

PROSTATE DISORDERS AND ACUPUNCTURE

What are they?

General symptoms: urine retention, 'dribbling', frequent and urgent urination, interrupted flow, weak stream urination, cloudy urine, possibly blood in the urine.

Three main types of disorder:

- a) prostatitis – acute or chronic inflammation/infection
- b) benign hyperplasia (enlargement) – in most older men, e.g. >80% of over 60's. Gradual onset, puts mechanical pressure on bladder as gets larger
- c) cancer – 15-25% of over 60's, but generally slow development and only becomes a problem in a small minority

Problems with Western treatment

Surgery for hyperplasia or cancer can cause side effects such as retrograde ejaculation, impotence or incontinence

Antibiotics for prostatitis are not necessarily effective when it becomes chronic

Acupuncture benefits

May reduce symptoms and reduce the need for surgery or other invasive options

May help hormonal imbalance and other side effects of hormone treatment for prostatitis or cancer

TCM patterns, aetiology and lifestyle advice

As with impotence, often the root cause is a kidney deficiency. This weakness may allow the development of Qi or Blood stagnation in the area, and the accumulation of Damp-Heat or Damp-Cold in the lower abdomen, which disturb the circulation of fluids

Lifestyle advice based on the aetiology of the pattern(s) diagnosed:

Damp-Heat/Cold: diet – avoid damp forming foods (cold, raw, stodgy, greasy, dairy etc) and hot (as in spicy, various meats and shellfish, sugar, alcohol) or cold as relevant.

Kidney deficiency – excess sex, overwork, heavy lifting

Qi stasis – emotional and sexual constraint/frustration/lack of control, excessive stress, lack of movement/exercise

Blood stasis – similar to Qi stasis plus various other factors depending on individual circumstances

Effectiveness of acupuncture treatment

China (1996) – hyperplasia

31 men diagnosed as kidney deficient

Response: 93% overall effective

China (2000) – hyperplasia

38 men – ‘satisfactory’ results

China (1999) + several more similar Chinese reports – chronic prostatitis

‘good’ results

China (2000) – acute prostatitis

Review + case history

Japan (1994) – prostatodynia (a prostatitis-like syndrome)

17 men not responsive to W. medicine

Electroacupuncture.

Response: 30% excellent, 70% moderate. All able to stop or reduce their medication.

USA (1999 & 2001) – prostate cancer

Looking at possible uses of acupuncture (and other CAM) in these patients, especially a) management of side effects of hormonal therapy, b) management of skeletal complications

Scandinavia?? (1999) – cancer: hot flushes

Vasomotor symptoms can arise from either castration therapy or hormonal treatment for prostate cancer

Small pilot study with 7 men, treated up to 14 times over 12 weeks

Response: all showed substantial reductions in the number of hot flushes – down by 70% after 10 weeks, and still by 50% 3 months after the end of the last treatment.

[This is similar to the use of acupuncture in women with breast cancer on Tamoxifen, where there have been a number of trials showing effectiveness for hot flushes and night sweats].

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