The Usages of “Dang Gui Shao Yao San” for Gynaecological disorders. Contrast the theory with reported clinical research

Author: - Dr. Edward Tsang (registered Chinese Herbalist & Acupuncturist)
Wu Zhu Metaphysician

Introduction

Dang Gui Shao Yao San (DGSYS) is a traditional formula for treating various gynaecological patterns. It has the action of nourishing liver blood, it spreads the liver qi, drains dampness and reinforces the spleen (Bensky & Barolet 1990; Fung & Cheung 2004). DGSYS not only releases pains, caused by gynaecological disorders, but also treats threatened miscarriage, abdominal pain during pregnancy, irregular menstruations and painful dysmenorrhoea (Bensky & Barolet 1990; Dharmananda 1996; Abdominal pain 2004; Min & Shelley 2005; Townsend 1995). This essay will analyse the composition and traditional applications of the formula in details. A clinical report of "New Uses of Ancient Formulas", from Bob Flaw will also be discussed to explore the contrasting theories for the formula of Dang Gui Shao Yao San.

Dang Gui Shao Yao San (DGSYS) (in Japanese : Tang Kuei & Paeonia Formula) is a traditional formula in treating gynaecological diseases and pains. It not only can treat women’s physical problems, such as menopause, irregular menstruation, habitual abortion, but also resolve gynaecological problems of edema during pregnancy and infertility, leucorrhoea and post-partum weakness (Townsend 1995).

DGSYS is a typical and major formula for treating various types of gynaecological pain. The formula is widely used for abdominal pain with urinary difficulty, weakness and numbness in the lower back and legs during women’s pregnant period or post partum, malposition or malpresentation of fetus, dysmenorrhoea and irregular menstruation (Bensky & Barolet 1990).

Fung Si Lun, professor of China Academy of Traditional Medicine remarked in Clause 5 of Jin Gui Yao Lue (金匱要略) that different types of abdominal pains during cold phlegm deficiency and stagnation of blood : “xu han dan yue xue yin”, are governed by DGSYS (Fung & Cheung 2004).
Though DGSYS has a broad application for varieties of abdominal pain and cramp, this essay concentrates in exploring threatened miscarriage, abdominal pain, irregular menstruation and dysmenorrhea.

**Composition of DGSYS** (Bensky & Barolet 1990):

- Dang Gui : 9g
- Shao Yao : 48g
- Fu Ling : 12g
- Bai Zhu : 12g
- Ze Xie : 24g
- Chuan Xiong 9g

Grind the ingredients into powder and take 3 to 6g with a little wine and warm water three times a day. The action of DGSYS is to tonify and move liver blood, assist the movement of liver qi, strengthen the spleen and resolve dampness (Bensky & Barolet 1990; Townsend 1995).

**Analyses the functions of DGSYS**

The chief herbs of the formula are dang gui, bai shao and chuan xiong. These combinations effectively harmonize the function of liver and soften the organs. Large dosages of bai shao are not only used for softening the liver and alleviating pain, but also to tonify and nourish the blood. Fu ling, bai zhu and ze xie are used in the formula as deputies. The combinations of these herbs strengthen the spleen and drain dampness. Bai shao and bai zhu are used as a combination in treating concurrent problems of liver and spleen. The warm nature of rice wine tunes up the flowing action and the dispersing of liver qi (Bensky & Barolet 1990).

**DGSYS is used for prevention of Threatened Miscarriage.**

Threatened miscarriage is generally caused by several factors. Overwork and excessive physical work, including heavy exercise, lifting, sports, which weaken the kidney yin, Trauma jumps and falls will damage the Penetrating and Directing vessels for pregnant women (Bensky & Barolet 1990). Excessive or vigorous sexual activity during pregnancy will weaken the Chong and Ren Mai (Min & Shelley 2005). Threatened miscarriage is also due to the imbalance in the mother’s system. In later stage pregnancy, weaknesses in the mother’s system or excessive fetal movement are also another factor causing miscarriage. DGSYS is the basis of most treatments aiming to avoid miscarriage. However the formula is mainly effectively used as a
daily preventive therapy. Extensive testing in the Orient shows that the formula is safe and the formula appears highly effective (Dharmananda 1996)

**DGSYS provides effective treatment for abdominal pain during pregnancy**
Etiology for the abdominal pain during pregnancy mainly reflects the Jing Luo stagnation in the lower jiao of the Ren, Du and Chong Mai. The symptom of the abdominal pain is due to deficiency of spleen and blood, which cannot generate sufficient blood to nourish the Chong Mai and relatively causes dull pain coming and going. There are also symptoms of blurred vision dizziness, and the tongue is thin and pale and the pulse is choppy or fine. The treatment principle is to nourish the blood, calms fetus and relieve pain. DGSYS is the formula that effectively treats the symptoms (Maciocia 2004; Abdominal pain 2004; Chen 1993).

