication or something stronger that can be prescribed.

But often they'll be recommending a birth control method, like an IUD or the birth control pill to try to mitigate or lessen the risk. the pain. When it comes to the TCM view for dysmenorrhea, we want to look at the root cause and see if we can address it or just manage it. When it is due to

external pathogens like cold and damp, which can come from external pathogens, but also from diet, something we can totally address.

Emotional stress, emotional trauma, um, can also be the root cause, as well as overworked, physically and emotionally, and intercourse too often that is quite strong. And when I mean strong, I mean a lot of jarring. That make sense? Okay, so that's the view of the Chinese medicine. Perspective when it comes to causes, there can be, of course, if it's due to endometriosis or fibroids, that's a different story because we have to look at the root cause of those disorders, but the pain itself, often when it's not associated with another disorder comes from having those causes we can look at, does that make sense?

Okay, now we're going to look at the excess and deficiency patterns that are the most common seen in clinical practice when it comes to dyspnoea with the symptoms, acupuncture points, and formula. Then I will share with you more options and what else you can do to help your patients. Now let's talk about the different patterns for dysmenorrhea in Chinese medicine.

I'm going to start with the excess pattern, and I'm going to compare them so we understand how we do the diagnosis so we can have the best treatment. So the first four are going to be qi internal cold, damp heat, and cold. Liver chi stagnation turning into fire. So the last two are excess, including heat.

And the first two don't have excess heat. Specifically, when there's chi and blood stagnation, it can eventually sometimes lead to internal cold, or excess internal cold, because when there is no blood circulation, eventually, internal cold can set in. With the first two, because they're both stagnation, with internal cold there's always stasis because the cold congeal and stop blood circulation.

This is an excess cold or excess yin syndrome. So both of them are going to have stabbing pain, strong pain in the lower abdominal area, and fixed pain in the uterus area. And it is going to be the day before. And the first couple of days of menstruation, when there is an excess pattern, it is always going to show the day or two before the menstruation and the beginning of the period, not at the end.

So they both have that same thing in common. However, there's a few different things. With the chin blood stagnation, we're going to have larger clots, while with the internal cold, we're going to have smaller dark clots. clots. The blood is going to be dark when it comes to blood stasis because blood stasis is purple and pain, right?

But with internal cold, it's going to be a little bit more bright red. With internal cold also, it's going to be scanty blood, so not a lot of flow, not a lot of blood. With blood stasis, it could be normal flow. Now, also with blood stasis, there's going to be PMS due to the qi stagnation, specifically irritability, mood swings, and breast distension.

With internal cold, we're going to have other symptoms like cold hands and feet, or cold lower abdominal area. So when it says cold body, it means body part. When it comes to tongue, if it's more qi stagnation, it's going to be more pink. If it's more blood stagnation, it's going to be more purple. And the pulse is going to be wiry no matter what, but if blood stasis is really showing, Then it'll be wiry, choppy.

With internal cold, the tongue is going to be bluish, which is the excess cold showing up. However, it could also be pale. And the reason for a pale tongue is that because when there is internal cold, often it's due to a blood deficiency. As you can see, there's scanty blood as well. So blood deficiency, often the consequences, which could be specifically for women, internal excess cold.

So the pulse is going to be tight. which is the excess cold, and Sharpie, which shows more a bit of a blood deficiency. So that's a little bit of the difference. Now, let's look at the two excess that contain excess heat. We have damp heat and we have liver trace stagnation, which turns into fire. Now, if you haven't seen my video on liver trace stagnation and its consequences, check it out because it explains how and what happens when it can turn into fire or blood stasis or Other symptoms, links in the show notes, when it comes to damp heat and liver cheat stagnation turning into fire, there's a bit of a difference.

So again, this is excess pattern. So the abdominal pain on both of them is going to be at the beginning of the period or just prior to. Now, when it comes to damp heat, dampness is heavy, like it's feeling heavy. And there's of course, excess damp, right? Which is going to show as excess abnormal vaginal.

sticky discharge. It is smelly because there's excess heat as well. And then the person's going to be thirsty. There's going to be dark urine, irritability, a yellow coat with a red tongue. That is all the heat. When it comes to the dampness, it's going to be more of the smell. The sticky discharge, the greasy coat, and the slippery balls.

