

Review of Daozhuo Massage Therapy for Chronic Prostatitis

Hua-nan Zhang¹, Bin Wang¹, Bing-hao Bao², Qi Zhao¹, Wang-qiang Chen³, Yong Yang^{1*}

¹Dongzhimen Hospital, Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, Beijing 100700, China

²China-Japan Friendship Hospital, Beijing 100029, China

³Zhejiang Hospital of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine, Beijing 310013, China

*Corresponding author: Yong Yang, fuxinyao@126.com

Copyright: © 2023 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: Daozhuo massage therapy for chronic prostatitis is an external treatment method that uses pointing, pressing, pushing, and kneading on specific acupoints to dredge meridians, regulate qi, and activate blood circulation. This therapy has a noticeable clinical therapeutic effect on chronic prostatitis, which is the core syndrome type of blood stasis. This article reviews the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) pathogenesis of chronic prostatitis, the historical overview, clinical application, and operational precautions of Daozhuo massage therapy. It also includes a case study to discuss the significant role, effectiveness, and practical application of Daozhuo massage therapy in the clinical diagnosis and treatment of chronic prostatitis.

Keywords: TCM surgery; Daozhuo massage therapy; Chronic prostatitis; Prostate finger acupoints

Online publication: October 25, 2023

1. Introduction

Chronic prostatitis (CP) is a common disease in male. Clinical symptoms include frequent urination, urinary urgency, pain, and discomfort in the lower abdomen, perineum, and other parts. Long-term development can induce neuropsychiatric symptoms and affect men's physical and mental health. 35–50% of men are affected by chronic prostatitis in their lifetime ^[1]. The core pathogenesis of this disease is kidney deficiency and blood stasis, and the primary treatment principle is to promote blood circulation and remove blood stasis. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) decoctions are used to correct the symptoms, and external treatments such as acupuncture and sitz baths are used as auxiliary treatments. Daozhuo therapy is rooted in acupuncture and acupoint massage techniques, applying pressing, pushing, rubbing, and other techniques on specific acupoints to dredge meridians, regulate qi, and activate blood circulation.

2. Chinese medicine understanding of chronic prostatitis

CP belongs to the “turbid semen” disease category and “stranguria” in traditional Chinese medicine. The

disease is located in the seminal chamber and involves the liver, kidney, bladder, and other organs. The nature of the disease is mainly a mixture of deficiency and excess. The understanding of the pathogenesis of CP in traditional Chinese medicine has evolved through different stages with the deepening of clinical practice [2]. The traditional view is that due to exogenous toxins, pathogens, dampness, and heat, or internal injuries due to diet, dampness and heat are injected, thereby affecting the gasification of the bladder, disturbing the seminal chamber, and mixing the semen and turbidity, eventually leading to the syndrome of turbid semen [3]. It was discovered later that the primary treatment idea was to clear away the heat and remove the dampness, but the clinical efficacy was mixed. The reason was mainly due to changes in modern living conditions and lifestyles. Drinking and sitting for long periods have become everyday living habits. The seminal chamber is located in the lower energizer, and long-term sitting leads to blocked qi and blood in the lower energizer, and blood stasis accumulates in the seminal chamber. In addition, alcohol is cold-natured, thus drinking much of it will lead to deficiency and cold in the lower energizer, leading to cold coagulation of the vessels and blocked qi and blood, and further leading to blood stasis in the seminal chamber. Therefore, kidney deficiency and blood stasis gradually become the core pathogenesis of CP [3]. In recent years, based on the theory of “long-term disease entering the collaterals,” some experts and scholars believe that obstruction of collaterals is the key pathogenesis of CP and has brought the pathogenesis of blood stasis to the research level of collaterals [4].

3. A historical overview of Daozhuo massage therapy

Daozhuo massage therapy is a traditional Chinese medicine method based on the theory of viscera and meridians. It uses finger acupoints instead of traditional acupuncture stimulation. It continuously stimulates specific acupuncture points on the body surface through tapping to dredge qi and blood, and expel turbid pathogen [5], originated from the science of massage manipulation and is a kind of warming technique [6]. Compared with conventional massage therapy, the so-called “turbid-dredging massage” (Daozhuo massage) has the effect of relaxing muscles and, activating collaterals, and regulating the yin and yang of the organs. Its core advantage is to expel pathogens. It uses finger-point massage to expel phlegm, dampness, blood stasis, and other turbid pathogens from the body. In *Behind the Elbow* by Ge Hong of the Jin Dynasty, he proposed using fingers to press the Renzhong acupoint to treat comatose patients. He proposed the concept of “fingers replacing needles.” After hundreds of years of experience accumulation and clinical practice, finger-point massage therapy with the core purpose of “dredging turbidity” gradually formed. With the development of andrology and the clinical practice of male diseases, Daozhuo massage therapy has been widely used in diagnosing and treating CP. Luo [7] found significant improvement of the symptoms of prostate urination and pain through massage therapy; Li *et al.* [8] conducted clinical observations and found that the improved prostate massage therapy can significantly reduce pain and discomfort during prostate massage with noticeable therapeutic effects.

