

# Understanding and Treatment of Insomnia in Traditional Chinese Medicine

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## Abstract

According to the survey, "61% of the global adults have some kind of medical problems that affect sleep, while in China, the national average sleep index is 66.2%. Generally speaking, poor sleep exists. In terms of sleep time, 30.9% of the people need more than 30 minutes to fall asleep, 0.9% need drugs to help them fall asleep, and more than 60% of the post-90s have sleep problems, Young people are becoming a high risk group of insomnia Through the overall discussion on the etiology, pathogenesis and dialectical treatment of insomnia in traditional Chinese medicine, we hope that it can better help the comprehensive understanding and treatment of insomnia in clinical traditional Chinese medicine.

## Keywords

Insomnia Etiology; Pathogenesis; Syndrome Differentiation and Treatment.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Insomnia Refers to a Kind of Disease that Often can't Get Normal Sleep

The main symptoms are lack of sleep time or poor sleep quality, and fatigue after waking up. In light cases, it can be seen that it is difficult to sleep, it is not deep, it is difficult to sleep again after waking up, or sometimes it is difficult to wake up when sleeping, and in serious cases, it can't sleep all night [1] [2] Insomnia symptoms are relatively single, so it is not difficult to diagnose. The World Health Organization defines insomnia as three nights in a week with difficulty in falling asleep or maintaining normal sleep, or waking up without effective relief of fatigue, fatigue, cognitive dysfunction, poor social function, and symptoms lasting for more than three months. With the development of modern society, electronic technology products are flooding in all aspects of our lives, increasing recreational activities, accelerating the pace of life, increasing mental stress, increasing incidence rate of insomnia, and bringing about a series of problems caused by insomnia, such as people's lives, work, learning and mental health. Modern medicine mostly uses sedative hypnotics in the treatment of insomnia, such as estazolam, lorazepam, dexzopiclone, etc. if long-term application has certain toxic and side effects, the efficacy will gradually weaken, and even increase the treatment dose, it can not get normal effect Sleep. After thousands of years of trials and tribulations, traditional Chinese medicine has unique advantages in understanding and treating insomnia in the long history.

### 1.2. Etiology and Pathogenesis

According to different regions and times, physicians of different dynasties have different understanding of the cause of insomnia, such as Huangdi Neijing: "stomach disharmony leads to restlessness". It not only records insomnia for the first time, but also expounds that insomnia is mainly caused by the disorder of Qi in the stomach. In the Ming Dynasty, Zhang Jingyue's Jingyue Quanshu recorded that "sleep originates from Yin, and God is the master of it. When God is calm, he will sleep, and when he is disturbed, he will not sleep. One of the reasons why

