

Chinese Medicine mitigates the pain, swelling and weakness of multiple sclerosis

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September 2008

Sara, a 41-year-old MS patient, was treated with a combination of pharmaceuticals, herbs, supplements, Chinese Massotherapy and Chi Kung over a 20-week period from January to May 2008. Results included a significant reduction of Sara's pain and swelling, a dramatic lessening of RLS (Restless Leg Syndrome) and an increase in her leg stability, overall balance, stamina, energy, and social confidence.

Background

Sara has suffered with MS for over five years. In this time she has had two major attacks, and was hospitalized for eight days in May 2004. Sara's doctors had doubts as to whether or not she would be able to walk again. She walked with the help of a cane for the first six months of her recovery.

In August 2004 she was prescribed a drug called Rebiff, which she took by injection 3 times per week. Debilitating side effects such as heavy flu-like muscular pain accompanied each injection. Weekly acupuncture treatments helped mitigate secondary effects of the injections.

October 2004 brought another MS crisis. Her physician prescribed a series of 10 cortisone injections, but these didn't offer much relief either.

In October 2006 her physician took her off Rebiff and started her on Copaxone. She noticed a great difference with this new medicine, and she experienced significant relief from symptoms without secondary effects.

In January 2007 Sara came in for her first session of Chinese Massotherapy. She reported good results, but only returned for more treatments the following January. In June 2007 she went through another crisis. She suffered swollen legs, had problems with her balance, and found it difficult to walk. She went back to see her physician, but he was unable to do anything for her except encourage her to continue taking her medication.

In January 2008 Sara started receiving Chinese Massotherapy treatments every 2 weeks. She also started training in Chi Kung meditation and breathing with movement and holding postures. This case study will address the time period from January to May 2008.

Table of treatments January to May 2008

Treatment	January	February	March	April	May
Chinese Massotherapy	4 sessions	2 sessions	2 sessions	2 sessions	5 sessions
Chi Kung meditation and exercise classes	4 sessions	2 sessions	2 sessions	2 sessions	5 sessions
Chi Kung self practice am/pm	18 days, 12 nights	28 days, 27 nights	30 days, 26 nights	25 days, 16 nights	13 days, 20 nights
Treadmill practice (30 min or more)	1	0	2	1	0
Biking (30 min or more)	6	4	7	1	0
Dancing (30 min or more)	3	2	2	1	2
Myelin MS Supplement (Advanced Orthomolecular Research)	1 month supply from January to February 2008				
Vitamin B Complex	1 tablet each night before bed	1 tablet each night before bed	1 tablet each night before bed	1 tablet each night before bed	1 tablet each night before bed
Copaxone	20 mg 1 injection/day	20 mg 1 injection/day	20 mg 1 Injection/day	20 mg 1 Injection/day	20 mg 1 injection/day
Mirapex	.5-1 mg/night	.5-1 mg/night	.5-1 mg/night	.5-1 mg/night	.5-1 mg/night
Rivotril	.5-1 mg/night	.5-1 mg/night	.5-1 mg/night	.5-1 mg/night	.5-1 mg/night
Muscle Relax by Mauve					7.5 ml or 1.5 teaspoon at night. Sara has had excellent results with a great reduction in RLS at night and she continues to take this product.

How Western medicine views MS

“Multiple sclerosis is a chronic, potentially debilitating disease that affects the central nervous system, which is made up of the brain and spinal cord. MS is widely believed to be an autoimmune disease, a condition in which the immune system attacks components of the body as if they're foreign.

In multiple sclerosis, the body mistakenly directs antibodies and white blood cells against proteins in the myelin sheath, a fatty substance that insulates nerve fibers in your brain and spinal cord. This results in inflammation and injury to the sheath and ultimately to the nerves that it surrounds. The result may be multiple areas of scarring (sclerosis). Eventually, this damage can slow or block the nerve signals that control muscle coordination, strength, sensation and vision.

Multiple sclerosis affects an estimated 300,000 people in the United States and probably more than 1 million people around the world. It affects twice as many women as men. Most people experience their first signs or symptoms between ages 20 and 40.

Multiple sclerosis is unpredictable and varies in severity. In some people, multiple sclerosis is a mild illness. But it can lead to permanent disability in others. Treatments can modify the course of the disease and relieve symptoms.

