

A Case Study: TREATING MIGRAINE HEADACHE THROUGH CHINESE ACUPUNCTURE, HERBAL SUPPLEMENTS & YOGA

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Approximately 12% of the population, including children, experiences an extremely incapacitating collection of neurological symptoms, called migraines (Migraine Research Foundation, 2017). Migraine and tension-type headaches are common headache disorders in clinic and result in significant reduction in social activities and work capacity of the sufferers (Woolhouse, 2005) and other types of headaches cause significant productive loss to employers. They are also one of the most common complaints seen in the doctor's office. Although drug treatments are very effective, patients suffering from Migraine attacks often use a wide spectrum of complementary, as well as alternative treatments. Chronic stress may contribute to the development of the most common types of headaches, which are Migraine and tension-type. Therefore, alternative treatments aim at stress reduction. These treatments include acupuncture, massage, herbs, and relaxation. Many clinical studies have been conducted to consider these alternative therapies as effective treatments for some patients with headaches.

According to the National Institute of Health, biomedicine holds numerous approaches to treating Chronic Migraine. These treatments include the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), analgesic medication, deep breathing exercises, yoga, and nerve block injection. While there have been research studies associating acupuncture to chronic migraine distinctively, there are extensive studies validating the effectiveness of acupuncture for pain, frequency, and duration of the migraine attacks. According to a case series demonstrating the treatment of migraine headache in two middle-aged female patients with multi-year symptoms in the Journal of Chinese Medicine, duration and intensity



of the migraine headaches decreased in both patients within the first week of treatment and were resolved by the third month. The first patient reported migraines occurring one to two times per week, lasting for up to ten hours, with a severe stabbing pain rated at eight to ten on a scale of one to ten, and nausea. One week after the initial treatment, the patient reported having no migraines during the previous week. This patient's second acupuncture treatment also included taking prescribed herbal formula, and reported no migraines by the end of the second week. The second patient reported Migraine episodes lasting three to four months during which the migraines occurred daily, normally beginning in the morning and lasting approximately four to five hours. This patient reported a significant decrease in Migraine symptoms following her first treatment. By the second week, headache frequency had decreased by 50 percent, headache duration had decreased by 40 percent, and headache intensity had decreased by nearly 75 percent (Allen, Deng and Langland, 2016). This case series illustrated the successful treatment of chronic migraines that were unresolved following traditional interventions. Additionally, this case series supports the use of acupuncture and herbal supplement as an alternative for the treatment of Chronic Migraine.

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As stated previously, the National Institute of Health suggests the practice of yoga as a biomedical approach to the treatment of Chronic Migraine. Yoga is a relaxation technique whose goal aims to produce the body's natural relaxation response, characterized by slower respiratory rate, lower blood pressure, and an increased feeling of well-being. Yoga has been studied to assess whether it might be of value in managing various health conditions. More specifically, Advanced Biomedical Research conducted a case study on the effects of 12 week yoga training on headache frequency, severity, and duration of female migraine episodes. 32 patients were divided into two groups; the control group received only medication for 12 weeks, and the yoga group was placed in a yoga training program that consisted of 3 sessions per week in addition to the same medical treatment. When comparing results from the yoga and control group after 12 weeks, the yoga group showed a greater reduction in headache severity, frequency, and headache impact on the patients' lives.

However, changes in the control group were not significant (Boroujeni and Marandi, 2015). Although the reduction of duration of headache was not found to be significant in this research study, yoga



was beneficial on various migraine parameters, including frequency and intensity of the episodes. This research study depicted that yoga released tensions accumulated around the areas of pain, as well as loosen tight muscles, which can trigger headaches. Overall, yoga improves the cardiac autonomic balance. Disturbances in the autonomic nervous system and in the regulation of the circulatory system are associated with migraines. If balance is restored, the likelihood of a migraine is reduced. Therefore, yoga can potentially assist migraine episodes.

ACUPUNCTURE TCM PRINCIPLE:

1. Invigorate Qi flow in ShaoYang Channel.
2. Remove obstruction from the channel and alleviate pain.
3. Resolve damp-phlegm in the luo collaterals.
4. Tonify Spleen qi, reverse counterflow of Stomach qi flow.

ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT:

R. SJ-5, L. GB-41, R. LI-4, L. GB-34, R. GB-8, Yin tang,
R. LIV-3, R. SP-9, R. SP-6, L. PC6, L. ST- 36, L. LU-7

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Acupuncture is effective mode of treatment for migraine and causes fewer side effects, per 2009 Cochrane review of acupuncture for migraine prophylaxis (Linde et al, 2009). This case support this statement and demonstrate effectiveness of acupuncture in resolution of migraine pain in patient with forty years history and no relief with help of medical/pharmaceutical intervention. This case did not include Chinese herbal medicine and therefore the outcome could be different from Cochrane review, showing rapid decrease in pain intensity, headache duration and headache frequency.

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