

Acupuncture treatment in Bell's palsy

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Abstract: Facial nerve is the 7th cranial nerve. The palsy of this nerve is often idiopathic and known as Bells' Palsy, but not always this term is synonymous with idiopathic facial nerve palsy. There are two facial nerves one of each side of the face. Injury to the facial nerve can cause a social, psychological and physical defect. From the perspective of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), facial nerve palsy is caused by wind in the facial channels. The Chinese name is Zhong Feng which means Wind Attack. According to TCM the facial channels are full with normal healthy bodily substance. If the channels are not full, there is some deficiency of Blood, Qi or Yin and the wind may get into the channels. In this study are included 9 patients, 5 female and 4 male, on age from 8 to 47, all diagnosed with Bell's palsy. All patients were treated with acupuncture in a clinic for TCM and acupuncture in Skopje, Macedonia by a doctor specialist in acupuncture. Despite the acupuncture treatments, patients were prescribed tablets by their doctors. With individual number of treatments, we succeeded to help the patients to heal naturally, regain the normal function of the facial muscles, restore the nerve function and improve the Qi and Blood circulation in the facial area.

Key words – acupuncture, treatment, traditional Chinese medicine, bell's palsy

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I. Introduction

Facial nerve is the 7th cranial nerve which controls the muscles on the one side of the face. The palsy of this nerve is often idiopathic and known as Bells' Palsy, but not always this term is synonymous with idiopathic facial nerve palsy. There are two facial nerves one of each side of the face This nerve together with the hearing nerve travel in and around the structures of the middle ear. Bell's palsy is a neurological disorder which affects only one side of the face. The condition can cause social, psychological and physical defects. The facial nerve damage results with facial muscles weakness, paralysis which also has an impact on person's taste on the affected side, tearing or saliva, dryness of the mouth, inability to cry and etc. People with this neurological disorder can experience difficulties with multiple facial functions like closing their eyes, eating, smiling and their speech may become slurred. Facial nerve palsy can affect anyone, but mostly affected are the diabetic, young adults, pregnant women and the elderly. [1-4] Some researchers say that the condition is connected with Herpes Simplex 1 virus, others stick to the theories that facial nerve and surrounding tissue are affected by the edema and the increased body fluids in the body or hyper coagulability or elevated blood pressure or suppressed immunity. [5] [6]

From the perspective of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), facial nerve palsy is caused by wind in the facial channels. The Chinese name is Zhong Feng which means Wind Attack. Wind as main pattern tends to enter the body and attack the sinews and vessels in the area of the face. In this case the cold wind primarily stays in the facial Yang-Ming channel, because these channels are most abundant in the Qi and Blood. According to TCM the facial channels are full with normal healthy bodily substance. If the channels are not full, there is some deficiency of Blood, Qi or Yin and the wind may get into the channels. [7] Acupuncture, as part of the 5000 years old TCM is used very often in the treatment of neurological disorders such a Bell's palsy. Acupuncture is not treating only the symptoms, but it focuses more on the underlying cause, on the root of the disease so it can effectively treat it and completely remove it. The main purpose of the treatment is to expel the exterior pathogen factor like Wind, eliminate the Wind and the toxins from the body, promote fresh Qi and blood and unblock the pathways so the energy can flow freely. [8]

II. Material and methods

In this study are included 9 patients, 5 female and 4 male, on age from 8 to 47, all diagnosed with Bell's palsy. All patients were treated with acupuncture in a clinic for TCM and acupuncture in Skopje, Macedonia by a doctor specialist in acupuncture. During the treatments were used fine sterile disposable needles for one use size 0.25 × 25mm made by Wuijiuang City Medical & Health Material Co., LTD. Treatments were made indoor, with duration of 35-40 minutes. Despite the acupuncture treatments, patients were prescribed

tablets by their doctors. Tablets were prescribed before coming to the clinic and before starting with acupuncture. With taking only the tablets there was no visible improvement in the patients, therefore they decided to do the acupuncture treatment. All patients were treated on the same acupuncture points located on the meridians of Liver, Dumai, Large Intestine and Stomach and Ashi (trigger) points. Trigger points were found with palpation on the face on the most painful places.

III. Results and discussion

All treated patients recovered with certain number of treatment, 5 patients needed less than 10 treatment and 4 patients made between 10-15 treatments. Average number of treatments is 7. There were more female than male patients, but this number is of no importance. Patients were divided in 4 groups, shown on table 1. Most of the patients were on age from 20 to 40.

Table.1. Age groups and number of patients in each group

Age group	Number of patients
<20	2
20-30	3
30-40	3
>40	1

Continuously with the acupuncture treatment, the patients were taking tablets prescribed by their general doctors. Tablets that were prescribed are: Neurobion, Vitamin B1, B6, B12, Decortin, Amoksiklav, Ampicilin, Aciclovir, Tocopherol, Pronison and Oспен. Tablets were given as combination and were not taken singly. In table 2 is shown the number of patients taking the tablets. Most patients were prescribed Aciclovir, B vitamins and Neurobion.

Table 2. Prescribed tablets and number of patients to which were prescribed

Tablets prescribed	Number of patients
Aciclovir	5
B vitamins (B1, B6, B12)	4
Neurobion	4
Amoksiklav	3
Decortin	3
Ampicilin	1
Tocopherol	1
Pronison	1
Oспен	1

According to the time of occurrence of the disease, some patients have it for more than 5 years, for month, for a few days, during or post pregnancy. Reasons for the occurrence of the disease were: trauma, accident, head injury, pregnancy and etc. Interesting case is a 34 years old female patient, who has been diagnosed with Bell's palsy for 5 years and her condition got better during the pregnancy. By Bell's palsy are usually affected women who are pregnant or it appears after pregnancy. By this condition 2 to 4 times are more affected the pregnant women than the non-pregnant. [9] Until delivery the patient has done 10 treatments.

Chinese medicine consider Bell's palsy to be induced by the sudden contraction of external wind, which obstructs the facial channels and collaterals. [10] Bell's palsy arises if the immune system is reduced or the body's defences are weak and the normal flow of blood and Qi energy in the face area are disrupted. [4] All the acupuncture points in the treatment are chosen to re-establish the smooth flow and invigorate the energy. The initial treatment goal according to TCM is to expel the Wind and improve the blood circulation in the face, nourish muscles and tendons. [11] In acute cases of Bell's palsy is recommended to start as early as possible with the treatment. [12] Chinese medicine treats facial palsy for over a millennia with over 90% effectiveness and in our practice we always have positive results in various of cases. [4] [8]

IV. Conclusion

With individual number of treatments, we succeeded to help the patients to heal naturally, regain the normal function of the facial muscles, restore the nerve function and improve the Qi and Blood circulation in the facial area.

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