PART ONE
ACUPUNCTURE IN OBSTETRICS

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The traditional Chinese texts contain little information on the use of acupuncture in pregnancy. Many Chinese physicians fear to use acupuncture to treat complications of pregnancy or systemic diseases in pregnant patients because of the perceived danger of preterm labour or abortion. At the same time, many manuals give a detailed description of the points to induce abortion. Acupuncture is highly recommended in the traditional texts, however, for inducing and augmenting labour, for anaesthesia, subinvolution of the uterus, hypogalactia, endometritis and mastitis. In our opinion, acupuncture has a much wider application in obstetrics, as long as certain conditions are observed.

We have more than ten years experience of treating gynaecological patients and pregnant women with obstetrical and extragenital pathologies by the methods of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Having a foundation in European medical education and Western clinical thinking, we try to compare and explain the Chinese and Western ideas of a disease, and the principles of selecting treatment approach and method. We are convinced that acupuncture, being both harmless and effective, is the most physiologically and pathogenetically determined way of treating both pregnant and non-pregnant women. It helps pregnant patients form a gestational dominant, lessens anxiety and fear of labour, relaxes muscles, including the muscles of the uterus, which improve utero-placental circulation, does not adversely affect the foetus, normalises the energetic state of the body, and provides a harmonious relationship between the mother and her baby. In gynaecology, acupuncture normalises reflex processes in the regulation of the reproductive system, restores the endocrine balance and improves metabolism in tissues. We are glad to share our observations and experience in the application of acupuncture in obstetrics with our readers and colleagues.

First of all a few general rules. Acupuncture can be used to treat emesis, ptyalism, threatened abortion, oedema, hypertension, anaemia, fear of labour, dysfunction of the internal organs and functional systems of pregnant women, low foetal weight, and abnormal position of the foetus in the uterus. At delivery, acupuncture successfully helps induce labour in prolonged pregnancy and stillbirth, lessening pain and regulating contractions of the uterus. It may also help to extract the retained afterbirth. After delivery, acupuncture can be applied to prevent and treat endometritis, mastitis, and hypogalactia and to restore strength. The use of acupuncture for anaesthetic purposes during surgery, including Caesarian section also has good prospects.

There are no absolute contraindications for acupuncture in pregnancy but there are some restrictions. For example moxibustion is not recommended in pregnancy as it increases Uterine Qi, and fullness of Ren Mai and may lead to abortion. For the same reason, during the 1st and 2nd trimesters one should not needle the points below the umbilicus on the anterior abdominal wall or strongly stimulate Bailao (BL 31-34), Hegu L.I.-4, Zusanli ST-36, Dadu SP-2, Taibai SP-3 or Shixuan (Extra). One should not stimulate the needles or leave them in situ for a long time. Sessions should not exceed 25-30 minutes, because it is not easy for a pregnant woman to lie still for a long time, especially on her back, during the last month of pregnancy. The patient should take a recumbent position, making herself as comfortable as she can. In general, acupuncture for pregnant women should be carried out carefully, without causing pain or unpleasant feeling; sessions should be short, and not more than 6 needles at a time should be used during a session. Besides acupuncture, acupressure, electro-acupuncture, light and laser puncture and magneto-puncture can be carried out in pregnancy. Before the treatment the physician should tell the patient about the method and explain its harmlessness for the foetus. It should be emphasised that before a physician begins a treatment according to TCM, s/he should reasonably assess the obstetrical situation and prescribe an adequate treatment in case of emergency. That is why we advise treating such patients in co-operation with an obstetrician. In ideal cases an obstetrician him/herself should administer acupuncture to these patients.

EMESIS AND PTYALISM IN PREGNANCY

Western medicine treats emesis of pregnancy by neuroleptics or by phenotyazine preparations, which are efficient in about 65-70% of cases. At the same time they produce many side effects, which may lead to central nervous system disturbances.

