

Blistering Moxibustion in pain treatment and Bi syndrome

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Forwards

The first time I experienced the enchanting power of Moxibustion was around fourteen years ago in my first real acupuncture treatment.

I remember laying on the treatment table, thin needles placed in different areas of my body and small cones of Japanese Moxa next to them. As my therapist lit the Moxa cones one after the other, nice smell filled the room and slight warmth infused my body.

It was so nourishing that I waited every week to come back.

I believe my current fascination with Moxibustion had also to do with this experience years ago.

There is something ancient in harnessing the power of fire for healing. Fire is purifying and wild, and if used in respect and proficiency, can be an amazing 'stand alone' tool in the clinic.

I do not share the standard belief in today's TCM thinking, that Moxibustion is to be used in Cold diseases while to be avoided in Heat pathologies.

In fact, in Japan there is a comprehensive and complete studies for those who wish to work with Moxa as their main tool and become Moxibustionists.

Even though still not widespread enough in the west, I believe that in the future there will be more and more practitioners that will use Moxibustion as their core tool.

This work is my attempt to give a taste of the possibility to utilise Moxibustion for the treatment of pain and Bi syndrome.

I also try to combine the knowledge of two of my big influences, the Japanese Moxibustion Master Isaburo Fukaya, that his treatment philosophy and practice I studied with his lineage holder Felip Caudet, and the classical Chinese medicine knowledge brought by the Daoist priest and Master Jeffrey Yuen.

From my point of view, the combined knowledge and approach of both Masters can be very effective and worth the inquiry.

I hope that this work will ignite further interest in Moxibustion as a powerful healing source.

PART ONE: BLISTERING MOXA AND PAIN TREATMENT THEORY

The Sinew Channels

Whether in massage, physiotherapy, or Ashi Acupuncture, the focus on muscles, tendons, and fascia is fundamental to pain treatment. Since in classical Chinese medicine sinew channels are composed of muscle groups, tendons, and connective tissues, their role in pain management is significant. Chapter 13 of the *Ling Shu* explores the sinew channels in detail, describing their pathways and the pathologies that emerge when they are disturbed.

The sinew channels govern the maintenance of the body's physical integrity, stability, posture and movement. When these are compromised due to injury or illness, the channels can create compensatory mechanisms to ensure survival and continued function. However, this process alters the natural flow of Qi, leading to the formation of excess and deficiency points in the body, what is known as Ashi points.

If the body is not able to restore balance due to deeper deficiency, there is a risk of chronicity and further depletion of resources in order to maintain the compensation.

Another aspect of the sinew channel is the intimate connection to our body's defence energy, the *Ling Shu* chapter 52 states: "Those Floating Qi that do not move along the conduits, they are the guard Qi. The essence Qi that move in the conduits, they are the camp Qi"¹.

The Wei Qi flows outside the vessels, in the space between the skin and flesh, making the sinew channels the primary realm of Wei Qi. This connection is evident in one of the sinew channels' key functions: serving as the body's first defensive layer against the outside world, injury and pathogenic factors.

As we treat the sinews for pain, we mobilise Wei Qi to expel pathogenic factors and encourage healing in an injured areas.

This connection will be crucial to the understanding why moxibustion can be such a wonderful treatment for pain as we go further.

In fact, this class of "secondary" channels, even though not discussed extensively today like the "primary" channels, are comprehensive and can be used solely as channels to treat many imbalances and not exclusively for pain.

The Chinese term "Jing Jin" is actually translated as channel sinew rather than the

¹ Unschuld "Huang Di Nei Jing Ling Shu" p227

common translation as sinew channel², indicating the belonging and affect on and to specific channel, rather than simply a channel of muscles and tendons. By this simple change of semantics we can already understand their interconnections with wider net and their potential influence on the whole system.

Ting Well Points

The Ting Well points is the only actual point attributed to the sinew channels, Ashi points on the other hand are manifesting only in the presence of pathology and therefore in that regard the Ting points are the only points on the sinew channels that exist with or without pathology.

The fact that the Ting Well point is the only actual point connecting to the sinew makes it an important point that its qualities need to be understood.

The Ting points are the representation of the external in the “primary” meridians, they are the most distal and external of all the other points, indicating exactly their ability to effect the external terrain hence the sinews.

