

Healing Hemorrhoids With Acupuncture: A Dignified Approach To Defecation

DAOM – OCOM Case Study 3

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Abstract

Hemorrhoids affect approximately 50% of the population and can create pain, stress and embarrassment. Due to the anal location of this disorder many people prolong Western medical diagnosis and treatment due to embarrassment. Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (AOM) offers a dignified and fast approach to hemorrhoid treatment. This case study illustrates a two-week course of acupuncture treatments for a 45 year old man experiencing acute hemorrhoids symptoms with chronic occurrences. The outcome suggests that AOM provides a significantly fast, non-invasive treatment for hemorrhoids and associated symptoms as well as prevention.

Introduction

Although hemorrhoids can effect any age group they mostly effect the ages of 50-65 years and are a result of diet and lifestyle. Many cases of hemorrhoids are untreated due to the embarrassment of facing a Western medical physician fearing a visual inspection of the anal area. As AOM theory relies on specifics of the condition and associated signs and symptoms of the overall persons constitution, there is no need for a visual inspection of the hemorrhoids so the client will feel comfortable and relaxed. Further more due to AOM theory and techniques of using distal points on the channels that directly relate to the genital area, treatments do not have to be in the local anal area.

Western Medical Overview and Treatment

Hemorrhoids occur when the veins surrounding the rectal area become swollen.

Internal hemorrhoids occur far enough inside the rectum that they can be unnoticed unless bleeding or large enough to prolapse and protrude outside the anal sphincter.

External hemorrhoids occur below the dente line and are more easily felt as well as painful while passing stools. (McPhee, Papadakis, 2011) (WebMD, 2012)

Abdominal pressure can cause the veins to swell and become irritated. This pressure can be due to obesity, pregnancy, straining while passing stools, coughing, sneezing, vomiting, holding the breathe while doing physical labour and standing and sitting for long periods. (McPhee, Papadakis, 2011)

People who eat a low fiber diet are more likely to get hemorrhoids due to excessive straining while passing stools and aggravating anal veins. (McPhee, Papadakis, 2011)

Western medical treatment for hemorrhoids includes over the counter high fiber products with and topical ointments. If symptoms persist treatment includes injection sclerotherapy, rubber band ligation or application of electrocoagulation is performed. Major complications can occur in about 2% of procedures. Surgical excision of hemorrhoids is performed for 5-10% of cases with chronic severe bleeding in stage III or IV hemorrhoids with complication of ongoing rectal pain and incontinence. (McPhee, Papadakis, 2011)

AOM

Hemorrhoids in AOM is referred to as Zhi Chuang which literally means pile sores.

In Chinese medical diagnosis, associated signs and symptoms are taken into account to form a pattern differentiation and with hemorrhoids we find the main diagnosis, dry heat, damp heat, and qi stagnation/ blood stasis and central qi falling downwards. (Flaws, Sionneau, 2001)

With the dry heat pattern, hemorrhoids will be external, stools will be dry and difficult to pass with possible constipation. Bright red blood from anus may be explosive on defecation. Excessive thirst with a dry mouth, abdominal distention and dark coloured urine. Pulse would present rapid accompanied by a red tongue with dry yellow coat. (Flaws, Sionneau, 2001)

A damp heat pattern would present with very painful swollen hemorrhoids that may be external with ulcerations and turbid coloured blood. Burning sagging and itchy sensation may be felt in the anus with an ongoing feeling of incomplete stools. This pattern may appear in someone who lives a sedentary lifestyle with high alcohol intake along with hot and spicy foods. Body would feel heavy with fatigue. Tongue presents with slimy yellow coat with a rapid and slippery pulse. (Flaws, Sionneau, 2001)

With a qi stagnation with blood stasis pattern presents with external hemorrhoids that are swollen, dark and painful with a sagging and distended feeling in anus. Distention and fullness feeling in the abdomen with difficult defecation and discharge of blood would be present. The tongue may appear dark red and or purple with a wiry pulse. (Flaws, Sionneau, 2001)

Central qi falling downward is indicated when the hemorrhoids fall out of the anus and do not return unless manually helped. Hemorrhoids will fall easily with coughing and sneezing or standing for long periods of time. Diarrhea may be seen with pale blood. The person may feel fatigue with lassitude and appear with a lusterless facial complexion. Tongue maybe seen as pale with a fine weak pulse. (Flaws, Sionneau, 2001)

As more AOM studies are conducted, we are provided with new information on the effects of acupuncture compared to western medicine. In a study of 120 cases of hemorrhoids, half the group received electro acupuncture on the points Chengshan BL-57 and Changqiang GV-1 at 2/100hz and the other half received oral Tramadol to see what treatment was more effective over a five day period in reducing pain on defecation associated with hemorrhoids. The results of the study indicated that pain reduced in both groups however there was no significant difference between the two groups. Therefore acupuncture can be seen just as effective for the treatment of hemorrhoid pain as western medication.

