Acu News

"Keep your vitality. A life without health is like a river without water." - Maxime Lagace

The Yin and Yang of Back Pain; Stagnation Pain

In Chinese medical theory, the most basic distinction between types of pain is whether they are due to '**deficiency**' or '**stagnation**,' both at the site of pain and systemically. In this article, we'll look at what stagnation pain means.

Most of the stagnation-types of pain involve traumatic injury or a palpable-pathogenic process. This is an area where acupuncture and its associated modalities truly shine, treating traumatic injury such as fractures, sprains, infection of tissue and acute pain efficiently and gently.

1) Starting from the most superficial type of stagnation, **Qi stagnation** involves a type of movement that becomes stuck. Most often it manifests as a tendency to have shoulder and neck pain due to stress which goes away with conscious relaxation and mild exercise. In this case, the muscle tissue itself has not yet been affected. The most common treatments for Qi stagnation involve **stress-relieving** acupuncture, **trigger-point** and **motor point acupuncture**, **massage** and **exercises.** Qi stagnation is a component of all the other types of stagnation as well.

2) The next level of stagnation involves the blood. A common example of **blood stagnation** is a muscle that has been tense and has formed a series of knots in the tissue, disallowing the full relaxation of the muscle, often present in low back and shoulder muscles. Blood stagnation is treated with **strong local acupuncture**, **cupping** and **gua sha** to physically move the blood. It often presents in combination with heat, cold, damp and phlegm stagnation.

3) Heat is part of the inflammatory process, along with redness, swelling and pain. **Heat stagnation** can be a secondary effect of lingering blood stagnation that starts to become inflamed, or it can be a rapid onset inflammation or infection. Heat stagnation is treated with **cooling techniques**, using **acupuncture** distally to relieve heat and inflammation while applying **cooling herbal poultices** and/or **liniments topically**. Internal herbs can be used to treat infection and inflammation concurrently. Heat is often combined with damp and blood stagnation.

4) Cold stagnation can either have a fast or a slow origin of onset, with the fast type of onset a physical exposure to cold causing the tissues to tense and the local cellular metabolism to slow down. This causes sharp stabbing pains similar to muscle cramps, accompanied by a deep ache. This can be seen with low back pain after a long bike ride with the low back improperly covered, riding through a cold and rainy environment. Cold stagnation is treated with **warming topical liniments** and **poultices** as well as **heat packs** and **moxibustion** combined with **acupuncture** to relax and **warm the area**. Cold stagnation is often combined with blood or phlegm stagnation.

5) Damp stagnation involves swelling that is still soft, as in the puffiness after a sprain or around a repetitive-motion injury. This can be found around the shoulder blades from overuse of the arms or across the whole low back after intense physical labor. Dampness is treated with **cupping**, **heat poultices**, **local acupuncture** and **constitutional body points** for eliminating dampness.

6) The most bizarre and deep-seated type is **phlegm stagnation**: a type of hard nodule or mass in the center of a deep bruise, a fatty lipoma, or the swelling of vertebrae involved in arthritis. Blood and Qi stagnation must both exist prior to the formation of phlegm stagnation. This potentially takes the longest to resolve due to the need to diminish the tissue accumulation. Strong **local acupuncture**, **plum-blossom acupuncture**, **cupping**, **gua sha**, **moxibustion** and **topical plasters** and **soaks** are all used to treat this more difficult type of stagnation.

These six types of stagnation interact with each other and change over the course of an injury or illness. Ask me today about questions or if you want more information on qi stagnation.

A Fine Balance Health Care
Stacey King
2117 Summerfield Blvd SE, Airdrie
403-540-8878
www.afinebalancehealthcare.ca

© Copyright Acupuncture Media Works/AcuDownloads, All Rights Reserved. The information contained within the AcuNews newsletter is only used to educate and inform. This newsletter is not a substitute for the advice of a licensed and registered health care provider. Seek prompt attention for emergencies. Consult a health care provider for specific health concerns, and before starting a diet, cleanse or exercise routine.

Photo Credits: ©iStock.com/bluejayphoto, ©iStock.com/MarsBars, ©iStock.com/microgen, ©iStock.com/kieferpix, ©iStock.com/kerdkanno, ©iStock.com/vgajic