Signs and symptoms of multiple sclerosis vary widely, depending on the location of affected nerve fibers. Multiple sclerosis symptoms may include:

- Numbness or weakness in one or more limbs, which typically occurs on one side of your body at a time or the bottom half of your body
- Partial or complete loss of vision, usually in one eye at a time, often with pain during eye movement
- Double vision or blurring of vision
- Tingling or pain in parts of your body
- Electric-shock sensations that occur with certain head movements
- Tremor, lack of coordination or unsteady gait
- Fatigue
- Dizziness

In some cases, people with multiple sclerosis may also develop muscle stiffness or spasticity, slurred speech, paralysis, or problems with bladder, bowel or sexual function. Mental changes, such as forgetfulness or difficulties with concentration, also may occur.”¹

How Chinese medicine views MS

The Chinese believe that MS “most likely originates with a combination of spiritual and emotional factors, and that the trigger for the disease may be an experience of a feverish illness, usually an infectious disease. The weakening of and the loss of control over the musculature may come about because the critical

energizing and regulating functions of the internal organs have become disturbed due to the loss of spiritual focus, perhaps because of a frightful experience which has scattered one's soul from its resting place. The triggering disease consumes vital fluid essences that are essential to nourishing the body and providing a relaxing medium for the spirit. Without spiritual relaxation, there is ongoing agitation, and destruction of bodily harmony.”²

Therefore a crisis of any kind such as the loss of a loved one can cause damage to internal organs. Shock can destroy a person psychologically, emotionally and physically.

According to an article written by Dr. Ted Cibik, inflammation is at the root of multiple sclerosis. Cibik says that inflammation is part of a “reflexive reaction of protection whereby the communication process intrinsic to the body/brain becomes systematically caught in an incessant cycle of aggravation.”³

In the same article, Cibik cites recent findings at the Emory School of Medicine, which show that mast cells normally found in the respiratory tract and the skin may be releasing histamine into the central nervous system, thereby damaging the myelin sheath.

In terms of Chinese medicine, Cibik says that MS is liver yang and kidney yin deficiency combined with spleen chi deficiency. The underlying causes of the deficiencies include overwork, worry, stress, excessive grieving and sadness, and consumption of greasy foods and alcohol.

Cibik also identifies one of the many possible causes of MS as being excessive anger and frustration. This raises yang chi toward the brain and bakes “the sea of marrow” (spinal cord/brain) to produce fissures or lesions. He advises lowering the yang energy and raising the yin energy. This is achieved through the practice of Chi Kung.³

Chinese Massotherapy

Sara reported that she suffered with insomnia, fatigue, lower back pain, leg tremors, and problems with balance and instability in the left leg due to a problem with the left knee.

Several studies have shown that MS patients benefit from weekly or bi-weekly massage therapy. In one study “twenty-four adults with multiple sclerosis were randomly assigned to a standard medical treatment control group or a massage therapy group that received 45-minute massages twice a week for 5 weeks. The massage group had lower anxiety and less depressed mood immediately following the massage sessions and, by the end of the study, they had improved self-esteem, better body image and image of disease progression, and enhanced social functional status.”⁴

In China, research has found that acupuncture combined with massage is of great benefit to those suffering with insomnia.⁵ A recent study of 129 patients suffering with lower back pain published in the British Medical Journal found that “acupressure conferred an 89% reduction in significant disability compared with physical therapy.”⁶

Sara experienced problems with her legs shaking at night. This problem is known as Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS) and it is common in people suffering with MS. In treating RLS and other conditions, Chinese Massotherapy incorporates acupressure points which are also used in acupuncture. Sara received treatments specific to RLS focusing on the spleen, kidneys, gallbladder, liver and bladder. Research in China shows that acupuncture used with moxibustion has been successful in treating RLS. In one study 41 out of 49 patients recovered completely with this treatment.⁷

Acupoints used in treating Sara

Yin	Yang
Lu (Lungs) 1, 2	LI (Large Intestine) 4, 15
Sp (Spleen) 6, 3, 10, 11	St (Stomach) 36, 41
Ki (Kidney) 1, 3	BL (Bladder) 57, 62, 40, 54 and other bladder shu points
Li (Liver) 3	GB (Gallbladder) 30, 31, 34, 41
Extra Points EX-LE2, EX-LE4, EX-LE5 (eyes of the knees)	

Note: The Spleen/Stomach points are particularly useful in treating MS because the spleen governs the muscles and flesh which are affected by MS.

Chinese Massotherapy results

Sara reported that her back felt better after her massage treatments, and that she felt more relaxed and more limber. She also reported that she slept better for a few nights following each massage. Acupoints used on her knees helped improve her overall stability as well.

