

Clara Cohen: Back in TCM school, I learned about Bi syndrome, but I didn't quite understand what that meant in practice. And we have a lot of those,

Lin syndrome, which relates to urination,

Plum Pit syndrome, which relates to having that phlegm stuck in the throat.

We have Running Piglets. There are a lot of different syndromes in TCM that basically we don't quite grasp when we're in TCM school,

but the most common one we see in practice is Bi syndrome.

So today, I'm gonna go and unpack this one because it is so prevalent and it relates to pain.

We're gonna look at the patterns, the symptoms, and of course, the treatment. How do we treat Bi syndrome in practice?

Let's say two people come and see you for knee pain.

One will tell you that when they put heat on it, it feels so much better.

The other one will say heat makes it worse.

Those are two different patterns already. You can see that, right? Well, this is part of Bi syndrome.

So let's look at it and let's finally understand how we can treat it in practice. Are you ready? Let's go.

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

What is Bi syndrome exactly?

Bi actually means obstruction. When qi and blood cannot flow freely through the channels or the meridian, then we get pain, numbness, heaviness, tingling in the limbs and joints. So really what happens, the root cause is there is a weak wei qi, defensive qi, that lets external pathogens into the body, like wind, cold, damp, heat, which enters through the channels and affects the musculoskeletal system, mainly joints, ligament, tendons, and muscles, of course. And when this occurs, qi and blood are blocked. And when there's blockage, there is pain, and that is Bi syndrome.

What are the common disorders associated with Bi syndrome?

Rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia, gout, sciatica, chronic joint pain, weather-related pain, and old injuries that never fully healed. Of course not every case of pain is Bi syndrome.

In practice, the TCM pattern matters more than the Western disorder because treatment changes depending on whether the symptoms is related more to wind, cold, damp, heat, blood stasis, or deficiency.

Is Bi syndrome acute or chronic? It can be either with acute Bi, it is external pathogen invasion, and it's an excess pattern. With chronic Bi, the pathogens go deeper, and it stays there for a long time, creating blood stasis and deficiency.

In TCM, the diagnosis will help us select the treatment. So looking at Bi syndrome, we have to ask what makes the pain worse versus what makes it better to give us clues on what the TCM pattern is.

Better with heat is called cold Bi syndrome, and we're gonna look at each of them coming up. Better with cold compress is heat Bi. If the pain moves around from place to place and is worse on weather changes, it is wind Bi syndrome. If it's heavy and worse on damp or rainy weather, it is damp Bi syndrome. If it's dull, achy, and the person is really tired all the time, that's a deficiency Bi.

But if it's sharp, fixed pain that is stabbing, that is blood stasis. Now, can we have a mixture? Absolutely.

We could have wind cold Bi, which would feel better with the heat, but moves around and depends on the weather, and it's probably worse on cold weather and weather changes.

We could have cold damp Bi syndrome, which is worse on rainy weather and cold weather.

Like in winter in Vancouver, it's cold and it's rainy, making the arthritis worse. This is why when people move to places like Arizona, for example, where it's dry heat, they feel much better if they have cold damp Bi syndrome.

now if they were someone with heat Bi, which means cold compress would make it feel better, they would not do well moving to a dry hot weather area. Make sense?

type one, wandering bi syndrome, which is wind predominant. Basically, the pathogen that invades it is wind. The symptoms are going to be pain that moves around. It starts at the wrist, then it goes down to the knee, and another day it's on the shoulder. It's all over the place, and it keeps moving.

It's an acute onset. It's worse in wind or changing weather. The tongue usually doesn't change much, maybe there's a bit of a white coat on it, and the pulse will be floating because it's external pathogen invasion, and it's acute, and maybe wiry because wind can affect the liver faster.

When it comes to acupuncture points, we would use gallbladder 20 to expel the wind from the head and neck, bladder 12 because it's the wind gate point, so it has to be there,

Bladder 17 to move blood because, of course, we want to relieve the pain, right? And then large intestine four to move blood as well, but also to expel pathogen. Spleen six because it's going to nourish blood. If the person has had this attack before, they're probably deficient somewhere.

And of course, local ash point, wherever the pain is located.

The other thing we can add is cupping because it's useful for stagnation and for pain.

We can also add moxa as long as there's no heat bi with the wind bi. A good formula would be Xuan Bi Tang if you do formula,

, and then why do we do bladder 17 and treat blood with spleen 6 and bladder 17? It's because when there is blood deficiency, it creates internal wind.