he is disturbed is due to evil Qi, and the other is due to insufficient Ying Qi [3] He thinks that the main causes of insomnia are external evil disturbing the spirit and Ying Yin deficiency. Li zhongzi's Yizong must read in Ming Dynasty has different records: "there are about five reasons for insomnia, one is Qi deficiency, one is Yin deficiency, one is phlegm stagnation, one is water stagnation, one is stomach disharmony [3] He believes that qi deficiency, yin deficiency, phlegm stagnation, water dampness and stomach qi disharmony are the main causes of insomnia. Their understanding of the etiology and pathogenesis of insomnia, on the basis of inheriting the traditional theory, combined with the summary of their own clinical experience, broke through the traditional theory of one-sided understanding of the etiology and pathogenesis of insomnia, to a certain extent, provided theoretical guidance for future generations to understand and treat insomnia. Until the stability of modern society, combined with the research of insomnia in ancient medical books, the causes are summarized as follows: ① emotional internal injury: emotional internal injury, first, it hurts the mind [3] ② improper diet: over starvation, over satiety or partial addiction can damage the spleen and stomach. The spleen and stomach is the postnatal foundation and the source of Qi and blood biochemistry. The normal operation of human viscera function depends on the nourishment of the essence of spleen and stomach metaplasia. The spleen and stomach are damaged, the movement is abnormal, the phlegm is turbid or the food is blocked, the phlegm is hot and the mind is disturbed, leading to insomnia. ③ Maladjustment of exertion and Leisure: exertion damages Qi, mental exertion damages blood, excessive room exertion damages essence, excessive leisure damages spleen qi deficiency, deficiency of Qi, blood essence and body fluid can not maintain the normal physiological function of heart, spleen and kidney, while deficiency of heart, spleen and kidney leads to deficiency of Qi, blood essence and body fluid biochemical source, and finally can not honor heart and mind, leading to insomnia. ④ Lack of Endowment: long illness into the collaterals, blood stasis or old age, exhaustion of innate essence, lack of source of acquired origin, can cause lack of effort, heart loss, restlessness and sleeplessness. As for the pathogenesis of insomnia, traditional Chinese medicine believes that whether the human body can get normal sleep, the key factor lies in whether the Ying Wei Yin and yang are normal and harmonious operation, so as to keep the mind firmly. As the "Internal Classic of the five permanent political treatises" said: "where Yin and yang are important, Yang secret is solid, and the two are incompatible, if there is no autumn in spring, if there is no summer in winter, so it is called Shengdu Yin calms Yang, and spirit is the cure. "Generally speaking, the basic pathogenesis of insomnia is the dysfunction of Qi and blood in Zang Fu organs, the imbalance of yin and Yang, the absence of Wei Yang in Ying Yin, the inability of Ying Yin to astringe Wei Yang, the loss of mind to nourish or the disturbance of spirit. As for the location of the disease, "Lingshu Wei Qi Xing" says: "it begins with Yin, and is often injected into the kidney from foot Shaoyin, the kidney into the heart, the heart into the lung, the lung into the liver, the liver into the spleen, and the spleen into the kidney." Therefore, in addition to the heart, the other organs such as liver, spleen, kidney, lung and stomach also play an important role in insomnia.

## **2. Syndrome Differentiation and Holistic Concept are the Essence of TCM Diagnosis and Treatment of Insomnia**

### **2.1. Syndrome Differentiation**

Syndrome is the pathological summary of the body at a certain stage in the process of disease development, which profoundly reveals the essence of the disease [4] There are many types of insomnia, which have been elaborated by doctors of all dynasties. The textbook of internal medicine of traditional Chinese medicine (ISBN 978-7-5132-0846-8) edited by Wu Mianhua, which is the 12th Five Year Plan textbook for Chinese medicine colleges and universities, classifies insomnia into five types, mainly including deficiency of heart and spleen, liver fire

disturbing heart, phlegm heat disturbing heart, deficiency of heart and gallbladder Qi, and disharmony of heart and mind.

① Insomnia due to deficiency of both heart and spleen

Key points of syndrome differentiation: the main symptoms of patients are insomnia, dreaminess, easy to wake up, palpitation, forgetfulness, mental fatigue, less food, dizziness. The secondary symptoms were fatigue of limbs, pale complexion or yellow flaccidity, thin tongue, thin pulse and weakness[3]

② Heart qi deficiency insomnia

Key points of syndrome differentiation: the main symptoms of the patients are restlessness, dreaminess, palpitation and shock. The secondary symptoms were shortness of breath, spontaneous sweating, fatigue, light tongue and thin pulse[3]

③ Insomnia due to heart kidney disharmony

Key points of syndrome differentiation: the main symptoms of the patients are restlessness, difficulty in sleeping, palpitation, dreaminess, dizziness, tinnitus, soreness of waist and knees, hot flashes, night sweats, five heart trouble, dry throat and less body fluid. The secondary symptoms were spermatorrhea in men, irregular menstruation in women, red tongue, less moss and fine pulse [3]

④ Liver fire disturbing heart insomnia

Key points of syndrome differentiation: the main symptoms of patients are irritability, sleeplessness, dreaminess and even sleeplessness. The secondary symptoms were dizziness, dizziness, red eyes, tinnitus, upset, dry mouth, bitter mouth, constipation, red skin, red tongue, yellow fur, and pulse string[3]