During pregnancy, the mother’s blood flows down to nourish the foetus with pre-existing blood emptiness. There is not sufficient blood to nourish the channels and the uterus vessel becomes empty and obstructed and therefore dull lower abdominal pain occurs. DGSYS has the functions of nourishing blood, eliminating stagnation of blood, reinforcing the spleen for assisting the formation of blood, draining dampness and stopping pain (Maciocia 2004; Abdominal pain 2004).

**DGSYS treats irregular menstruation**
Irregular menstruation is called “Yue Jing Xian Hou Wu Ding Qi” in Chinese, which means an irregular cycle with periods that come early or late. The disease is always related to liver and kidney disharmony, as menstruation flow originates from the kidneys. When the liver-qi stagnates the kidneys also stagnate. Irregular menstruation is basically related to emotional stress, excessive work and so on (Maciocia 2004; Zuo 2000; Qian & Beer 2005).

DGSYS is an effective formula for treating irregular menstruation. The formula effectively to spread the liver qi, strengthen the spleen and nourish liver blood. (Bensky & Barolet 1990; Townsend 1995)

**DGSYS treats dysmenorrhoea**
Menstruation pain indicates that a painful period happens before, during or after menstruation. The pain generally occurs in the lower abdomen or sacral region, which sometime extends to the legs. The pain may accompany nausea, vomiting or in severe cases, there may even be fainting. The pain is also due to the liver qi stagnation and
blockage. If liver qi does not flow properly, painful menstruation occurs (Maciocia 2004; Qian & Beer 2005).

DGSYS has the action to nourish the liver blood, spread the liver qi and strengthen the spleen and drain dampness (Bensky & Barolet 1990; Townsend 1995; Fung. & Cheung 2004).

There are other applications of using DGSYS, for example, using Dan Gui Shao Yan San plus Yi Yi Ren, Bai Bian Dou and Xiang Fu to treat excessive vaginal discharge due to liver qi stagnation (Maciocia, 2004) and the results from clinical reports in Chinese Journals may be considered in further practice.

Contrast the theory with reported clinical research

Bob Flaws (2006) published his clinical report stating that treatment is predicated primarily on the patient’s personal Chinese pattern of disharmony and not primarily on their Western disease diagnosis. Flaws retrieved a famous Chinese medical saying -“Yi bing tong zhi, Tong bing yi shi”, which means that different diseases, same treatment and same disease, different treatment. As per Flaw’s clinical report, patients suffering from different disease diagnose will be treated with the same Chinese medical treatment. Conversely, patients with the same disease diagnose will have different Chinese medical treatment if their patterns are different.

Flaw subscribed to a Chinese language medical journal published in Beijing named “Xin Zhong Yi (New Chinese Medicine) in 1996 and in 1998 and one of the sections in his journal was named “Gu fang xin yong”, which means “New uses of ancient formulas”. Flaw came out with a list of the same Chinese medicinal formulas that may be used to treat opposite conditions. Flaw also pointed out that “As a teacher of Chinese medicine in the West, the single most persistent mistake I encounter is the use of Chinese treatment modalities based on Western disease diagnoses”.

One of the formulas from the list of Flaw ‘s report, pointed out the “New uses of Dang Gui Shao Yao San” to treat different diseases, such as Atrophic gastritis, Abdominal ascites due to liver cirrhosis, irritable bowel syndrome, Chronic nephritis, Headache and Facial neuritis.
The captioned research emphasises that there are contrasting clinical practices to be found on the path of studying Chinese Medicine. DGSYS is merely one of the many examples to show that the same formula can treat different diseases.

Summary

Dang Gui Shao Yao San is one of the traditional major formulas for treating gynaecological problems and pains, including abdominal pain during pregnancy, miscarriage, irregular menstruation, painful menstruation and so on. The formula nourishes the liver, reinforces the spleen, drains dampness and soothes the liver (Bensky & Barolet 1990 ; Townsend 1995). Dang Gui Shao Yao San is considered as a “New Use of Ancient formulas” (Flaw 2006).

Conclusion

Dang Gui Shao Yao San has been used effectively in treating a number of gynaecological disorders and the formula can be used to treat different diseases, if the patterns of disharmony covered by Dang Gui Shao Yao San. To further develop the application of Dang Gui Shao Yao San, clinical trails need to be conducted.

References :