4. Clinical application of Daozhuo massage therapy

Daozhuo massage therapy has noticeable therapeutic effects on various common clinical diseases. Through the manipulation of corresponding acupuncture points and the circulation of meridians, it plays the role of communicating with the inside and outside of the body, moving qi and blood, regulating yin and yang, and can significantly improve symptoms such as obstruction and pain in specific parts [9]. For example, by loosening muscle knots, pressing acupuncture points such as Wangu, Jianjing, and Tianzong can significantly relieve the symptoms of cervical vertigo [9]; pressing Qijie acupoints such as Fengchi, Baihui, and Fengfu can improve insomnia symptoms caused by menopausal syndrome [10]; techniques such as pointing, kneading, pressing,

rubbing, stretching, and pushing have sound clinical effects on patients with lumbar disc herniation and help patients to resolve their pain ^[11].

Applying Daozhuo massage therapy on CP patients by tapping the Ashi point (tender point), Baliao point, Huiyin point, Yinlingquan, Sanyinjiao, and other parts of the lower abdomen, lumbosacral, prostate, and other parts can promote qi, activate blood circulation, and unblock meridians, as well as dredge the turbidity blocked by prostate stasis, clear and empty the prostate gland ducts, and at the same time, use the circulation direction of qi and blood in the meridians to dredge local qi and blood, relax the muscles and activate the collaterals, which can reduce prostate pain and other related symptoms; by tapping Zusanli and Yinlingquan, heating and pressing on the Huiyin points can warm yang and transform qi, help the kidneys to open and close. At the same time, it can strengthen the spleen and qi, diuretic, and dampness, and relieve the dampness pathogens in the lower energizer. It considers both the symptoms and the pathogens, and simultaneously eliminates all pathogens to improve urination symptoms, thereby helping the prostate to return to normal function. Prostate Daozhuo therapy has noticeable clinical effects and is easy to operate, thus it is a practical clinical treatment method.

4.1. Ashi point

Ashi is an acupuncture point in traditional Chinese medicine to treat localized pain or sensitive reaction points. It is also called the Tianying point, the tender point. The Ashi point of the prostate mainly refers to one or more pain points in the lower abdomen, lumbosacral, and prostate areas. The idea of diagnosis and treatment of Ashi point originated from the *Nei Jing: Lingshu·Jingjin* chapter records: “Treatment is to use burnt needles to rob pricks, with knowledge as the number, and pain as the loss” ^[12]. When the disease occurs, the human body’s corresponding qi and blood blockage will occur in a certain part, causing qi and blood to temporarily accumulate in a localized region, resulting in the Ashi phenomenon. Sun Simiao, a famous doctor in the Tang Dynasty, clearly put forward the name “Ashi” in *Essential Formulas for Emergencies Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold*: “There is a method of Ashi, and if a person is in pain, he should pinch it.” Prostate Ashi acupoint therapy uses techniques such as pointing, pressing, and pushing on the Ashi point to promote qi and blood circulation, relax tendons, and unblock meridians. It can dredge the prostate gland ducts through the meridians and promote the returning of normal function of the prostate.

Li Xiang *et al.* divided 94 cases of CP patients into observation group and control group. 47 patients in the control group were given prostate massage treatment. They used the palm of the index finger to massage the prostate across the rectal wall, first massaging the left and right sides, and the order was turning the outer top toward the inner bottom, repeated 3 to 5 times. This was repeated 3 times a week for 4 weeks. Results: The National Institutes of Health Chronic Prostatitis Symptom Index score (NIH-CPSI score) and white blood cell count of the patients in the control group were lower than before treatment ($P < 0.01$), and the quality-of-life score was higher than before treatment ($P < 0.05$). Wang Beiya *et al.* treated 59 CP patients with oral antibiotics and prostate massage. They used their fingertips to massage and squeeze both sides 2 to 3 times from the outside up to the inside down, and lastly massage and squeeze 1 to 2 times from top to bottom along the central sulcus. Observation of the patient’s NIH-CPSI scores before and after treatment showed that the treatment plan can significantly improve the patient’s pain, urination, and other symptom indicators, and various scores, such as quality of life, have improved. Prostate massage therapy has been shown to improve the symptoms of CP.