They are represented by two elements- wood and metal. The liver is attributed to the wood element and the lung to metal. Both organs have tight connections and influence on the sinew channels, as the liver responsible for the sinews, their elasticity, and their ability to contract and relax, and the lung is responsible for the distribution of Wei Qi to the surface.

The Ting point are exit points for pathogenic factors, allowing the pathogens lodged in the sinew to go out, making this point an important exit if the pain is caused by blocked pathogenic factors in the sinews.

and the Ting points is said to be able to open the entire meridian as it holds the most dynamic energy of all the other points.

In that regards, the Ting Well points are extremely beneficial to the sinew channel treatments.

Pain is a disturbance in the flow of Qi

When we look at the treatment of the sinew channels and their Pathology in relation to pain, the prism we observe through is of Qi stagnation.

This point of view is strengthen by the fact that the Ashi points, which are the main manifestation of imbalance of the sinew channels and their main focus of treatment, are

² Robert Aspell “the practice of Tai Na: principles, diagnostics and working with the Sinew Channels” p116-117

in fact points where the Qi collects and stagnate, creating pain as a result.

The root of stagnation can be varied, from the patient's diet, lifestyle, emotional stability, constitution, physical trauma, climatic factors etc. but whatever the root cause is, imbalance starts when those factors disturb the flow of Qi and are able to create stagnation.

In this regard, we can understand that maybe the main tool of diagnostic when it comes to pain management is palpating the channels looking where exactly the Qi stagnates, creating those Ashi points, and by releasing those points we are able to restore the natural flow and bring relief.

The creation of Ashi points by the body is an intelligent and complex mechanism and not to be seen as mere coincidence. even though it seems obvious that stagnation will result in the area of the trauma of example, as the sinew channels are interconnected and overlapping each other, stagnation can be created along different channels as a result of the body's attempt to compensate on impairment in other parts of the body.

Stagnant points are also red lights that can indicate which meridian is taking part in certain imbalance.

In the case of genital pain, even though there are few channels passing through the area and few organs that can be responsible for genital dysfunction, as we palpate the channels it can indicate us through Ashi points in which channel and organ the problem actually lies (The way to assess which organ is impaired will be discussed in the part on B syndrome).

Physical trauma, trapped pathogen and the hot needle

The Ling Shu chapter 13 also describes the treatment to be performed in order to cure sinew channels impairment and pain: "To achieve a cure, an aggressive piercing with a hot needle is to be repeated until an effect can be seen"³.

The hot needle technique is unique to the treatment of the sinews. Not widely performed today for mostly comfort reasons to the patient and practitioner, the technique holds fundamental understanding in regards to the nature of pain and the sinews.

Classically we can observe pain in two ways: the first is pain caused by physical trauma to the body structure and tissue either by abrupt hit or by slow gradual strain, and the second is pathogenic factors blocking the channels.

To that there is the need to add the secondary development of blood stasis and phlegm which are the continuation of stagnation of Qi and bodily fluids through the reasons above.

³ Unschuld "Huang Di Nei Jing Ling Shu" p228

It is important to note that pathogenic factors are not only external but can be developed internally through the complexion of lifestyle and emotions.

The hot needle technique is unique in the way it aims to address this sinew channel challenge.

The classical approach described is inserting a hot needle into the supposedly Ashi points “aggressively” and withdraw it quickly until an effect can be seen.

Apart from the mechanical release of the tight area with the needle, the hot nature of the needle and the quick withdrawal indicates two major things: the first is that the technique is not aimed to supplement but rather to release stagnation by quick aggressive insertion and withdrawal, and that heat is extremely effective to our needs.

The heat expends and relaxes, it is invigorating and moving Qi and blood, and addresses the most common pathogenic factor that creates stagnation in classical Chinese medicine- Cold.

More ever, heat as Yang energetic communicates with Wei Qi in the same language, as Wei Qi is derivative of Yang as well.

The concept of “Evil Qi” in Chinese medicine is well known, the climatic pathogenic factors are Wind, Cold, Dampness, Heat, Dryness and summer heat. Even though commonly known as the “Six Evil Qi” when it comes to pain in the sinews and the chronification as Bi Syndrome, the reference is to four out of the Six as the cause, namely Wind, Cold, Dampness and Heat⁴.

