

## **Wei Syndrome**

### **痿 证**

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Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/drcantreat/home>

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**Venue:** A 6 , Room 3, Holborn Union Building , Archway Campus, Middlesex University

‘*Wei*’ 痿 in Chinese means flaccidity. In TCM ‘*Wei Syndrome*’ **refers the syndrome marked by muscular flaccidity or atrophy of the limbs with motor impairment.** Clinically, *Wei* syndrome may manifest as just weakness of the limbs at the beginning, and then eventually leading to muscular flaccidity and atrophy of the limbs.

In Western medicine, *Wei Syndrome* covers many acute and chronic diseases such as acute inflammation of the spinal cord - (meningitis 脑膜炎 or encephalitis 脑炎), spinal cord trauma, muscular atrophy due to polio, multiple sclerosis, muscular atrophy due to tumours in the CNS, etc.

Though there is no certain curing therapy for most types of *Wei* syndrome today in both Western medicine and TCM, I still introduce basic theory and some experience in treating the symptoms of *Wei Syndrome* with acupuncture and herbal medicine.

Dear students, perhaps you will be the one to discover a new therapy for our patients with *Wei* syndrome in near future.

### **Aetiology and Pathology**

According to TCM theory, *Wei Syndrome* can be caused by either external or internal factors.

1) **Heat in the lung:** *Wei* syndrome was first described in The Chapter 44 *Wei Syndrome* in Plain Questions, a part of Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Internal Medicine (475-221BC). It says ‘when the lung is invaded by a heat pathogen, exhausting body fluids, the lobes of the lung become atrophied - a

dry *Wei* condition , when the heat lingers chronically, paralysis of extremities results.’ That is either external pathogenic heat invades the lung or excessive internal heat accumulates in the lung. Both can damage the lung-*yin* and the body fluids, resulting in malnutrition of muscles and tendons, which may develop into muscular flaccidity and even atrophy of the limbs; so a *Wei* syndrome takes place.

2)**Dampness or heat in the body:** the Chapter 44 *Wei* Syndrome in Plain Questions of Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Internal Medicine also states that ‘if one person is exposed to damp pathogen over a period of time, the muscles will be invaded by dampness. This condition causes local numbness, muscle flaccidity or *Wei* syndrome. According to the *Xia Jing* (Canon of Xia Dynasty), *Wei* condition is always caused by exposure to environmental dampness.’ From the above and my clinical experience, we can understand that *Wei* syndrome can be caused by external pathogenic dampness or accompanied with heat by invading the body, which can damage the meridians and the body fluids, so the muscles and tendons can not be nourished properly.

However, it could be also caused by internal pathogenic dampness and heat accumulated in the body because of excessive intake of greasy or hot foods, leading to stagnation of *qi* and blood in the meridians, so there is not enough body fluids, *qi* and blood to supply the muscles and tendons. Eventually this condition may develop into muscular flaccidity or atrophy of limbs, and as result, *Wei* syndrome occurs.

3)**Deficiency of the liver and kidney:** TCM believes that the liver stores blood , and the kidney stores life essence, the blood and essence supply and nourish all the tissues including muscles and tendons. Prolonged illness or indulgent sexual activities can cause the loss of blood and essence thus resulting in deficiency and inability to nourish the tendons, muscles, bones and meridians, therefore *Wei* syndrome may occur. According to Chapter 44 *Wei* Syndrome in Plain Questions of Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Internal Medicine, ‘*Wei* syndrome marked by paralysis of the ligament is caused by a liver disorder, it is the result of over indulgence in sex and depletion of the kidney-essence.’

4) **Deficiency of *qi* and blood:** in most TCM textbooks, the deficiency of *qi* and blood is not listed as a common factor to cause *Wei* Syndrome, but from my experience it is a very important factor and also a very common clinical

pattern of *Wei* Syndrome, some chronic cases in particular. It generally results from deficiency of the spleen and stomach or improper diet, which causes the deficiency of *qi* and blood, leading to malnutrition of the muscles and tendons leading to *Wei* syndrome.

**5)Trauma & Injury:** Both can directly cause damage of tissues including muscles, tendons and bones as well as meridians ,resulting in blood stasis and *qi* stagnation. As a result, muscles and tendons are not nourished properly, the meridians are not functioning normally, marked by numbness and inability, therefore *Wei* syndrome comes into being.

