

## Cold moxibustion

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### Abstract

**Background:** Cold moxibustion is a treatment method of Traditional Chinese Medicine, having a secular history and until now it is widely used in the Chinese People's Republic. Treatment consists in applying for a short time herbal powder on the acupuncture points. Cold moxibustion has good effect in the treatment and prophylaxis of respiratory, digestive, osteoarticular, gynecological and nervous system diseases. Thus, ancient Chinese doctors believed that external application of herbs powder can treat internal organs. There are over 200 prescriptions of cold moxibustion.

**Conclusions:** Clinical research demonstrates that cold moxibustion is an effective method, very simple to apply and inexpensive. Therefore, it would be beneficial to be included in the complex treatment of the respiratory, digestive, osteoarticular, gynecological and nervous system diseases. Cold moxibustion is an ancient method, easy to apply, inexpensive and can be widely used. This method is an ecological one and does not have side effects, is easily bearable by patients. Numerous clinical experiences made in the Chinese People's Republic demonstrate high efficiency of this method.

**Key words:** cold moxibustion, traditional Chinese medicine.

### Introduction

Cold moxibustion is a treatment method of Traditional Chinese Medicine. It consists in applying for a certain period of time, a mix of Chinese herbs powder in areas of acupuncture points. Because sometimes there can occur hyperemia and blisters as in the moxa therapy, the method was called Cold moxibustion. Traditional method is used in summer heat, known in China as "San fu tie", period, but can be used at any time of the year. In translation "San" means three signifying the start, middle and end of hot summer, "fu" indicates the heat, "tian" means a day. "San fu tie" period has three sub-periods, with total duration of 30-40 days and begins after the summer solstice. This period is calculated each year by the lunar calendar using a complicated formula, so the period will be different every year. Thus in 2017 "San futien" will debut with "ChuFu", sub-period which will last 10 days (12.07-21.07), then follows "Zhongfu" sub-period lasting 20 days (22.07-10.08) and the last is "MoFu", sub-period which lasts 10 days (11.08-20.08).

### History

For the first time this method has been mentioned in the work "Requirements for 52 diseases", where the application of white mustard seed *Semen Sinapsis* on Baihui point (GV20) for snakebites is recommended. In another ancient work "Shengnong's Classic of Materia Medica" it is mentioned that the application of *Lytta vesicatoria* is effective in skin ulcers and gangrene. A famous ancient physician Sun Si Miao in his work "Thousand Golden Recipes" wrote that *Herba Ecliptae* powder applied on Jianshi point (PC5) heals you. In the ancient famous work "Taiping Holy Preions for Universal Relief" it is mentioned that for the treatment of back and legs, *Radix Aconite* is applied on

umbilical region. Thus ancient Chinese doctors believed that external application of herbs powder can treat internal organs. There are over 200 prescriptions of cold moxibustion.

### Mechanism of action

Cold moxibustion treatment is based on the concept called: "winter diseases treated in summer". In summer Yang energy is on body surface, pores are open and this facilitates faster absorption of herbs powders and stimulates the points. Through the phytotherapeutic action of the plant and acupoint stimulation can be obtained strength Yang energy, which disperses internal cold, invigorates kidneys and spleen, meridians drainage, regulating the flow of Qi and blood, thus the immune system strengthens, receiving a treatment and prophylactic effect.

1. Local Action. Cold moxibustion has a vasodilatation effect, so it improves microcirculation and tissue adjacent power, also it decreases edema.

2. Action on the nervous system. By stimulating peripheral nerve fibers or their inhibition the regulation of internal organs function occurs.

3. Action on the immune system. By regulating cellular and humoral immunity the treatment effect is obtained.

Modern research shows that cold moxibustion acting through the sympathetic and parasympathetic system can change the contraction and relaxation of vascular smooth muscle and bronchial smooth muscle and secretory gland, reducing state of hypersensitivity of the airways and improve body non-specific immune function [1]. Cold moxibustion increases macrophage phagocytosis, increases the rate of transformation of lymphocytes and plasma cortisol, reducing the number of eosinophils in the blood [2]. By stimulating the acupuncture points and through the

absorption, metabolism of plants occurs nervous, endocrine and immune system regulation, significantly increases biological potency in vivo, generating impact on the lungs physical, chemical receptors and decrease IgE serum levels, by stimulating cerebral cortex occurs autonomic regulation manifested by improving the body's immune response and increasing resistance to disease [3].

