

## Treating Prostate Pain Via the Liver

by  
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As the Baby Boom generation ages, prostate problems are becoming more and more common in Western acupuncturists' offices. Statistically, the Baby Boom is the generation that currently makes the most use of acupuncture and Chinese medicine in the West, and the leading edge of the Baby Boom is now 54 years old. Prostate problems are generally divided into three types: 1) prostatitis, 2) benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH), and 3) prostate cancer. Prostate pain is mainly associated with prostatitis or inflammation of the prostate, and prostatitis is divided into acute bacterial prostatitis, chronic bacterial prostatitis, acute nonbacterial prostatitis, and chronic nonbacterial prostatitis. There is also a condition referred to as prostatodynia which is a noninfectious, noninflammatory condition primarily seen in younger men. Prostate problems in older men, such as BPH, are usually treated via the kidneys. However, prostate problems in middle-aged and younger men, *i.e.*, prostatitis and prostatodynia, should more often be treated via the liver, and especially prostate pain due to chronic nonbacterial prostatitis.

So-called prostate pain mainly manifests in the perineal region and is often aggravated by sitting. However, it may also refer to the lumbosacral region, lower abdomen, anus, penis, and medial regions of the thighs. In Chinese medicine, prostate pain associated with prostatitis and prostatodynia usually falls under the categories of low back pain, strangury condition, and abdominal pain. It is a statement of fact in Chinese medicine that, "The liver rules the

gathering of sinews." The gathering of sinews (*zong jin*) is a synonym for the penis. In addition, the foot jue yin liver channel runs up the medial side of the legs to connect with the reproductive organs. This means that the channels and network vessels of the liver have a close relationship with the reproductive organs. The main disease mechanisms associated with acute prostatitis are damp heat, stasis, and turbidity causing obstruction and stagnation. As it is said in Chinese medicine, "If there is free flow, there is no pain, and if there is pain, there is no free flow." If such an acute damp heat condition transforms in damp turbidity, its course may become protracted, insidious, and difficult to cure. If this condition continues for a long time, the blood vessels' movement and transportation will lose their smooth and easy flow, instead engendering stasis. This then results in urinary pain, penis pain, lower abdominal pain, testicular heaviness and distention, and/or perineal distention and discomfort. In this case, when looked at from a channel and network vessel pattern discrimination point of view, it is the liver vessels which are not freely flowing. Therefore, the treatment principles should be to course the liver and dispel stasis. If there are clear and present signs and symptoms of lingering damp heat, this heat should be cleared and this dampness eliminated. If there is dampness and turbidity, the dampness should be seeped and the turbidity transformed, and if there is lower abdominal chilly pain, the channels should be warmed and cold should be scattered.

### ***Shu Gan Zhi Tong Tang***

Xu Zhi-liang and Zeng Jin-xiong, in an article titled, "Experience Treating Prostate Pain Via

the Liver,” published in *Fu Jian Zhong Yi Yao (Fujian Chinese Medicine & Medicinals)*, #2, 2000, p. 36, recommend a self-composed formula called *Shu Gan Zhi Tong Tang* (Course the Liver & Stop Pain Decoction) for coursing the liver and dispelling stasis, clearing heat and eliminating dampness. Based on my own clinical experience treating prostate pain in middle-aged males, I think this formula is a good guiding one for this condition. It consists of: Radix Bupleuri (*Chai Hu*), 12g, Radix Albus Paeoniae Lactiflorae (*Bai Shao*) and Radix Rubrus Paeoniae Lactiflorae (*Chi Shao*), 12g each, Fructus Immaturus Citri Aurantii (*Zhi Shi*), 10g, Radix Glycyrrhizae (*Gan Cao*), 5g, Cortex Radicis Moutan (*Dan Pi*), 10g, Radix Pseudoginseng (*San Qi*), 3g (swallowed with the decoction), Caulis Sargentodoxae (*Hong Teng*), 10g, Herba Lycopi Lucidi (*Ze Lan*), 10g, Semen Pruni Persicae (*Tao Ren*), 10g, Semen Coicis Lachryma-jobi (*Yi Yi Ren*), 18g, Semen Benincasae Hispidae (*Dong Gua Ren*), and Herba Pyrolae (*Lu Ti Cao*), 12g.

