

Clinical Observation of the Therapeutic Effects of Wenzhong Hewei Formula in Treating Spleen and Stomach Qi Deficiency Syndrome in Internal Medicine Diseases

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Abstract: *Objective:* To observe the clinical efficacy and safety of Wenzhong Hewei Formula in treating spleen and stomach qi deficiency syndrome in internal medicine diseases. *Methods:* Sixty patients with spleen and stomach qi deficiency syndrome admitted to the hospital from April 2022 to June 2023 were randomly divided into observation and control groups, with 30 patients in each group. The control group received conventional internal medicine treatment, while the observation group was additionally treated with Wenzhong Hewei Formula on the basis of conventional treatment. Both groups were treated for 4 weeks. *Results:* The total effective rate of treatment in the observation group was higher than that of the control group ($P < 0.05$). After treatment, the traditional Chinese medicine syndrome scores of both groups were significantly lower than before treatment, with the observation group showing a more pronounced reduction ($P < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference in the incidence of adverse reactions between the two groups ($P > 0.05$). *Conclusion:* Wenzhong Hewei Formula can effectively improve clinical symptoms in patients with spleen and stomach qi deficiency syndrome, enhance clinical efficacy, and have a high level of safety, making it worthy of clinical promotion.

Keywords: Wenzhong Hewei formula; Internal medicine diseases; Spleen and stomach qi deficiency syndrome

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1. Introduction

In the field of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), spleen and stomach qi deficiency syndrome is a very common pattern. Patients with this syndrome often present with various discomforts, such as shortness of breath, where even slight physical activity causes breathlessness; fatigue, where the body often feels tired and weak, with low spirits; and dizziness, which intermittently troubles patients and disrupts their daily lives. Their complexion is often pale, lacking a healthy, rosy glow^[1-3]. Moreover, after meals, patients suffer from

gastric distention and pain, as if something is tightly constricting the stomach, causing unbearable pain. They also experience postprandial bloating, where food seems to stagnate in the stomach, making digestion difficult, and causing great discomfort. These symptoms severely affect patients' quality of life. Therefore, timely and effective treatment for spleen and stomach qi deficiency syndrome is necessary to prevent further deterioration of the condition, which would bring even greater suffering to patients.

In recent years, with rapid societal development, increasing social pressures, and an accelerating pace of life, people's lifestyles and dietary habits have undergone significant changes. Against this backdrop, the incidence of spleen and stomach qi deficiency syndrome has shown a rising trend year by year^[4]. This phenomenon has drawn widespread attention because it seriously affects people's health and quality of life. In the hustle and bustle of daily life, people often neglect to care for their spleen and stomach. Poor dietary habits, excessive fatigue, and prolonged mental stress can all contribute to the development of spleen and stomach qi deficiency syndrome. In Western medicine, this condition is often classified under "gastrointestinal dysfunction." While Western medicine has certain efficacy in treating this disease, using certain medications to alleviate symptoms to some extent, there are limitations. The side effects of Western treatments can be relatively significant^[5,6]. During treatment, patients may experience various adverse reactions, such as nausea, vomiting, and dizziness. These side effects not only cause physical discomfort for patients but also impact their treatment adherence. In contrast, recent studies have shown that TCM has good efficacy in treating spleen and stomach qi deficiency syndrome. TCM, with its unique theoretical system and treatment methods, regulates the entire body, not only effectively relieving symptoms but also reducing the occurrence of side effects, thus improving treatment compliance. Wenzhong Hewei Formula, commonly used in TCM to treat spleen and stomach qi deficiency syndrome, is characterized by its rational composition and remarkable efficacy. The formula consists of multiple Chinese herbs, which work together in synergy to effectively regulate spleen and stomach function and alleviate symptoms. This study aims to observe the clinical efficacy and safety of Wenzhong Hewei Formula in treating spleen and stomach qi deficiency syndrome in internal medicine diseases, providing a reference for clinical practice.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. General information

