

A Review on Diaphoresis Method in Traditional Chinese Medicine- An Alternative Treatment to Modern Diseases

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Abstract

Sweat is the fluid that excretes out from the skin. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, treatment through sweating, or diaphoresis, refers to a treatment that expelling the exogenous pathogenic factors through sweating with the function of unblocking the superficial skin, regulating the nutrient-ying and defensive-wei phase, as well as dispersing the lung-qi. The treatment method has been applied for a long time in treating different diseases. In this review, the usage of diaphoresis in ancient and modern time is discussed.

Keywords

Diaphoresis method, sweating, Traditional Chinese Medicine, renal diseases, skin disease

Introduction

Diaphoresis method refers to a treatment method that expelling the exogenous pathogenic factors through sweating with the function of unblocking the superficial skin, regulating the nutrient-ying and defensive-wei phase, as well as dispersing the lung-qi. The purpose of diaphoresis method is not only in induce sweating, but also target on unblocking the superficial, regulate nutrient-ying and defensive-wei, smoothen the Lung-qi, dredge the blood vessels through perspiration, so that the pathogenic factors can be expel from the body and regulate the healthy-qi.

Sweat is the fluid that excretes out from the skin. A normal human body have lesser fluid excretion to skin to nourish skin and flesh. The little amount of sweat can be known as normal sweat or physiological sweat and they are all belongs to healthy sweat (Yang Xue, 2015). Normal sweat is led by the harmony of yin and yang in human body (Guo Ai Yu, 2015). Normal sweat is produced after the movement of the body or exposing the body under the hot sun or hot weather. People will not feel any discomfort after the normal sweating.

On the other hand, pathogenic sweat is caused by the imbalance of yin and yang in human body due to the invasion of exogenous pathogenic factors. Pathogenic sweat refers to the syndromes of abnormal sweating. It included spontaneous sweat, night sweat, large amount of sweat, head sweat, hand-foot sweat, half-body sweat, Yin sweat, exhausted sweat, yellow sweat and so on. (Li Shi Man, 2015). The pathogenic sweat have three main symptoms-localised sweating, spontaneous sweating and feverish sensation remaining in the body after sweating.

The Application of Diaphoresis Method in Ancient Books

Earliest record regarding to the diaphoresis method to treat patient can be found at East Zhou dynasty, approximately 2000 years ago (Cheng Shi De, 1982). <Records of the Grand Historian> stated that “If the pathogen of disease appeared at the skin, it can be treated by prescription of herbs and application of steaming”. The statement describes the situation of the well-known physician Bian Que during the treatment for King of Qi, and also define the meaning of diaphoresis method to expel exogenous pathogen. After that, <Fifty Two types Diseases and Prescription> stated “Treat spasm by using steaming with salt can promote sweating and expel the cold pathogen at the same time” (Ling Yao Xing, 1990).

<Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Medicine> mentioned a clear therapeutic principle and therapeutic method of treating skin diseases by using diaphoresis method (Zhang Zhong Jing, 2005). <Plain Conversation · Major Discussion on the Administration of Five-Motions> stated: “The patient who suffers from sores can be cured by diaphoresis method. This is due to the general opening and closing condition of muscular interstice and the excessive and insufficient motion of Qi” [汗之则疮已，此腠理开闭之常，太少之异耳]. These sentences show the application of diaphoresis method of sores in external medicine.

Application of Diaphoresis in Certain Kidney Diseases: Uremia

Urination is an important way for the body to excrete the toxin wastes. However, patients with uremia usually have damage of kidney structures and malfunction in excretion (Cao Ling Yong, 2010). Disorder in excretion can lead to the retention of toxins inside the body. Accumulation of toxic waste can lead to the body poison. Therefore, our body will be self-regulated in increasing the sweat glands. Diaphoresis can promote the excretion of toxins and relieve the symptoms of uremia, as increased sweat glands stimulate the body to sweat, and the toxins can be eliminated via sweating.

Application of Diaphoresis in Certain Kidney Diseases: Renal Edema

Edema refers to disease that varieties of reason leading to aqueous fluid retention and

manifestation as swollen at the head, eyelid, four limbs, belly, back, and even the whole body. According to the Internal Medicine of Traditional Chinese Medicine [中医内科学], this syndrome can be either caused by yin or yang water. The additions of herbs that induce sweating can be used with great clinical effect.