This is external wind on this bi syndrome, but it can become internal and then that creates more issue and that becomes more chronic. And internal wind always comes from a liver issue, liver fire, liver yang rising, liver blood

deficiency, liver yin deficiency. Now, with liver fire, yang rising, or yin deficiency, there would be heat sign.

So if this is just a wind bi with no heat sign, often it would come from blood deficiency. That's why we have to nourish blood. See, understanding theory in TCM and remember how we diagnose our patient makes a huge difference in the outcome.

Ad: A lot of people know that I have three books. However, many don't that I also offer continuing education online courses. This is actually how I started AcuPro Academy to support new practitioners. You can choose from TCM treatment for common mental disorders, fertility, pregnancy, thyroid disorders, but also specific ones like scalp acupuncture or cosmetic acupuncture online course.

All these are prerecorded so you can watch them on your own time, and since you have access to them forever, you can revisit the information anytime you need. You will receive a certificate with your name on it after you pass a multiple choice quiz, and if you're truly not satisfied with any of my online courses, I offer a seven-day money back guarantee as I stand behind my products and truly, truly want you to benefit from them.

So go check them out on my website, acuproacademy.com and click the TCM course tab on the menu bar or check out the link in the show notes below.

Clara Cohen: The second type is painful bi syndrome, which is cold predominant. Remember, when cold invades the body, it congeals, it becomes ice, and so blood circulation cannot go through, so we do get pain that is correlated to blood stasis.

So the symptoms are severe fixed stabbing pain. That is a typical blood stasis symptom, but this one is better with a heat pad. It's worse on cold, so we know the culprit here is cold. The pain is cold to the touch, there's no redness, and it's worse in the morning, but once the person starts moving, it improves the stiffness.

The tongue could be pale with a white coat, but it could also be purplish with a white coat if there is blood stasis, right? Depending if the blood stasis is already there and it's a chronic issue that has an attack that's acute or not. And then the pulse is usually tight, wiry. That connotes the cold.

For acupuncture points, we are going to try to do local points, of course. Now, with the local points, we're gonna add up moxa because that's gonna help the cold bring blood circulation, right? Specifically on the joints. You have to do moxa for painful cold Bi.

Now, another cold Bi that's very common in Western disorder is Raynaud's disease.

Raynaud's, people are in pain and their fingers are really, really, really cold. Moxa on the fingers works so well. I've done it so many times in my years of practice. Moxa is fantastic for Raynaud's disease when it is cold Bi syndrome.

We wanna tonify the body again because when there is cold invasion, it stops the flow of blood, and so we wanna make sure that we are warming the body with moxa. We can moxa Ren 4, we can moxa Du 4, we can moxa Gallbladder 34, the joint and sinews, tendons, ligament. We can use Stomach 36 to boost qi to warm the body as well because we wanna warm and boost the immune system.

Remember, Bi syndrome starts with a weak immune system. Does that make sense? For formula, Wan Jing Zhong Bi Tang is a good option for this. This is very common also for arthritic patients, And of course, we can recommend good diet like ginger, cinnamon, warming food that is going to help with pain as well as decreasing the inflammation.

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Type 3 is Fixed Bi, which is damp predominant. So the symptoms here are going to be heavy, achy, fixed pain. Swelling and numbness can happen also at the joint area. The body feels like it weighs a ton. This also could be a fibromyalgia picture. It is worse with damp weather or rainy weather.

The tongue has a greasy coat on it. Sometimes it's pale if, again, the condition has been chronic for a few years. And the pulse is slippery

When it comes to acupuncture point for the damp bi syndrome, of course spleen nine is your number one point for dampness.

We can also do ren nine, which is great to reduce edema, transform damp. We are going to use gallbladder 34 as the joint sinews ligament tendons point, but also because it reduce dampness as well overall. We can use bladder 20, the back-shu point of spleen, because spleen of course is in charge of transporting and transforming to help reduce the dampness.

Now I also wanna put stomach 36 because it strengthen the spleen and stomach and it strengthen the immune system to try to again prevent an attack. And of course, we always do local ah-shi points where the pain is.

For formula, Yi Yi Ren Tang is a good choice for this. We could do moxa specifically if there's cold and damp bi together. We can do cupping to help reduce the swelling, and of course we wanna look at digestion and food and reduce all the damp-forming food like dairy, sugar, and we don't wanna add up cold food because it depletes the spleen, which is in charge of getting rid of dampness.

