

An Exploration of Leukorrhea in Women Based on the Yin-Yang Theory in Huangdi's Internal Classic

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Abstract: The Huangdi's Internal Classic is a classic work of traditional Chinese medicine, and the theory of Yin and Yang is one of the important academic ideas in the Huangdi's Internal Classic, which is of fundamental significance for the interpretation of human life activities. When discussing the opposites, complementarity, interroot and interuse of Yin and Yang, Yang is dominant, emphasizing that Yang strengthens Yin and Yin is secret, Yang governs Yin. As the core theory of traditional Chinese medicine, it plays an important role in guiding the clinical practice of traditional Chinese medicine and in all aspects of understanding, prevention, and treatment of diseases. Leucorrhea is one of the common gynecological diseases in women, with complex and variable symptoms that have a significant impact on women's physical and mental health. The Huangdi's Internal Classic, a classic work of traditional Chinese medicine theory, has profound discussions and unique yin-yang theory explanations for leucorrhea. Based on the theory of Yin and Yang in the Huangdi's Internal Classic and in combination with modern medical research, this article will explore vaginal discharge in women, with the aim of providing new ideas and methods for clinical diagnosis and treatment.

Keywords: Huangdi's internal classic; Theory of Yin and Yang; Dai Xia; Leucorrhea

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1. Introduction

Yin and Yang are the natural laws of heaven and earth and the origin of nurturing life ^[1]. The concept of Yin and Yang originated in the era of Fuxi over 7,000 years ago. In Taoist culture, everything can be explained by the duality of Yin and Yang. The theory of Yin and Yang originated from the Huangdi's Internal Classic and is one of the foundations of the theoretical system of traditional Chinese medicine. It is both a worldview and a methodology, and the most fundamental logical thinking method for explaining its theories of physiology, pathology, diagnosis, treatment, and health preservation ^[2]. The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic emphasizes

that the human body is closely and inseparably linked to the changes of Yin and Yang. It is mentioned in the *Suwen*: “When Yin and Yang are separated, the spirit is governed; When Yin and Yang are lost, vital energy is lost”. Among them, “the balance of Yin and the secret of Yang” reveals an orderly homeostasis. The human body maintains self-regulation and relative stability in overall activity and function through a series of interaction mechanisms such as the opposition, interroot, interuse, waxing and waning, and transformation of Yin and Yang ^[3]. Yin and Yang are closely related to the body’s physiology, pathology, and the treatment and prevention of diseases. Balance of Yin and Yang is the foundation of human health, and an imbalance of Yin and Yang leads to the occurrence of diseases. Only when Yin and Yang are in balance can the body maintain a normal state of health.

2. Women’s belt overview below

The term “vaginal discharge” first appears in “*Suwen - Gukong Lun*”: “The Ren meridian is a disease. In men, there is a hernia in the seven meridians; in women, there is a mass in vaginal discharge”. From puberty, as the kidney Qi becomes more abundant, the Chong and Ren meridians become unobstructed, and a small amount of white or colorless transparent fluid appears in the vagina. The secretion increases before and after menstruation, between periods, and during pregnancy, which is physiological vaginal discharge. Physiological vaginal discharge has the effect of moistening the orifices of the vagina, ensuring that the genital area remains moist ^[4]. The term “leucorrhea” first appeared in “*Treatise on the Etiology of Various Diseases*”, referring to a class of diseases in which there is a significant increase or decrease in the amount of vaginal discharge in women, abnormal color, quality, or odor, or accompanied by systemic or local symptoms ^[5]. This disease is often caused by dampness attacking the Ren and Dai meridians, causing the Ren meridian to be unstable and the Dai meridian to be out of control. Dampness is the main cause of this disease. The theory of Yin and Yang, as one of the core theories of traditional Chinese medicine, emphasizes that the human body is a whole of balanced Yin and Yang, and the imbalance of Yin and Yang is the fundamental cause of disease. The occurrence of leucorrhea is closely related to the imbalance of Yin and Yang. Therefore, exploring vaginal discharge in women from the perspective of the theory of Yin and Yang is of great significance for a deeper understanding of its etiology and pathogenesis and for guiding clinical diagnosis and treatment.