From the standpoint of Eastern medicine, these troubles are caused by stagnation of Liver and Stomach Qi and...
disharmony of the internal organs. Pregnancy (the foetus in the uterus) prevents the movement of Stomach Qi, hence the Qi rebels upwards of the body. This condition is accompanied by fullness of the Large Intestine (as a rule, the stools are absent for several days or even weeks), Stomach and Spleen.

**DIFFERENTIATION AND TREATMENT**

The patient complains of vomiting from 2 to 10 times a day, or even more frequently, accompanied by fatigue and discomfort in the abdomen. The tongue has a light yellow coating in the centre and the pulse is Wiry at the right Cun position. If vomiting persists, there is a painful induration at Zhongwan REN-12. The area of the Stomach on the ear (the base of the margin of the auricle) is pale, oedematous and painful. The body has a sour smell. The urine is scanty and concentrated.

Treatment principle: regulate Stomach and Liver Qi, harmonise the internal organs.

**Primary points:**
- Zusanli ST-36 - to harmonise the Stomach and to redirect rebellious Qi downwards
- Zhongwan REN-12 - to relieve pyloric spasm, to benefit digestion and to strengthen and tonify the Spleen
- Hegu L.I.-4 - to regulate and moisten the Large Intestine
- Quchi L.I.-11 - to regulate and moisten the Large Intestine

**Secondary points:**
- Youmen KID-21 - to relieve the pyloric spasm
- Gongsun SP-4 - a spasmolytic point, Confluence point of the Penetrating Vessel; to regulate and strengthen the Spleen, regulate the Stomach, reduce digestive stagnation and regulate the Penetrating Vessel
- Neiguan P-6 - to calm the spirit and regulate the Stomach
- Yintang (Extra) - to calm the spirit and to facilitate the internal organs

**Auricular points:**
- Stomach, Upper Abdomen, Endocrine Glands, Ovaries, Kidney

The needles should be inserted carefully and painlessly. Occasional turning of the needles at Hegu L.I.-4 and Quchi L.I.-11 is allowed. Sessions last 20-25 minutes once or twice a day. If the patient loses weight she is advised to have meals late in the evening, in small portions, to have an enema in the morning, and to sip 1-2 teaspoons of milk in the day time.

Usually the patient’s condition is improved after the first or second session, and the patient cured in five to seven days. If vomiting is not frequent, but some food is retained in the stomach with symptoms of nausea and discomfort in the abdomen, it may be enough to teach her to have meals late in the evening, in small portions, to have an enema in the morning, and to sip 1-2 teaspoons of milk in the day time.

**Ear points:** Parotid Gland and Shenmen.
vii. Heat syndrome: fetal restlessness, occasional abdominal pain, subjective sensation of heat all over the body, red lips, or thirst and dark urine. Pulse: slippery and rapid.

In my routine work I have more often observed the symptoms of threatened abortion of the Kidney deficiency type, and more rarely the heat syndrome type. In the case of Kidney deficiency, the patient complains of heaviness and pain in the lower abdomen which radiates to the back and sometimes bloody vaginal discharge. The patient seldom urinates and has a frightened facial expression. The pulse is weak and the tongue pale with a slight whitish coat. The area of the Kidney on the ear is markedly white.

Treatment

The treatment principle is to tonify the Kidney.

Primary points:
- Taixi KID-3 - to tonify Kidney
- Fuliu KID-7 - to tonify Kidney

Secondary points:
- Neiguan P-6 - to calm the spirit
- Tongli HE-5 - to benefit Heart Qi
- Qihai REN-6 - to normalise the Qi. At this point needles should be turned only anti-clockwise without causing strong sensation.

 Auricular points:
- Kidney, Endocrine Glands, Ovaries, Shenmen, Heart
- In obese women, threatened abortion in the early stages of pregnancy is not uncommonly caused by stagnant Qi manifesting as heat syndrome. The main symptoms in these patients may be slight uterine bleeding, slight pains or heavy sensation in the lower abdomen, or pressure on the bladder. The patient may complain of accelerated heart beat, insomnia, chills and constipation. Such patients have warm reddish faces and hands, the oral mucous membrane is dry, little saliva is produced, the tongue is red and the pulse is tense, rapid and slippery.