⑤ Phlegm heat disturbing heart insomnia

Key points of syndrome differentiation: the main symptoms of patients are restlessness, chest tightness, generalized evil, belching. The secondary symptoms were heavy head, dizziness, bitter mouth, red tongue, yellow greasy fur, slippery pulse [3]

## 2.2. Treatment Principles and Prescriptions

Insomnia always belongs to Yin decline and Yang excess, yin and Yang disharmony. In addition to balancing yin and Yang and harmonizing mind, tonifying deficiency and reducing excess should be the important treatment principle. ① Insomnia due to deficiency of both heart and spleen: the heart governs the mind and the spleen governs the movement and transformation, which is the source of Qi and blood biochemistry. Insomnia occurs when the deficiency of the spleen leads to the lack of Qi and blood, which makes it difficult to be proud in the heart, and the heart is out of support and restless. Clinical treatment should be Guipi Decoction, tonifying the heart and spleen, nourishing the heart and calming the nerves. ② Heart qi deficiency insomnia: "heart, the monarch's official, God out of Yan... Courage, in the right of the official, decision out of Yan." [6] If the heart qi is not enough, the spirit will not keep inside; The liver is closely related to the gallbladder. The liver is the liver, while the gallbladder adheres to the masculinity of the liver. If the gallbladder lacks the courage, the Qi of Shaoyang will be weak, the mind will be depressed, the spirit will be restless, and the timidity will make it difficult to sleep. In clinical practice, Anshen Dingzhi pill and Suanzaoren Decoction were used to replenish qi and calm the nerves. ③ Heart kidney disjunction insomnia: "shenzhai Yishu": "heart kidney intersection, all by the rise and fall, and the heart qi down, because of the rise of kidney qi; The rise of kidney qi is due to the fall of heart qi." [6] The heart and kidney are not connected, the kidney water is not helpful to the upper heart fire, the heart fire can not drop, the warm kidney yin, the water and fire are not helpful, the heart fire is only hyperactive, the mind is disturbed, and insomnia occurs. Liuwei Dihuang pill and Jiaotai Pill are used to nourish yin, reduce fire and promote heart and kidney. ④ Liver fire disturbing heart insomnia: the heart stores the

mind, governs the mind, the liver governs the catharsis and regulates the smooth emotion, and the two are coordinated to maintain the normal mental function [7] When the five aspirations are too extreme, liver qi stagnation, long and fire, mother disease and son, disturbance in the heart, mind disturbed, unable to maintain normal sleep, insomnia. In clinic, Longdan Xiegan decoction is used to relieve liver fire and calm the mind. ⑤ Phlegm heat disturbing insomnia: emotional discomfort, qi stagnation into fire, refining fluid for phlegm, phlegm fire in Sheng, mind disturbed, insomnia. Huanglian Wendan Decoction was used to clear away phlegm heat and tranquilize the mind. 2.3 understanding and treating insomnia from the overall concept.

The human body is a whole, which is influenced by each other in physiology and pathology. Therefore, the appearance of insomnia is often the result of multiple visceral lesions and multiple pathological factors. Each syndrome type often does not appear alone, and it is often mixed with deficiency and excess. Traditional Chinese medicine treatment of insomnia has never been a simple treatment of insomnia, but the whole treatment, pay attention to the physiological and pathological relationship and influence between the viscera, by adjusting the Qi, blood, yin and Yang of the whole viscera, restore the normal physiological function of patients with insomnia, make Yin level Yang secret, in order to achieve the purpose of lasting root treatment of insomnia. Insomnia belongs to the mind, mind disturbed or mind dystrophy is the most important aspect, so pay attention to the mind and daily life has practical prevention and treatment significance for insomnia patients. Man is the unity of form and spirit. ① The Yellow Emperor's Canon of internal medicine says: "tranquility and nothingness, true Qi, inner spirit and peace of mind." [8] Doctors help insomnia patients adjust their mental state, establish confidence to overcome insomnia, patients should also actively self-regulation, maintain a good mood, psychological hint, in order to overcome the fear of insomnia. ② Pay attention to the daily life. Before going to bed, we should regulate and control the factors that stimulate mental excitement, such as reducing high-intensity exercise, avoiding watching TV, mobile phone video games and other entertainment activities. In order to cut off the vicious circle of insomnia, we should change the bad living habits, such as sleeping too long at noon, excessive brain use for a long time, staying up late to study and work, using mobile phones before going to bed, and watching time frequently.

