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Fire Dragon Cupping in Case Nursing Care for Xiangbi Disease (Cervical Spondylotic Radiculopathy): A Postprint

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Abstract

To analyze the efficacy of Traditional Chinese Medicine syndrome differentiation and nursing in fire dragon cupping therapy for cervical spondylosis neck pain, a male patient presenting with neck and shoulder pain accompanied by right upper limb pain for over one month was selected as the research subject. Following patient assessment, a care plan was formulated. For this case, we developed the plan utilizing the holistic concept methodology of Traditional Chinese Medicine in conjunction with fire dragon cupping therapy. The results demonstrate that applying Traditional Chinese Medicine syndrome differentiation and nursing to fire dragon cupping treatment for cervical spondylotic radiculopathy can significantly alleviate pain intensity, yielding satisfactory outcomes.

Full Text

Preamble

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Fire Dragon Cupping in the Nursing Care of a Case of Neck Bi Disease (Cervical Spondylotic Radiculopathy)

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Abstract

This study analyzed the effect of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) syndrome differentiation nursing in Fire Dragon Cupping treatment for cervical spondylosis neck pain. A 52-year-old male patient with neck and shoulder pain accompanied by right upper limb pain for over one month was selected as the research subject. After assessment, a nursing plan was formulated using the holistic concept of TCM combined with Fire Dragon Cupping therapy. The results demonstrated that applying TCM syndrome differentiation nursing to Fire Dragon Cupping treatment for cervical spondylotic radiculopathy can significantly alleviate pain intensity with ideal therapeutic outcomes.

Keywords: cervical spondylosis; neck pain; Fire Dragon Cupping; TCM syndrome differentiation nursing; nursing care

Neck bi disease, also known as cervical spondylotic radiculopathy, is the most common and frequently occurring type of cervical spondylosis. It is primarily caused by cervical intervertebral disc degeneration leading to posterior-lateral disc protrusion, formation of posterior vertebral osteophytes, uncinat joint hyperplasia (especially posterior-superior uncinat process hyperplasia), localized ossification of the posterior longitudinal ligament, and cervical instability, which compress or irritate the spinal nerve roots. The main symptoms include neck and shoulder tenderness, pain, soreness, and numbness, accompanied by limited neck and upper limb movement and sensory dysfunction [1].

1 Clinical Data

Present Illness: Patient Li, male, 52 years old, presented to our hospital' s orthopedic outpatient clinic on March 12, 2022, with neck and shoulder pain accompanied by right upper limb pain for over one month. One month prior, after exposure to wind and cold during the night, the patient awoke with neck discomfort characterized by soreness and distending pain, right shoulder region pain, and right upper limb numbness radiating to the fingertips. Neck extension was mildly limited, with exacerbation of right upper limb pain during extension. The patient reported slight relief after rest and no improvement after applying topical plasters (specific type unknown). During this period, the patient received massage therapy at another hospital, reporting temporary relief followed by recurrent episodes.

Pain Assessment: The Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) [2] was used to evaluate limb pain, with a total score of 10 points; higher scores indicate more severe pain. The patient' s scores were: neck tenderness 7 points, indicating severe pain.

Current Symptoms: Numbness in the right upper limb radiating to the right hand, no abnormalities in fine motor movements, and no lower limb gait instability.

Specialized Examination: Positive brachial plexus traction test. Cervical CT

revealed cervical degenerative changes, showing posterior protrusion of C4-C7 cervical intervertebral discs, most severe at C6-C7 with right-sided protrusion, right nerve root compression, and corresponding dural sac compression.

Diagnosis: TCM diagnosis: Neck bi disease (wind-cold bi obstruction, qi stagnation and blood stasis type); Western medicine diagnosis: Cervical spondylotic radiculopathy.

2 TCM Syndrome Differentiation Nursing

2.1 Constitution Analysis

The patient was conscious and alert, with moderate body build, reddish-yellow facial complexion, and normal gait. Voice was moderate and breathing even. The patient typically felt cold, had cool hands, sweated with exertion, occasional dizziness, no chest tightness or pain, normal appetite, regular bowel movements, poor sleep with frequent dreams, red tongue with white coating, and wiry-tight pulse. Due to prolonged desk work and overstrain injuring the sinews and vessels, wind-cold attacking the exterior exacerbated qi and blood stasis in the neck and shoulder region. The treatment principle focused on warming the meridians, unblocking collaterals, dispelling stasis, and relieving pain. For neck and shoulder pain, TCM nursing technology prioritized external treatment with Fire Dragon Cupping comprehensive moxibustion to reduce medication use.