### Contemporary research

#### Action on leukocytes

Sun Di Li [4] demonstrated that cold moxibustion with different concentration of *Lytle vesicatoria* applied on mice with chemotherapy on points Dazhui (GV14), Shenshu (BL23), Zusanli (ST36), produces bone marrow hyperplasia and rapid growth of leukocytes numbers in comparison to the control group. Also Sun Di Li [5] clinical research demonstrated that cold moxibustion with *Lytle vesicatoria* tincture can stimulate macrophage colony growth factor (GM-CSF) in the peritoneum, thus stimulating the growth and differentiation of hematopoietic stem cells and increasing the leukocytes number in peripheral blood. Obtained laboratory data can be used for developing combined treatment methods of leukemia and tumors. The author has used cold moxibustion for treatment of glioma with satisfactory results.

#### Action on T lymphocyte

Zheng Qian [6] investigated Cold Moxibustion action on the CD4 / CD8 report on rats with asthma. The study found the reduction of CD4 / CD8 ratio in the material taken from the trachea and spleen of rats with allergic asthma. Yong Rongxue [7] used cold moxibustion on patients with chemotherapy and there has been found decreased white blood cell counts and increased lymphocyte proliferation.

### Clinical use

#### Respiratory disease

Zhang Qingzhen and others [8] applied cold moxibustion method to the 1500 asthmatic patients, treatment efficiency is 99.07%. The author used the following plants: *Semen sinapis*, *Euphorbia Kansai T. N. Liou ex T. P. Wang*, *Asarum sieboldii Miq*, *Ephedra sinica Stapf*, *Corydalis turtschaninovii Bess. f. yahusuo Y. H. Chou et C. C. Hsu* etc. The used points: Feishu (BL13), Xinshu (BL15), Pishu (BL20), Shenshu (BL23), Wei Zhong (BL40), Dingchuangxue (EX-B1). Liu Guocheng, Han Genyan [9] used Cold Moxibustion method to treat 145 patients with asthma, treatment efficiency – 86.9%. The authors used the plants: *Semen sinapis*30g, *Euphorbia Kansai TN Liou Ho SB* 15g, *Asarum sieboldii Miq*-15g, *Corydalis turtschaninovii Bess. f. yahusuo H. Y. Chou et C. C. Hsu*15g, *Magnolia biondii Pamp*15g. Plants powder mix with ginger juice are applied on points Feishu (BL13), Fenmen (BL12), Gaoyushu (UB26) for about 2 hours. Du Xu [10] used powder *Semen sinapis*, *Ephedra sinica Stapf*, *Asarum sieboldii Miq*, *TN Liou ex Euphorbia Kansai Ho SB*, *Rizoma Coryda-*

*lis*, *Rizoma Peniliae* for the treatment of 30 patients with chronic bronchitis, treatment efficacy was 93.3%.

#### Nervous system diseases, Rheumatism and other osteoarticular diseases

Cold moxibustion is widely used to treat rheumatism and arthritis because by stimulating specific points, meridians and collaterals can be drained, regulating the flow of Qi and blood; also analgesic effect can be achieved [11].

Zhao Xinkui [12] investigated the action of Cold moxibustion on values of IgA, IgG, IgM, CRP, ESR in patients with rheumatism. After the treatment an improving of the indices listed was obtained. Treatment efficiency in research group was 92.5%. The scientist selected such plants as: *Asarum sieboldii Miq plants*, *Semen sinapis*, *Herba Spiraniskiae tuberosa*, *Euphorbia Kansai TN Liou Ho SB ex*, *Fructus Evodiae*, *Moschus*, *Flos Dturae*, which were applied on points Dazhi (DU14), Fenglong (ST40), Quchi (LI11), Yinling Quan (SP9) at the beginning, middle and end of the “San futien” period for 4-6 hours.

Zhang Jin [13] used cold moxibustion in 54 cases of scapulohumeral arthritis. Selected plants: *Semen sinapis*, *Asarum sieboldii Miq*, *Radix aconite*, *Ramulus Cinnamomi*, *Cortex Cinnamomi*, *Radix Angelicae Dahuricae*, *Rhizoma Kaempferiae*, mixed with ginger juice were applied on Tai Yuan (LU9) point. As a result of the treatment there were registered: healing – 35 cases, improvement – 14 cases. Total efficiency – 90.17%.