### 3. Clinical Cases

Wu, a 53 year old female, was initially diagnosed on February 20, 2019.

Patients reported insomnia, not easy to sleep, more than a month dream. Symptoms: insomnia, not easy to sleep, upset and anxious, morning mouth pain, fatigue, red tongue, yellow and white fur, pulse sinking string slippery. Diagnosis: Insomnia (phlegm heat disturbance). Traditional Chinese medicine: dangshen 10g, jiangbanxia 9g, Chenpi 10g, Fuling 10g, Zhuru 10g, Shengdi 10g, Dazao 2, shenggancao 6G, Jiaoteng 15g, hehuanpi 10g, Suanzaoren 15g, vinegar Wuweizi 9g, Danggui 10g, shenglonggu 20g (decocted first), shengoyster 15g (decocted first), baiziren 10g, Yuanzhi 9g. After the first dose of Qifu was taken, the patient's sleep was improved, and his anxiety was relieved. So the original prescription was added or subtracted. After taking it for one month, the patient recovered.

This prescription is mainly Wendan Decoction, with ginger and Pinellia as the king. Pinellia is pungent, which can directly drive the Qi of Shaoyin and Jueyin, and make it reach Yangming. It can elevate the Qi of Qingqi and turbid Yin, and make the Fu Qi pass. Therefore, the origin of Medicine says that Pinellia has the function of "harmonizing stomach qi" According to the compendium of Materia Medica, "it can cure abdominal distension, but the eyes can't sleep in peace", all of which are based on its functions of ascending clear and descending turbidity and stomach sleeping peacefully. Zhuru is slightly cold, good at clearing phlegm heat, and can get rid of trouble; Besides clearing away heat, it can also nourish yin to prevent dryness from

damaging body fluid; Tangerine peel can regulate qi and dry dampness; Poria cocos has the function of invigorating spleen, infiltrating dampness, eliminating phlegm and calming the nerves. Suanzaoren, baiziren, Schisandra chinensis, etc., which can be added to insomnia deficiency syndrome, and Albizia julibrissin, yejiaoteng, shenglonggu, shengoyster, Yuanzhi, Acorus calamus, etc., which can be used to treat insomnia, are commonly used in traditional Chinese medicine. The symptoms of deficiency and excess often appear in insomnia for a long time. Clinical traditional Chinese medicine can be added according to the patient's situation.

#### 4. Discuss

Generally speaking, short-term or occasional insomnia has less impact on people's life, but long-term intractable insomnia has a greater impact on people, often causing psychological, physiological, mental and other injuries. According to the observation of the clinical symptoms of different insomnia patients, patients with long-term insomnia often have the accumulation of anxiety, depression, low spirits, headache, dizziness and other symptoms, and anxiety, depression, headache and other symptoms will aggravate insomnia, and eventually lead to sleepless all night. And insomnia can also be caused by other diseases, as a doctor to achieve a comprehensive and accurate diagnosis, through comprehensive treatment to alleviate other diseases, in order to reduce the impact of sleep quality factors. Traditional Chinese medicine treatment of insomnia, doctors should be based on the specific etiology and pathogenesis of different patients, syndrome differentiation and treatment, the overall participation, using accurate and effective methods for treatment, in order to achieve better curative effect. In the use of traditional Chinese medicine treatment, doctors should also pay attention to another aspect, that is, the patient's psychological and spiritual factors, through emotional therapy to ease mental pressure and improve anxiety to enhance the effect of traditional Chinese medicine treatment of insomnia, at the same time, acupuncture, massage and other therapies can also be used to help improve insomnia.

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