Even in these four factors in some approaches Heat is seen as a secondary pathogenic factor that develop as a result of the others, in case of stagnation that create heat or as a result of Wei Qi “fighting” against the pathogens for example.

In the event of Wind, Cold and Dampness invasion, the application of hot needle is supportive, and in the case of heat invasion or heat formation the application should be carful or avoided if the practitioner is not skilled in fighting “fire with fire”.

Concerning the treatment to heat and inflammation, the application is not to be preformed on the inflamed area but rather further up or down the channel where Ashi points formed as a result, releasing these points will allow the channel to drain the heat in the area of inflammation.

Blistering Moxibustion

The use of moxibustion as a therapeutic tool dates back thousands of years.

moxibustion therapy in different variations as heat therapy was not only used in classical Chinese medicine but in other eastern traditions like Tibetan medicine for example, the

⁴ W. Hou G. Xu H. Whang “Autoimmunerkrankungen mit chinesischer Medizin gezielt behandeln” p92

tibetans still use moxibustion as one of their primary therapies and their moxibustion points selection includes around three thousand points for various conditions⁵.

Traditionally, moxa cones of various sizes were shaped and placed directly on acupuncture points, where they were lit and allowed to burn down to the skin, often causing blisters and scars. To avoid the intense pain and aesthetically unpleasant scars that direct moxibustion created, the practice evolved over time into an indirect method. In modern TCM, moxibustion is typically performed with a barrier between the moxa cone and the skin, such as a slice of ginger, or by using moxa sticks, which radiate warmth to the points without direct contact.

In Japan on the other hand direct moxibustion experienced a renaissance and adapted to the modern times using a rice or half rice size grain of moxa on the points, which when performed correctly was in times creating mini blister but did not leave permanent scar on the skin.

In these pages, whenever the application of moxa is discussed, it is in relation to the Japanese way of applying rice grain size of moxa.

Blistering moxibustion as a four levels system

Blistering moxibustion offers a sophisticated approach to pain treatment, it shares qualities with the Hot needle technique and communicates well with the sinew channels language.

The technique works on four main aspects: releasing pathogenic factors, opening blocked and tight tissue and providing unique tonification technique of Qi and Blood.

As a release of trapped pathogenic factors- as blistering occurs through direct application of the moxa cone, the opening of the tissue provides the Wei Qi outlet from which it can release the pathogenic Qi from the body⁶.

the yang aspect of the Moxa and the superficial “sting” and blistering on the surface communicates with the level of Wei Qi in synergy, the body receives the signal to mobilise Wei Qi to the Ashi points where stagnation happens.

The Yang energy of moxa similarly to the Hot needle is very suitable for the treatment of the most common pathogenic factors that invades the body.

⁵ Chögyal Namkhai Norbu “Healing with Fire” in section “About this book”

⁶ Jeffrey C. Yuen “Channel systems of Chinese medicine: Divergent Channels” transcript p80

As as release of blocked and tight tissue- the application of heat allow the vessels and muscles to relax and expand while repetitive application of moxa cones on one point enable the warmth to penetrate deep into the subcutaneous tissue.

Yang is movement and therefore as moxa is applied, it provokes movement in the sinews.

as pain is mostly a result of stagnation of either Qi, fluids (blood included) and pathogenic factors, moxa is a simple way to restore movement and drain the stagnation.

As a continues tonification of Qi in the point- blistering moxibustion has an advantage, namely the ability to draw attention and Qi to the point selected for long period of time.

as the blister occurs, in the process of healing and the creation of scab, the body brings Qi to the point continuously, making “Press needle” effect that lasts for days.

As a tonification of blood and fluids- the tonification of blood through blistering Moxibustion follow the rule, that Qi is responsible for the transformation and creation of blood. In the case where Qi stagnate, it is not able to fulfill this job efficiently.

Furthermore, by clearing stagnant blood we encourage and enable new blood to saturate the area. we clear the old to make space for the new.

It is important to understand that by itself, no moxibustion nor acupuncture is able to create blood out of nothing, for that, diet is the building block. But by affecting the imbalance of the Qi and the internal organs, the practitioner is able to effect the production mechanism itself in case it is impaired.

Blistering moxibustion is a highly effective method for pain relief and treating sinew channel imbalances, offering a strong alternative to the hot needle technique. By applying direct heat to the skin, it releases trapped pathogenic factors, relaxes tight tissues, and promotes the flow of Qi, which is blocked in areas of pain.