2.2 Fire Dragon Cupping

Overview and Structural Characteristics: Fire Dragon Cupping integrates three therapeutic methods—scraping, massage, and moxibustion—into one treatment. Scraping dilates capillaries, increases sweat gland secretion, and improves microcirculation; moxibustion promotes inflammation absorption, activates blood and resolves stasis, and provides antioxidant effects; massage improves skin respiration and accelerates blood circulation. The technique combines ten manipulations: kneading, pushing, grinding, pressing, pointing, shaking, flashing, vibrating, ironing, and burning [3-5].

Efficacy and Actions: Fire Dragon Cupping has warming, unblocking, regulating, and tonifying effects. *Warming* uses fire to attack pathogenic factors, dispel cold and disperse stagnation, and promote blood circulation. *Unblocking* warms and opens meridians to improve cardiovascular and cerebrovascular function. *Regulating* balances organ qi mechanism, regulates nerve function, and warms the uterus to regulate menstruation. *Tonifying* supports healthy qi, dispels pathogenic factors, supplements and strengthens the body, and activates immune system function.

Treatment Protocol: Cup selection: Lotus small cup; Medium: Ginger essential oil; Locations and acupoints: (primarily neck, shoulder, and upper limb) Acupoints: Fengfu, Fengchi, Dazhui, Tianliao, Jianjing, Tianzong, Naoshu; Meridians: 1. Governor Vessel; 2. Bladder Meridian of Foot-Taiyang;

3. Small Intestine Meridian of Hand-Taiyang; Duration: 20-30 minutes, every other day; Manipulation: The operator holds the Fire Dragon Cup with both hands, ensuring full contact between the cup base and the operator's thenar eminence with the patient's neck and back skin. Both hands guide the cup along the neck and back skin, first using the ironing method to slowly relax muscles, then the scraping method to release fascia, followed by the plucking method to gently stretch muscles, and finally the pointing method to stimulate acupoints [6] to enhance therapeutic effects.

Rationale for Acupoint Selection: *Fengchi (GB20)*: Classical texts including *Jia Yi Jing* and *Great Compendium of Acupuncture* document Fengchi's efficacy in treating neck pain, embodying the principle "where the meridian passes, the indication lies." It belongs to the Gallbladder Meridian of Foot-Shaoyang, located in the neck depression between the sternocleidomastoid and trapezius muscles, level with Fengfu. *Dazhui (GV14)*: *Treatise on Cold Damage* records "for stiff and painful neck, puncture Dazhui." It is the intersection point of the Governor Vessel and three yang meridians of hand and foot, a crucial neck acupoint for cervical spondylosis, located in the depression below the spinous process of the seventh cervical vertebra on the posterior midline. *Jianjing (GB21)*: *Great Compendium of Acupuncture* states for "cold wind soreness and pain in the arm: Jianjing, Shousanli, Quchi, Xialian." "Jianjing treats stiff neck pain and upper limb paralysis." It belongs to the Gallbladder Meridian of Foot-Shaoyang, located at the midpoint of the line connecting the C7 spinous process and the outermost point of the acromion. *Fengfu (GV16)*: *Great Compendium of Acupuncture* records it "treats wind stroke, headache, urgent neck inability to turn, wind injury with urgent neck; Hua Tuo treated this acupoint effectively." It is the intersection point of the Governor Vessel and Yang Wei Vessel, located in the occipital region, one inch directly above the midpoint of the posterior hairline. *Tianliao (TE15)*: *Jia Yi Jing* documents it "treats shoulder and arm soreness, urgent neck, cold and fever." It belongs to the Triple Energizer Meridian of Hand-Shaoyang, located in the scapular region, in the depression at the superior angle of the scapula. *Naoshu (SI10)*: *Jia Yi Jing* records it "treats arm soreness and weakness, shoulder pain radiating to scapula, cold and fever with swelling and shin pain." It belongs to the Small Intestine Meridian of Hand-Taiyang, located in the scapular region, in the depression at the inferior border of the scapula directly above the posterior axillary crease. *Tianzong (SI11)*: Both *Jia Yi Jing* and *Bronze Man Acupuncture Chart* consider "shoulder pain," "scapular pain," and "pain in the posterior lateral aspect of the elbow" treatable with Tianzong. It is an important acupoint on the Taiyang meridian pathway where cervical spondylosis patients typically show positive reactions, located in the depression at the junction of the upper 1/3 and lower 2/3 on the line connecting the midpoint of the scapular spine and the inferior angle of the scapula. *Small Intestine Meridian of Hand-Taiyang*: This meridian has 19 acupoints, 8 on the posterior aspect of the upper limb and 11 on the shoulder, neck, and face, beginning at Shaoze and ending at Tinggong. It is also called the "Shoulder Vessel." The patient's right upper limb numbness radiating to

the fingertips follows the pathway of this meridian, making meridian dredging on the affected upper limb feasible after neck meridian unblocking.

