

Traditional Medicine

Mastering Specificity of Acupoints Based on Clinical Verses of Acupuncture and Moxibustion*

WANG Rong

The classic verses of acupuncture and moxibustion are the ancient records of the content of acupuncture and moxibustion in the form of songs, including meridians, acupoints, techniques, clinical treatment, medical cases, etc. About 20 articles among them summarize the valuable clinical experience of ancient famous acupuncturists. The verses are extremely useful. They prescribe a method of treating disease in which very few acupoints are selected (mostly only one, but sometimes two or three points). The point selection is based on the acupuncturists' advanced mastery of acupoint specificity, which practitioners today must learn. Unfortunately, because of the verses' simple expression, it is difficult for modern readers to understand them in depth. As a result, undergraduates majoring in acupuncture and moxibustion are no longer required to study the verses.^(1,2) This means that modern acupuncturists are unfamiliar with these verses and seldom use them in clinic practice. This greatly limits the application and promotion of the verses.

Characteristics of Clinical Verses of Acupuncture and Moxibustion

The clinical verses of acupuncture and moxibustion record the clinical experience of many ancient famous acupuncturists in the form of catchy rhymes, which makes them easy to read and remember as the songs of the Tang dynasty poets. When treating patients, doctors can recite the appropriate verses and use them freely. Therefore, the verses were regarded by ancient physicians as "entry level work" for students of acupuncture and moxibustion. Some researches have shown that if students can remember a number of verses, their clinical practice becomes easier and more effective.⁽³⁻⁵⁾

All the clinical verses embody the principle of simple selection of acupoints in ancient China. In the *Jade Dragon Song* (Yu Long Ge), 120 acupoints were used to treat more than 80 kinds of diseases. In the *Sheng Yu Song* (Sheng Yu Ge), only 66

acupoints are used to treat 54 kinds of diseases. Most importantly, there are many ancient medical cases that demonstrate an exceptional therapeutic effect with the use of few acupoints. The selection of acupoints in the verses is very simple, but effective.⁽⁶⁻⁸⁾ In contrast, in current practice, it is common to select more than 10 acupoints for a patient at one treatment session, a practice that has been criticized as "rice transplanting." The ancient acupuncturists were able to make precise acupoint selections because of their highly accurate acknowledge of acupoint specificity. Therefore, the study and use of the verses in clinical practice should be strongly recommended as the most reliable way of improving current practice.

The clinical verses of acupuncture and moxibustion are based on the experience of various acupuncturists, so the treatment of the same disease is distributed among different verses (Table 1). For example, Weizhong (BL 40) is selected to treat low back pain in the *Total Four Point Song* (Si Zong Xue Ge); in the *After Elbow Song* (Zhou Hou Ge), Quchi (LI 11) is needled deeply to treat acute spasmodic back pain; in the *Jade Dragon Song*, moxibustion is applied on Shenzhu (GV 12) for low back pain with cough, and so on. Each acupuncturist uses his or her own experience to differentiate and treat similar symptoms.

Learning Clinical Verses of Acupuncture and Moxibustion Is Helpful in Mastering Specificity of Acupoints

Although some aspects of the clinical verses

©The Chinese Journal of Integrated Traditional and Western Medicine Press and Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany, part of Springer Nature 2019

*Supported by the Teaching Research Project of Shanxi Education Department, China (No. 2017JG85)

College of Acupuncture and Moxibustion, Shanxi University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Taiyuan (030024), China

Tel: 86-351-3179709, E-mail: 1343456225@163.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11655-019-2938-5>

Table 1. Some Acupoints Used for Back Pain in Clinical Verses

Acupoints	Indications	Source
Weizhong (BL 40)	Most kinds of low back pain	Si Zong Xue Ge
Quchi (LI 11)	Acute spasmodic back pain	Zhou Hou Ge
Shenzhu (GV 12)	Low back pain with cough	Yu Long Ge
Dadu (SP 2)	Chronic lumbago-leg pain	Zhou Hou Ge
Renzhong (GV 26)	Lumbar sprain	Yu Long Ge

are difficult to explain in terms of common meridian theory, they are very practical. For example, *After Elbow Song* recommends that LI 11 should be needled deeply (1.5 cun) for acute spasmodic back pain. At first sight, this choice of acupoint is likely to confuse almost all acupuncturists. The route of the Large Intestine Meridian of Hand Yangming does not pass through the back and waist, and the indications of LI 11 in our textbooks is not related to the pain of back and waist. Why use LI 11 to treat it? The reader will wonder whether this choice is correct. However, a deeper consideration of the acupoint selection reveals the answer is just meridian musculature of Hand Yangming, which is often neglected. In the *Huangdi's Internal Canon of Medicine* (Huang Di Nei Jing), this musculature passes alongside the spinal column. Therefore, we suggest that modern acupuncturists should have more confidence in mastering the verses. If we are confused by them, we should think them over and try the techniques they present, rather than simply wondering whether they work. Objective efficacy will verify the educational value of the verses and help us to develop the confidence to use them properly.

To summarize, the experience recorded in the clinical verses is achievable and valuable. Learning the clinical verses could help modern acupuncturists to

improve their practice. This will not only help to avoid the excessive selection of acupoints, but also provide with a valuable summary of treatment experience and gain a better grasp of acupoint specificity.

REFERENCES

- Gao SZ, ed. Treatment of acupuncture and moxibustion of the 12th five-year-plan concise-practical textbook. Shanghai: Shanghai Science and Technology Press;2015:169-194.
- Gao SZ, Yang J, eds. Treatment of acupuncture and moxibustion of the 13th five-year plan textbook. Beijing: China Press of Traditional Chinese Medicine; 2016:193-209.
- Yu BX, Qin Y, Fan X. Study of students' independent assessment on classics acupuncture and moxibustion recitation. *Modern Remote Edu Tradit Chin Med (Chin)* 2016;17:23-25.
- Ma QL, Zheng MC, Yang XG, Guo XH, Ren S, Gao XY. Theory of "three practice and three enlightenment" in acupuncture and moxibustion teaching. *Tradit Chin Med Edu (Chin)* 2014;33:69-70.
- He NN, Li KP. Applied research of acupuncture and moxibustion verses in the teaching of acupuncture and moxibustion. *J Liaoning Univ Tradit Chin Med (Chin)* 2018;20:162-164.
- Xie YF, Chen Y, Yang ZB. The exploration of XI Hong's clinical experience based on the viewpoint of acupuncture and moxibustion verses. *Guiding J Tradit Chin Med (Chin)* 2017;23:63-64.
- Wang Q, Song X, Xia LJ, Zhang LY, Xia YB. A preliminary study on the academic thought of LI Xue-geng, heir of Chengjiang scholar. *Jiangsu Tradit Chin Med (Chin)* 2018;50:73-75.
- Feng BW, He XF. The probe into the ancient and modern application of Yanglingquan in acupuncture and moxibustion verses. *Guid J Tradit Chin Med (Chin)* 2018;24:55-56.

(Accepted April 2, 2018; First Online May 5, 2019)
Edited by WANG Wei-xia