Type four is heat bi, and obviously this one is heat predominant. The symptoms are red, hot, swollen joints, specifically if there's heat and dampness. If there's no swelling, it's just red and hot, then it's only heat bi. Often it's combined, but not always, right? The pain feels like burning, and it's worse with heat or even hot weather.

It's better with a cold compress. The person is thirsty, irritable, and has dark, murky urine. The tongue of course is gonna be red with a yellow coat and the pulse is slippery, rapid.

For acupuncture point, we are gonna use large intestine 11, the best points to clear heat, of course, cool blood.

Large intestine four because it'll expel the pathogen, it moves qi, but also expel heat. Du 14 is great to clear heat for the entire body, specifically if you do cupping. That would help a lot. We can use san jiao five to clear heat from the joints. That's something that we don't talk enough about, but san jiao five is great because it's the san jiao meridian, which if you look at it, the san jiao is kind of like the lymphatic system.

It really clears inflammation, so it's a really good point for that. And then spleen 10 or stomach 44 is good to cool the blood to clear the heat if there's a lot of

excess heat. When it comes to formula, Bai Hu Jia Gui Zhen Tang could be a good option, or Xuan Bi Tang if there is damp and heat of course, we're never gonna do moxa on that patient. And we can recommend some cooling food, like cucumber, and food that decrease inflammation, like asparagus. Mint tea also is really good to cool and decrease inflammation.

Now that we looked at the four common types that are excess and acute, let's look at the second type, which are more chronic.

Number one is blood stasis Bi syndrome.

Blood stasis B is chronic, fixed, sharp, stabbing pain in one area. It's not moving. The joints may look dark, distorted, or even deformed, like rheumatoid arthritis for years. The tongue is gonna be purple or dark, and the pulse is choppy.

The points we can use are bladder 17, spleen 10, large intestine four, liver three, this is all moving for the blood stasis, of course, and local usher points. This is your long-term patients. This is the one who's been in pain for years. The pain that doesn't move and feels sharp is definitely always blood stasis, right?

You have to move blood to break the cycle.

The second pattern is a deficiency B, and the deficiency B affects liver, kidney, and spleen. So spleen six has to be there, right? Because it's the crossing point of liver, kidney, and spleen. This is a long-term pain that is more dull and achy, and the person feel weak, fatigue.

They're probably older, they have weak knees, weak lower back, and they take a long time to recover.

The pain is worse with cold, cold weather and resting does not help much This is a wei qi that was weak at the start, and then the pathogen invaded the body, and now zheng qi, or true qi, is completely depleted. This is definitely your chronic deficiency pattern picture.

So for points, we are gonna tonify, right? With kidney three, spleen six, Du four, bladder 23. We wanna really tonify. And of course, we're still gonna do gallbladder 34 because it affects the joints, right? We can do bladder 11 if the bones are affected. Let's say it's osteoarthritis, then you could do bladder 11.

We still wanna tonify with stomach 36 because it helps the immune system and overall qi and blood. A good formula would be Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang. It's actually a very common formula for this. And I just wanted to add that, you have to remember to treat the root and the branch. You can't just keep expelling pathogen in a depleted patients, right?

So if there is cold Bi syndrome in this patient, but they're also deficient, they have deficient Bi and cold Bi, you're gonna exhaust them further if you just tonify. Make sure you expel the pathogen, deal with the branch, but also address the root.

Ad: Before we continue with today's episode, I wanna share something that honestly feels like a big moment for me. If you've been following me for a while, you know I've always said no to all sponsorships. I've been approached many times, but I turn them all down because if I don't genuinely use a product or love it, I will never recommend it to you.

But today is different. I am super excited to introduce my very first sponsor, drum roll, please, Jane App. I'm also a Jane ambassador, so this is a company I actually use and love. I am saying yes because I've used Jane for years in my own multidisciplinary clinic. Truly, it's the best practice management software and electronic medical record I've ever worked with.

Before Jane, we were using a clunky system that made everything harder than it needed to be. When we switched, the entire clinic felt the difference immediately. Jane is built by people who actually understand what it's like to be a practitioner running a busy practice. One of my favorite features is online booking.

There is nothing better than waking up and seeing patients booking their own appointment while I was asleep. Your patients can book when it works for them, and the wait list feature fills last-minute cancellations automatically. I love that. I used to spend so much time calling eight to 10 people just to fill up one spot.

Jane also automates the things we never enjoy doing, like intake forms, reminders, confirmation. It honestly feels like having an extra assistant handling all the moving parts so you can focus on what really matters, which is supporting your patients and being the TCM rockstar practitioner you truly are.