Sixty patients with spleen and stomach qi deficiency syndrome who were admitted to the hospital between April 2022 and June 2023 were selected and randomly divided into an observation group and a control group, with 30 patients in each group, using a random number table method. Inclusion criteria: (1) Meeting the diagnostic criteria for spleen and stomach qi deficiency syndrome in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), as referenced in Traditional Chinese Internal Medicine; (2) Aged between 18 and 65; (3) Willing to participate in the study and signing informed consent. Exclusion criteria: (1) Patients with severe dysfunction of major organs such as the heart, liver, or kidneys; (2) Patients with malignant tumors, hematologic diseases, or mental disorders; (3) Patients allergic to the study medication; (4) Pregnant or breastfeeding women. The two groups were comparable, with no statistically significant differences in terms of gender, age, or course of disease ($P > 0.05$).

2.2. Methods

2.2.1. Control group

The control group received conventional internal medicine treatment aimed at alleviating symptoms and improving spleen and stomach qi deficiency through comprehensive methods.

(1) Lifestyle Interventions

- (a) Dietary guidance: Patients were advised to adjust their dietary habits, avoiding spicy, greasy, cold, and irritating foods, while increasing their intake of easily digestible, nutrient-rich foods such as millet porridge, yam, and pumpkin. The principles of regular meals, eating in moderation, and avoiding overeating were emphasized.
- (b) Regular rest: Patients were encouraged to get sufficient sleep, with 7–8 hours of sleep per day, and to establish a regular sleep routine, avoiding late nights and overexertion to help restore the body and regulate spleen and stomach function.
- (c) Avoid overexertion: Patients were reminded to balance work and rest in daily life, avoiding prolonged heavy physical or mental labor. Moderate physical activity such as walking and tai chi was encouraged to strengthen the body, but overexertion was to be avoided.

(2) Pharmacotherapy: Based on the patient's condition, appropriate medication was chosen to strengthen the spleen, benefit qi, and regulate spleen and stomach function.

- (a) Jianpi Yiqi Pill: This pill strengthens the spleen, stimulates the appetite, and nourishes the blood. It is mainly used for symptoms such as spleen and stomach weakness, indigestion, and poor appetite. The administration method is oral, 8 pills at a time, 3 times a day.
- (b) Shenling Baizhu Powder: This powder strengthens the spleen and stomach and benefits lung qi. It is suitable for symptoms such as spleen and stomach weakness, reduced appetite, loose stools, shortness of breath, coughing, and fatigue. The administration method is oral, 6–9 grams at a time, 2–3 times a day.

2.2.2. Observation group treatment methods

On the basis of conventional internal medicine treatment, the observation group received additional treatment with the Wenzhong Hewei Formula to further improve clinical efficacy.

- (1) Medication composition: Wenzhong Hewei Formula consists of *Codonopsis pinosula*, *Atractylodes macrocephala*, *Poria cocos* (Schw.) Wolf, licorice, dried ginger, tangerine peel, *Amomum villosum*, *Coptis chinensis*, and more. These herbs work in synergy to warm the middle, strengthen the spleen, harmonize the stomach, relieve pain, regulate qi, and dissolve phlegm.
- (2) Administration and dosage: One dose per day, prepared by decoction and taken in two doses. The specific preparation method is as follows: the herbs are placed in a ceramic pot with an appropriate amount of water and soaked for 30 minutes. The mixture is then brought to a boil over high heat, reduced to low heat, and simmered for about 30 minutes to extract the juice. For the second decoction, an appropriate amount of water is added, boiled over high heat, then simmered over low heat for about 20 minutes to extract the juice. The two extracts are mixed and taken in the morning and evening.

2.2.3. Treatment duration

Both groups were treated for 4 weeks. During the treatment period, patients were closely monitored for symptom changes, adverse reactions, and other conditions, with regular examinations such as blood tests, liver and kidney function tests, and gastroscopy performed to assess treatment efficacy.