This formula is made from *Si Ni San* (Four Counterflows Powder) with added flavors. Within it, Bupleurum disinhibits the qi mechanism at the same time as it courses the liver. It is also able to guide the other medicinals into the liver channel. Peony’s sour flavor supplements liver wood by nourishing the blood. Only if the liver receives sufficient blood to nourish it can it do its duty of coursing and discharge. Therefore, when Bupleurum and Peony are combined, they harmonize the liver, thus promoting the the coursing of the liver qi and the out-thrusting of congestion and stagnation. When Peony is combined with Licorice, sour and sweet transform yin as well as relax urgency and stop pain. Immature Aurantium eliminates lower abdominal fullness and oppression, sagging and distention. Moutan is acrid, bitter, and slightly cold. It enters the three channels of the heart, liver, and kidneys where it clears heat and cools the blood, quickens the blood and scatters stasis. The combination of the three blood-quickening medicinals,

Pseudoginseng, Sargentodoxa, and Lycopus, strengthen the functions of this formula to quicken the blood and transform stasis to the point where it can now dispel stasis and stop pain. Persica likewise quickens the blood and dispels stasis. In addition, it moistens the intestines and frees the flow of the stool. This promotes the elimination of both damp turbidity and blood stasis via defecation. Coix, Benicasa, and Pyrola are all sweet, bland, and slightly cold. They are able to seep dampness and expel turbidity. When all these medicinals are used together, they course the liver and dispel stasis, clear heat and transform dampness.

If damp heat is more prominent, one can add Radix Gentianae Scabrae (*Long Dan Cao*), Rhizoma Polygoni Cuspidati (*Hu Zhang*), Herba Patriniae Heterophyllae Cum Radice (*Bai Jiang Cao*), Rhizoma Dioscoreae Hypoglaucae (*Bi Xie*), and *Liu Yi San* (Six [to] One Powder) in order to disinhibit dampness, transform turbidity, and free the flow of strangury. If blood stasis is marked, one can add Squama Manitis Pentadactylis (*Chuan Shan Jia*), Flos Carthami Tinctorii (*Hong Hua*), Spina Gleditschiae Chinensis (*Zao Jiao Ci*), and Rhizoma Corydalis Yanhusuo (*Yan Hu Suo*) in order to quicken the blood, transform stasis, and stop pain. If there is simultaneous kidney vacuity, one can add Cortex Eucommiae Ulmoidis (*Du Zhong*), Fructus Lycii Chinensis (*Gou Qi Zi*), Semen Cuscutae Chinensis (*Tu Si Zi*), Fructus Rosae Laevigatae (*Jin Ying Zi*), Fructus Corni Officinalis (*Shan Zhu Yu*), and Radix Dipsaci (*Xu Duan*) to supplement the kidneys, secure and astringe. If the central qi is falling downward and perineal sagging and pain are marked, then one can add Radix Astragali Membranacei (*Huang Qi*) and Rhizoma Cimicifugae (*Sheng Ma*) to upbear and lift the yang qi which has fallen downward.

### Representative case history:

The patient was a 38 year old male worker who was initially examined on Apr. 20, 1996. He had

been suffering from perineal distention, fullness, aching, and pain for the last year. This was lessened when he took hot water sitz baths. The patient's urine was also not smoothly flowing and he had ejaculatory pain. The man's tongue was dark with static spots and thin, white fur, and his pulse was choppy. The patient had no history of any urinary tract infection and digital prostate and prostatic fluid exams were both negative. Because this man had been a truck driver for 15 years, there was always pressure on his perineal region. Over time, this had led to obstruction and stagnation of the qi and blood in that area. The liver channel qi and blood were not smoothly flowing and damp turbidity was also obstructing and stagnating. Hence he was not able to open the orifices of the two yin (*i.e.*, anus and urethra), and his bladder qi transformation was obstructed. This then led to piercing pain in his perineal area when he urinated.

Based on the above signs and symptoms, the treatment principles were to course the liver and dispel stasis, clear heat and transform dampness. For this, *Shu Gan Zhi Tong Tang* described above was administered. After taking these medicinals for 15 days, the perineal area pain was reduced and there was no pain with intercourse. In addition, his urination was now smoothly and easily flowing. After stopping the above treatment, the man went back to driving a truck. On follow-up after one year, there had been no recurrence.

For more information on the treatment of prostate disorders, see *A Handbook of TCM Urology & Male Sexual Dysfunction* by Anna Lin and Sionneau & Lü's *The Treatment of Disease in TCM, Vol. 6: Diseases of the Urogenital System & Proctology*, both available from Blue Poppy Press.

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