Zhang Feng [14] used a combination of cold moxibustion and acupuncture for the treatment of 24 patients with Facial Neuropathy. Selected plants were: *Fructus Crotonis*, *Mylabris*, *Curcuma Longa*. In 20 cases very good results were obtained, in 4 cases – good result, treatment total efficiency – 100%. As a result of local treatment adverse effects such as burns or scars have not been found.

Xie Honglian [15] and others used applications of *Semen sinapis*, *Asarum sieboldii Miq*, *Euphorbia Kansai T. N. S. Liou ex B. Ho*, *Rizoma Corydalis* for treatment of 60 cases of Cervical Spondilopati. The applications were used in the first 10 days and lasted 10 days of summer hot period on points Dazhui (Du14), Tianzhong (SI11), Jianyu (LI15), Quchi (LI11), Waiguan (SJ5), Hegu (LI4). Total efficiency – 91.67%.

#### Diseases of the digestive system

Cold moxibustion is used in the treatment of gastritis caused by *Helicobacter pylori*, stomach pain, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis and gastric ptosis. Yuan Jianrong [16] and others used the Cold moxibustion method to treat chronic stomach pain. There were selected the following plants: *Semen sinapis* – 40g, *Asarum sieboldii Miq* – 40g, *Euphorbia Kansai TN Liou Ho SB ex* – 10g, *Rizoma Corydalis* – 10g. In the early hot period the selected points were Guanyuan (RN4), Zhongwan (RN12), Tianshu (ST25), Zusanli (ST36), in the mid hot period the selected points were Xiawan (RN10), Shangwan (RN13),

WeiShu (BL21), Shangjuxu (ST37) during the hot terminal period there were selected Neiguan (FP6), Gongsun (SP4), Pishu (BL20), and in the last two days of the terminal period points of hot early or middle period were again selected. Treatment efficiency – 87.95%.

HeYueshuo [17] used the powder of *Fructus Evodiae*, *Semen Myristicae*, *Semen sinapis*, *Rhizoma Corydalis*, *Cortex Cinnamomi* mixed with ginger juice applied on Tianshu (ST25), Guanyuan (RN4), Zusanli (ST36), Pishu (BL20), Shengque (RN8) points to treat diarrhea. Total efficiency was 97.8%.

Shi Xiaowen [18] used “Baijiezan” powder made from *Semen sinapis*, *Asarum sieboldii* Miq, *Euphorbia kansui* T. N. Liou ex S. B. Ho, *Rhizoma Corydalis*, applied on the points Guanyuan (RN4), Tianshu (ST25), Qihai (RN6) to treat colitis. Treatment efficacy was 93.7%.

### Gynecological diseases

Yang Haizheng [19] for the treatment of 38 patients with Dysmenorrhea, combined administration of “Zi Ni Nuān Qu Yū Tang” decoct with cold moxibustion. Used plants: *Semen sinapis*, *Asarum sieboldii* Miq, *Herba Ephedrae* and *Coridalis yanhusuo* applied on Guan Yuan (RN4), Qihai (RN6), Sanyinjiao (SP6), Ciliao (BL32) points. The efficiency was 94.7%.

Zhang Yuayuan [20] used external applications of garlic and Mirabilite to treat 115 patients with acute mastitis. Healing – 89cases, improvement – 26 cases. Total efficiency was 100%.

### Pediatric diseases

Wei Zhizhong and others [21] used cold moxibustion for the treatment of 30 children with enuresis. Selected plants were: *Rhus chinensis* Mill, *Alpinia oxyphylla* Miq., *Tenodera sinensis*, *Rose laevigata*, *Polygala tenuifolia* Willd, applied on Yongquan points (KI1), Shenque (CV8). As a result of the treatment healing was found in 12 cases, improvement – 18 cases, total efficiency – 100%.

Mo Shan [22] and others used cold moxibustion for the treatment of 120 children with Tourette syndrome. Used plants were: *Semen sinapis* and *Asarum sieboldii* Miq. Cold moxibustion was applied on Feishu (BL13), Pishu (BL20), Shenshu (BL23) and Tiantu (LU3) points. The treatment was used for children older than 5 years old, in hot initial and hot final period. After 1 month of treatment the frequency of tics was significantly decreased ( $p < 0.01$ ).

### Conclusions

Cold moxibustion is an ancient method, easy to apply, inexpensive widely used for the treatment and prophylaxis of respiratory, digestive, nervous, gynecological and rheu-

matological diseases. This method is ecological one and does not have side effects, is easily bearable by patients. Numerous clinical experiences made in the Chinese People's Republic demonstrate high efficiency of this method.

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