

The Characteristics of Prescription and Clinical Application of Wu WeiZi Decoction

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Abstract: Background: Wu WeiZi Decoction is a herbal formula coming from TCM classical books of Sanyin Ji Yi Bingzheng Fang Lun. It has the function of tonifying kidney, liver and spleen which is mostly effective in six Xin years. Objective: To expound the characteristics of prescription and clinical application of Wu WeiZi Decoction. Methods: By referring to TCM classical books, citing related records and descriptions in the books, the composition characteristics of Schisandra decoction were analyzed and summarized. There was a table to list the nature, taste, meridian tropism, ownership of the five zang organs, and efficacy of each medicine in the formula. The clinical application of Wu WeiZi Decoction was summarized as how to use it in combination with other prescriptions, as well as how to add or subtract drugs according to different concomitant symptoms. Results: First, treatment prescription should be built on the basis of TCM concept of holism in consideration of solar term. Secondly, Wu WeiZi Decoction could be applied to treat the syndrome of kidney deficiency accompanied with excessive water and dampness, malnutrition of tendons and bones. Thirdly, Schisandra chinensis is the monarch drug of Wu WeiZi Decoction, and the basic principles of the composition of the herbs in Wu WeiZi Decoction are mutual reinforcement and mutual assistance. Conclusion: The thoughts of compositive construction of WWZ decoction embodies the concept of holism, the principle of treatment according to syndrome differentiation, and the clinical application of TCM herbal seven emotions.

Keywords: Wu WeiZi Decoction, Characteristics of Prescription, Clinical Application, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

1. Introduction

Wu WeiZi Decoction is the major formula of six Xin (辛 symplectic) years according to the theory of five evolutive phases and six climatic changes. It has the function of tonifying kidney and strengthening the body constitution, treating Bi-syndrome and relieving pain as to treat the syndrome of “Water Deficiency Year, Prevailing Dampness, Earth Winning and Wood Reprisal” [1]. The monarch drug in this prescription is Wu WeiZi (Schisandra chinensis, abbr. WWZ), while the ministerial drug is Fu Zi (Radix aconiti carmichaeli, abbr. FZ), and the adjuvant drugs include Lu Rong (Cornu cervi-pantotrichum, abbr. LR), Shu Di (Prepared rhizome of rehmannia, abbr. SD), Shan ZhuYv (Fructus corni, abbr. SZY), Du Zhong (Eucommia ulmoides, abbr. DZ), and Ba JiTian (Morinda officinalis, abbr. BJT).

2. Academic Origin

The famous TCM classical book of Sanyin Ji Yi Bingzheng Fang Lun (Treatise on Three Categories of Pathogenic Factors) was written by Chen WuZe (陈无择), the famed physician in Song Dynasty. Chen WuZe said that five movements and six Qi were the normal laws of the movement of ascending and descending of the heaven and the earth as well as Yin and Yang. He believed that the reason why the people would be sick was the excess or insufficiency of the circulation of five movements or reverse, obedience, overcoming and recurrence of the ascending and descending of six Qi. It was recorded in the book that Wu WeiZi Decoction was the major formula of six symplectic years and the feature of the syndrome was “ShaoYv (少羽) movement (运), insufficiency of year-water, the prevalence of dampness, victory of earth and recurrence of wood”. The common-seen symptoms of the

patients include: heaviness sensation in the general body, diarrhea, cold sores, foot flaccidity, and cold limb extremities [2]. Because there are several formulas with the same name of Wu WeiZi Decoction with different composition, Wu WeiZi Decoction recorded in the book of Treatise on Three Categories of Pathogenic Factors is usually called as Chans Si Tian (司天) Wu WeiZi Decoction.

3. The Characteristics of Prescription

The monarch drug in this prescription is WWZ, while the ministerial drug is FZ, and the adjuvant drugs include LR, SD, SZY, DZ, and BJT. It is expounded in detail as follows (See Table 1).

WWZ is the dry mature fruit of *Schisandra chinensis* (Turcz.) Baill. The taste of its peel and pulp is sweet and

acidic, while that of its kernel is bitter and pungent and both with the taste of salt. That is the reason while it is named with “WuWei” meaning five flavors. Tao HongJing (陶弘景) recorded it in the book of BenCao Jing JiZhu (Collection of herbal classics) [3]: According to Tao HongJing, WWZ was ascribed to water, but it could include wood, fire, earth and metal too. Although the main meridian tropism was the channel of lung and kidney, it could actually replenish five Zang-organs altogether. He also considered that WWZ was the key drug for producing body fluid and the effective astringent. In this formula, WWZ is the monarch drug performing the function of astringing and controlling Yin and Yang into Kan (坎). Because the onset time of the disease is in six symplectic years and the basic pathogenesis is insufficiency of water, so WWZ is applied to strengthen five Zang-organs and restore their normal function.

