

Progress of Traditional Chinese Medicine Treatment for Cancer-Related Fatigue in Patients with Colorectal Cancer

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Abstract: Cancer-related fatigue, which is a common symptom among colorectal cancer patients, has a high incidence and it affects the quality of life of these patients. Western medicine still lacks effective treatment means. However, with various methods of intervention and treatment, Chinese medicine has made certain progress in this area, where it has good curative effect in improving fatigue and the quality of life of patients. This article briefly summarizes the main TCM treatment methods for cancer-related fatigue in patients with colorectal cancer in order to provide reference and suggestions for clinical practice.

Keywords: Colorectal cancer; Cancer-related fatigue; TCM treatment; Progress of treatment

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1. Introduction

Cancer-related fatigue is a subjective fatigue or fatigue that is related to cancer or its treatment. It is intense, long-lasting, and inconsistent with activities. Moreover, it is usually not relieved after adequate sleep or rest ^[1]. It has a higher incidence rate among colorectal cancer patients, especially those receiving radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Epidemiological investigations have shown that the incidence is around 60%~90%. It is characterized by non-specific physical, psychological, emotional, and cognitive fatigue, such as lethargy, mental laxity, inattention, reduced activity, and loss of interest without remission after rest. At present, Western medicine largely emphasizes on treating symptoms, thus having poor curative effect. On the other hand, traditional Chinese medicine uses drug therapy and non-drug therapy, in which it has achieved remarkable effects.

2. Traditional Chinese drug therapy for cancer-related fatigue

2.1. Traditional Chinese medicine decoction

Research have shown that the use of specific traditional Chinese medicine decoction can effectively improve the fatigue along with the accompanying symptoms. In a research conducted by Ningning Liu and other researchers ^[2], 36 advanced colorectal cancer patients with CRF were treated with kidney tonifying and detoxifying prescription. The multidimensional scale scores and total scores of Piper Fatigue scale, as well as the various scores and total scores of Brief Fatigue Inventory (BFI-C) scale of the study group were lower than that of the control group. This showed that the prescription can significantly reduce the degree of fatigue. In another study, it has been found that the use of fired glycyrrhiza decoction in 58 gastrointestinal tumor patients with CRF effectively improved their fatigue ^[3].

2.2. Chinese patent medicine

Chinese patent medicine is simple in terms of syndrome differentiation and easy to consume. It is suitable for urgent needs and a modern fast-paced life. Zhen Qi Fu Zheng granule can replenish Qi and Yin, strengthen the body resistance and tonify deficiency, as well as improve the fatigue state of colorectal cancer patients after radical resection ^[4].

2.3. Traditional Chinese medicine injection

Traditional Chinese medicine injection can strengthen the foundation, detoxify and eliminate symptoms, improve patients' immunity, as well as reduce the toxicity and side effects of radiotherapy and chemotherapy. It is widely used in clinics. Xinting Wang and other researchers found that Kangai injection can improve cancer-related fatigue and improve the quality of life of patients ^[5].

3. Traditional Chinese non-drug therapy for cancer-related fatigue

3.1. Acupuncture and moxibustion

Acupuncture and moxibustion are important methods in the treatment of CRF. Acupuncture and moxibustion can dredge meridians, communicate viscera, as well as regulate Yin and Yang. By searching through a large number of databases, Wenwen Che and other researchers found that acupuncture and moxibustion have good effects on CRF ^[6]. In another research, 50 patients with CRF were observed. The results confirmed that acupuncture and moxibustion are effective as adjuvant treatments for CRF, in which they can significantly improve the degree of fatigue ^[7]. Moxibustion can adjust functional disorders by stimulating Qi channel activity. Sixty-six colorectal cancer patients with CRF were included in another study ^[8]. The study proved that moxibustion can significantly relieve fatigue and improve the quality of life of patients with colorectal cancer.

3.2. Acupoint therapy, auriculotherapy, and other therapies

Acupoint and auricular application are auxiliary therapies for the treatment of CRF. They have high clinical acceptance because they are easy to operate and have minimal adverse reactions. Xiangqin Zheng and other researchers ^[9] dynamically observed 120 CRF patients. The results showed that acupoint sticking therapy has a high safety property and can significantly improve the levels of cytokines and neuroendocrine hormones. Shiyuan Chen and other researchers ^[10] found that auricular point sticking can improve the fatigue in patients with gastrointestinal tumors and improve their quality of life. Massage, Chinese medicine foot bath, and other methods also have advantages in the clinical application for treating CRF.

3.3. TCM nursing

Emotional therapy, traditional Chinese medicine diet, and traditional health preservation methods are important links for the prevention and treatment of CRF. Patients are prone to psychological imbalance after cancer. The appropriate control of emotions can effectively prevent negative emotions. In a research conducted by Yanyan Du and another two researchers ^[11], 200 cancer patients were observed. They found that positive psychological intervention can regulate the mental resilience and psychological state of cancer patients as well as relieve the degree of cancer-related fatigue. Under the guidance of traditional Chinese medicine theory, the allocation of certain meals can ensure the nourishment of the body, the vigorous functioning of five internal organs, and the enrichment of Qi and blood. Taijiquan, Baduanjin, Wuqinxi, and others are generally simple and easy to learn. These exercises can promote the smooth flow of Qi and blood as well as strengthen physical fitness. In addition, when applied with other treatments, they can be

used to treat CRF.

4. Conclusion

Cancer-related fatigue is a common complication of colorectal cancer, which seriously affects the physical and mental health of patients. There are no specific drugs in Western medicine to treat CRF. However, traditional Chinese medicine has unique advantages in improving symptoms and the quality of life of patients. It is important to further trace the etiology and pathogenesis of cancer-related fatigue in regard to TCM while exploring and introducing new methods of TCM treatment in order to give full play to the advantages of traditional Chinese medicine.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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