

Treating Idiopathic Nephrotic Syndrome of Childhood

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The kidneys are said to be the root of life due to their relationship to prenatal essence and their control of birth, growth, development, reproduction as well as water and fluid metabolism.

The strength, functioning, and continuing health of our marrow, bones, and brain depend upon the healthy state of kidney energy. The kidneys rule Fire and Water, Yin and Yang.

Naturally, the process of aging decreases essence and may cause deficient kidney energy, which means that reinforcing treatments may be needed in order to minimize depletion that may lead to decreased function, as well as other signs of aging (graying, premature hair loss, issues with memory, loss of hearing, etc.) So, when someone has a congenital defect, health issues beginning at an early age, is prematurely born, or has physical kidney disease, his/her aging process may be accelerated. General health will also likely suffer.

I would like to share a case about a 50-year-old male who was suffering from very frequent priapism. Almost every morning he suffered from a painful erection that lasted for several hours. Sometimes he could "run it off" but the fear of the frequent event was becoming more and more distressful to him. His allopathic physician recommended a surgical procedure, insertion of a shunt into his penis. The patient refused to undergo the procedure. An interesting part of this patient's medical history is that he was diagnosed with Idiopathic Nephrotic Syndrome of Childhood (INSC).

According to the National Institute of Health, INSC is a syndrome that can occur at any age, but is most common between the ages of 1-1/2 and 8 years. It seems to affect boys more often than girls. A child with this syndrome has these signs: high levels of protein in the urine, low levels of protein in the blood, and swelling resulting from build-up of salt and water. The syndrome can be the first sign of a disease that damages the tiny blood-filtering units (glomeruli) in the kidneys, where urine is made.

It made perfect sense to me that this male patient was experiencing a condition that could easily be traced to kidney energy. There had been periods of INSC remission in his past, but for the last several years he required a monthly regimen of treatment with steroids to keep the condition under control. For 10 days out of a month, he took 5 mg. of prednisone daily. By the time he came to see me he was pretty frustrated with both the treatment (he felt that the steroids made him an "angry person") and the priapism.

A person may suffer from deficiency of Kidney Yang, Kidney Yin, Kidney Essence, and Kidney Qi. Or, Kidney Qi may be unconsolidated or too weak to maintain normal inspiration. In general, chronic nephritis would be associated with a deficiency of Kidney Yang, Kidney Yin, and Kidney Qi. But, since I like to be "surprised" by each patient's pulses, I do my best not to pre-judge what the pulse picture will be before I examine them. Why make a diagnosis or differentiation before examining the pulses?

Individual treatment is the promise of our medicine and part of the beauty of it is determining the cause/root of each individual's condition and I do that primarily with pulse diagnosis.

In this patient's case, the pulse picture was one where the kidney pulses were not moving into their respective next positions (Spleen/Stomach and Liver/GB). Then there was a deep deficiency in the Spleen position due to a history of poorly functioning digestion and issues with feeling nurtured along with a movement indicating some depression or unresolved angst about some past experience. We discussed the diagnostic findings from the pulse examination and the patient was able to elaborate on the experience of his brother's death. He still had strong feelings about it, although it had occurred 40 years ago.

Additionally, he had a history of digestive issues, bloating, and some acid reflux along with eczema that was primarily on his feet (interestingly around K6, but it was spreading along both the Kidney and Spleen channels).

The patient was also going through a divorce while dating a married woman, complicating his emotional *qi* life. I explained the importance, especially for him, of respecting kidney energy and being careful about allowing it to hold emotions like worry and depression, potentially weakening it.

I advised *qi gong* or other meditative techniques. However, his chief concern was to end the priapism though he seemed amenable to working on his entire system to see if he could reduce his intake of prednisone. As of now, he has not had to take prednisone for almost four years. This is a very lengthy remission for him.

Upon examining the pulses, when you feel that a patient's kidney energy is not making it through to support the other organ systems, you must consider whether it is too weak to do so or whether there is a physical, emotional, or energetic block that is preventing it from flowing. In this case, since the patient had kidney issues since he was a child, I wanted to see if when I strengthened the kidneys their *qi* was exuberant enough to make it through to the Spleen and Liver positions respectively. I needled K2 and K4 (to connect organ systems) and reexamined the pulses. Kidney energy was flowing, albeit weakly.

The next order of business was to rebalance the movements that indicated depression and poor digestion. I used a variety of means to stop attacks and open the Spirit. One way is to needle Ren 14 or 15 (whichever one feels more sensitive or gets redder with touch) and then Lung 1 or 2. Sometimes adding Gb21 enhances this opening. In his case, I also needed to calm down the emotional "craziness" that he had created in his personal life so that his kidney energy wouldn't suffer further. Gb 34 and Heart 8 do a good job of that and you can add Du 20 and 24 needled toward each other to help treat mental/emotional issues. His priapism resolved in two treatments with an occasional flare-up that he could manage over the first few months, but he hasn't had an episode in years.

With each treatment I continue to allow free flow of *qi* through the organ systems, minimize the negative impact of his chosen emotional life, and rebuild his digestion. INSC remission means kidney energy revitalized to the point that his quality of life is better, he has more energy, and he no longer has to take steroids.

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