

The Ancient Use of ST36 (Zusanli) with Different Needle Techniques and Point Combinations

As practitioners of Oriental medicine, we know that acupuncture points are a nexus of physiological activities that govern certain body parts. These points may have certain elemental energies, such as "water" points that regulate water, or they may have domain over the *zang fu* organs or essential substances.

These functions are not automatically activated simply by sticking needles into a point. It could involve active twirling of the needle (a typical Chinese technique), or simply the subtle but equally effective positioning of a needle in relation to the flow of *qi* in the meridian (a common Japanese method).

In this article, I will illustrate these concepts by explaining the use of a particular point, ST36 (*zusanli*), and how it can achieve varied clinical effects in two ways: first, by the specific needle technique employed; second, by its combination with other points. I've chosen *zusanli* specifically because of its multiple clinical energetics and its importance in the clinician's repertoire of treatment points.

In the Chinese selection of points, ST36 is perhaps the most renowned. From a classical standpoint, we know it as the *he-sea* point of the stomach meridian. *He-sea* points are those in which the *qi* of the channel is deeply converged. Because of this, they have a direct effect upon the organ, in this case the stomach. Likewise, on a yang meridian, *he-sea* points correspond to earth points elementally. As such, this means these points can regulate earth energy by adding to or taking away that energy, for instance, dampness. The way to achieve this, however, is by way of needle technique. A tonification technique can strengthen the earth element; a dispersion technique can disperse excess earth energy. Therefore, we can appreciate the critical relationship of needle technique to point selection. Point selection, of course, is contingent upon the treatment in plan, which in turn is constructed in coordination with the diagnosis.

Returning specifically to ST36, as an earth point on an earth meridian, confers its additional status as an horary point. Horary points have the same elemental energy as the meridian on which they are located. Possessing this unique quality is analogous to a "double dose," so to speak, of that elemental energy. In the case of ST36, this makes it a very "earthy" point, but again, it is through needle technique that we decide what to do with that earth energy.

In terms of indications (clinical conditions that are a direct function of the classical energetics discussed above), ST36 is known for its use in treating the following conditions: gastric pain; vomiting; abdominal distention; indigestion; hordobrygamus; diarrhea; constipation; dysentery; mastitis; dizziness; mental disorders; hemiplegia; beriberi; aching of the knee joint; abscessed breast; edema of the limbs; difficult urination; incontinence; paralysis; seizures; asthma (lung or kidney type); duodenal ulcers; depression; and abdominal and gastric illness.

Now let us turn our attention to the use of ST36 with other acupuncture points, to see how they work synergistically, and to see which needle technique needs to be chosen to accomplish those results. Source materials for this discussion were obtained in a lecture I attended in 1988 at the International Training Center of the Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Beijing, China, entitled "Very Famous Old Prescriptions for ST36." In lieu of a lengthy discussion, and for clinician convenience, this information is summarized in the table that follows. The practitioner may select any tonification (reinforcement) or dispersion (reduction) technique that he/she prefers. Standard point locations and depths of insertion should be used and, if required, can be consulted.

Point Combination	Needle Method	Energetics	Clinical Conditions
ST36 (<i>Sanyinjiao</i>) and	Reinforce	To elevate the yang <i>qi</i>	For rheumatic disease, <i>bi</i> -syndromes, numbness of the legs
SP6	Reinforce	To strengthen the yin and blood; for deficiency and cold of the spleen or deficiency of <i>qi</i>	
		Overall, the main prescription to tonify the <i>qi</i> and blood	
ST36 and	Reduce	<i>He-Sea</i> point to eliminate turbidity in the stomach	Diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, acid regurgitation, <i>bi</i> -syndrome, knee pain, beriberi of the foot
GB34 (<i>Yanglingquan</i>)	Reduce	<i>He-sea</i> point to clear heat in the liver and gallbladder	
		Overall aim: to harmonize wood and earth. For diseases of wood and earth, such as retention of phlegm in the middle <i>jiao</i>	
ST36 and	Reinforce both points or use even technique	As <i>he-sea</i> points, they strengthen the middle <i>jiao</i> , dispel damp, and promote transformation and transportation	Reduces edema caused by the heart and dysfunction of the kidney, dysuria, edema of the lower extremities, for digestion with abdominal distention, chronic diarrhea
SP9 (<i>Yinlingquan</i>)			
ST36 and	Reduce	Promotes circulation of meridians and collaterals	Poliomyelitis, <i>wei</i> -syndrome