Treatment Outcomes: On the first day, after 30 minutes of treatment, the patient reported significant relief of neck and shoulder pain, increased comfort, and improved sleep that night. On the second day, Fire Dragon Cupping was applied along the Small Intestine Meridian of Hand-Taiyang from Jianjing to Shaoze for 30 minutes, with the patient reporting relaxed upper limb muscles and reduced numbness. After one week of treatment (four sessions total), the patient' s pain score decreased from 7 to 2, reducing from severe to mild pain, with improvement in neck and shoulder pain and reduction in right upper limb pain and numbness.

3.1 Daily Living Care

Correct poor postures during daily life, work, and rest, maintaining natural upright sitting position with straight back. Perform brief cervical exercises after 1-2 hours of work, such as looking up at the sky, gazing at the moon, and neck-arm resistance exercises, 2-3 times daily, 2-3 sets each time, 10-15 repetitions per movement [7] to improve neck muscle fatigue. Pillow height should equal or slightly exceed the height of one' s fist when compressed, approximately 10-15 cm, with supine position being optimal. Avoid high pillows during sleep. Maintain neck warmth and avoid wind, cold, and dampness invasion, as these pathogenic factors can trigger disease onset. Encourage conscious adherence to exercises, helping patients recognize the importance of functional exercise while emphasizing gradual progression to avoid injury from excessive force.

3.2 Dietary Care

The patient should consume wind-dispelling, cold-dispersing, and warming foods such as soybeans, mutton, and Sichuan pepper. Recommended dietary therapy: eel soup, angelica and red date mutton stew. Avoid cold foods, raw fruits, cold drinks, and consume more warm tea beverages.

3.3 Emotional Care

Due to neck, shoulder, and arm numbness with sensory and motor dysfunction affecting quality of life, patients easily develop anxiety and pessimism. Strengthen psychological care by patiently explaining disease etiology, current status, progression consequences, and achievable effects of current interventions to eliminate tension and fear. Provide successful treatment case examples to build confidence, relieve mental burden, and encourage treatment compliance.

Cervical spondylosis belongs to the bone bi category in TCM, primarily caused by cold-dampness invasion, chronic strain, or qi-blood deficiency failing to nourish tendons and bones. TCM treatment follows the principle of "blood first, qi primary, phlegm and stasis treated together" [8]. According to TCM' s root-treatment principle, methods to relax tendons, activate blood,

anti-inflammation, reduce swelling, relieve spasm, and alleviate pain address the branch, while improving cervical physiological curvature treats the root, yielding significant efficacy through simultaneous branch and root treatment. Cervical spondylosis is a common clinical disease currently managed primarily through conservative treatment. Future research should investigate more TCM therapies to provide new options for cervical spondylosis treatment.

Throughout this nursing process, holistic care addressing lifestyle, exercise, diet, and emotions helped patients further understand their disease. Combined with Fire Dragon Cupping treatment, this approach significantly improved neck and shoulder pain, arm numbness, and other symptoms. Utilizing nursing knowledge systems and thinking to solve nursing problems demonstrated the value of nursing professionals.

Fire Dragon Cupping perfectly combines three traditional TCM therapies—moxibustion, massage, and scraping—to achieve synergistic effects greater than the sum of its parts ($1+1+1>3$) [9], yielding twice the result with half the effort. The manipulation combines firmness and gentleness, supplementing and draining simultaneously. Compared with traditional scraping and massage, Fire Dragon Cupping's scraping technique does not leave excessive marks, and with moxibustion's action, patients essentially feel no pain. After treatment, patients recover quickly with healthy cell regeneration [10], experiencing excellent comfort and deep temperature penetration. Fire Dragon Cupping is convenient to operate, easy to learn, and highly effective. Based on experience from this case, I have successfully relieved neck and shoulder pain for over 50 patients using this technique in clinical practice. This technology merits widespread promotion.

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