# Acupuncture and Chinese Medical Treatment of Nosebleeds

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### Introduction

Bleeding from the nose, or epistaxis, is secondary to a wide variety of primary disorders. The most common are local infections (vestibulitis, rhinitis, and sinusitis), systemic infections (scarlet fever, typhoid fever, malaria), drying of the nasal mucous membrane, blunt or digital trauma (picking the nose), arteriosclerosis, hypertension, and bleeding tendencies associated with aplastic anemia, leukemia, thrombocytopenia, liver disease and hereditary coagulopathies. Often, pinching the nose for 5 to 10 minutes may be sufficient to stop the bleeding. If this is not sufficient, a cotton impregnated with a vasoconstrictor such as phenylephrine can be applied. Also, the bleeding point, most likely to be found in the vessel plexus in the anteroinferior septum, may be cauterized. Exceptions are arteriosclerosis and hypertension in which bleeding is commonly posterior in the inferior meatus; hence, it is also difficult to control. Clearly, besides stopping bleeding during acute cases, the underlying problem, if it can be identified, should be corrected.

Chinese medicine differentiates between two types of nose bleeding: bi nu and bi hong. Bi nue can literally translated as spontaneous blood ejection (nue) at the nose (bi); more commonly, this is simply referred to as nosebleeds. Bi hong's literal translation is nose flood. The difference between the two is that bi nu refers to bleeding of the nose with only a small amount of blood loss; bi hong, on the other hand, refers to bleeding of the nose with a large amount of blood loss. The most commonly seen Chinese medical pattern for nose bleeding are lung heat, stomach heat, or liver fire. The nose is the orifice of the lung and the stomach and liver channels both connect to the nose. Heat in any one of these viscera may ascends along the channel and stir the blood in the vicinity of the nose. Hot blood moves frenetically and seeps outside the vessels; hence, bleeding arises. Heat in the lungs is due to wind heat evils attacking or due to ascending heat from another viscera, most commonly the liver and stomach, that becomes trapped in this "canopy of all viscera and bowels." Stomach heat accumulates if one eats too many greasy and spicy hot foods, consumes too much alcohol, or eats excessively. Alternatively, heat that has transformed in the liver secondary to liver depression qi stagnation may transfer to the stomach or, as outlined above, may become fire and flare up along the liver channel to lead to bleeding of the nose. An alternate mechanism for nose bleeding is spleen vacuity. The spleen contains the blood. If this function becomes weak, the blood seeps out of the vessels and bleeding of the nose may appear. This last mechanism is discussed less frequent in the Chinese medical literature and therefore is most likely also seen less frequently clinically. Symptoms vary according to the type of nose bleeding. If it is due to frenetic movement secondary to heat in either the lungs, stomach, or liver, the blood is bright red and there manifest accompanying signs of heat. Depending on the viscera, or group thereof, involved in the disease mechanism, such signs of heat vary. In wind heat invading the lungs, signs such as fever with simultaneous aversion to wind, sore throat present. If heat is trapped in the lungs, signs such as a red face, constipation, and yellow nasal discharge or nasal dryness, and thirst present. If the underlying mechanism is stomach heat, symptoms such as increased appetite, thirst, constipation, and inflamed gums present. Liver fire commonly manifests with irritability and red eyes. In all cases of heat, the pulse is rapid and the tongue is red. The vacuity type nosebleeds (i.e., spleen vacuity not containing the blood) manifest with pale colored blood and accompanying spleen vacuity signs, such as lack of energy, loss of appetite, possibly loose stools, and a forceless pulse.

## Acupuncture Treatment:

Li Lian-ying reports in an article that appeared in the *Zhong Guo Zhen Jiu<sup>1</sup>* on his 10 years of experience of treating nose bleeding with the two acupuncture points *Shang Xiang* (GV 23) and *Yin Bai* (Sp1). During the year 1977 and 1997, he treated 15 cases suffering from acute nose bleeding. Out of the 15 cases, 9 were male and 6 female; nine cases were between the ages of 9 and 15 years, 4 between the ages of 16 and 40 and 2 cases older than 40. The onset was acute in all cases and blood loss varied between 100 to 500mL. His method of treatment, treatment results, a representative case history, and a short discussion follow.