3. The relationship between the theory of Yin and Yang and vaginal discharge in women

The theory of Yin and Yang constitutes the core foundation of traditional Chinese medicine, and the imbalance of Yin and Yang is regarded as one of the fundamental pathological mechanisms in the theory of traditional Chinese medicine. The general principle of the Eight Principles of TCM syndrome differentiation is yin-Yang syndrome differentiation. Likewise, in the field of gynecology in traditional Chinese medicine, the theory of Yin and Yang plays a crucial role in exploring causes, pathological mechanisms, and conducting syndrome differentiation and treatment. In the cognitive system of etiology and pathogenesis in gynecology of traditional Chinese medicine, the imbalance of Qi, blood, Yin, and Yang in the Zang-fu organs is the key factor that causes diseases, among which the abnormality of the functions of the liver, spleen, and kidney is particularly important. For example, the imbalance of Yin and Yang in the kidney can cause many

gynecological disorders. When kidney Yang is deficient, there will be conditions such as menstrual edema, amenorrhea, and ovulatory infertility; Deficiency of kidney Yin can lead to problems such as amenorrhea, bleeding during the menstrual period, and infertility ^[6].

3.1. Etiology and pathogenesis of vaginal discharge

3.1.1. Invasion by external pathogenic factors

There are six kinds of pathogenic factors in nature: wind, cold, heat, dampness, dryness, and fire. When the Yin and Yang of the human body are out of balance and coordination, these pathogenic factors can invade the human body. Among all the pathogenic factors, dampness is most closely associated with leucorrhea. Dampness belongs to the Yin category, and its nature is similar to that of water, which has the characteristic of moving downward. Coupled with dampness itself being heavy, turbid, and sticky, its tendency to invade the human body downward is even more pronounced ^[7]. When the body's Yang Qi is insufficient and unable to transform water and dampness, or when it stays in wetlands for a long time, wades through water in the rain, etc., causing external dampness to invade the body, dampness descends into the uterine cavity and can cause abnormal vaginal discharge. "All dampness, swelling, and fullness belong to the spleen", as stated in the *Suwen: The Great Treatise on the Essentials of Truth*. Weakness of the spleen Yang, abnormal transformation of water and dampness, is a key factor in dampness-induced illness, reflecting the pathological change of imbalance of Yin and Yang, deficiency of middle Yang Qi leading to excess of Yin evil.

3.1.2. Internal injuries caused by the Seven emotions

Internal injury caused by the seven emotions can affect the internal organs, Qi, blood, Yin, and Yang. The smooth flow of Yin and Yang Qi and the harmony of Qi, blood, Yin, and Yang require normal physiological activities ^[8]. Changes in emotions such as anger, joy, pensiveness, sorrow, and fear can also cause dysfunction of the internal organs and imbalance of Yin and Yang. Such as liver depression and Qi stagnation, Qi stagnation turning into fire, liver fire disturbing downward, can cause the color of the vaginal discharge to turn yellow and thick; Or worry harms the spleen, and the spleen fails to function properly, causing internal water and dampness to descend into the vaginal discharge, resulting in an abnormal amount of vaginal discharge. This is a manifestation of the imbalance of Yin and Yang in the body caused by emotional factors, which in turn leads to leucorrhea.

3.1.3. Eating and overwork

Improper diet, excessive consumption of raw, cold, rich, and greasy foods can damage the Yang Qi of the spleen and stomach, leading to spleen Yang deficiency, failure of transformation and transportation, and internal generation of water and dampness. Overwork depletes vital energy, especially that of the spleen and lungs. The spleen is the foundation of the body after birth and the source of Qi and blood production. When the spleen is weak, it cannot transform the essence of food and water, and water dampness descends to form leucorrhea. This is due to the deficiency of Yin and Yang Qi and blood in the body caused by overeating and overworking, resulting in leucorrhea.

3.2. Clinical manifestations

The clinical manifestations of leucorrhea are diverse. Excessive leucorrhea is characterized by increased leucorrhea volume, abnormal color, quality, and odor of leucorrhea, and may also be accompanied by vulvar

pruritus, pain, burning, lumbago, abdominal pain, and other discomforts. Scanty vaginal discharge, vaginal itching, pain, and dryness may also cause changes in the menstrual cycle and volume, and decreased libido during the reproductive years. These symptoms are closely related to the imbalance of Yin and Yang and reflect the disorder of the internal environment of the body^[9].