There are two types of renal edema, acute nephritis edema and chronic nephritis edema. (Chen Ying Lan, 2013). Both of them sharing the same pathogenesis, which is the invasion of exogenous pathogens, wind and water competing with each other, overflow in the superficial skin. In this case, diaphoresis is used by disperse and unblock the obstruction in the Wei Qi, promote the water and fluid to excrete out in the form of sweat. Sweats coming out from the skin able to clear the lung, regulate the water metabolism and promote the qi transformation of bladders. Acrid herbs can be used to disperse the lung so that the flow of qi and blood is smooth and the turbidity can be purified. Then, the symptom of edema will relieve.

Application of Diaphoresis in Skin Disease

The invasion of wind, cold and dampness pathogens into the body can lead to itchiness of the skin. Wheal and rashes will be found in some of the mild cases, or even itchiness and scratching of the skin that cause bleeding in serious cases. Early stage of the skin disease can be relieved by using diaphoresis method to eliminate the pathogens. Diaphoresis also promotes a good prognosis in skin disease.

Diaphoresis is widely used in skin diseases such as rashes, itchiness, hives are due to the loose superficial, invasion of exogenous pathogens such as wind and heat that stagnated in the lung and superficial. When qi, blood and fluid flow is obstructed in the skin, the pathogens can stagnate in the skin and cause disharmony of internal environment. Therefore, diaphoresis is useful in treating the skin diseases, to expel wind and eliminate pathogens.

Su Zhan Bao did the pathology collection to explore the classic prescription Gui Zhi decoction and its similar prescription in treating skin diseases (Su Zhan Pao, 2010). In his clinical cases, he has concluded that the 12 prescriptions of Gui Zhi similar decoction in <Treatise of Febrile Diseases> have benefit to treat urticaria, vitiligo, skin itching, Behcet's diseases and other skin diseases. Zhang Yan had concluded all the literature about using modified Yin Qiao San to treat skin diseases such as Rubella, herpes(Zhang Yan Hao, 2009), allergic purpura, acne and other diseases, he has written detailed summary of using Yin Qiao San in the application of skin diseases and also promote other prescription of diaphoresis method.

Min Jie and Lu Yin Xi used modified Jiu Wei Qiang Huo decoction to treat a case of acute urticaria get successful result Xi (Min Jie, 1982). Ma Chao used Ma Xing Shi Gan decoction to treat 29 cases of eczema (Mao Chao, 2012), after treatment, the total efficiency is 89.7%. The function of Jing Fang Bai Du San are relieving exterior syndrome by diaphoresis, eliminate ulcer and relieve pain, it is a prescription of strengthen body resistance and relieving

exterior syndrome, so that can treat the acute and chronic eczema efficiently. Chen Rong Mei got good results in the treatment of acute eczema by using Jing Fang Bai Du San. Zhu Xiao (1996) also had the valid result in treatment of chronic eczema, sores and urticaria by using Jing Fang Bai Du San (Chen Rong Mei, 1993).

The Correct Treatment and Precautions

When we applied the diaphoresis method clinically, we must interpret the cause of the disease, the effect of using diaphoresis method, situation to use it promptly and when to stop it at the end of the disease, as diaphoresis is not suitable for a long time use. We should also understand the indications of diaphoresis method accurately and the extent of using it according to different pathogens, different syndromes and care about the waxing and waning of vital-qi and pathogen. The characteristic of pathogen, the location of pathogen and the different treatment purpose should be emphasized when treating the disease. It included the proper of using diaphoresis method, the characteristic of not completed sweating and not released pathogen, too much sweating will cause qi and body fluid damaged. Using the diaphoresis method correctly can expel the pathogen through sweating but did not damage the healthy-qi in human body.

In clinical treatment, there are many factors affecting the effect of diaphoresis method, such as the body condition of patient, the characteristics of various pathogens, the severity of disease, the process of giving treatment, the evolution of disease and more. So that it may have big difference to each patient after we use diaphoresis method.

Firstly, we should avoid going outdoor after perspiration, to avoid invasion of wind and cold pathogens so that we can fully expel the pathogen through sweating and prevent the disease recrudescence. It is because the vital-qi is deficiency and the skin is loose when perspiration, and the pathogens tend to attack the body easily after sweating. (Zhang Wei Hua, 2012).

As diaphoresis is an effective method in the treatment of various disease and consider as simple and non-invasive, the method should be further used in curing diseases in Malaysia.

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