4.2. Baliao point

Baliao acupoints are located in the first, second, third, and fourth posterior sacral foramina, with eight acupoints on the left and right. They are acupoints on the bladder meridian of Foot-Taiyang. In *Lingshu·Jingmai* records: “The bladder meridian pulse originates from the eye... carries the spine, reaches the middle of the waist, enters

the pelvis, connects the kidneys, and belongs to the bladder; from the middle of the waist, carries the spine downwards, and runs through the buttocks.” “If it enters the popliteal region, the disease will be caused by arteries... there will be pain in the neck, back, waist, crotch, popliteus, kicks, and feet.” The “crotch” refers to the end of the ischium near the anus and perineum. It is proposed that the bladder meridian of Foot-Taiyang circulates through the lower back, the anus, and other prostate projection areas, and can treat pain in the anus and perineum. At the same time, the tapping and rubbing techniques can dredge the meridians, circulate qi and blood, and moisturize the muscles and bones. Therefore, the tapping and massaging of the Baliao point on the bladder meridian can significantly alleviate the pain caused by CP, that is centered on the prostate and radiating to surrounding tissues (such as the lower abdomen, perineum, lumbosacral area, and prostate).

Xu Xiangdong treated 54 CP patients with systematic point-kneading massage techniques centered on tapping and rubbing the Baliao acupoint with a 20-day course of treatment. Among 54 patients, 45 had complete disappearance of clinical symptoms, with a complete effective rate of 83%. It is suggested that spot rubbing and massaging Baliao point can significantly improve pain and urination symptoms caused by prostate diseases. Ma Yaohui *et al.* randomly divided 86 CP patients into observation and control groups. The observation group used acupuncture techniques, including acupuncture at Baliao points (Shangliao point, Ciliao point, Zhongliao point, and Xiliao point). Treatment was three times a week for a total of 4 weeks. The control group was orally treated with diclofenac sodium sustained-release tablets (75 mg, once a day) for four weeks. The results showed that after treatment, the NIH-CPSI total score, pain score, inflammatory factor level, and urinary symptom score of the observation group were lower than those of the control group ($P < 0.05$).

4.3. Huiyin point

The Huiyin point is located in the middle depression between the anus and the genitals. Its name was first seen in the *A-B Classic of Acupuncture and Moxibustion*: “The Huiyin, also known as the screen, is the meeting point between the two yin before defecation and after urination,” the Huiyin point is the starting point of the Ren meridian. Regarding the efficacy of this point, it is also found in *A-B Classic of Acupuncture and Moxibustion* Volume 9: “Difficulty in urination, heat in the orifice, actual pain in the abdominal skin, deficiency will cause itching, and the Huiyin governs it.” Using techniques such as point-kneading massage and finger trembling on the Huiyin point, through the conduction of the Ren vessel, the effect can be conducted to the diseased area, thereby improving urinary, local abdominal pain, itching, and other problems.

Hou Jin *et al.* randomly divided 120 CP patients into control and observation groups. The observation group took acupuncture therapy with the Huiyin point as the primary point, leaving the needle for 20 minutes and continuing treatment for 30 days. The control group was treated with clarithromycin (0.25 g, once a day) and terazosin hydrochloride (2 mg, once a day) for 30 consecutive days. The results showed that the rates of the NIH-CPSI score, self-rating depression scale (SDS) score, white blood cell count, and recurrence of the observation group were lower than those in the control group ($P < 0.05$).

Other experts have clearly stated, based on clinical experience, that taking the midpoint of the line connecting the anus and the root of the scrotum, stabbing straight for 0.5–1.0 inches, or moxa stick moxibustion for 5–10 minutes can effectively improve impotence, premature ejaculation, spermatorrhea, and other male diseases including CP.