4. Classification of Yin and Yang in women's vaginal discharge

4.1. Leucorrhea is a syndrome of cold and Yin

Leucorrhea is often caused by a deficiency of Yang in the spleen and kidney. Kidney Yang is the root of all Yang Qi in the body. When kidney Yang is deficient and fails to warm the spleen earth, the spleen fails to function properly, water and dampness are retained internally and turn into a cold and damp pathogen, which descends to the uterus and causes leucorrhea. The characteristic of leucorrhea is that it is abundant in quantity, thin in texture, white in color, odorless, or fishy. Patients often have symptoms such as chills, cold limbs, soreness and weakness of the waist and knees, poor appetite, and loose stools, which are signs of Yang deficiency and Yin excess. The treatment should be based on warming the kidney and strengthening the spleen, removing dampness and stopping leucorrhea, such as Wandai Decoction, Neibu Pills, and other prescriptions, to restore the balance of Yin and Yang in the body by warming Yang and strengthening the essence, benefiting Qi, and removing dampness.

4.2. Yellow leucorrhea is a syndrome of Yang heat

Yellow leucorrhea is often caused by damp-heat descending or Yin deficiency with internal heat. Damp-heat pathogen, which belongs to the Yang pathogen, can be caused by external damp-heat or internal damp-heat. External damp-heat, such as during menstruation or postpartum when the blood vessels are empty, causes damp-heat to invade; Endogenous damp-heat is often caused by emotional distress, liver Qi stagnation, wood and earth congestion, depression turning into fire, and damp-heat descending through the liver meridian^[10]. Damp-heat descending and damaging the Ren and Dai meridians can cause yellow vaginal discharge, which is yellow in color, thick and foul-smelling, often accompanied by symptoms such as vulvar pruritus, bitter mouth and dry throat, and short and red urine. If the yellow discharge is caused by Yin deficiency and internal heat, it is due to Yin deficiency of the liver and kidneys, internal false fire, boiling the body fluids, resulting in yellow and small discharge, accompanied by symptoms of Yin deficiency such as dry throat and mouth, hot flushes, night sweats, and hot palms and soles. For yellow leucorrhea caused by damp-heat descending, treatment mainly focuses on clearing heat and promoting diuresis, detoxifying and killing parasites, such as modified Zhidai Decoction, Longdan Xiegan Decoction, etc. For yellow leucorrhea caused by Yin deficiency with internal heat, it is advisable to nourish Yin and benefit the kidney, clear heat, and promote diuresis, such as the modified Zhibai Dihuang Pill.

4.3. Red and white leucorrhea is a sign of a mixture of Yin and Yang

Leucorrhea is more complex. It is often caused by long-term illness or insufficiency of vital energy, leading to an imbalance of Yin and Yang and disorder of Qi and blood. When there is an excess of wood in the liver, it overattacks the earth in the spleen; when blood is not stored, there is excessive damp-heat, and the vaginal discharge is red; Liver depression and spleen deficiency, excessive dampness, white vaginal discharge^[11]. It may have a base of leucorrhea due to Yang deficiency and cold dampness, as well as red leucorrhea due

to Yin deficiency and hyperactivity of fire or damp-heat descending. If there is a deficiency of Yang in the spleen and kidney, with cold and dampness descending, and at the same time due to liver depression transforming into fire or long-term accumulation of damp-heat burning the blood vessels, there may be blood streaks in the leucorrhea, or a mixture of red and white. The treatment of such leucorrhea should be based on the specific situation of the imbalance of Yin and Yang, balancing the relationship between tonifying Yang and nourishing Yin, clearing heat and removing dampness, and comprehensively regulating Yin and Yang Qi and blood to achieve the purpose of stopping leucorrhea.

