

Acupuncture treatment for pain after tooth extraction

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Abstract: Acupuncture has limited application in dentistry, but it can relieve dental symptoms very quickly. The acupuncture plays important role in the dental science, because it can be effective in treating many dental conditions like facial pain, TMJ dysfunction, dry mouth problems, post-operative pain, dental anxiety and etc. Acupuncture is also used for treating pain after tooth extraction. There are various causes of toothache. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), toothache is caused by a stagnation of energy in the body. In this article are shown three patients, two males, both 66 years old and one 30 years old female, with dental pain after molar extraction. Acupuncture treatments were made in clinic for TCM and acupuncture in Skopje, Macedonia. The patients needed no more than 5 treatments to achieve the positive results and relieve the pain.

Key words: treatment, toothache, traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture

I. Introduction

There are many causes of toothache, including: tooth decay (such as cavities), dental injury, abscesses, gingivitis and teething. However, the pain that comes after tooth extraction is the worst. Extraction of molar teeth is often associated with temporomandibular joint syndrome, pain, nerve injury, alignment problems associated with chewing ability or jaw joint function, difficulty swallowing, limited mouth opening and swelling. The pain can be treated with analgesic drugs, but drugs have only a short term effect. Many studies have shown that acupuncture can be helpful for pain relief after tooth extraction. It represents a non-toxic method of pain relief. [1-5] According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), temporomandibular joint syndrome may be caused by: external injury, external contraction of wind evils, internal damage by the seven affects, habitual bodily vacuity and worms. The pain occurs when there is lack of free flow of Qi and blood. It may be caused by external wind cold or wind heat evils invasion, which invade the exterior and lodge in the channels and vessels of the face. Pain in the face occurs very often when wind evils are combined with spleen vacuity. When the spleen is vacuous and weak, the spleen and lung Qi may not move and transport fluids. There is inter-relationships between the liver, stomach, and heart. Emotional stress and upset may cause depressive heat or fire which may manifest in the heart and/or stomach. Because the heart and stomach channels are connected with the mouth, the heat may cause burning facial pain. But most cases of TMJ have their root at liver-spleen disharmony. [6] In addition, the stomach and intestinal meridians have direct course to the upper and lower gums, so when there is stagnation of Qi (vital energy) in this meridians, it creates heat toxins that cause swelling of the gums. [3] Acupuncture can remove stagnation in order to prevent further damage.

II. Material And Methods

In this article are shown three patients, two males and one female, who suffered from a toothache. First patient (female) is 30 years old with temporomandibular disorder, after molar tooth extraction. The second patient (male) 66 years old, has pulled out the two lower molars and he felt pain in the area of the lower jaw for two years. Third patient is 66 years old (male) with toothache after extraction of molar tooth, with swelling of the cheeks and stronger pain attacks in the evening. All patients were treated with acupuncture. Acupuncture treatments were done in a clinic for TCM and acupuncture in Skopje, indoor on the room temperature, by a doctor specialist in acupuncture. The female patient was treated with normal acupuncture and the two male patients were treated with fire needle acupuncture on the Ashi points i.e. trigger points found on palpation on the most painful place around the TMJ. Treatments that were done with normal (cold) needle acupuncture were with duration of 35-40 minutes and the treatments made with fire needle acupuncture were with duration of 3-5 minutes.

II. Results

In first case, the patient (female) is 30 years old, in good general condition, with temporomandibular disorder, after molar tooth extraction. She has pulled out only one molar tooth. She felt pain on the right side of her face, had difficulty swallowing, limited mouth opening. The patient needed two treatments to improve the condition. The treatments were made on 10th and 17th February 2017. The patient was treated with normal needles on the acupuncture point St7, in the area of the temporomandibular joint. In this case acupuncture was

successfully used for temporomandibular disorder after tooth extraction. The second patient (male) 66 years old, has pulled out the two lower molars and he felt pain in the area of the lower jaw for two years. He was unable to sleep because of pain. The patient is in good general condition, with high blood pressure, which he regulates it with tablets. He needed only one treatment to improve the condition. The treatment was done with fire needle on trigger Ashi point, on the right side of the lower jaw. Third patient is 66 years old (male) with toothache after extraction of molar tooth, with swelling of the cheeks and stronger pain attacks in the evening. The patient has diabetes, cervical spondylosis and normal blood pressure. He needed 6 treatments to solve the problem. The patient was doing the treatments from 03.12.2016 to 07.02.2017. All treatments were done with fire needle on trigger Ashi point - the most painful place on the lower jaw we found with palpation.

III. Discussion

Acupuncture is a technique, which involves insertion of needles at acupuncture points with aiming to cure diseases. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), toothache is caused by a stagnation of Qi (vital energy) in the stomach and intestinal meridians. This pathways have direct course to the upper and lower gums. [3] On the other hand temporomandibular joint syndrome may be caused by: external injury, external contraction of wind evils, internal damage by the seven affects, habitual bodily vacuity, and worms. The aim of acupuncture is to remove wind and scatter cold, wash away phlegm and free the flow of the network vessels. [6] Stimulation of certain acupuncture points can relieve the obstruction of meridians and collaterals, recover the equilibrium of Yin and Yang and physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of the individual, to improve energy flow and energy quality promoting the free flow of Qi and thereby eliminating pain. Acupuncture possesses pain-reducing and anti-inflammatory effects. It helps to flush toxins, boost immunity, has ability to elevate the pain threshold, release neurotransmitters in local regions, and modulate pathways in the central nervous system thus yielding analgesic effect. [7-9] Fire needle technique is used at least 2,700 years back in the history of Chinese traditional medicine. It is a local needling therapy, where one sharp needle is heated on fire to be really hot (until it becomes red hot), and the needle is inserted very quickly into the treated area on the body. The needle has to be really hot (more hot – less painful). The needle is made of tungsten steel.

St7 (Xiaguan) – this point is located on the stomach meridian, on the face, anterior to the ear, in a depression between the zygomatic arch and the mandibular notch, with mouth closed. Xiaguan is Meeting Point of the Stomach and Gallbladder Channels and this point is the key local point of the temporomandibular joint region. This point can be used for TMJ, toothache, pain of the teeth of the lower jaw, swelling and pain of the gums (of the lower jaw), pain of the cheek and face, swelling of the cheek, yawning, deviation of the mouth and eye, visual dizziness, hearing issues, deafness, tinnitus, ear pain, ear discharge/infections. The acupuncturist can find this point with palpation. First he feels the condylar head. The acupoint is located in a depression between the zygomatic arch and the mandibular notch. After the patient opens his mouth. Then the condylar head will bounce up from the depression. When patient again closed his mouth, the depression can again be felt. When patient's mouth is open, the acupuncturist inserts the needle perpendicularly to the skin surface. It brings relief of masseter muscle and lateral pterygoid muscle. [5][10]

IV. Conclusion

Acupuncture as part of Traditional Chinese Medicine is used to promote and uphold good oral health and it can give quick and effective pain relief for many dental conditions.

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