4.4. Yinlingquan and Sanyinjiao

Yinlingquan is located on the inner side of the calf, in the depression between the lower inner edge of the tibia and the inner edge of the tibia. It is the joint point of the spleen meridian of Foot-Taiyin. The five elements

belong to water and should be located in the kidneys. Sanyinjiao, on the inside of the calf, 3 inches above the tip of the medial malleolus of the foot, behind the medial edge of the tibia, is the intersection point of the spleen meridian of Foot-Taiyin, liver meridian of Foot-Jueyin, and kidney meridian of Zushaoyin. *Essential Formulas for Emergencies Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold* has the saying “stranguria, moxibustion of Foot-Taiyin Baizhuang, three inches above the medial malleolus,” which can treat various symptoms of the seminal chamber. Applying finger acupoint techniques on Yinlingquan and Sanyinjiao can strengthen the spleen and replenish qi, transport water, and dampness, and achieve the effects of clearing the lower energizer, clearing away heat and dampness; at the same time, it can also strengthen the spleen and regulate blood, and help to dredge qi and blood in tendons, activate blood circulation, and remove blood stasis.

Chen Xiang *et al.* randomly divided 168 patients with chronic non-bacterial prostatitis into observation and control groups. The observation group underwent acupuncture treatment on Yinlingquan, Sanyinjiao, and other acupoints for 25–40 minutes and performed twisting and purging, continuous treatment for 2 months; the control group was treated with prostate tablets (3 7.5 mg, two times a day) for 2 consecutive months. The results showed that the total effective rate of treatment in the observation group was higher than that in the control group, and the difference was statistically significant ($P < 0.05$). Wen Cuifen *et al.* randomly divided 168 cases of CP into treatment group and control group. Patients in the treatment group were treated with warm acupuncture on acupuncture points with Yinlingquan and Sanyinjiao as the main points, once a day for 30 consecutive days; the control group took prostate tablets (two times a day for 30 days), and the results showed that the total effective rate of the treatment group reached 88.10%, and the NIH-CPSI score dropped significantly.

5. Case study

Zhang, male, 32 years old, went to see a doctor on March 17, 2021, mainly due to pain in the lower abdomen and perineum. The pain in the lower abdomen and perineum was more than 3 months, accompanied by frequent urination, urgency, yellow urine, occasional pain during urination, and moist scrotum; he had general appetite, poor sleep, difficulty in falling asleep, and fatigue after waking up, as well as sticky and greasy stools, once every two days. The patient usually had spicy and greasy food; drank alcohol for more than ten years, 3–4 times/week, 200–600 ml/time; had high work pressure and usually stayed up late; denied smoking history and history of food or drug allergies. The tongue was fat and pale, with tooth marks on the edges of the tongue, white and greasy coating, slightly stagnant sublingual veins, and a slow and slippery pulse. No noticeable abnormalities were found in the external genitalia, and there was mild tenderness in the lower abdomen. In the prostate digital examination, the prostate was slightly hard and had nodules. Auxiliary routine prostate examination in March 2021 yielded white blood cell count (WBC) of 26/high power field (HPF), red blood cell count (RBC) of 0/HPF, and phospholipid bodies were moderately reduced. TCM diagnosis found seminal turbidity, syndrome differentiation is damp-heat and blood stasis syndrome. Western medicine diagnosis was chronic prostatitis. Treatment method included clearing away heat and dampness, activating blood circulation, and removing blood stasis. For treatment with traditional Chinese medicine decoction, the prescription is as follows: 15 g of *Astragalus membranaceus*, 12 g of *Salvia miltiorrhiza*, 3 g of leech, 12 g of *Dioscorea septemloba*, 15 g of *Acorus calamus*, 10 g of *Plantago* seed, 15 g of *Poria*, 10 g of *Cortex Phellodendri*, 9 g of *Atractylodes*, 12 g Medicinal *Cyathula* root, 20 g of raw *Coix* seed, 16 g of raw licorice. 7 doses of the decoction in water were made, one dose/day, and taken warm in the morning and evening.

On March 24, 2021, he reported that frequent urination and urgency symptoms were relieved, his sleep

improved, and the pain was relieved but still affected his life. The tongue was light and fat, dark in color, with tooth marks still present, and the coating was white and slightly greasy. *Atractylodes* rhizome and *Cuscuta* were removed for the second treatment, and 15 g of *Corydalis* and 10 g of white peony root were added. 28 doses of the decoction in water were made, one dose/day, taken warm in the morning and evening. In conjunction with prostate Daozhuo massage therapy, massage, finger trembling, and other therapies are performed on the prostate's Ashi point, Huiyin point, Baliao point, Yinlingquan point, Sanyinjiao point, once a week for 4 consecutive weeks as a course of treatment. Patient receiving the first massage felt obvious tenderness and discharged pus-like white prostatic fluid.