Additionally, the blistering effect draws continuous attention and Qi to the treated area, providing long-lasting therapeutic benefits. This makes blistering moxibustion particularly well-suited for addressing pain and restoring balance within the sinew channels.

PART TWO: WORKING WITH BLISTERING MOXA

The right point selection

“Once the correct point for treatment is located, the disease will go away on its own”- Isaburo Fukaya

Blistering Moxa in its essence is an intense and concentrated application of heat in order to break stagnation, and therefore the point selected for the treatment must present the signs of Qi and Blood stagnation in order to be effective to the treatment.

If the point does not show signs of fullness then the point is not suitable for our purpose.

It is important to note that traditional moxibustion practices and points selection among practitioners are mainly divided into two schools: those who fundamentally influenced by acupuncture theory, and those guided more by the manual therapies.

The first one utilises the Yin-Yang theory and deficiency/excess derived from it, balancing the flow of Qi in the body using standard points regardless of their status (whether the imbalance is expressed in the point or not).

For example using Xi points to unblock the channel or BL23 as to treat lower back pain caused by Kidney Qi deficiency.

The second school will relay heavily on palpating the channels, looking for live points manifested almost exclusively as pressure pain points.

The restoration of balance is achieved through the release of the Qi stagnation in the point, allowing the body to readjust the flow of Qi back to healthy stance.

In this approach the standard textbook points are used if they present this “live point” quality, as master moxibustionist Isaburo Fukaya said “The point is not affective if its not reactive to pressure”⁷

As palpation for blistering moxa technique is dealing mostly with “Live points” presenting Qi and blood stagnation signs, this section is concentrated on the second approach.

After one learned how to palpate the channel and find those points, a combination of both approaches can be applied.

Effective point should present with two qualities: induration and reactivity.

Induration is the aspect of stagnant blood, as blood stops from moving in a certain point, it collects and create the feeling of density under our palpating finger.

The density can be different in hardness and shape, hinting for the severity of stagnation in the point, the tighter and harder the point feels, the more stagnant it is.

⁷ “Isaburo Fukaya” by Felip Caudet p.124

Reactivity on the other hand is the the sign of Qi accumulation, as Qi collect it brings with it the feeling of pain and discomfort.

As we press the point it is not enough that the point will be indurated but rather is should present discomfort and pain as well.

The degree of reactivity of the point can indicates its involvement in the ongoing disease or imbalance.

Palpating the channel

Palpation is the bread and water of successful Moxa treatment, therefore palpation skills should be practiced and perfected, without it, lesser are the chances of finding the right points for the treatment.

skilled palpation can not only present us with good points for treatment, but rather show the physical depth in which the point lays.

As we know the physical depth, the level of induration and reactivity, our treatment strategy as well as the form and density of the Moxa cone can be altered to fit the point and generate better results.

Three general depth level can contain valuable points: superficial, mid level and deep.

A beneficial point can be found on one of these levels, or in some cases spreading over two or even all of them.

In order to detect the level in which the reactive point lies, the practitioner needs in some cases to adjust the pressure or the position of the palpating hand.

this aspect of palpation in my understanding should not be overlooked, as when one palpate deep, one can compress the reactive points that may be found on the surface and not notice them, and when palpating superficially one simply not pressing deep enough to discover deeper points that may be beneficial.

Of course someone can decide to work with certain level and leave the others.

As the practitioner palpate, he Mark the 'Live points' with a marking pencil, in that way there is no need to remember where they were and loose time trying to find them again.

Superficial palpation

Starting with our fingers pressing lightly, as the angle of our hand is almost flat to the skin surface. Lightly stroke the meridian as you try to perceive changes of density.

a good point for moxibustion on this level can present itself as tightness that as we press a bit stronger will create discomfort or pain in the patient, and many times with the release of pressure a redness will occur that will stay for a bit.

Middle level palpation

Adjusting the angle of our fingers to 45° degrees and applying deeper pressure will increase resistance, making it more probable to encounter and engage deeper stagnations.

the stagnant points on this level are likely to possess a denser nature.