Now the balls can also be rapid, it depends on how much heat there is or the person has. Also burning pain, like the pain is burning and it extends to the lower back or the sacrum area, and the person in general feels hot. So obviously for that person, we can't use a heating pad, we can't use Moxa, compared to the two patterns before, internal cold and heat stagnation, where we can use a heating pad and Moxa.

That's the difference here. This is why diagnosis is so important. Now, when there is liver T stagnation, often the person has a lot of stress. And when it turns into fire, first, it'll turn into liver yang rising, which might come down, but eventually it turns into fire. So how does it look like again? It is going to show us heat, but worse heat than the one before.

And the difference is that heat or fire specifically dries the fluids. So there is going to be dry stool with constipation. The person's going to feel hot all the time. And they're going to be thirsty for

cold drinks, like ice cold drinks. They are going to have anger, mood swings, short fuse, very irritable.

Also, when there is fire, fire has tendency to rush blood. So there's going to be a heavy period or it's going to be heavier. It's going to be dark blood with small clots. So that's a difference there. And of course, in the tongue, it's going to show as really red with a yellow coat and probably, Obviously some dryness, because again, dry coat, it will be a dry coat because the fire dries fluid.

The tongue is going to be red with reticides because that's the liver area of the tongue. And the yellow coat, the yellow coat will be very dry because the fluid are going to dry from the excess fire. It may have also some cracks. The pulse is going to be wiry and rapid. Okay, so let's look at treatment.

When it comes to formula, each formula is really good to address the area. And basically, usually it's great to take a week before the period, a week to 10 days before the period, or past ovulation until the first day of period. This is the best thing to do. Tao Hong Si Wu Tang is a modification of Si Wu Tang, which is great when there is a lot of stagnation, but it also nourishes blood.

Shao Fu Zhu Yu Tang is really specifically for the lower abdominal blood stasis and its warming. So again, there is a blood deficiency and a blood stasis there. Shao Fu Zhu Yu Tang does not nourish blood, so it does not address the blood deficiency if it's there. When it comes to damp heat, the formula is Qing He Tiao Xue Tang.

So again, my pronunciation, I'm French, speaking English, and pronouncing Mandarin. And the last one is danger, which is a modification of for when there is excess heat. One of the point that has to be there really is spleen 8, because spleen 8 is the xi-cleft point of the spleen, which is in charge of moving blood and relieving pain, specifically uterus.

pain. So that has to be there. She and blood stagnation. We are going to do spleen four and PC six. And usually I do spleen four on the right and PC six on the left. So you don't have to use four needles using two, the less amount of needles, the better treatment in my experience. Liver 3 to move, obviously, liver chi.

Spleen 6 to balance the hormone, the reproductive system, but also to move chi and move blood. Stomach 29 because it's really located where the ovaries are, and it is the only point that actually warms the uterus. And in this instance, It is going to cause excess cold if it continues to be a blood stagnation.

So this is a really good point to put in there. Now, Splint 10 is great to also move blood and move qi specifically for the uterus. So that's a good combination. When it comes to internal cold, we want to add up Moxa. I could also do Moxa or heat lamp on the first one as well. Often if the patient has some kind of cold symptoms somewhere else in the body, I might also add it.

because it also moves blood. In this instance, we're going to do lung seven on the right, kidney six on the left. Again, less amount of needles, the better. We're still going to do spleen eight, but this time we want to warm the uterus area. So stomach 28, we're going to do it, which is around the ovaries and REN4, REN6, we really want to.

And I would do MOXA on spleen 6 as well because this is the meeting point of the kidney, the liver, and the spleen, which are all in charge of the female reproductive system as meridians. When it comes to damp heat, we are going to clear the dampness for spleen 9 and REN 9. And we are going to clear the heat with large intestine 11.

Spleen 10 is also good to move blood, liver 3, move chi, which helps in moving dampness. Because when there's dampness, things are sticky, they don't move. as well. So that's why there's clots in that specific pattern. Bladder 32 is also a really good point when there is therapy in the lower jowl, specifically in the female reproductive system.