Table 1. The Characteristics of Wu WeiZi Decoction.

| Role | Herb | abbreviation | Property | Taste | Meridian tropism | Viscera | Function |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Monarch | Wu WeiZi (<i>Schisandra chinensis</i>) | WWZ | moderate | five flavors | Tai Yin | lung, heart, kidney | astringing and controlling Yin and Yang into Kan |
| Minister | Fu Zi (<i>Radix aconiti carmichaeli</i>) | FZ | hot | pungent | Shao Yin | heart, kidney | warming kidney Yang |
| | Lu Rong (<i>Cornu cervi pantotrichum</i>) | LR | warm | sweet, salt | Shao Yin | kidney | nourishing blood and replenishing marrow |
| | Shu Di (<i>Prepared rhizome of rehmannia</i>) | SD | mild warm | sweet | Shao Yin | liver, kidney | supplementing kidney Yin |
| | Shan ZhuYv (<i>Fructus corni</i>) | SZY | mild warm | acidic, astringent | Jve Yin | liver | replenishing liver |
| | Du Zhong (<i>Eucommia ulmoides</i>) | DZ | warm | sweet, mild pungent | Jve Yin | liver | replenishing liver |
| adjuvant | Ba JiTian (<i>Morinda officinalis</i>) | BJT | warm | pungent, sweet | Shao Yin | kidney | warming kidney Yang, strengthening bones and tendon |

FZ is the processed root of *Aconitum carmichaelii* Debx. It is very hot in property and is poisonous. Tao HongJing called it as the leader of all the drugs. Li ZhongZi (李中梓) recorded it in the book of LeiGong PaoZhi YaoXing Jie (Explanation of Drug Property): It was Yang within Yang with the character of ascending without descending, and moving without cessation. He considered that FZ could pass through all the channels [4]. In this prescription, FZ is the ministerial drug and applied to expel all kinds of Yin pathogens.

LR is the pilose antler which is good at nourishing blood and replenishing marrow as a kind of animal drug. Zhang ZhiCong (张志聪) said that LR inherited pure Yang so could replenishing the fire to warm the earth [5]. Because essence and blood belong to Yin, so the function of LR is to generate Yang on the base of Yin promoting the inter-transformation between Yin and Yang. At the same time, LR can also consolidate the relationship between kidney, which is called as the origin of the innate, and spleen, which is called as the origin of the acquired, to strengthen the whole body constitutes.

SD is the processed root and stem of glutinous *rehmannia* with the taste of sweet giving assistance to WWZ to perform the function of tonifying liver and kidney. Wang HaoGu (王好古) said that SD was the Yang in Yin because of its thick taste and thin Qi and the main meridian tropism was foot and hand

Shao Yin (少阴) and Jve Yin (厥阴) channel [6].

SZY is the dry mature fruit of *Cornus officinalis* Sieb. et Zucc. It is acidic in the taste and apt to enter liver in the nature. Miao XiYong (缪希雍) said that it was the Yin of Yang and inclined to descend. He considered that it could treat several symptoms such as cold or heat pathogen in the precordium due to deficiency-heat in the channel of liver and kidney [7]. Ye TianShi (叶天士) considered that SZY could control fire into the lower Jiao transforming into minor fire (少火) to warm the middle Jiao [8].

DZ is the bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* Oliver with the taste of sweet and a little pungent. Li ShiZhen (李时珍) said that DZ could enter liver and tonify kidney like the son could help his mother [9]. Because kidney controls bone and liver controls tendon, so DZ can relieve the pain in loins and knees with the function of strengthening kidney and liver.

BJT is the dry root of *Morinda officinalis* with the taste of sweet and pungent. Li ShiZhen said that it could cure beriberi, dissipating wind and replenish blood sea [9]. Miao XiYong said that it inherited the essence-Qi of original Yang from the earth as well as harmony Yang from the heaven with the function of replenishing original Yang and dispelling pathogens [7].