Deep level palpation

As we arrive to the points located on the deepest levels of the tissue, it is important to exhibit enough pressure and resistance through our fingers.

at this point we can use two hand palpation movements (there are of course more):

1. With our pointing and middle fingers palpating the channel with 90° degree.
2. With the tip of our thumb applying pressure as we 'split' the channel.



Superficial palpation



45° degree middle level palpation



90° degree deep level palpation



Deep level palpation with the thumb

Live points can be found in many places

The formation of indurated points may be perceived as compensatory or balancing mechanism, enabling body to maintain normal function. Alternatively, from a more classical perspective, it can be viewed as the channel system's attempt to block pathogenic Qi from penetrating deeper into the Zang-Fu organs.

In that way we come to understand that points can be found not only on the meridian passing along the affected pain area but on wider areas through the compensation mechanism.

Point that can treat upper back pain may be found on the upper chest for example.

Back and front, up and down and along the channel, beneficial points can be located in surprising places.

Moxa shape and density

Moxa shape and density can be finely altered to fit the condition and depth of the indurated point in order to achieve better results.

the rules of thumb are pretty straight forward:

the harder the induration therefore it requires more intense dispersion, which can be done by either more repetitive application of moxa on the point or through higher density of the moxa cone itself.

The tighter we press the moxa cone the slower and intenser it will burn, resulting in greater dispersion.

The depth of the point will affect the shape of the moxa cone. Flat base cone will distribute the energy from the moxa more superficially, making it more suitable for points located more on the surface.

If the point lies deep, the cone can be shaped into an oval like a grain of rice, allowing the energy to move more deeply as it follows the pointed shape downwards.

in this case as well, a repetitive application of cones as well as burning cones on the top of the ashes will allow the warmth and Qi to infuse into the deeper tissues⁸ (burning cones on top of the burnt ashes also results in more pleasant feeling for the patient).

⁸ Junji Mitzutani 2005 "Practical Moxibustion Therapy" (North American Journal of Oriental Medicine)



Oval shape Moxa cone



Flat base Moxa cone

Dosage and over treatment

The subject of dosage is discussed extensively among the moxibustion practitioners, as moxibustion master and Fukaya's lineage holder Felip Caudet once said "treating with moxa is like trying to open the door with a Bazooka"⁹, indicating that the power of moxa is big and therefore we need to be mindful how we use it.

From my little experience I can testify that direct moxa indeed produce powerful movement in the system even from few points and cones, and one should be aware of it. In order to form an educated opinion and not rush to conclusions, it will be beneficial to observe the matter from different point of views.

in Japan it is a standard to apply odd number of cones on the point, mostly 3,5 or 7 cones (odd numbers represent "Yang") but it is not a hard rule.

Some points react fast and improvement in the reactive induration can be felt after 1-3 cones only and some points can be more persistent require more cones. The classical rule of thumb about the dosage is "if heat is felt, apply until the heat cannot be felt; if heat cannot be felt, apply until it can be felt"¹⁰.

In some cases some points can require large number of cones to release, can be even twenty to fifty cones, however it is important to be in contact with the patient's body and feel what it can tolerate.

⁹ Felip Cuadet, Fukayakyu course in "Shou Zhong", Berlin 2022

¹⁰ Janji Mizutani "Practical Moxibustion Therapy" NAJOM magazine

If we use large number of points, we will use smaller number of cones on each point. If we use smaller number of points we can use more cones on each point.

On the other hand, in the Chinese classics they used significantly larger cones than the Japanese “rice grain” cones, what would definitely challenge the perception regarding the concept of dosage and “over treatment”.

in some cases like the famous moxibustion point *Gaohuang shu* Bladder 43 the recommended number of cones to be applied is one hundred and up to a thousand!

Zhang Jiebin in the Ming Dynasty said “Apply up to 100 cones each on the left and right *Gaohuang shu*. Some apply three or five hundred or even more up to 1,000 cones. It makes the Qi move down, gurgling like the descent of flowing water.”¹¹

In the Tibetan Moxibustion tradition a larger cone size is used and the recommended dosage is between five to seven cones per point and more if necessary.¹²

Over treatment

unfortunately when we observe the subject of over treatment and its indications, we find very different point of views that can be completely contradictory.

where for some the indication that we treated too much is if the patient start to sweat, in some traditions it is seen as a natural response for direct blistering moxibustion.