### **Differential Diagnosis**

*Wei* syndrome can be classified as 5 patterns clinically:

- 1) **Heat in the lung:** it may manifest as fever, coughing with yellow sputum, irritability, dryness in the throat, thirst, dry stool and scanty urination at beginning, then gradually developing into muscular flaccidity of the lower limbs with motor impairment, red tongue with yellow fur and rapid and slippery pulse.
- 2) **Damp-heat in the body:** muscular flaccidity of the legs with warmth and a sensation of general heaviness of the whole body or accompanied by oedema , a full feeling in the chest and gastric region, yellow and dark urination with burning sensation, red tongue with yellow and greasy fur, soft and rapid pulse.
- 3) **Deficiency of the liver and the kidney:** this type of *Wei* syndrome is mostly seen in old people. Typically symptoms are muscular flaccidity of the limbs come on slowly, a mild to moderate amount of motor weakness in the legs, accompanied with soreness and weakness of the loins and knees, dizziness and blurring of vision, impotence or seminal emission, a light red tongue with less fur, a thready and rapid pulse.
- 4) **Deficiency of *qi* and blood:** muscular flaccidity or atrophy of the limbs with motor impairment, marked by lassitude , listlessness, short breath, weak voice, sweating on slight exertion, dizziness, palpitation, pale tongue with white thin fur, and weak pulse.

5) **Trauma & Injury:** the patient had a history of trauma or injury, manifested as flaccidity or paralysis of the limbs, or accompanied with incontinence of urination and defecation, dark purplish tongue with white thin fur, and astringent pulse.

### **Diagnosis in Western Medicine**

Clinically there are 2 diseases which are often diagnosed and treated as a *Wei* Syndrome in TCM.

**1) Polio:** The full name of polio is poliomyelitis, or called infantile paralysis, it is a viral paralytic disease. The virus – poliovirus (PV) enters the body orally, infecting the intestinal lining, which may proceed to the blood stream and into the central nervous system causing weakness and even paralysis. It has declined rapidly since the introduction of a polio vaccine in 1995. According to research, approximately 4%-8% of polio infections consist of a minor, non-specific illness without clinical or laboratory evidence of central nervous system invasion. Clinically, there might be 3 syndromes observed with the above form of polio infection, manifested as upper respiratory tract infection symptoms such as sore throat and fever; or gastrointestinal disturbances such as nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, constipation or rarely diarrhoea; or symptoms of influenza-like illness. Polio can be diagnosed by laboratory tests including viral isolation, serology and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), etc.

**2) Multiple sclerosis (MS):** It is a chronic neurological disease that involves the central nervous system specially the brain, spinal cord and optic nerves, causing the problems with muscle control and strength, vision, balance, sensation and mental functions. The most common early symptoms include muscle symptoms such as muscle weakness, leg dragging, stiffness, a tendency to drop things, heaviness of feeling, clumsiness or lack of coordination; and visual symptoms such as blurred, foggy or hazy vision, eyeball pain, blindness or double vision. Additionally, there are sensory symptoms such as tingling, or ‘pins and needles’ numbness, a band like tightness around the trunk or limbs, etc. Further diagnostic tests are also needed such as an MRI Scan, a lumbar puncture (spinal tap), evoked potentials, etc. to confirm the diagnosis.

### **TCM Treatments:**

## 1. Acupuncture

According to the Chapter 44 *Wei* Syndrome in Plain Questions of Yellow Emperor's Canon of Internal Medicine, the main acupoints for the treatment of *Wei* syndrome should be selected from the Yangming Meridian, it says that 'When treating *Wei* syndrome, doctor should target Yangming Meridian, as Yangming is the source of nourishing for all the *zang-fu* internal viscera, only with this nourishment can make the tendons, bones, and joints be lubricated.' However, I think that it is just one of TCM therapies, we should select more acupoints from other meridians according to TCM diagnosis.

### Basic Acupoints:

#### Upper limbs:

Erjian (LI 2)  
Sanjian (LI 3)  
Hegu (LI 4)  
Waiguan (SJ 5)  
Shousanli (LI 10)  
Quchi (LI 11)  
Binao (LI 14)  
Janyu (LI 15)

#### Low limbs:

Taichong (Liv 3)  
Jiexi (S 41)  
Fenglong (S 40)  
Zusanli (S 36)  
Yanglingquan (G 34)  
Xuehai (Sp 10)  
Biguan (S 31)  
Futu (S 32)

### Supplementary Acupoints:

For heat in the lung, add,  
Chize (L 5)  
Kongzui (L 6)  
Yuji (L 10)  
Shaoshang (L 11)

**For damp-heat in the body, add,**

Sanyinjiao (Sp 6)  
Yinlingquan (Sp 9)  
Pishu (B 20)  
Sanjiaoshu (B 22)

**For deficiency of the liver and kidney, add ,**

Xingjian (Liv 2)  
Ligou (Liv 5)  
Taixi (K 3)  
Fuliu (K 7)

**For deficiency of *qi* and blood, add ,**

Xinshu (B15)  
Feishu (B 13)  
Pishu (B 20)  
Weishu (B 21)

**For trauma damage, add ,**

Huatuojiaji (Extra 15) points at the corresponding level of spinal injuries.

