



HERBAL MEDICINE

San Zhen Protocols: Part I

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The system of San Zhen therapy or "three-needle technique" is a highly effective system of acupuncture, which I use extensively in my private practice. In this two- part article, I will discuss various three-needle combinations for various patterns of disharmony and present some case studies which reflect the effective clinical results of this elegantly simple approach. It appears the modern trend within the acupuncture community is the endless search for "magical" points, which require no diagnostic evaluation along with the mixing of traditional Chinese medicine with ersatz "new age" beliefs such as chakras and/or the ever nebulous idea of "energy healing." San Zhen therapy is a wonderful way for clinicians or students to establish a pathway for returning the roots of established systems of acupuncture as well as training themselves to understand the vast options inherent within simple combinations of traditional acupuncture points.

One of the most important aspects of using and learning San Zhen therapy is that it allows the practitioner to refine his/her knowledge of acupuncture points as well as fine tune their diagnostic skills. Each point selected must have a clear reason and must be supported by the pattern/symptom presentation of the patient. Another benefit for this streamlined approach is that patients who are wary of needles experience less stress which allows the treatment to work quickly and effectively. The following three-point combinations are some which I have used extensively in clinical practice with consistently positive clinical results.

Ren 17 + Ren 6 + Du 20

This is a wonderful combination for moving stagnant *qi* throughout the entire body and is extremely effective in cases of chronic depression and chronic insomnia. Ren 17 is the influential point of *qi* moving stagnant *qi* from the Heart and Lung area in the Upper *Jiao*. Ren 6 is the "sea of *qi*" and moves stagnant *qi* from the Middle and lower *Jiao* and has the ability to tonify *qi* as well. The combination of

Ren 17 with Ren 6 powerfully moves stagnant *qi* throughout the entire body and gently tonifies without causing any type of cloying.



Adding Du 20 allows the *qi* to flow up into the head area and has the ability to calm and clear the mind as well as clear pain the head region. I use this three point combination as much or more often than the "Four Gates" of LI4 and Liv3 and find that it works just as well if not better for cases of depression or insomnia. I often combine this three point combo with the three point combo of ear points: Shen Men, Point Zero and Sympathetic point to address recalcitrant cases of mental and emotional origin.

Ren 17 + Ren 6 + Sp10

This is a wonderful three point combination in cases of *qi* stagnation with concomitant Blood stasis. Sp 10, "Blood Sea", has the unique ability to move and cool the blood and works in elegant synergy with Ren 17 and Ren 6 to clear out *qi* stagnation/blood stasis with potential stagnant heat. I often use this three-point combination in cases of amenorrhea with painful cramps and also in cases of menorrhagia due to deficiency.

Ren 6 + GB 34 + Sp9

This is a wonderful combination to clear Damp Heat in the lower *jiao*. I use this combination extensively in cases of vaginal/urinary issues due to Damp Heat. It's also extremely effective in cases of Damp Heat seeping into the lower *jiao* causing knee pain or leg pain. It also has the ability to clear *qi* stagnation via the combination of Ren 6 and GB 34.

ST 23 + Ren 12 + Liv3

I use this three-point combination in cases of food allergies, leaky gut or other gastric issues with signs of depression, malaise or insomnia. ST23 has unique indications for psychological or emotional issues, as well as targeting the Stomach meridian and Stomach viscus particularly in concert with Ren 12. This combination is also effective in cases of "IBS" or other gastric syndromes which present with pain or aggravation during times of psychological or emotional stress. In these cases I once again use the three-point ear combo of *Shen Men*, Point Zero , Sympathetic.

Du24 + Yin Tang + Du 20

This is an excellent three-point formula for disorders related to stress, mental-emotional issues, insomnia, allergies, migraine headaches or general headaches. Results can often be seen within minutes with correct needle manipulation.

Du24 + GB 14 + Liv 3

This is an excellent three-point formula for issues related to the eyes, particularly in patterns of Depressive heat due to Liver Qi Stagnation and Liver Yang Rising patterns. I have also used this group of points in cases of insomnia and computer related eye fatigue. It can also be used in cases of acute and chronic sinusitis and allergies as the Liver meridian and Liver viscus is frequently involved in these clinical presentations. If heat signs are predominant, substitute Liv 2 for Liv 3.

In part two of this article, I will discuss each of these point combinations with case studies along with a discussion on specific needle manipulation techniques for each three-needle combination.

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