### Method of Treatment

The points Dr. Li selected were *Shang Xiang* (GV 23) and *Yin Bai* (Sp 1). *Shang Xiang* was needled horizontally to a depth of 0.5 to 0.8 inches; *Yin Bai* was needled perpendicularly to a depth of 0.5 inches. Both points were then strongly stimulated until the bleeding stopped; thereafter, they were retained for 5 to 15 minutes.

#### Treatment Results

Out of the fifteen cases, 10 experienced a marked effect. This meant that after one treatment the bleeding stopped without the need of cotton to stop up the nose or other bleeding stopping drugs and that bleeding did not recur for at least one week. Five cases experienced some effect. This meant that even though the bleeding stopped after one treatment, it recurred within one week and repeated needling or bleeding stopping drugs had to be used. None of the cases experienced no effect.

## Representative Case History

The patient was a 12 year old male named Li. He was brought to the clinic on August 12, 1978, after his nose had been bleeding for an entire hour. Running cold water over the nose, using ephedrine drops were not effective. Hence, a cotton was used to stop up the nose. However, this caused pain which the boy could not endure and it did not stop the bleeding either. Thus, needling on *Shang Xian* and *Yin Bai* was performed. After half a minute, the bleeding stopped. The needles were retained for another fifteen minutes before they were withdrawn. At that time, the bleeding did not recur and the boy went back to school. No recurrences were noted within the following week.

### Discussion

Emergency acupuncture on *Shang Xian* and *Yin Bai* with strong stimulation can immediately stop nose bleeding. *Shang Xian* is a point on the Governing Vessel Channel; it extinguishes wind and clears heat, calms the mind and frees the nose. Draining this point clears nose heat and it can thus treat unstoppable bleeding of mouth and nose. *Yin Bai* is a point on the foot greater yin spleen channel; it fortifies the spleen and calms the spirit, regulates the channel's blood containing effect. Draining this point clears and drains stomach fire and guides blood to move downward and it can thus treat blood ejection and spontaneous external bleeding<sup>2</sup>. The combination of these two points effectively treats bleeding of the nose. It is an especially good treatment for acute nose bleeding as it effectively stops the bleeding.

Chinese Medicine

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Li Lian-ying, "Acupuncutre on *Shang Liao* and *Yin Bai* to Rapidly Stop Bleeding of the Nose in 15 Cases," *Zhong Guo Zhen Jiu (Chinese [Journal] of Acupuncture and Moxibustion)*, #12, 1998, p.738.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Blood ejection (*tu xue*) ...

In a very short article titled "The Prevention and treatment of Nosebleeds with *Zhi Zi Hua Tang* (Gardenia flower Decoction)," Xu Chang-yan explains his simple method of treating and preventing nosebleeds. The formula he used, a representative case history, and a short discussion follow.

## Formula and Method of Preparation

The exceedingly simple formula *Zhi Zi Hua Tang* consists of the two ingredients Flos Gardeniae Jasminoidis (*Zhi Zi Hua*) and lean pork meat. After the green petals are removed from the flower, 50 flowers should be cooked with a suitable amount of chopped lean pork meat. This decoction should be consumed once daily with three days constituting one treatment course.

## Representative Case History

The patient was a 16 year old male student. Daily nose bleeding episodes are precipitated by common colds, eating spicy foods and even little exercise. Taking many different Chinese and Western medicines prescribed by ENT specialists lead to only very brief periods of relieve. Daily occurrences recurred. Hence, in May of 1997, the boy was prescribed the above formula. After taking three decoctions, the nosebleeds stopped and had not recurred until the writing of this short article. Discussion

The nose is the orifice of the lung. Heat evils depressed in the lungs steams the clear orifice above; this leads to frenetic movement of the blood, and hence causes frequent nose bleeding. The gardenia flower's color is white and it enters the lungs; its nature is cold and it clears heat; furthermore, all flowers have a dissipating nature; hence, it clears and dissipates depressed heat within the lungs, cools the blood and stop bleeding. Lean pork meat enriches yin and moistens dryness. If the two are used together, they clear heat and stop bleeding, enrich yin and moisten dryness. Hence, this formula treats as well as prevents recurrences of nosebleeds. Furthermore, because this is a food decoction, it is readily accepted and relatively easy to take.