GB39 (<i>Xuanzhong</i>)	Reduce (apply moxa to GB39 to prevent wind-stroke)	Reduces/clears heat/fire in the gallbladder. A must for any marrow problem. Tonifies the marrow	Early signs of wind-stroke such as numbness or hemiplegia
		For kidney problems caused by gallbladder fire	Hypertension
ST36 and	Reinforce	Strengthens earth, harmonizes stomach	For chronic hepatitis and jaundice
LR3 (<i>Taichong</i>)	Reduce	Pacifies the liver	
ST36 and	Moxa recommended over needle	Affects the fetus	Difficult labor, promotes menstrual flow
BL67 (<i>Zhiyin</i>)			
ST36 and	Reinforce	For perversion of <i>qi</i> , any <i>qi</i> going the wrong way, brings <i>qi</i> down	Coma due to anger, sunstroke, toxic coma, respiratory failure, dehydration, makes blood pressure normal
ST36 and KI1 (<i>Yongquan</i>)	Reduce		
ST36 and	Reinforce	Both points of the foot and hand <i>yang ming</i>	Acute or chronic rhinitis, nasal obstruction due to invasion of wind-cold (deficiency case)
LI20 (<i>Yingxiang</i>)	Reduce		
ST36 and	Tonify	Benefits and strengthens the stomach	Deficiency cough caused by fatigue, deficiency asthma
LU7 (<i>Lieque</i>)	Reduce	Resolves phlegm	
ST36 and	Reduce	Clears heat in the diaphragm and chest	Stifling sensation in the chest, dry retching, irritability, belching, irascibility, vomiting, acid regurgitation, lassitude
PC8 (<i>Laogong</i>)	Reduce	Clears heat in heart and lung, descends upward attack of heat	
ST36 and	Reduce	Clears heat in the diaphragm and chest	Stifling sensation in the chest, dry retching, irritability, belching, irascibility, vomiting, acid regurgitation, lassitude
PCS (<i>Laogong</i>)	Reduce	Clears heat in heart and lung, descends upward attack of heat	

ST36 and	Reduce	Reduces fire in the <i>yang ming</i> , clears heat in the stomach meridian	Toothache caused by upward attack of stomach fire, headache due to upward attack of heat in the <i>yang ming</i> , sore throat, frontal headache, redface
Li2 (<i>Erjian</i>)	Reduce		
ST36 and	Reduce	ST36 for <i>fu</i> organs	Famous prescription for constipation due to depression of <i>qi</i> in 3 <i>jiaos</i> and dysfunction of spleen and stomach. Can use for constipation in pregnancy
TE6 (<i>Zhigou</i>)	Reinforce	TE6 for regulating <i>qi</i> of 3 <i>jiaos</i> of the <i>fu</i> organs	
ST36 and	Reinforce	Regulates the <i>qi</i> of the foot and hand yang ming	Stomach and intestinal problems. Good formula for health
LI10 (<i>Shousanh</i>)	Reinforce	For disorders of the <i>qi</i> of the stomach and intestines	Weakness in spleen and stomach, abdominal distention, fullness and pain, loose stools, irregular bowel movement, constipation, anorexia
		Deficiency of <i>qi</i> and blood in general and in the elderly	Dizziness, vertigo, blurry vision, weakness of lower limbs, fatigue, hemiplegia, <i>wei-</i> and <i>bi-</i> syndromes, trembling of extremities due to <i>qi</i> and blood deficiency seen in older patients
Point Combination	Needle Method	Energetics	Clinical Conditions
ST36 and	Reduce	Very famous ancient prescripion to regulate the upper and middle <i>jiao</i>	Removes food retention