Treatment

In this case it is necessary to harmonize the Blood and Qi.

Primary points:
- Taichong LIV-3 - to facilitate Qi
- Xingjian LIV-2 - to benefit Liver Qi
- Sanyinjiao SP-6 - to facilitate Spleen Qi and Blood in the lower part of the body, to benefit the Spleen
- Xuehai SP-10 - to normalize Spleen Qi
- Zhongwan REN-12 - to facilitate Qi in the middle burner and Spleen Qi
- Zhaohai KID-6 - to facilitate Kidney Qi, to harmonize the upper and lower parts of the body together with Lieque LU-7 - to facilitate Lung Qi

 Secondary points:
- Xuehai SP-10 - to normalize Spleen Qi
- Taichong LIV-3 - to facilitate Qi of the lower part of the body, to resolve Damp

Auricular points:
- Shenmen, Back of the Head, Liver, Lower Abdomen, Heart, Kidney

One should note that acupuncture may increase mobile activity of the foetus. It should be taken as a positive sign, because in this case uteral-placental circulation increases and the supply of oxygen to the foetus improves. Moreover, the foetus receives nervous stimulation and increases its own activity.

A good supplement to the acupuncture treatment of threatened abortion may be herbal therapy. We advise taking a combination of Rosa Canina, Helichrysum Arenarium, Inula Helenium L., Radix Valerianae Officinalis and Leonurus in equal proportions. The main herb, providing uterus relaxation, is Radix Inulu Helenii L. If these herbs are taken for a long time, they also normalize the nervous system, and improve sleep and digestion. The herbs are mixed, 1 tablespoonful of the mixture is infused in 300 ml of boiled water for an hour. Then 100 ml of the infusion is taken three times a day before meals. As a preventative the treatment may last for one to two months.

**UNSTABLE POSITION OF THE FOETUS IN THE UTERUS, BREECH PRESENTATION**

This pathology, causing many complications in labour and increasing the incidence of Cesarean section, is due to impaired tonicity of the uterus, hydramnios, or multiple pregnancy. Obstetricians try to restore the normal head presentation of the foetus in the uterus. For that
purpose special exercises, manoeuvres, devices are used, but their efficiency is small. In such cases the works on Eastern medicine advise the use of moxibustion or strong stimulation of the point Zhiyin BL-67.

To increase efficiency of treatment we chose additional points which allowed us to cure 28 out of 33 patients. The treatment was carried out between 28-34 weeks of gestation. The course of treatment consisted of four to five daily sessions. The aim of the acupuncture treatment is to normalize the Qi in the lower part of the abdomen, to relieve spasm and to facilitate free flow of Blood in the uterus.

1st session
Zusanli ST-36
Neiguan P-6
Auricular point - Shenmen
Method - dispersion. Duration - 25-30 minutes

2nd session
Gongsun SP-4
Neiguan P-6
Auricular point - Shenmen
Method - dispersion. Duration - 25-30 minutes

The 3rd, 4th, and 5th sessions consisted of moderate stimulation (by turning the needles for 3-4 times a session) of the points Zhiyin BL-67 and auricular point Uterus on both sides for 20-30 minutes. In half of the cases an electro-stimulator with the following parameters was used: voltage 9 V, capacity 20 mcA, frequency 4-6 Hertz and connected up to the needles for 5-10 minutes.

During the first two sessions the patients calmed down and dozed. On stimulating Zhiyin BL-67 some noted a short increased foetal activity. The foetus changed to head presentation at night, unnoticeable for some women, while some patients said that they had been awoken by strong short contractions of the uterus and active movements of the foetus, during which time it turned position to head presentation. We did not notice any complications of pregnancy in this group.

References