#### Other Chinese Medicine Formulas

Considering the fact that Chinese medicine discriminates different patterns of nose bleeding which not all can be treated by the simple formula listed above, I list a few more practical formulas which are listed in the *Xin Xue Guan Xue Ye Bing Shi Yong Fang (Practical Formulas for Cardiovascular and Hematologic Diseases*)<sup>3</sup> under the disease heading *bi nue*, nosebleeds.

For nosebleeds due to wind heat invading the lungs accompanied by aversion to cold, fever, headache, bodily pains, cough, panting, expectoration of phlegm, dry mouth, painful throat, stagnant and rough stools, a red tongue with a yellow fur, and a floating and rapid pulse one can use *Sang Ju Yin* (Mulberry Leaf and Chrysanthemum Beverage): Folium Mori Albae (*Sang Ye*), Flos Chrysanthemi Morifolii (*Ju Hua*), Herba Menthae Haplocalycis (*Bo He*), Radix Platycodi Grandiflori (*Jie Geng*), Semen Pruni Armeniacae (*Xing Ren*), Fructus Forsythiae Suspensae (*Lian Qiao*), Rhizoma Phragmitis Communis (*Lu Gen*), Radix Glycyrrhizae Uralensis (*Gan Cao*).

This formula clears heat and discharges the lungs, cools the blood and stops bleeding. Based on Bob Flaws' *A Handbook of Chinese Pediatrics*, one can add Rhizoma Imperatae Cylindricae (*Bai Mao Gen*) and ??? in order to strengthen the bleeding stopping properties of this formula.

For nosebleeds due to replete fire, one can use *Mao Gen Huang Qin Zhi Zi Tang* (Imperata, Scutellaria, and Gardenia Decoction): Rhizoma Imperatae Cylindricae (*Bai Mao Gen*), Radix Scutellariae Baicalensis Carbonisatus (*Huang Qin Tan*), Fructus Gardeniae Jasminoidis Carbonisatus (*Zhi Zi Tan*), Herba Cirsii

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Zhao Guo-ping, ed., *Xin Xue Guan Xue Ye Bing Shi Yong Fang (Practical Formulas for Cardiovascular and Hematologic Diseases*). 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Jiangsu: Jiangsu Science and Technology Press, 1994.

Segeti (*Xiao Ji*), Radix Rubiae Cordifoliae (*Qian Cao Gen*), Nodus Nelumbinis Nuciferae (*Ou Jie*). This formula drains fire and clears heat, cools the blood and stops bleeding.

For nosebleeds that are due to spleen vacuity with non-containment of blood within the vessels and are accompanied by shortness of breath and scant essence spirit, one can use *Ren Shen Yin Zi* (Ginseng Drink): Tuber Ophiopogonis Japonici (*Mai Men Dong*), Radix Ginseng (*Ren Shen*), Radix Angelicae Sinensis (*Dang Gui*), Radix Astragali Membranacei (*Huang Qi*), Radix Albae Paeoniae Lactiflorae (*Bai Shao*), Radix Glycyrrhizae Uralensis (*Gan Cao*), Fructus Schizandrae Chinensis (*Wu Wei Zi*). This formula supplements the spleen and contains the blood.

In the event that heat has dried up the fluids, depleted yin and consumed qi, one can use *Sheng Liao Ji Su San* (Uncooked Ingredients Stachydis Powder): Folium Stachydis Baicalensis (*Ji Su Ye*)<sup>4</sup>, Radix Astragali Membranacei (*Huang Qi*), uncooked Radix Rehmanniae Glutinosae (*Sheng Di*), Gelatinum Asinii (*E Jiao*), Rhizoma Imperatae Cylindricae (*Bai Mao Gen*), Tuber Ophiopogonis Japonici (*Mai Dong*), Radix Platycodi Grandiflori (*Jie Geng*), Pollen Typhae (*Pu Huang*), Bulbus Fritillariae Thunbergi (*Zhe Bei Mu*), Radix Glycyrrhizae Uralensis (*Gan Cao*), Radix Zingiberis Officinalis Recens (*Sheng Jiang*). This formula boosts qi and nourishes yin, cools the blood and stops bleeding.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Folium Stachydis Baicalensis (*Ji Su Ye*) is acrid and slightly ewarm in nature and enters the lung channel. It has the function to course wind, rectify qi, stop bleeding and disperse inflammation (*yan*). Recommended dosage is 9 to 15 grams in dried form and 15 to 30 grams of the fresh leaves.