In short, the prescription of Wu WeiZi Decoction can perform the function of strengthening five Zang-organs and harmonize their relationship. The monarch drug is WWZ with

the feature of inheriting Yin of the earth and accompanying with Yang of the heaven. WWZ can mainly tonify kidney and taking five Zang-organs into account altogether. FZ is the ministerial drug which can enter Shao Yin channel communicating heart (fire) and kidney (water) accompanied with WWZ. LR can help FZ to warm the earth by replenishing the fire. SD, SZY and DZ are together performing the function of enriching water to nourish wood, promoting inter-generation of essence and blood, consolidating tendons and bones. BJT is ascribed to metal with the taste of pungent performing the adjuvant action to relieve symptoms in bones and tendons. With the assistance of DZ, WWZ can strengthen the metal and promoting the inter-generation of earth to metal and metal to water.

4. Clinical Application

4.1. The Chance for Application

According to Chinese TianGan (天干, heavenly stems) and DiZhi (地支, earthly branches) chronology, the chances for the application of Wu WeiZi Decoction are mainly in six Xin years. On the base of the theory of five movements and six Qi (五运六气), TianGan changes into five movements which houses between the Heaven Qi and Earth Qi. Ten heavenly stems are divided into 5 kinds as the following in detail: Jia and Ji are ascribed to Earth movement, Yi and Gen are ascribed to Metal movement, Bing and Xin are ascribed to Water movement, Ding and Ren are ascribed to Wood movement, and Wu and Gui are ascribed to Fire movement. Furthermore, Year movement is divided into 2 kinds, which are excess and deficiency. The excess is coming before it should come, while the deficiency is not coming when it should have come [10]. According to the above theory, Xin year belong to the deficiency of Water movement with the features of insufficiency of water, excess of dampness, winning of earth and reprisal of wood.

It is recorded in Su Wen (Plain Questions) that heaven has four seasons and five elements, promoting generation, development, harvesting and storing, accompanied with coldness, summer-heat, dryness, dampness and wind [11]. People can get sick when exogenous pathogens invade inside the body, such as excessive wind can cause tremble, excessive heat can cause swelling, excessive dryness can cause desiccation, excessive coldness can cause edema, excessive dampness can cause diarrhea.

4.2. The Diagnosis and Syndrome Differentiation

Chans Si Tian Wu WeiZi Decoction should be applied according to the accurate diagnosis and syndrome differentiation with the following expounding.

The corresponding Zang-organ to water is kidney which is responsible for water metabolism. The insufficiency of kidney leads to dysfunction of generation, distribution and excretion of water which then cause the retention of water inside the body, so that the patients complain heaviness in the whole body and diarrhea with intestinal borborygmus. At the same

time, because of kidney Yang deficiency failing to warm muscle and vessels and promote the circulation of blood and body fluid, the cold limbs extremities and sores may occur. Besides, insufficiency of kidney Yin fails to nourish bones and tendons, so that the loins, knees and feet may be painful and unable to move freely and actively.

Water is the mother of wood and kidney essence can transform into liver blood to nourish the eyes, so the patients may usually complain blurred vision in the clinics. Kidney is the origin of congenital constitution with the function of storing essence which then generate primordial Yin and Yang (also called as genuine Yin and Yang). Kidney deficiency will lead to the general deficiency of five Zang-organs and the whole body, so the patients usually manifest lusterless complexion, lassitude and fatigue, pale tongue body and deep-thready pulse with the typical feature of syndrome of kidney deficiency.

4.3. Modification of Formulas and Herbs

If the symptoms manifested as poor appetite, diarrhea with intestinal borborygmus, sallow complexion, pale tongue with tooth-marks, deep and thready pulse, the syndrome should be ascribed to both kidney and spleen deficiency, the prescription should be the combination of Wu WeiZi Decoction and Decoction of Astragalus for Tonifying Middle-jiao (黄芪建中汤) [12] or Linggui Zhugan Decoction (苓桂术甘汤) [13], and herbs such as Astragalus, cassia twig, Poria cocos and Licorice should be added.

If the symptoms manifested as lumbago aggravated after exertion, headache, stiff fingers and knees, difficult to move the joints, pale tender tongue with little coating, deep and thready pulse, the syndrome should be ascribed to both kidney and liver deficiency, the prescription should be the combination of Wu WeiZi Decoction and decoction of four ingredients (四物汤) [14] or Erzhi Pill (二至丸) [15], and herbs such as Chinese angelica, Chinese herbaceous peony, Privet and Eclipta should be added.