And lung 7 on the right, kidney 6 on the left to balance the reproductive hormones. Good. The last one, we are going to move Qi and release the fire. So to move Qi, liver 3 is great, right, obviously. Also, Sanjiao 6, because it's great for constipation when there is a lot of constipation due to excess. Li 11 is going to clear the heat or the fire.

Liver 2 is going to clear the fire. from liver, so that's a really good combination. Spleen 8 is going to release the pain, spleen 10 is going to move as well to get less clots and better flow. REN6 and REN4 are great to add up in the area without MOXA, without anything, but just to get some movement. And liver 14 is the front end point of the liver, and because this is a really big liver pattern, it's a great way to add liver 14 for better results.

If you still struggle to come up with the right treatment protocol for your patients, you are going to love my third book. By popular demand, I have created a guide for TCM treatments for over 160 common syndromes with acupuncture points, herbal formula, ear points, diet, and so much more, including many, many of my clinical pearls.

It is the Game changer for acupuncture students. And specifically for practitioners, you can download the digital version on any device, and it comes with many video links to compliment it or. If you're like me and you'd rather have a hard copy version, the publisher ships it all over the world. But before you invest in my Chinese medicine treatments made easy, I want to make sure it's everything you were looking for.

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That's awesome! Oh my god, I immediately purchased this and it is such a bargain price that I almost feel ashamed for paying what I believe is worth of much, much more. Even as an experienced practitioner for over 10 years, I like your stuff just as much and benefit from it. Yay! You All this is just so rewarding for me.

So I hope you get your copy if you don't have one. The link is in the show notes below. Or you can go to my website acuproacademy.com and click the shop tab on the menu bar. You won't regret it. I put so much heart and soul in it. I hope you enjoy and benefit from it and in turn your patients do as well.

Now let's look at the deficiency pattern of dysmenorrhea. We already have three. Those are the common basic one. It doesn't mean that there can't be any other, but those are the common one that I see in clinical practice.

Always make your own diagnosis for your patient. This is just a guide. As a reminder, so qi and blood deficiency compared to spleen yang deficiency with liver blood deficiency, which I see is very common in clinical practice, and liver and kidney yin deficiency. So those three are the most common one when it comes to dysmenorrhea.

Let's look at the symptoms. So one of the thing is pain itself compared to the patterns before, which were excess and very strong pain. This pain is more dull. It's milder. It's still annoying. It's still constant. It's still really affecting the person, but it won't be as strong. So it's easier to manage, I guess, compared to, you know, stabbing pain, which makes it very difficult to go about our days.

So let's start with the first one, Qi and blood deficiency. Let's see. The pain is very dull, like I said, and it's a hypogastric pain towards the end of the period. So that's another thing that is different. When there is deficiency, usually the pain shows more at the end of the period. So maybe day three, four, and five, if that's the case, the period, let's say, is six days.

So it's not the beginning or prior, it's at the end. end of the period. So that's going to happen on all three of them. With chin blood deficiency, we're going to have a dragging feeling in the lower abdominal area because it could lead to spleen qi sinking. This is usually a spleen sheath deficiency with some liver blood deficiency.

So it doesn't show the organ per se, but that's often the case. That's why there's going to be loose stool because that's a spleen sheath deficiency, fatigue, pale face, But there's blood deficiency affecting liver, and that's the dizziness. Makes sense? Okay. The pain feels better with massage, right? The gentle massage feels good.

Compared to the excess pattern, massage makes it worse. We don't want to be touched in the lower abdominal region. We want heat, but we don't want to be touched. This feels so much better with massage in this case right now. And the tongue of course is paled, but it's okay. Pulse is weak and choppy because there's g and blood deficiency.

The next one is what would happen if this one, g and blood deficiency, is not addressed. That's the next stage, which is the same thing except there's worse symptoms or it gets worse. So the pain is relieved by massage, but now we also need warmth. Because now it's not spleen deficiency only, it's spleen young deficiency.