Chi Kung

Sara also began training in Chi Kung in January. She was taught meditation exercises designed to build up, circulate and cultivate chi. She was taught Chi Kung stances and weight shifting exercises. A pilot study conducted in Wales found that movement with mindfulness resulted in improvement for patients with MS over 22 symptoms.⁸

Sara’s legs became stronger and her confidence grew with the practice of weight shifting and stance exercises. Her cardio and stamina also improved. Her experience has been confirmed in research. In a study testing balance control, flexibility and cardio respiratory fitness published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, participants who practiced Chi Kung fared better than their sedentary counterparts. “Compared with the sedentary group, the TCC group had significantly

better scores in resting heart rate, three minute step test heart rate, modified sit and reach, total body rotation test on both right and left side ($p < 0.01$), and both right and left leg standing with eyes closed ($p < 0.05$). According to the American Fitness Standards, the TCC group attained the 90th percentile rank for sit and reach and total body rotation test, right and left.”⁹

In a 10-year study done in Korea on Chi Kung, the 768 participants reported improvements in wound healing (84%), inflammation (67%), physical health (67%), pain reduction (43%), psychological health (40%), fatigue reduction (22%), and insomnia reduction (9%).¹⁰

Chi Kung results

Sara experienced a dramatic lessening of RLS with her morning and evening Chi Kung practise. When her Chi Kung practise lapsed her RLS would return.

Vitamin B Complex

Sara has been taking a B complex vitamin every night before bed for a long time. She has been doing this to raise her energy and folic acid levels. Small studies have shown the intake of folic acid (vitamin B6) can help with RLS.

Copaxone

Copaxone is a prescription medicine commonly used in MS treatment. In clinical studies, people who took the medication experienced fewer MS relapses and had fewer lesions after two years. The injections are given subcutaneously (just under the skin) once a day. Potential side effects of Copaxone include weakness, joint pain, and reaction at the injection site.¹¹

Mirapex

Mirapex has some of the same effects as a chemical called dopamine, which occurs naturally in the body. Low levels of dopamine in the brain are associated with Parkinson's disease. Mirapex is used to treat symptoms of Parkinson's disease, such as stiffness, tremors, muscle spasms, and poor muscle control. Mirapex is also used to treat RLS.¹²

Rivotril

Rivotril is also known as Clonazepam. This medication belongs to the class of medications called benzodiazepines. In general, benzodiazepines are used as a sedative or to decrease seizures or anxiety. Rivotril is used to treat seizure disorders. It helps by slowing the activity of the nerves in the brain and central nervous system.¹³

Muscle Relax by Mauve

Sara began taking Muscle Relax by Mauve at the end of May 2008 and reported excellent results. This product is a liquid formula made of herbs which are anti-spasmodics, muscle relaxants, and anti-inflammatories. Mauve is a Montreal based company which makes a variety of health products based on herbal recipes.¹⁴

Plant / Ingredient	Standardization	Dry plant qty per 7.5 ml
Boswellia	Boswellic Acid 5%	500 mg (gum)
Yuzu	Limonoids 0.2%	500 mg (seeds)
Malic acid	N/A	300 mg
Kudzu	Isoflavones 8%	300 mg (roots)
Hop	Flavonoids 1%	200 mg (cones)
Officinal Peony	Paeoniflorin 4%	200 mg (roots)
Magnesium	Chelated with amino acids	75 mg
Coleus	Forskolin 0.3%	50 mg (roots)

Results

Sara has reported that Chinese Massotherapy has helped her to relax, de-stress and increase her well-being through releasing trapped energy and improving blood circulation. Chi Kung training has helped her to strengthen her legs, reduce her pain and swelling and improve her overall balance, energy and stamina. The Chi Kung she practices has also helped to strengthen her kidney energy (chi) which is vital to warding off illness.

The yuan or ancestral chi gets depleted with MS and this is replenished through Chi Kung practice. Through balancing the kidney chi and through doing the breathing exercises the lungs and large intestine are reinforced and digestion improves. Chinese medical research indicates that a spleen deficiency is part of the problem of MS. Through balancing the digestive process the stomach/spleen and liver/gallbladder become rebalanced. With the liver balanced the yang energy descends instead of ascending. As Dr. Cibik indicates the yang energy needs to come down and the yin energy needs to rise. Chi Kung and Chinese Massotherapy together help accomplish this correction of energy balance.

Sara's health and social confidence improvements have been rapid. We are encouraged by her progress and we will continue to work closely with her.

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