CV21 (<i>Xuangi</i>)	Reduce	Sends <i>qi</i> downward; when spleen and stomach lose the ability to transform and transport	Severe asthma, improper food intake, abdominal distention, nausea, anorexia, fullness, belching, loose stools, hard masses
		Overall, the main prescription to tonify the <i>qi</i> and blood	
ST36 and	Reinforce	<i>He-sea</i> point to eliminate turbidity in the stomach	Strengthens the spleen and stomach
CV11 (<i>Jianli</i>)	Reinforce	Harmonizes the stomach, ascends the clear, resolves damp	Eases the chest, chronic diarrhea due to dysfunction of the stomach and intestines
		Main prescription for stomach disorders and epigastric pain	Abdominal pain, spontaneous sweat, lassitude
ST36 and	Reinforce	Main prescription for stomach ulcer	Stomach ulcer, epigastric pain
CV12 (<i>Zhong wan</i>)	Reinforce		
ST36 and	Reinforce	Regulates and harmonizes the <i>qi</i> of the stomach and intestines	Wide indications. Chronic diarrhea - reinforce; acute diarrhea - reduce; bacterial dysentery - reduce. Very effective in treating bacterial dysentery; constipation due to disorders of transportation in the intestines
ST25 (<i>Tiantu</i>)	Reinforce (retain needle two hours for dysentery)	Disorders of transportation in the intestines	
ST36 and	Reinforce	Main prescription to tonify <i>qi</i> ; especially good for <i>qi</i> deficiency	Wide indications; after severe disease
CV6 (<i>Qihai</i>)	Reinforce (if <i>qi</i> is dranged, reduce)		
ST36 and	Reinforce	Eliminates the pathogens	Tuberculosis of the lung deficiency due to fatigue
BL43 (<i>Gaohuang</i>)	Reinforce	Strengthens the antipathogenic <i>qi</i> for keeping fit and healthy	
ST36 and	Reinforce or even	Harmonizes the blood, checks bleeding	Vomiting blood due to coldness in spleen (failure to control the blood)

BL17 (<i>Geshu</i>)	Reinforce (or even needle). Position tip of needle toward spine.	Produces blood	For upper respiratory and digestive tract
ST36 and	Reinforce	Promotes <i>qi</i>	Dizziness, blurry vision due to deficiency of liver blood
BL18 (<i>Ganshu</i>)	Reinforce* (Needle BL 18 first)	Replenishes blood	Lassitude due to dysfunction of stomach and liver, dysfunction of spleen and stomach
ST36 and	Reinforce	Decline of <i>mingmen</i> fire	Impotence, prostermia
GV4 (<i>Mingmen</i>)	Reinforce (moxa can be used)		
ST36 and	Reinforce or even	Harmonizes the stomach, invigorates yang <i>qi</i>	Stops vomiting spontaneous sweat caused by yang <i>xu</i>
PC6 (<i>Neiguan</i>)	Movement		
ST36 and	Reinforce	Tonic points	Premature ejaculation
CV4 (<i>Guanyuan</i>)	Reinforce	Abdominal crossing of 3 leg yen; better than SP6; includes function of SP6; tonifies source <i>qi</i>	Impotence due to <i>qi xu</i>
ST36 and	Reduce	Anti-inflammatory; lowers white blood cells when there is inflammation	White blood cell pathology
DU14 (<i>Dazhid</i>)	Reduce (can raise white blood cells with use of moxa)		
ST36 and	Reinforce	Regulates the <i>qi</i> of stomach and intestines	Acute and chronic diarrhea due to <i>qi</i> dysfunction
LI4 (<i>Hegu</i>)	Reinforce (reduce if due to an accumulation of damp and heat)	Failure of <i>qi</i> to ascend or descend	Vomiting, nausea related to the intestines

SEPTEMBER 2002