During the third consultation on April 21, 2021, the prostate fluid routine test yielded 4/HPF WBC, 0/HPF RBC, and slightly reduced phospholipid bodies. Appetite and sleep were improved, scrotal moisture was reduced, and frequent urination and urgency symptoms were relieved. He complained that the pain was more severe 2 days after the first massage, and the pain symptoms were significantly relieved 2 days after the massage compared to the beginning. After receiving four prostate massage therapies, the patient's pain symptoms were eliminated. He was advised to have a regular and healthy schedule, avoid sitting for long periods, and exercise moderately. There was no recurrence during recent follow-up visits.

Note: CP is a common urinary tract disease in men, which is related to the liver, kidneys, bladder, and other internal organs. Traditional Chinese medicine believes that CP disease is located in the seminal chamber, and it is usually caused by liver-kidney deficiency, disturbing the kidney essence; or injected dampness and heat, and pathogenic factors disturbing the seminal chamber; or long-term illness consuming yin, excessive heat from yin deficiency, and heat disturbing the sperm chamber. The patient usually liked to eat fatty, sweet, and rich-flavored foods, drank too much, and overate, which damaged the spleen. The spleen is in poor health and generates dampness. The dampness and heat are concentrated in the seminal chamber and bladder, resulting in symptoms including frequent urination, urgency, scrotal moisture, long-lasting pathogens turbidity, blockage of meridians, qi stagnation, and blood stasis, and symptoms of pain in the lower abdomen and perineum. A fat tongue with a dull color, tooth marks on the sides of the tongue, with white and greasy coating, slightly stagnant sublingual veins, and a slippery pulse are also manifestations of damp-heat blood stasis.

6. Conclusion

In summary, prostate Daozhuo massage therapy can exert unique advantages in the clinical syndrome differentiation, diagnosis, and treatment of CP. The core of its syndrome differentiation function is to determine the type of TCM syndrome based on the four diagnostic methods of traditional Chinese medicine through palpation of the prostate and patient symptom feedback. The core of its therapeutic effect is to massage local Ashi points and other acupoints on the prostate to expel turbid pathogens in the prostate ducts and meridians in the body, dredge qi and blood, regulate the internal organs, and improve prostate-related symptoms, mainly pain. However, due to the lack of fundamental experiments and large samples, and multi-center clinical studies, high-quality evidence-based evidence has yet to be supported, and further research is required.

Funding

Beijing Traditional Chinese Medicine Science and Technology Development Fund Project (No. WHZX-2020-104)

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Mo X, Wang B, Li H, et al., 2015, Progress in the Treatment of Chronic Prostatitis with External Therapy. *Global Chinese Medicine*, 8(07): 878–883.
- [2] Nickel JC, Nyberg LM, Hennenfent M, 1999, Research Guidelines for Chronic Prostatitis: Consensus Report from the First National Institutes of Health International Prostatitis Collaborative Network. *Urology*, 54(2): 229–233.
- [3] Li H, Han F, Li Y, 2008, Study on the Distribution of TCM Syndrome Types in 918 Cases of Chronic Prostatitis. *Beijing Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2008(06): 416–418.
- [4] Zhu L, Li P, Sun Z, 2018, A Brief Exploration of Chronic Prostatitis Based on the Theory of Collateral Disease. *Clinical Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 30(05): 835–837.
- [5] Yu T, 2003, *Massage Manipulation*, China Union Medical University Press, Shanghai, 84–85.
- [6] Lu X, 2006, A Brief History of the Development of Ancient Chinese Folk Massage Therapy. *Chinese Folk Therapy*, 2006(08): 3–4.
- [7] Luo W, 2008, Self-Massage to Treat Prostate Disease. *Chinese Folk Therapy*, 2008(06): 17.
- [8] Li Q, Fu W, You X, et al., 2019, Clinical Observation of Improved Prostate Massage Method. *Chinese Journal of Andrology*, 25(12): 1143–1146.
- [9] Lu Q, Fu M, Gao X, et al., 2017, Clinical Effect of Acupoint and Meridian Therapy in Treating Cervical Vertigo. *China Medical Herald*, 14(34): 86–88 + 93.
- [10] Jia C, Lin M, Zhang J, 2010, Clinical Observation on 56 Cases of Menopausal Syndrome Insomnia Treated with Acupoint Therapy. *Liaoning Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 37(01): 147–148.
- [11] Han S, Wang S, Zhou H, 2013, Clinical Research Progress on Massage Therapy for Lumbar Disc Herniation. *Chinese Folk Therapy*, 21(11): 95–96.
- [12] Zhang X, Wang M, Gao X, 2018, The Past and Present of Ashi Point. *Chinese Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 33(07): 3009–3011.

Publisher's note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.