Some of the more agreed upon signs for over treatment in the Japanese moxibustion tradition are if the patient feels dizzy, or he or she feels hot flashes or they feel depleted at the end of the treatment (in contrast to feeling deeply relaxed).

It is also important to note that the signs of over treatment happen mostly on the treatment table.

Traditions influenced more from acupuncture theory can relay on the pulse to tell them if they deviated from balance, looking for the pulse to be “pleasant”, if it acts “out of balance” it can indicate over treatment.

As the tendency of yang is to rise up if not anchored as in hot flashes or dizziness, if we over treated and wish to anchored it again we can apply gentle direct or indirect moxa on Zusanli St-36¹³ or Yongquan Kid-1 in order to direct the yang downwards.

¹¹ Lorraine Wilcox 2008 “Moxibustion, the power of mugwort fire” (Blue Poppy Press) p21. Zhang Jiebin LJTY: 7-1-35

¹² Chögyal Namkhai Norbu “Healing With Fire A practical manual of Tibetan moxibustion”- Translator’s Introduction xxi

¹³ Merlin Young “The Moon Over Matsushima” Godiva Books p140

Healing reactions

Healing reactions are events where after the treatment the patients may develop “cold” like sickness, slight fever, cough or even aggravated symptoms of their disease. it is happening as the body attempt to release old pathogens lodged deeply in the body, many times in a dormant state or what the Chinese call Fu Xie- hidden pathogenic evil. Initially as pathogens enters the body through our diet or climatic factors, the body relays on our Zhen Qi and Wei Qi to eliminate it either by perspiration, coughing, urination, defecation or fever.

When this attempt fails through weakness of our Qi or the strength and dedication of the evil Qi, the body divert the evil Qi to places where it is staying away from the Zang Fu.

In order to keep the pathogen in place’ there is a need for a very “Yin” area where there is Yin substance that can hold the pathogen in place. these areas are mostly the joints. In order to finance this state of latency the body consumes essences like Yin, Yang, Blood and Qi, resulting in growing deficiency that create Imbalance.

As blistering moxibustion is working primarily with the level of Wei Qi and strengthening Yang, as we blistering the skin in reactive points (therefore opening it), we signal the body to mobilise Wei Qi to eliminate pathogenic Qi, resulting in these healing reactions as the body try to eliminate old pathogens and restore balance.

These events are good for the healing process, but for some they can be too much or the timing is not fitting. Therefore if we want to minimise these events and allow the body to work in slower pace in a way that does not disturb the normal daily life, it is important to put attention to the dosage of moxa in the treatment.

The bigger the dosage the higher the chances to create these events, therefore we need to be mindful in our treatments.

On a personal note: In my experience, it is impossible to avoid completely the healing reactions, and I also find them essential for the process as well.

communication with the patient about it is important.

In nature the restoration of balance occur in many different ways, some of them are not necessarily pleasant, and things that can seem chaotic at first bring balance after. Therefore even though I am mindful during the treatment, I also choose not to be afraid of “unbalanced” pulse or healing reaction if they happen as I respect their place in the process.

The use of Bamboo tube

The bamboo tube is seen to be used particularly in the Japanese moxibustion tradition. It involves pressing the tube around the moxa cone after it was lit.

the Japanese moxibustion master Isaburo Fukaya is one of the most famous advocates of the bamboo tube, and his tube dimensions and particular use seemed to be an inspiration for the later adaptations by other moxibustion masters.

The “standard” Fukaya bamboo tube has an internal diameter of 15mm and a length of 120mm.

Fukaya’s timing of pressing the tube around the moxa cone is shortly before the cone is about to burn completely to the skin, the reason is not in any way to extinguish the fire but rather to create a sensory confusion in the mind.

As the cone is about to burn to the skin, the pressing of the tube creates a sensory confusion, significantly reducing the sensation of burn.



Fukaya's standart Bamboo tube

In addition to greatly improving patient comfort through sensory confusion, the bamboo tube serves two additional purposes that benefit sinew channel treatment.

Similar to Ashi acupuncture, where one hand isolates the muscle string while the other inserts the needle, in direct moxibustion, pressing the tube onto the point isolates the trigger point as the moxa burns down, resulting in greater accuracy.

Another outcome to the act of pressing is that, as the bamboo presses the point, it compresses the layers of muscle and skin allowing the heat from the moxa to penetrate faster into the deeper tissue layers.