2.3. Observation indicators

- (1) Clinical efficacy: Clinical efficacy was evaluated based on the changes in clinical symptom scores before and after treatment, classified into three levels:
 - (a) Marked Effect: Post-treatment symptom score reduction $\geq 70\%$;
 - (b) Effective: Post-treatment symptom score reduction $\geq 30\%$ and $< 70\%$;
 - (c) Ineffective: Post-treatment symptom score reduction $< 30\%$.
- (2) Changes in TCM syndrome scores: Changes in TCM syndrome scores before and after treatment were assessed using TCM syndrome scoring criteria.
- (3) Adverse reactions: The occurrence of adverse reactions such as headache, diarrhea, and vomiting during the treatment period was recorded for both groups.

2.4. Statistical analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 23.0 software. Measurement data were expressed as mean \pm standard deviation (SD), and comparisons between the two groups were conducted using *t*-tests. Count data were expressed as [*n* (%)], and comparisons between the two groups were conducted using chi-squared tests. $P < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

3. Results

3.1. Comparison of TCM syndrome scores between the two groups before and after treatment

Before treatment, there was no statistically significant difference in TCM syndrome scores between the two groups ($P > 0.05$). After 4 weeks of treatment, the TCM syndrome scores of both groups decreased compared to before treatment, with the decrease in the observation group being significantly greater than that in the control group, showing a statistically significant difference ($P < 0.05$). See **Table 1**.

Table 1. Comparison of TCM syndrome scores between the two groups before and after treatment (mean \pm SD, points)

Group	<i>n</i>	TCM syndrome score before treatment	TCM syndrome score after treatment
Observation group	30	15.65 \pm 3.52	12.43 \pm 2.78
Control group	30	15.81 \pm 3.48	8.91 \pm 2.14
<i>t</i> -value		0.0177	5.500
<i>P</i> -value		0.860	< 0.001

3.2. Comparison of total effective rate between the two groups

After the end of treatment, the total effective rate in the observation group was 93.33% (28/30), significantly higher than 70.00% (21/30) in the control group, with a statistically significant difference ($P < 0.05$). See **Table 2**.

Table 2. Comparison of total effective rate between the two groups [*n* (%)]

Group	<i>n</i>	Markedly effective	Effective	Ineffective	Total effective rate
Control group	30	9 (30.00)	12 (40.00)	9 (30.00)	21 (70.00)
Observation group	30	18 (60.00)	10 (33.33)	2 (6.67)	28 (93.33)
χ^2 -value	-	-	-	-	5.455
<i>P</i> -value	-	-	-	-	0.020

3.3. Comparison of adverse reactions between the two groups

During the treatment period, no severe adverse reactions occurred in either group. Only a few patients experienced mild headaches, diarrhea, etc., which resolved on their own after stopping the medication. There was no statistically significant difference in the incidence of adverse reactions between the two groups ($P > 0.05$).

4. Discussion

In TCM, the spleen and stomach are regarded as the foundation of postnatal life, playing a crucial role in transporting and transforming qi and blood. When the spleen and stomach's vital energy is weak, it leads to impaired spleen function, causing inefficient nutrient absorption. Over time, this manifests as reduced appetite, eventually leading to gradual weight loss^[7,8]. Additionally, the deficiency of spleen and stomach energy results in the accumulation of dampness within the body, which in turn leads to loose stools. The qi and blood deficiency caused by spleen-stomach qi deficiency severely impacts individuals' quality of life. Wenzhong Hwei Formula has proven to be highly effective in treating spleen-stomach qi deficiency. This formula is a modified version of the classical Chinese formula, Banxia Xiexin Decoction^[9,10].