**For incontinence of urination, add,**

Zhongji (Ren 3)  
Guanyuan (Ren 4)  
Qihai (Ren 6)  
Shenshu (B 23)  
Pangguangshu (B 28)

**For incontinence of defecation, add ,**

Tianshu(S 25)  
Dachangshu (B 25)  
Ciliao (B 32)  
Baihui (Du 20)

Method: select 10-20 acupoints for each treatment according to the location of muscular flaccidity.

For heat in the lung and damp-heat in the body, the reducing method is advisable;

For deficiency of the liver and kidney, the reinforcing method should be applied;

For trauma & injury, strong stimulation should be used.

Our experience shows that for all the above types, during acupuncture treatments, we may also connect the needles with electronic acupuncture treatment instrument such as BMZ-I Nerve and Muscle Stimulator which is more effective for some muscular flaccidity conditions.

## **2. Herbal Therapies**

### **1) Heat in the lung**

Therapeutic principle: clearing away heat from the lung to restore functions of the limbs with muscular flaccidity.

Formula: Modified ***Qing Zao Jiu Fei Tang***/Decoction for Clearing Dryness to Save the Lung/清燥救肺汤

Source: Yi Men Fa Lu /Principle and Prohibition for Medical Profession 医门法律, by Dr Yu Chang, in 1658.

Ingredients:

Dongsangye (Folium Mori) 冬桑叶 10g

Shigao (Gypsum Fibrosum (decocted first) 石膏 15g

Renshen (Radix Ginseng) 人参 3g

Maimendong (Radix ophiopogonis) 麦门冬 10g

Xingren (Semen Pruni Armeniaca) 杏仁 9g

Mudanpi (Cortex Moutan Radicis) 牡丹皮 9g

Xuanshen (Radix Scrophulariae) 玄参 10g

Zhimu (Rhizoma Anemarrhenae) 知母 9g

Lianqiao (Fructus Forsythiae) 连翘 10g

Gualou (Fructus Trichosanthis) 瓜蒌 15g

Huangqi (Radix Astragali) 黄芪 20g

Directions: All the above herbs should first be soaked in water in a pot for 2 hours or more and then place the pot over a high flame until boiling. Then simmer over a low flame for 25-30 minutes. Finally, drain the herbal liquid for oral use. Drink half in the morning and the remainder in the evening.

## 2) **Damp heat in the body**

Therapeutic principle: clear away dampness and heat to restore functions of the limbs.

Formula: Modified *Er Miao San*/ Powder of Two Wonderful Ingredients 二妙散

Source: Dan Xi Xin Fa/ Danxi's Experiential Therapy 丹溪心法, by Dr Zhu Danxi, in 1481.

Ingredients:

Yiyiren (Semen Coicis) 薏苡仁 20g

**Cangzhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis) 苍术 10g**

**Huangbai (Cortex Phellodendri) 黄柏 10g**

Niuxi (Radix Achyranthis Bidentatae) 牛膝 12g

Fuling (Poria) 茯苓 10g

Bixie (Rhizoma Dioscoreae Hypoglaucae) 萆解 12g

Chishao (Radix Paeoniae Rubra) 石膏 10g

Gancao (Radix Glycyrrhizae) 甘草 9g

Huangqi (Radix Astragali) 黄芪 20g

Directions: All the above herbs should first be soaked in water in a pot for 2 hours or more and then place the pot over a high flame until boiling. Then simmer over a low flame for 25-30 minutes. Finally, drain the herbal liquid for oral use. Drink half in the morning and the remainder in the evening.

## 3) **Deficiency of the liver and the kidney**

Therapeutic principle: nourishing the liver and the kidney to restore movements of limbs with flaccidity.

Formula: Modified *Hu Qian Wan*/ Deliquescent Tiger Pill 虎潜丸



Source: Dan Xi Xin Fa /Danxi's Experiential Therapy 丹溪心法, by Dr Zhu Danxi, in 1481.

Ingredients:

Huangbai (Cortex Phellodendri) 黄柏 9g  
Chaozhimu (Rhizoma Anemarrhenae Praeparatae) 炒知母 9g  
Shudihuang (Rhizoma Rehmaniae Praeparatae) 熟地黄 15g  
Chenpi (Pericarpium Citri reticulatae) 陈皮 9g  
Baishaoyao (Radix Paeoniae Alba) 白芍药 15g  
Suoyang (Herba Cynomorii) 锁阳 10g  
Ganjiang (Rhizoma Zingiberis) 干姜 9g  
Huangqi (Radix Astragali) 黄芪 20g  
Danggui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) 当归 10g  
Niuxi (Radix Achyranthis Bidentatae) 牛膝 9g

Directions: All the above herbs should first be soaked in water in a pot for 2 hours or more and then place the pot over a high flame until boiling. Then simmer over a low flame for 25-30 minutes. Finally, drain the herbal liquid for oral use. Drink half in the morning and the remainder in the evening.