So we still have loose stools and fatigue, but now we have a cold body. The person is cold all the time. They're much more fatigued. They don't have energy physically or mentally. And because there is blood deficiency, there is dizziness, blurred vision, right? And the tongue is swollen because when there's spleen young deficiency, The tongue has a tendency to swell because there's retention of excess fluid because there's not enough young to move the fluid.

The pulse is usually deep and thin. It could be also slow if the spleen yang is very prominent. Make sense? With the liver and kidney yin deficiency, we're still going to have the dull pain, but at the same time, it is going to be relieved by massage. So same thing. However, we don't want heat on this one because the yin deficiency is going to create some heat symptoms like five center heat.

Five center heat is palms. Souls and chest area that feels warm. There's going to be sore lower back, and that's very common with kidney deficiency. And there's going to be blurred vision, maybe irritability, that's the liver coming up. There's going to be scanty red blood, and the reason for that, it's because when there's yin deficiency, there's fluid deficiency.

So without that, I have a lot of flow. It's going to be pretty scanty. The tongue is going to be red. With scanty coat, that is a typical yin deficiency, tong, and the pulse is going to be thin, rapid, same thing, very typical. So let's look at the formulas. Those three formulas are very useful. The first one I love, sheng yu tong, for qi and blood deficiency.

The second one is very warming, dong gui Very warming, which is good because there is a spleen young deficiency. And the last one, tiao gian tong, is very specific to the uterus and nourishing liver and kidney deficiency. Now let's look at the acupuncture points. When it comes to the first one and the second one, chi and blood deficiency, we can do Mark Sa for both of them, maybe not on every point, but definitely on men 4.

That's always going to be a good bet because chi and blood deficiency will lead to the next pattern, Spleen, Young, and Pregnant. and liver blood deficiency. So now we're also going to do stomach 36 because it tonifies qi and blood. So this is a really good point you have in the first two patterns.

They're very common and very similar, right? When it comes to qi and blood deficiency, of course, spleen 6 on both of them is going to be a good point to add as well. Again, this is a perfect point to balance the female reproductive system. And then you can play with back shoe point, right? Bladder 20, bladder 17.

Remember bladder 20 is the back shoe point of spleen because this is a spleen sheet deficiency and there is a liver blood deficiency. So the blood deficiency can have bladder 17. You can add a bladder 18 because that's the back shoe point. of liver. When it comes to spleen young and liver blood deficiency, I like to really do lung 7 on the right and kidney 6 on the left to really balance the hormones, strengthen the kidney essence, strengthen the hormonal system.

Liver 8 is a really, really good point when there is liver blood deficiency. So I would add it up. You can add up in the previous one as well. Like I said, you don't have to do all the points. This is just basics. And I just want to explain how I come up with those points. Yes. The last one is a little bit different because we're going to address the kidney and the liver.

So, back shoe point of liver, bladder 18, of kidney, bladder 23. And then we can continue with spleen 6, but now we can also add a bladder 54, which is also located in the back and is really good to relieve the back pain or the lower back pain with bladder 32, which is good for the sacrum area or the uterus when there is.

lower back pain. Kidney 3 is also really good to nourish kidney. So that I would add it up as well. So now I know often I get this question by students is like, well, some of your points are in the front, some are in the back. How do I do this? This is your preference. Your intention with your treatment is what counts.

I have a tendency to do just one side. Either I do front treatment or back treatment. I don't like to do both sides in one session, so it's up to you. If you like to do both sides in one session, then you can do this. I prefer not to, so my sessions are usually 30 to 40 minutes with the needle, so the patient can really get in a parasympathetic state.

So what do I do? I usually use one side. Let's say I do a front treatment. There's a lot of the points that I can't do that are in the back, and I'm gonna alternate and adapt to this. And if I'm putting the patient face down, then I can do still spleen six, kidney three, kidney six, lung seven, all those points I still can do, right?

So there's not a lot of differences, except that if I'm facing up, I can do back shoe point, for example. I often ask my patients, Would you rather face up or face down? And the patient will tell you what they prefer, which helps in the treatment. So it's always listening to your patient and have the right intention in your treatment.