(Li, He, Wang, Yang, 2008)

Case History:

45 year old male presented with internal and external hemorrhoids that had been reoccurring over 20 years. I treated him twice with acupuncture with one week between treatments. This current episode of hemorrhoids started approximately two months prior to the initial treatment. He reported uncomfortable pain and heaviness with itching and incomplete feeling with defecation. He also noted seeing dark red blood.

At the initial acupuncture treatment temperature was hot in general, with energy levels low. He appetite was normal however not interested in making his own food. Thirst was for alcohol rather than water and drinks 2-4 glasses of red wine most evening. He has ongoing tinnitus in both ears and explained it could be from attending loud concerts. His sleeping is good with occasional waking due to stress and thinking about work. He feels uncomfortable due to sitting for long periods of time at a computer.

His tongue was red and slightly purple with red tongue tip and macules, swollen with scallops with a thin yellow coat. Pulse was moderate to fast and slippery.

Assessment: The TCM diagnosis was Damp Heat with qi stagnation and blood stasis. This diagnosis was determined to the symptoms internal and external hemorrhoids that are painful and swollen. His stools having a feeling of being incomplete, with an occasional burning sensation and heavy distention. Excess alcohol and spicy foods with long periods of sitting for work. Tongue is red and slightly purple with a red tip. Tongue as a thick greasy yellow coat. Pulse was slippery and slightly rapid.

Treatment Principles: Resolve damp, clear heat, correct the flow of qi and move blood.

Treatment: The patient was in the prone position for the treatment. On both treatments I used the auricular hemorrhoid point bilateral as a guiding point and placed the needle in this point first to indicate to the body the action and intention for the remainder of the treatment. I waited five minutes before continuing with the rest of the treatment. I then inserted the extra points Erbai – two whites bilateral, then Taiyuan LU-9, Chengshan BL-57, Taichong LV-3, Bahui Du-20 and Mingmen DU-4. Needles were retained for 40 minutes on both treatments. All body acupuncture procedures were performed with disposable needles: 25X30mm spring singles, DBC brand Korea with auricular points using 25X15mm.

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Table 1

Acupuncture Point	Category	Actions	Indications
Taichong LV-3	Shu-stream, yuan- source Earth point	Spreads liver qi, nourishes liver blood, regulates the lower jiao	Treats constipation and difficult defecation
Taiyuan LU-9	Hui meeting point of vessels		Regulates 100 vessels
Chengshan BL-57		Treats hemorrhoids	Important distal point for hemorrhoids
Bahui – DU-20		Raises yang and counters prolapse	Prolapse of the rectum
Mingmen Du-4		Clears heat regulates the Governing vessel	Treats disorders of the anus, prolapse rectum, hemorrhoids, blood in stool
Erbai		Treats prolapse of the rectum	Hemorrhoids, blood in stool
Auricular Hemorrhoid point			Hemorrhoids.

(Deadman, Al-Khafaji, & Baker, 2007)

Outcome: The outcome for this patient was almost immediate. Within five hours of the initial treatment the patient reported that his hemorrhoids and symptoms decreased by 80% and one day after the second treatment a week later he had no sign of hemorrhoids.

Discussion:

As all acupuncture points have many action and indications, using the auricular hemorrhoid point as a guiding point in these treatments may have significantly increased the intention of the treatment. Taiyuan LU-9 which is the Hui meeting point of vessels may have added reassurance and strength to the specific tissue the treatment was addressing, healing the integrity of blood vessels. Using two points on the Du channel rather than the local point of Changqiang GV-1, that can sometimes make the patient and practitioner uncomfortable creates a very replicable treatment.

Conclusion:

In summary, the patient experienced significant and almost immediate improvement of hemorrhoids and associated symptoms of blood with defecation pain and itchiness after just one treatment. The patient had not used any form of treatment previously due to embarrassment and was pleased that the nature of using AOM verses Western medicine allowed self-dignity with no inspection or treatment of the local anal area.

References

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