There are so many features I could talk about, but we would be here all day. If you're looking for a system that brings more ease, more clarity, and calm into

your practice, I truly recommend Jane. You can check it out at jane.app/demo, and because you're part of the AcuPro community, you can use my code AcuPro1MO, one month, when you sign up to get a one-month grace period on your new account.

The link and the code are also in the show notes below for you. Now, let's get back to today's episode.

Clara Cohen: So here's my framework for you. First look at the root. What's deficient? Kidney, spleen, liver, blood, qi. Then the branch. What pathogen is there? Wind, moving around a lot; cold, being worse with cold weather, better with heat; damp, swelling, heaviness; heat, better on cold and worse on heat; and stasis, sharp, sharp pain.

What channel is involved, right? Where is the pain? Is it a pain that's on the wrist area? Is it large intestine? Is it a pain that's on the ankle, which is stomach, let's say? Is it the pain that's going to be on bladder, gallbladder? No matter where, which meridians are affected or channels are affected in the area where the pain is.

And the last one is looking at your tools. What are we gonna use? Just needling, or do we add moxa, cupping, electroacupuncture, herbs, diet, et cetera? You have so many tool in your TCM toolbox.

Every treatment for Bi syndrome needs all four layers: root, branch, channel, and tools.

Here are the core acupuncture points we wanna use for Bi syndrome. Gallbladder 34 is a non-negotiable if the problem is in the ligament joints or tendons.

Now, if it is fibromyalgia, the best point is spleen 21 because it is the luo, major luo of the spleen, which connects to all the muscular layers or muscular channels.

So we wanna make sure that if it's fibromyalgia or muscle related, spleen 21 has to be there. Now, spleen 21 can also be used for arthritis and for joints ligament in combination with gallbladder 34, but you don't wanna overdo it, so pick one or the other.

Stomach 36 to strengthen that immune system, to boost qi and blood, obviously to support the healing system because it's one of the best point when it comes to healing.

If there is heat bi, large intestine 11, Du 14, or even stomach 44 if there's a lot of heat, probably your best bet. If there is damp bi, spleen 9 is a non-negotiable. If there is blood stasis, spleen 10, bladder 17, and large intestine 4 is also non-negotiable.

Now, large intestine 4 should be there quite often for the excess 4 common types because it moves qi, it relieves pain, it's the best point to relieve pain, and it expel pathogen. Bladder 12 can be used for expelling wind from the surface of the body or wind and cold.

And then kidney 3, bladder 23, and Du 4 are great when there's a kidney yang deficiency or the lower back is in a lot of pain and there's chronic cold Bi syndrome with a deficiency Bi. So this is a mixture of the two, right? And of course, we always do ah shi points. Basically, where it hurts, that's where the needle goes.

Other tools we can use are moxa, of course, for cold Bi, damp Bi, or yang deficiency Bi syndrome. Never use moxa for heat, of course.

Cupping is great for cold and/or damp because it relieves tight muscles. Electroacupuncture can be used for chronic pain, but we have to be really conscious that it should be very low setting. This is a good one to use, for example, for sciatica Bi syndrome. Gua sha can be used for stagnation, for tight fascia, to relieve cold, damp, to bring circulation to the area.

We can use herbs, of course, if you do herbal formula. That is going to be very useful to decrease the inflammation. And diet, food is medicine, so of course we can use food to complement our treatment and educate our patients.

Let's finish off by testing yourself. What's your diagnosis if the patient comes in with knee pain, swollen and heavy, worse on rainy days? Of course, it's damp Bi. If someone has shoulder pain that is cold to the touch, sharp, better with a heat pack, that is cold Bi,

If a patient has red, hot, swollen wrist, pretty much heat Bi, maybe some dampness with it. If a patient comes in with chronic low back pain, cold feet, fatigue, and is 75 years old, that's usually a kidney yang deficiency that may

have cold damp Bi attack, but there is a kidney yang deficiency underneath it, So there is cold damp Bi and deficiency.

If someone has hip pain that moves to the knee, then to the ankle, very arthritic-like, and it changes daily, that is wind Bi syndrome.

I hope I was able to shed some light on what is Bi syndrome, how we treat it in practice so you can make a difference in the lives of your patients.

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. Follow the show, leave a review, and if you want more, go to my website, acuproacademy.com. I have tons of resources there with treatment protocols, case studies, free courses, and so much more.

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