

Clinical study finds Chinese medicine treatment of hyperthyroidism to be over 80% effective

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Hyperthyroidism is a common endocrine disease in which the thyroid gland is overactive and makes more thyroid hormones than the body needs. The excess secretion of the hormone thyroxine speeds up the body's metabolism, causing many of the body's functions to speed up, such as the nervous, circulation and digestive systems. Hyperthyroidism symptoms are complex and as the condition is difficult to cure, treatment can be a long process and there is a high recurrence rate.

Hyperthyroidism falls under "goiter" in Chinese medicine. Major symptoms include neck swelling, excessive appetite, emaciation,

restlessness, palpitations, intolerance to heat, hyperhidrosis, hand tremors and protruding eyes. From the perspective of Chinese medicine, the pathogenic factors of hyperthyroidism are mainly related to emotion, diet, constitution and inheritance. The pathogenesis of such disease is stagnation of qi which will generate fire, causing consumption of yin and qi, and asthenic yin excessive pyrexia.

Mr Leung Ho-wing, Lecturer I of the SCM Clinical Division at HKBU, conducted a clinical observation of 115 patients who attended HKBU's Chinese medicine clinics for treatment of hyperthyroidism from May 2013 to April 2017. The study aimed at exploring the incidence of hyperthyroidism in Hong Kong and to assess the curative effect of Chinese medicine treatment on such illness. The 19 male and 96 female patients, with ages ranging from 13 to 66, have been suffering from the disease for periods ranging from a week to 28 years.

According to the principle of syndrome differentiation and treatment in traditional Chinese medicine, Mr Leung classified the patients into six groups, namely deficiency of qi and yin; hepatic stagnation and stagnation of qi; hepatic and renal yin deficiency; asthenic yin excessive pyrexia; excessive hepatopyretic; and stagnation of phlegm and stasis. The findings showed that deficiency of qi and yin, and hepatic stagnation and stagnation of qi were the two major syndromes of hyperthyroidism with a total of 60 clinical cases (52.2 percent).

Mr Leung explained that according to the different stages (acute phase, remission, recovery period) and constitution of the patients, Chinese medicine prescriptions with the function of eliminating pathogen and supporting vital qi were provided for patients. The course of treatment ranged from one month to 12 months with the key focus of replenishing yin, strengthening qi, alleviating burden on the liver and regulating qi. In general, the observation indicated that the overall efficacy rate of the treatment for hyperthyroidism was 88.7 percent; 15 patients made a full

recovery (13 percent), 34 patients showed obvious improvement (29.6 percent), 53 exhibited general improvement (46.1 percent) while 13 showed no progress (11.3 percent). The curative rate of the treatment was 42.6 percent.

According to the observation, 78.3 percent of the patients were between the ages of 21 and 50. The disorder is more common in women especially those aged between 30 and 40. The results also indicated that family inheritance and emotional disorder are the two major causes of hyperthyroidism. Of the 115 cases, 47 patients had a family history of hyperthyroidism (40.9 percent); and 72 patients (62.6 percent) developed hyperthyroidism for the first time or it recurred due to emotional problems or pressure.

Mr Leung explained that the study revealed that the male to female prevalence ratio is one to five. This may be related to tendencies being inherited from the female side of the family and also females being more prone to emotional stress than males. He reminded ladies to pay more attention to their thyroid health, in particular those with a family history and have never developed hyperthyroidism. He added that more and more young people are diagnosed with hyperthyroidism and this trend should not be overlooked.

Mr Leung pointed out that [hyperthyroidism](#) can be treated with Chinese medicine in a variety of ways, such as in the form of herbs, soups, food, tea, and acupuncture. All these treatments also work well in strengthening a patient's immunity to fight against the disease as well as enhancing the curative rate and reducing the chance of recurrence. He suggested patients to maintain a positive attitude and get enough rest to avoid over-exertion. A healthy diet and regular exercises such as tai chi, eight brocade breathing exercise, walking and swimming are also highly recommended.

Provided by Hong Kong Baptist University

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