

The Management of Multiple Sclerosis With the Extraordinary Vessels

As practitioners and fellow humans, we know there is no secret to the sufferings of patients with multiple sclerosis (MS). It is a devastating chronic illness, which robs the patient of control over simple physiological processes, oftentimes to the point of physical incapacitation. While its myriad signs and symptoms can be recognized once the illness is fairly progressed, its origins are as mysterious as they are insidious.

From a Western perspective, MS patients have demyelinated nerve sheaths of the central nervous system, which consequently result in the lack of fluid nervous transmission such that indications of nervous system failure result. These symptoms include lack of motor control, problems with walking and control of limbs, intestinal and bladder incontinence, and visual disturbances. Other disturbing developments include memory and concentration problems, extreme fatigue, and lack of sexual energy.

With regard to Western prognosis and treatment, multiple sclerosis is characterized by recurrent periods of exacerbation of symptoms. The disease may progress pathologically to the point of immobilization and confinement, although at times the patient may experience spontaneous, unexplained remissions. There is no treatment or cure, and the prognosis is poor. Experimentation with various diets, largely those that eliminate sugar and food allergens; raw foods diets; and those that reduce meat, carbohydrates and saturated fat, yield varied and/or temporary results, as does stress reduction, mild exercise and a positive mental attitude.

Up until fairly recently (approximately 30 years ago), MS was unheard of in China. It first gained attention in large, populated cities, where it was assumed the illness was due to the stress of modern culture and the concomitant pollution that accompanied contemporary times. Some Chinese medical theorists, inferring from signs and symptoms, advanced at that time that overall MS was a problem of yin deficiency, which originally began with "Fire in the Metal element" at an early age. Different fevers such as scarlet fever, fever accompanying German measles, or other fevers of unexplained origin were often considered the causative factor that then devolved into other organs' deficiencies of yin. Interestingly, heat seems to aggravate the condition, a further substantiation that the yin of the body is truly involved. Pathology progresses according to the reverse *sheng* (normal nourishing) cycle, thus revealing the element and organ disharmonies that ensue. As Kidney and Bladder disharmonies develop, the patient is near the end of the elemental cycle, where it finally terminates in a return to Metal.

While nothing can obviously be done for this "scorching of the yin aspect of Metal," Oriental medicine still posits a 40 percent chance of success with treatment that is positive and better than a zero percent prognosis by Western doctors. In some cases, this edge can take the patient to the point of remission, and in others to that of management of the illness' symptoms, much akin to a pain management protocol, to the point the patient can cope with many of the symptoms of MS. Treatment needs to be frequent, with common lifestyle factors adopted like sensible Chinese dietary therapies; gentle exercise such as stretching; and the implementation of stress reduction mechanisms.

Oriental medical practitioners may select various places to begin treatment. Treating the manifestation or the branch has no-to-short-term success. Treating the root and the branch is an option that works better in the short run, but beware of using too many needles (greater than 10), which can drain the patient's energy. In my experience with MS patients, treating the root not only works faster, but also produces results that are more sustainable.

Various modalities may be employed, but my preferred methods are ear therapy with gold magrain pellets on the major organs involved such as Lung; Kidney; Spleen; Stomach; Liver; and Brain as a core formula, and *shenmen*. Body acupuncture, with a protocol practitioners may be well aware of but not utilize, is that of the *jing* treatment.

The Chinese *jing* treatment is a therapeutic strategy that makes use of the master and coupled points of the eight extraordinary vessels plus CV 6 (*qihai*) to activate the functions of the extraordinary vessels. Remember that the extraordinary vessels are not subject to the same laws of yin/yang that characterize the 12 main meridians. While they have numerous physiological functions, in essence they are homeostatic vessels, which can:

1. supplement deficiency when needed, especially of *jing* (as in the case of many MS symptoms), and
2. reduce excesses and pathological products such as phlegm, damp, stagnant *qi* and blood that develop due to underlying deficiencies.

Many clinicians are wary of using the extraordinary vessels for fear of draining an already weakened patient, but a clear understanding of the physiology of the extraordinary vessels and centuries of clinical experience (as well as your own) proves this fear is not supported. Consult Table 1 for a summary of the generalized functions of each of the extraordinary vessels.

Table 1: The General Function of the Curious Vessels

Functions		Usages
1. Homeostatic	Absorbs excess peerverse energy from the 12 main meridians	To treat fever caused by invasion of an exogenous pathogen
2. Circulatory	Warms and defends the surface by circulating <i>wei qi</i>	To increase yang in the body
3. Enriching	Enriches the body with <i>qi</i> , blood and ancestral <i>qi</i>	To treat deficiencies in those areas
4. Controlling	Serves as reservoirs and conductors of <i>jing</i>	To treat essence deficiency illness and the decelopmental life cycle problems
5. Nourishing	Harmonizes and nourishes the extraordinary organs: gallbladder; uterus; brain; blood vessels; bone marrow; and bone	To treat diseaes of the liver/gallbladder, uterus, brain, blood vessels, bone marrow, and bone
6. Supervisory	Exerts a commanding role over areas of the body, essential substances and <i>zang-fu</i> organs	To treat zones of the body, essential substances, and <i>zang-fu</i> organs
7. Balancing	Regulates energy	* When the pulses are balanced but the patient still complains of symptoms * When the 12 main meridians have failed * To treat the root causes of a disease
8. Supplementing	Supplements multiple deficiencies	To treat chronic disease, metabolic and hormonal disorders and psychic strain