5. Modern medicine's understanding and treatment of leucorrhea

5.1. Modern medicine's understanding of leucorrhea

There is no exact corresponding disease in modern medicine. Modern medicine includes excessive vaginal discharge caused by some female reproductive system inflammations, such as vaginitis, cervicitis, endocrine disorders in Western medicine, and insufficient vaginal discharge caused by severe oophoritis, Sheehan's syndrome, etc., in the category of abnormal vaginal discharge ^[12]. "Leucorrhea" in modern medicine is called "vaginal discharge" or "vaginal secretions", and its formation is related to the effect of estrogen. If the vagina is damaged by labor, intrauterine operations, external pathogen infection, or low estrogen levels, local resistance can be reduced, leading to various types of vaginitis and cervicitis ^[13]. Infection factors mainly include microbial infections such as bacteria, fungi, and viruses; Endocrine disorders such as abnormal estrogen levels; and immune dysfunction factors such as autoimmune diseases, etc. These factors can cause an abnormal increase or decrease in vaginal discharge, accompanied by changes in color, quality, and odor, resulting in a variety of clinical manifestations in the female body.

5.2. Treatment of leucorrhea in modern medicine

The combination of traditional Chinese and Western medicine has a significant advantage in treating leucorrhea in current clinical practice. Traditional Chinese medicine focuses on the whole, regulating the balance of Yin and Yang, and restoring the normal functions of the body; Western medicine focuses on treating the cause of the disease, eliminating the pathogen and pathological changes. The combination and complementarity of the two can enhance the therapeutic effect.

5.2.1. TCM syndrome differentiation and treatment

Clinical prevention and treatment of diseases in traditional Chinese medicine focus on "strengthening the body's vital energy", combining the elimination of pathogenic factors with strengthening the body's vital energy, treating both symptoms and root causes, with the aim of fundamentally eliminating the disease, expelling the pathogenic factors, and restoring the body's vital energy ^[14]. When treating leucorrhea, the holistic concept, syndrome differentiation, and treatment are also emphasized. The treatment methods include internal administration of traditional Chinese medicine, external washing, acupuncture, etc. Individualized treatment is carried out based on the specific condition and constitution of the patient to achieve both symptomatic and root treatment. In addition, traditional Chinese medicine also focuses on prevention and conditioning. By adjusting the patient's diet, lifestyle, and emotions, it regulates the balance of Yin and Yang and restores the normal functions of the body to achieve the purpose of treating leucorrhea.

5.2.2. Western medicine anti-infection treatment

Western medicine treats infections by targeting infection factors. Clinical guidelines mainly use oral or vaginal topical antibacterial, fungal, or other antimicrobial drugs, and even emphasize the repeated use of drugs before and after menstruation and in multiple cycles, such as antibiotics, to kill pathogens and eliminate the source of infection ^[15]. At the same time, Western medicine focuses on regulating endocrine and immune functions and improving the internal environment of the body.

5.2.3. Integrated treatment combining traditional Chinese and Western medicine

The combination of traditional Chinese and Western medicine can give full play to the advantages of both and improve the clinical treatment effect. Both Chinese and Western medicine have their own characteristics in treatment. Western medicine shows an effect slightly faster than Chinese medicine, but it has a higher recurrence rate and is prone to drug resistance ^[16]. Chinese medicine, on the other hand, requires syndrome differentiation and treatment. It takes a little longer to show effect, but the therapeutic effect is stable and has the characteristics of a low recurrence rate and few adverse reactions ^[17]. On the one hand, the holistic concept and syndrome differentiation treatment of traditional Chinese medicine can provide useful references and guidance for Western medical treatment; On the other hand, the modern science and technology and treatment methods of Western medicine can also provide strong support for traditional Chinese medicine treatment. By regulating the balance of Yin and Yang through syndrome differentiation and treatment in traditional Chinese medicine and eliminating pathogens and pathological changes through anti-infection treatment in Western medicine, the two complement each other and can jointly promote the recovery of patients.

6. Conclusion

Leucorrhea is one of the common gynecological diseases in women. Its etiology and pathogenesis are complex and changeable. The theory of Yin and Yang in the Huangdi's Internal Classic provides an important theoretical basis for the diagnosis and treatment of leucorrhea. Clinically, the treatment of leucorrhea can be achieved by regulating the balance of Yin and Yang to restore the normal physiological functions of the body. The modern medical understanding of leucorrhea also provides new ideas and methods for the integrated treatment of traditional Chinese and Western medicine. Therefore, in clinical practice, full attention should be paid to the application of the theory of Yin and Yang, combined with modern medical research, to constantly explore and innovate treatment methods and improve the therapeutic effect of leucorrhea.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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