#### 4) Deficiency of *qi* and blood

Therapeutic principle: invigorating *qi* and nourishing blood to restore the movements of limbs.

Formula: *Shi Quan Da Bu Tang*/Pill of Ten Powerful Tonics 十全大补丸

Source: *Taiping Hui-Min He Ji Jiu Fang*, by Tai Ping Hui-Min Ju (Public Welfare Pharmacy Bureau in Chinese Song Dynasty in AD 1200.

Ingredients:

Danggui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) 当归 10g  
Chuanxiong (Rhizoma Ligustici Chuanxiong) 川芎 9g  
Baishaoyao (Radix Paeoniae Alba) 白芍药 10g  
Shudihuang (Rhizoma Rehmaniae Praeparatae) 熟地黄 15g  
Renshen (Radix Ginseng) 人参 6g  
Baizhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae) 白术 10g

Fuling (Poria) 茯苓 9g  
Zhigancao (Radix Glycyrrhizae Praeparatae) 炙甘草 9g  
Huangqi (Radix Astragali) 黄芪 20g  
Rougui (Cortex Cinnamomi) 肉桂 9g  
Shengjiang (Rhizoma Zingiberis Recens) 生姜 2 slices  
Dazao (Fructus Ziziphi Jujubae) 大枣 3 pieces

Directions: All the above herbs should first be soaked in water in a pot for 2 hours or more and then place the pot over a high flame until boiling. Then simmer over a low flame for 25-30 minutes. Finally, drain the herbal liquid for oral use. Drink half in the morning and the remainder in the evening.

Or take its pills, 8 pills each time, 3 times a day, continue to take it for 3-6 months.

### 5) Trauma & Injury

Therapeutic principle: removing blood stasis to restore the movements of the limbs.

Formula: Modified *Bu Yang Huan Wu Tang*/ Decoction for Invigorating Yang and Recuperation 补阳还五汤

Source: Yi Lin Gai Cuo/ Corrections on of Errors among Physicians 医林改错, by Dr Wang Qingren, in 1830.

Ingredients:

Shenghuangqi (Radix Astragali seu Hedysari) 生黄芪 20g  
Danggui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) 当归 10g  
Chishaoyao (Radix Paeoniae Rubra) 赤芍药 10g  
Chuanxiong (Rhizoma Ligustici Chuanxiong) 川芎 10g  
Honghua (Flos Carthami) 红花 9g  
Taoren (Semen Persicae) 桃仁 9g  
Xuduan (Radix Dipsaci) 续断 10g  
Duzhong (Cortex Eucommiae) 杜仲 10g  
Niuxi (Radix Achyranthis Bidentatae) 牛膝 10g

Directions: All the above herbs should first be soaked in water in a pot for 2 hours or more and then place the pot over a high flame until boiling. Then simmer over a low flame for 25-30 minutes. Finally, drain the herbal liquid for oral use. Drink half in the morning and the remainder in the evening.

## **Life Style and Dietary Advice**

### **1. Regulating emotions**

Patients with *Wei* (flaccidity) syndrome are susceptible to depressive emotions such as pessimism, melancholia and impetuosity due to their disabilities. For adults, it is advisable for them to select proper psychological health preservation methods, such as calligraphy, painting, playing the guitar, etc; for children and juveniles, we should encourage them to play with toys, which encourages the rehabilitation of the limbs with muscular flaccidity as well as regulates emotions.

### **2. Health exercises**

Some health exercises are helpful for patients with *Wei* syndromes, for those with flaccidity of upper limbs, we may suggest writing Chinese or Japanese characters, playing catch or knitting etc; for those with flaccidity of lower limbs, learning to ride a tricycle or other leg exercises.

### **3. Dietary therapy**

For patients with flaccidity marked by deficiency of the liver and the kidney, the following recipe may help: Dry 300 g of cattle bone marrow over a fire and grind it into powder. Parch 300 g of black sesame until they smell fragrant and grind it into a powder. Then add a little sugar to the powder (to taste) and mix and stir the types of powder evenly, take 9g, 2 times a day. For patients with flaccidity manifested as deficiency of *qi* and blood, we can ask them to eat Hen Stewed with Danggui (*Radix Angelicae Sinensis*). For patients with flaccidity of blood stasis type, they could try Peach Kernel Gruel, etc.

## **References:**

1. The Medical Classic of the Yellow Emperor (English edition), Translated by Dr Ming Zhu, published by Foreign Language Press, in 2001, 2005.

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3. A Practical English-Chinese Library of TCM, by Prof Enqin Zhang (Engin CAN), published by Shanghai TCM University Press in April 1990; March, 1999.
4. For more information, please visit Website:  
<http://sites.google.com/site/drcantreat/home>