9. Adjusting	Reduces inherited or acquired structural stress	To treat muscle tension, postural or structural stress
--------------	---	--

The *jing* treatment contacts the patient's *qi* on a very deep level: that of the *jing qi*, a combination of one's pre- and postnatal *qi* - in short, who we are. By virtue of the needles, the *jing* treatment accesses this very deep core energetic substrate, augments it, frees it up and circulates it for proper physiological functioning. Patients with multiple sclerosis describe the effect of this treatment as comparable to a rested vacation - certainly a testimony to the power of the needles and the energetic zones regulated by the extraordinary vessels.

Table 2: Eight Confluent Point Protocol

Point Order	Eight Curious Vessel Master Point	Eight Curious Vessel Coupled Point	Side of the Body to Needle	Needle Technique (Japanese Needles Best, #1G)
TE 5 (<i>waiguan</i>)	<i>Yangwei Mai</i>	GB 41 (<i>zulinqi</i>)	Right side	Perpendicular superficial insertion .3 inch. No or small manipulation depending upon patient's condition
GB 41 (<i>zulinqi</i>)	<i>Dai Mai</i>	TE 5 (<i>waiguan</i>)	Left side	Obliquely .3 inch in the direction of the meridian (towards the toe)
PC 6 (<i>neiguan</i>)	<i>Yinwei Mai</i>	SP 4 (<i>gongsun</i>)	Left side	Superficial insertion .3 inch. No or light manipulation depending upon patient's condition
SP 4 (<i>gongsun</i>)	<i>Chong Mai</i>	PC 6 (<i>neiguan</i>)	Right side	Perpendicular or oblique insertion .3 inch. If oblique, needle in direction of meridian
LU 7 (<i>lieque</i>)	<i>Ren Mai</i>	KI 6 (<i>zhaohai</i>)	Right side	Obliquely .3 inch towards thumb
KI 6 (<i>zhaohai</i>)	<i>Yinqiao Mai</i>	LU 7 (<i>lieque</i>)	Left side	Posteriorly horizontally .1-.2 inch in direction of meridian (towards the heel)
SI 3 (<i>houxi</i>)	<i>Du Mai</i>	BL 62 (<i>shenmai</i>)	Left side	Perpendicular or obliquely upward (distally) .2-.3 inch
BL 62 (<i>shenmai</i>)	<i>Yangqiao Mai</i>	SI 3 (<i>houxi</i>)	Right side	Obliquely .2-.3 inch in the direction of the meridian (towards the toes)
CV 6 (<i>qihai</i>)	X	X	Center	Perpendicularly 1-1.5 inches. Summon the <i>Qi</i> to the area and tonify

Treatment may be administered daily or from two to five days per week, depending on the patients' condition, availability for treatment, and other factors. Needles are inserted from top to bottom to ground and anchor the *qi*; from right to left to bring yin into yang; and unilaterally. See Table 2 for which side of the body to treat, as well as my adjusted angles and depths of insertion. Standard Chinese point locations are employed.

I use #1 gauge 30 mm Seirin needles (my needles of choice for virtually everything) for patient comfort and in consideration of their deficient condition. Simply insert each needle, obtain no-to-little *qi*, and twist once in a small clockwise direction for tonification. Retain the needles for 10 to 15 minutes. Before you leave the room, instruct the patient to try not to think of anything, but if they must, tell them to think about the needles tapping into the deepest reserves of the body for replenishment and healing. After the treatment, the patient should report a feeling of deep seated energy, calmness, and lack of pain. Instruct the patient to go home and rest instead of expending

any energy acquired by the treatment. The patient should not feel light-headed, "spacey," weak, shaky or very tired. If any of these scenarios develop, check your needle size; insertion technique; angle and depth of needle insertion; needle manipulation; and retention time, which may be faulty. Allow the patient to rest five to 10 minutes in the treatment room after treatment, to get up slowly, and offer them a small glass of water before they leave, as their energy has been contacted at a very deep level.

This is an easy-to-use treatment protocol that treats the root of the disorder by supplementing and regulating the *qi*. It works on a profound level physically, energetically and emotionally. Stick with it as an effective treatment strategy for the management of multiple sclerosis. As improvement is made, other points may be substituted based upon in the energetic layer affected and the type of acute and transient symptoms, but always try to see where the symptoms are coming from for more long-lasting results.

Acupuncture will not cure multiple sclerosis as it does not cure many other devastating illnesses. The weakness, pain and debilitation of multiple sclerosis can coexist amidst the joy and splendor of life, and can be managed through the physical, mental and emotional relief acupuncture can bring by the correct discernment and treatment of energetic layers involved. That relief can be a lifeline of hope to many patients and to you as a practitioner.

DECEMBER 2003