Each herb in the Wenzhong Hwei Formula plays a unique role. *Codonopsis pilosula*, commonly used for tonifying qi, strengthens the spleen and lungs and nourishes blood and body fluids. In clinical practice, *Poria cocos* (Schw.) Wolf, tangerine peel, and licorice are also commonly used for strengthening the spleen. *Codonopsis pilosula* helps improve immunity and enhance spleen function; *Atractylodes macrocephala* strengthens the spleen, benefits qi, and eliminates dampness, promoting digestion and eliminating damp pathogens. *Poria cocos* (Schw.) Wolf drains dampness, strengthens the spleen, and calms the mind, helping expel dampness and alleviate spleen-stomach discomfort. Licorice harmonizes the formula and has tonifying, detoxifying, and pain-relieving effects. Dried ginger warms the middle, disperses cold, and stimulates circulation, improving symptoms of spleen and stomach cold deficiency. Tangerine peel regulates qi, strengthens the spleen, and dries dampness, promoting a smooth flow of qi in the stomach. *Amomum villosum* dries dampness, promotes digestion, warms the spleen, and stops diarrhea, enhancing the digestive function of the spleen and stomach. *Coptis chinensis* clears heat, dries dampness, and detoxifies, removing damp heat from the spleen and stomach^[11]. Furthermore, modern pharmacological research confirms the efficacy of these herbs. *Codonopsis pilosula* improves microcirculation, enhances adaptability, regulates gastrointestinal motility, and has anti-ulcer, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory effects. *Poria cocos* (Schw.) Wolf, tangerine peel, and licorice significantly improve gastrointestinal function, while Fructus Aurantii relieves intestinal spasms, regulates gastrointestinal smooth muscle rhythm, and has an anti-ulcer effect^[12].

Spleen-stomach qi deficiency is a common syndrome in TCM internal medicine, with distinct clinical

features. These include loss of appetite, frequent bloating, weakness, and loose stools. Patients often experience poor appetite, even when facing delicious food, and feel no desire to eat. Bloating and discomfort are common, with the abdomen feeling full, as though filled with gas. Weakness is a constant companion, leaving the body fatigued and unable to carry out normal activities. Loose stools are frequent, with stools that are not well-formed and tend to be watery. Wenzhong Hewei Formula has a distinct advantage in treating spleen-stomach qi deficiency by using a combination of herbs to regulate the spleen and stomach from multiple angles. This improves their functional state, alleviating symptoms and improving patients' quality of life. In clinical applications, the Wenzhong Hewei Formula should be used based on individual patient conditions to maximize its therapeutic effect. Modern pharmacological research provides further scientific backing for its use, strengthening its credibility and efficacy in clinical treatment. With further research and application, Wenzhong Hewei Formula is expected to benefit more patients with spleen-stomach qi deficiency.

The results of this study show that Wenzhong Hewei Formula can effectively improve clinical symptoms in patients with spleen-stomach qi deficiency in TCM internal medicine, enhance clinical efficacy, and is safe. This may be related to its functions of warming the middle, dispersing cold, and tonifying the spleen and qi. In this formula, *Codonopsis pinosula*, *Atractylodes macrocephala*, *Poria cocos* (Schw.) Wolf, and licorice are the principal herbs for tonifying the spleen and qi; dried ginger and tangerine peel warm the middle, disperse cold, regulate qi, and relieve pain as the secondary herbs; *Amomum villosum* dries dampness, regulates qi, and awakens the spleen as an adjuvant herb; and *Coptis chinensis* clears heat and dries dampness to prevent warm herbs from damaging yin as the guiding herb. The combination of these herbs achieves the effects of warming the middle, dispersing cold, and tonifying the spleen and qi. However, this study has certain limitations, such as a small sample size, short observation time, and lack of long-term follow-up.

5. Conclusion

Wenzhong Hewei Formula is a safe and effective treatment for spleen-stomach qi deficiency in TCM internal medicine. It significantly improves clinical symptoms and is superior to conventional treatment alone, making it worth promoting in clinical practice. However, due to the limited sample size, further large-scale, multi-center randomized controlled trials are needed to verify the clinical efficacy and safety of Wenzhong Hewei Formula.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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