Now if you're not sure, and I know sometimes making a TCM diagnosis is not always easy, so if you're not truly sure, go with the basics. Large intestine 4, best point to remove blood and relieve pain. Liver 3, best point to remove chi and relax the body. When there's pain, there's tension, right? That's normal.

Spleen 8, the best point for menstruation cramp that women can also acupressure at home. And you can show them because spleen 8 is the sheep's Cleft point of the spleen, making it the best

point when it comes to menstruation cramps. Kidney 5 is also a chic left point and it's fantastic for menstruation cramp, specifically when you combine it with spleen 8.

And then spleen 6, because spleen 6 is the crossing point of the liver, the kidney, and the spleen, making it a great point to relax the whole uterus area and the reproductive system of the female. So those four points, recapping is LI4, liver 3, open the gates, spleen 8, kidney 5, to relieve the pain, and spleen 6, because it's an overall point to try to help women's reproductive system.

Now, let's talk about treatment option, including food recommendations. When it comes to dysmenorrhea, no matter what the pattern is, ear acupuncture is fantastic and you can put ear seeds, which the patient can stimulate at home, which is useful when they can't come and see you as often. So when it comes to ear, we want to do liver.

Spleen, kidney, just like when I talked about spleen 6 being the crossover of liver, spleen, and kidney, this is the same for the ear. All those three will represent the female reproductive system. And then we want to put sympathetic to really calm the body from the pain area. And then we want to add up also the endocrine point to balance.

The female reproductive hormones in this instance. Now another one that I'd like to add is on the sacrum, we want to do seven star. Often it's called seven star or plum blossom. I love that. Little hammer. And then you tap on the sacrum. You're going to tap all along the sacrum with the little hanger, which is called the plum blossom or the seven star, and you're going to do this at least a week before the period every single day.

Now it's not always easy to see the patients every single day, so at least a week, up to a week before the period to do it at least a couple of times will really help. This is also very useful for endometriosis to break down that scar tissue, so I use it for that as well. Okay. which we know endometriosis, of course, creates dysmenorrhea or menstruation cramps.

Other treatment options, so exercise, specifically gentle exercise. We need to relieve the body, relax the body. So relieving stress and physical exercise. So breathing. Meditation technique, yoga, qigong, tai chi, going for a walk in nature outside, enjoy the trees, being forest bathing, very good to calm the mind, but move the body.

This is very key to help when it comes to dysmenorrhea. Now let's talk about food and teas. The first one is ginger tea, turmeric tea, cinnamon tea. Those three, and you can combine them, obviously. Those are great for dysphenoia. And one of the great drink I like is golden milk. And golden milk is from Ayurvedic medicine.

It's from India originally, and I love this drink. It's really soothing and it's great for dysmenorrhea and menstruation cramps. So start taking it probably a week before the period on a daily basis. Plus it has so many other health benefits. And then diet, diet is a huge component of our health because it's the center of our health, specifically spleen and stomach in transmission.

So we need to have a really good digestive system, but also feed the body nourishing and nutrients that is going to help relieve the pain. So avoiding. Everything that's going to create information in the body, like alcohol, coffee, processed food, sugar. Yeah, all those things have to be eliminated. Dairy is usually not a great one, neither.

Gluten for some people as well. Not everybody, depending on the area of the world you live in and many factors. But in general, we want to try to reduce the inflammation and we want to have a lot of omega 3 fatty acid, like salmon, like fatty fish, nuts, seeds are great for that, avocado, we want to have a lot of really good fat that decrease inflammation and in TCM perspective, any spice is going to increase circulation in the body, which is fennel.

Fantastic as well. One more treatment option is heat applied, like a healing pad or a moxa, but that can only be done if the person is blood deficient, has blood stasis, or is young deficient, but not if they have excess heat, right? If they have excess cold, great, but if they have excess heat, we do not want to apply more heat.

Heat brings about circulation, but it's not always good for everyone, so we want to make sure we address the individual every single time. Thank you so much for spending your time with me today. I truly hope you benefited from this episode and I would love for you to share it with a friend that may benefit from it as well.

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