If the symptoms manifested as palpitation, insomnia, dysphoria, tidal fever, red tongue with little coating, thready and rapid pulse, the syndrome should be ascribed to disharmony between heart and kidney, the prescription should be the combination of Wu WeiZi Decoction and Tianwang Buxin Dan (天王补心丹) [16] or Jiaotai Pill (交泰丸) [17], and herbs such as Ginseng, Radix Ophiopogonis, Coptis chinensis and cinnamon should be added.

5. Comments

5.1. The Thoughts of the Concept of Holism

The compositive construction of WWZ decoction embodies the thoughts of maintaining health corresponding to the nature and treating diseases on the basis of the concept of holism. There is a saying in the book of Internal Cannon [10]: People grow up in the earth and sustain life by the heaven, and keep living activity by the integration of the heaven and the earth. Our lives are endowed with the energy between the heaven and the earth, so the gasification state of heaven and earth will

inevitably affect our physical bodies. It is proposed in Plain Questions [11]: “Contaminated by the pathogenic Qi of heaven, people’s five Zang-organs will be damaged. Abnormal cold or hot stimulation of foodstuff will do harm to people’s six Fu-organs while dampness of earth to people’s skin, muscle, tendon and vessels.” That means we should regulate our clothing, diet, activity and life style according to the conditions and changes of the climate and natural surroundings, or we would be apt to be attacked by all kinds of exogenous pathogens and get sick. The composition thought of Wu WeiZi Decoction embodies the concept of holism by rectifying the biases of Zang-Fu organs and Qi-blood in human being induced by abnormal climatic changes.

5.2. The Thoughts of Treatment According to Syndrome Differentiation

The clinical manifestations of the patients are various, but the key pathogenesis in six Xin year is “Water Deficiency Year, Prevailing Dampness, Earth Winning and Wood Reprisal”, so the treatment principle lay emphasis on replenishing kidney-water to astringe Yin and Yang to Kan so that keeping the normal function of five Zang organs and smooth circulation of Qi-blood. The basic disease feature is deficiency, so the total prescription of Wu WeiZi Decoction gives priority to tonic. Kidney is the congenital foundation and stores the genuine Yin and Yang which are the basis of the other four Zang organs.

The thoughts of herbal formular composition of Wu WeiZi Decoction reflect in two sides: the first is tonifying kidney Yin combined with enriching water to nourish wood, the other is strengthening kidney Yang combined with warming life gate fire to generate earth. The whole formula aims at keeping balance between Yin and Yang, and consolidating the transformation and correlation among five Zang-organs.

5.3. Selecting Herbs According to TCM Seven Emotions

WWZ is the monarch drug in this formula which is ascribed to water, performing the main function of tonifying water. Actually, the other six herbs in this formula all have the relationship of mutual assistance with WWZ. FZ assists WWZ to warm kidney Yang to expel cold and dampness pathogens, so as to treat heaviness sensation in the general body, diarrhea, cold sores, foot flaccidity, and cold limb extremities. LR assists WWZ to replenish essence and blood to keep healthy marrow and bone. SD assists WWZ to nourish Yin and blood and promoting the generation of essence and marrow. SZY assists WWZ to promote the transformation of essence to blood, so as to replenish liver and be beneficial to tendon and eyes.

WWZ is warm in nature with the similarity of FZ, LR and DZ. In consideration of the function of warming Yang and expelling cold and dampness pathogens, FZ, LR and DZ have mutual reinforcement relationship with WWZ. WWZ is sour in taste with the similarity of LR and SZY. In view of the function of astringent and consolidation, LR and SZY have mutual reinforcement relationship with WWZ. So the basic principles of the composition of the herbs in Wu WeiZi

Decoction are mutual reinforcement and mutual assistance.

In conclusion, Wu WeiZi Decoction is mostly effective in six Xin years according to the treatment principle of adapting measures to people, time and local conditions. The formula can perform the function of tonifying kidney, liver and spleen aiming at the key pathogenesis of disharmony between Yin and Yang, and the discordance among five Zang-organs. The formula can be applied with the modification according to various accompanied symptoms or combined with other classical herbal formulas. The formula can be effective in treating various kinds of diseases such as arthralgia, endocrinal diseases, or malignant carcinomas which manifests the TCM thoughts of treating different diseases with same method. The correct application of this formula fully shows TCM preponderance in consideration of correspondence between man and universe and taking individuals as one part of the nature, and it may be the reason why TCM treatment sometimes works wonders in certain difficult miscellaneous diseases.

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