The bamboo tube is mostly used in more “fleshy” areas in the body, in small and boney areas it may be less comfortable to work with, and in this case the moxa cone should be allowed to burn to the skin, or in some cases we can mimic the function of the bamboo by stretching the skin around the point as the moxa fire touching the skin, it will create sensory confusion as well.

In places when even the finger stretching is not possible like Ting points, the moxa cones need to be rather loose, very small and thin in order not to create too much discomfort.

Another option is to press the moxa cone as it's about to touch the skin. In that way it will only create a minimal sensation of burning.

PART THREE: BI SYNDROME AND TREATMENT GUIDELINES

Bi Syndrome basics

Bi syndrome in short can be seen as persistent and chronic pain syndrome in different places in the body, caused by invasion of the pathogenic factors Wind, Cold, dampness or Heat.

If the body is in a state of systematic deficiency of either Qi or Blood, it is unable at the time of the invasion to eliminate the pathogenic factors fully, resulting in their stay in a latent state until the body can gather the resources again to fight them.

One of the classical theories presented by Taoist and classical Chinese medicine master Jeffrey Yuen suggests that when the body is unable to fully combat and eliminate the pathogenic factors, it creates the Divergent channels to prevent these pathogens from penetrating deeper into the internal organs. These channels divert the pathogens into large cavities and joints — areas rich in thick fluids and yin energy — allowing the body to keep the pathogens in a latent state. However, maintaining this latency requires the body to continually use resources such as Jing, Blood, Fluids, and Qi, leading to further depletion. As these resources diminish, the body struggles to sustain the latent state, causing the disease to flare up and result in pain until the body can reestablish latency¹⁴.

The treatment for Bi Syndrome requires not only addressing the pain, but to reestablish and strengthen the constitutional and deficient resources.

Fukayakyu's Root Treatment

“To test whether one has found the right location one presses it with the finger.

When [the patient] feels a reaction there, and if [an existing] pain is resolved, then that is the transport [opening]. One may cauterise it. One must not pierce it.”¹⁵- Ling Shu

The Ling Shu chapter 51 on the Shu transport points on the back describes how to find and treat the Shu points, in order to find the points one must palpate the back for tender points, when this tenderness occurs from the applied pressure, the practitioner knows it is the point and may cauterise it.

The Shu points are the points where the original Qi through the mechanism of the triple heater is being transported directly into the inner organs, making them suitable to constitutional treatments.

¹⁴ Jeffrey C. Yuen “Channel systems of Chinese medicine: Divergent Channels” transcript

¹⁵ Unschuld “Huang Di Nei Jing Ling Shu” transport [openings] on the back -p483

As transport points they transport Qi in and out of the organs, allowing them to be used either for tonification of the inner organs or to transport pathogens and excess out of the organs.

The root treatment developed by the moxibustion master Isaburo Fukaya utilises these points in order to treat the root of disease, addressing the constitutional imbalance. By finding stagnation in the Shu points and disperse them, the body restores healthy flow of energy into the inner organs, bringing them back into balance and enable them to fulfill their job. In that way the blockage is removed and the original Qi can flow inside and tonify the deficient organs.

Fukaya's root treatment is executed with the patient is in a sitting position while his back is facing the practitioner.

The root treatment zone is located between the inner edge of the scapulae and extend from under the second thoracic vertebra GV-13 to under the ninth thoracic vertebra GV-8. In some cases also the trapezius and the scapulae can be included. the practitioner palpate the area of the inner and outer branches of the Bladder meridian with a sliding finger motion (the Huatu and the GV meridians also can be palpated). the practitioner palpate the area for reactive points, pressing them and marking them with a pen as he goes.

The aim is to find around 5 reactive points for the treatment, then cones are applied to the points, pressing the bamboo around the cone as it about to burn to the skin, until there is noticeable change in either the induration or the reactivity of the point.

The importance of this specific area on the back according to Fukaya's lineage holder Felip Caudet lies in the fact that it is structurally contains and affect two important organs: the Lung and the Heart. As those two organs responsible for the movement of Qi and Blood in the body¹⁶.

Because Blistering moxibustion is aimed to release stagnation of Qi and blood as the reason of disease, treating this area will have global effects throughout the body.

