



Center for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine, P.A.

HEADACHES

Cluster and migraine headaches affect millions of individuals. According to Chinese medicine, often this imbalance is rooted in the Liver and Gall Bladder systems. The following case study may provide some insight into acupuncture and Chinese medicine in the treatment of this and other imbalances.

Susan is a 28-year-old female who has been experiencing cluster headaches for the past 11 years. Her headaches begin every year in late July and generally last until the end of autumn. During this period she experiences headaches multiple times per day, usually worse in the late evening and early morning. Her headaches are stabbing and sharp and can be rated a 10 on a scale of 1 to 10. This past year she was having headaches all the way through the winter months. She first called the office in January while in the middle of an episode and was able to be seen that same day.

During the evaluation she revealed that she had been in numerous motor vehicle accidents in which she sustained injuries to her head, including concussions. She was quick to mention that all the western doctors that she informed of this fact discounted it. They assured her that her head trauma years before was not related to her present condition. Later in the interview she mentioned that her major car accident occurred in the month of July. She believed strongly that her accidents had something to do with her headaches and was relieved when our diagnosis concurred.

Susan presented as an aggressive young woman with a "shouting" voice. Her pain was located on the left side of her head and was fixed in location on the Gall Bladder channel just posterior to her temple. She also revealed that she experienced neck and occipital pain, both also on the Gall Bladder meridian. Susan had very few other reported symptoms, except for a history of genital herpes, acne on her face and upper back, and a lack of appetite. She was diagnosed primarily with local Qi and Blood stagnation in the Gall Bladder channel. After the insertion of the acupuncture needles the pain had disappeared instantly.

By the next visit (3 days later) Susan was still pain-free. Susan had no headaches for the next 3 weeks (with acupuncture treatments two times per week). She was also prescribed an herbal formula during this time.

At the four-week mark, Susan was experiencing a great deal of stress in her job and well as having some relationship trouble with her boyfriend. While her headaches did not come back, she was reporting feeling some twinges in her head and was fearful of their return. On two occasions she felt a mild aching at the same location while reading at night in her bed. Upon talking with Susan about her stress, a great deal of information was revealed that had not been prior. She admitted to having a great deal of anger over the past few years that she could not explain. She also admitted to being unable to cry for the past 10 years. She was not able to express any emotion other than anger. She recounted that her childhood was very painful and that she used to cry every day as a child. When she reached 18 years of age, she decided not to cry anymore and completely suppressed that emotion. Since then, anger has been her predominant theme. She also mentioned that the problems with her boyfriend revolved around her not being able to be emotionally intimate. And on the physical level, she was unable to relax during sexual activity, thus preventing her from achieving an orgasm.

The treatment strategy was expanded to include harmonizing her Liver and calming her spirit. After insertion of the needles she reported feeling as if she needed to cry (but she suppressed it in the office). Later the next day she had an emotional catharsis and cried for over an hour. Afterwards, she reported

feeling great and much relieved. The following visit she divulged some more information that added another wrinkle into her health history. The reason for her painful childhood was an emotionally unstable mother who would traumatize her and her siblings as children. The stories that were recounted were horrifying. She has not spoken to her mother in many years. Treatments were modified to include herbs and acupuncture points which strengthened the (mother) earth element. Since then, Susan has not experienced even a twinge of a headache, and has been able to gain greater intimacy and emotional expression.

The original thoughts on Susan were mostly Gall Bladder channel stagnation due to trauma. Over the course of the first 4 weeks and with Susan deciding to no longer withhold vital pieces of her past and intimate life, her situation was understood more completely. While the trauma most definitely was real and caused the location of the stagnation to be localized to the left temple, the catalyst for her problem was much deeper. Her weak earth element (the inability to be nourished by her own mother as a child) allowed the Liver and Gall Bladder to become excessive. And the suppression of her tender feelings (refusing to cry) coupled with the weakness in her Lungs, left the Liver and Gall Bladder unchecked. Thus, the Liver and Gall Bladder became dominant in her expressions (anger, shouting voice, aggressive behavior, inability to relax/flow, genital herpes, cluster headaches). The most natural place for any physical symptom of stagnation to appear is the place where there has been prior injury/trauma and compromised circulation ---- the Gall Bladder channel of her head. By also strengthening the Spleen and Stomach and Lung systems, we were able to achieve lasting results.