Pain treatment guidelines

Moxibustion treatment for the sinew channels can be intensive work for the practitioner and the patient, but it aims to treat the pain from the root, push pathogenic factors outside of the body, resolving painful reactive and blocked points, reestablish the

¹⁶ Felip Caudet "Isaburo Fukaya" p132

healthy flow of Qi and to treat the underlying constitutional deficiency in the case of Bi syndrome.

It gives the practitioner the chance to better his understanding of the body, facing him with different dilemmas, what to do when few channels are involved, set priorities, respecting boundaries, to know when to push and when to stop for the day allowing the body to continue it's healing process and to adjust till the next session.

The following guidelines are suggested treatment protocol and not the only way to address pain with moxibustion.

Treatment guidelines:

If the treatment is for Bi syndrome, start with Fukaya's root treatment and then move to the instructions below.

For regular pain syndrome the root treatment is not needed.

1. Examine the painful area.

If not inflamed, palpate and mark the reactive Ashi points.

If inflamed, examine but do not mark the points directly on the inflamed area.

2. observe on which sinew channel the pain is located.

because of their overlapping nature, it is possible that more than one sinew channel passes through specific location.

3. Palpate the sinew channels involved and mark the reactive points along it.

be sure to palpate along the entire meridian.

4. If not inflamed, apply moxa on the reactive points in the area of the pain until there is a noticeable change in either reactivity or induration or both.

It is not necessary to break the induration and reactivity completely, it is important to respect the body and let it adjust to the new state. Even a small change in induration and reactivity will create a chain action, resolving more and more in the coming days.

5. Apply moxa using the bamboo where it is possible on the reactive points along the sinew channels involved from the centre toward the extremities.

As the sinew channels originate in the extremities going upwards into the head and torso, in order to "push" the pathogenic factor outside it is beneficial to work in a reverse manner, from the centre toward the extremities.

6. Apply sesame grain size moxa on the Ting point of the treated meridian and allow it to burn to the end or press the moxa with your finger before it burns

completely.

the moxa on the Ting point will give the body the signal to unblock the meridian and give the pathogenic factor a final outlet.

7. Apply 3 cones of moxa to St36 (one side is enough) to anchor the Yang downwards.

this stage is extremely important because Yang energy goes easily upwards to the head and can cause lightheadedness, hot flashes etc.

St36 is the classical point used for floating Yang caused by application of too much moxa.

8. Remove the moxa ashes, clean the place and apply thin layer of Shiunko to the points to encourage healing to the burns.

In many cases 3-7 cones are more than enough to create change in the induration and reactivity. Do not be tempted to use moxa cones excessively as it could easily lead to over treatment.

When palpating along the sinew channel itself, it is enough to find and treat around 3 major reactive points, it is not necessary or helpful to treat all the reactive points along the channel. When the main points are released the others will adjust to the new flow of energy.

- while working on hairy areas like the head, it is important to be extra careful. Ask the patient to hold the hair to the sides or use hair clips to hold the hair away from the point.

Then put extra Shiunko and use smaller cones. Allow them to burn completely and do not use the bamboo tube.

If the cone is smaller and not too tight, the pain from the burn will be bearable and for a split of a second.

In gentle places like the face, one can use protective shield stickers for direct moxa. The sticker will protect the area from blistering while maintaining the dispersive effect of the moxa.

apply the cone on the shield with thin layer of Shiunko and allow it to burn completely. The use of bamboo tube in the face can be too aggressive and therefore I recommend without and instead use the stretching movement with the fingers to create the sensory confusion.

Resources:

"The moon over Matsushima - insights into Moxa and Mugwort" Merlin Young (Godiva books).

"Healing with fire - A practical manual of Tibetan moxibustion" Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (Shang Shung publications).

"The treasure book of points FUKAYA KYU" Hideo Shinma.

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"Advanced acupuncture - a clinic manual" Ann Cecil-Sterman MS, L.Ac. (classical wellness press).

"Channel systems of Chinese medicine - Divergent channels" Jeffrey C.Yuen, workshop transcripts, New England school of acupuncture continuing education department 2004.

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"Autoimmunerkrankungen mit chinesischer Medizin gezielt behandeln" W. Hou G. Xu H. Whang (Urban & Fischer Verlag).

"Huang Di Nei Jing Ling Shu" Paul U. Unschuld, 2016 (University of California press).

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