

CASE STUDY

CS530

SLOW THYROID SYMPTOMS

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ABSTRACT [REAL CASE]

A patient came in seeking acupuncture treatment because he received blood tests confirming a diagnosis of hypothyroidism. This was his first intervention of medical treatment.

He said that he had received these labs over a year ago, but his symptoms have become worse over time. His main issue with the underactive thyroid is that he is gaining weight, intermittent joint pain in the shoulders, hips, and ankles, and slow digestion.

Impression: Hypothyroidism (ICD-10: E03.9)

TCM Diagnosis: Liver Qi Stagnation with Depressive Heat with underlying Spleen and Stomach Qi Deficiency

Treatment: Ear Shenmen, HT7, SP3(+), LU9 (+), LR2, LR3, LI11(+), ST36 (+), SI5 (-), LI5(-), GB41(+), SI3(+), BL66 (-), SJ2 (-), GV20, Ah shi points surrounding the thyroid gland

Result: Each week, the patient came in feeling centered, more talkative, with all symptoms much less severe than the previous week.

GENERAL INFORMATION

01

DATE OF VISIT

1/30/2023

02

GENDER

Male

03

AGE/MARITAL STATUS

Single – No children

04

OCCUPATION

Software Engineer
Works Remotely

VITAL SIGNS



BLOOD PRESSURE

133/88 mm/Hg



HEART RATE

75bpm



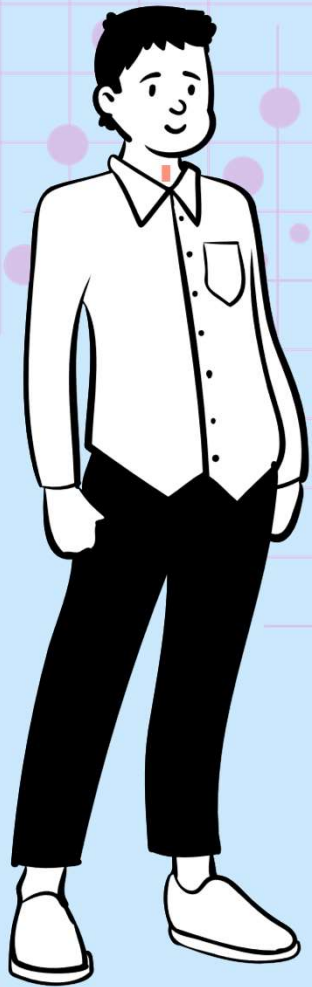
RESPIRATORY

17 breaths per minute



TEMPERATURE

98.7 degrees F



CHIEF COMPLAINT

Slow thyroid symptoms
for one year

HISTORY OF PRESENT ILLNESS

The patient came into the clinic after experiencing hypothyroid symptoms after being confirmed by blood test one year ago. He has been experiencing weight gain regardless of diet and exercise, intermittent joint pain in the shoulders/hips/ankles, slow digestion, dry skin and lips, and an intermittent sensation of cold.

- Low to moderate energy level during intake 6/10
- Stool is very loose and has been for years
- Cold hands and feet

The patient recalls an event that happened 4-5 years ago that contributed to a phase of restrictive eating habits. He was not eating and led to malnourishment and fainting. He finally began eating normally in October 2022. However, this affected his digestion in the long-term.

His lab results consisted of elevated TSH levels of 7.09mIU/L (standard range is 0.40-4.50mIU/L). These levels confirm that there may be dysfunction with the thyroid itself and not from the pituitary gland.

T3 levels are only slightly out of the normal range of 4.3pg/mL (standard range is 2.3-4.2pg/mL). T4 levels are within the normal range.

PAST MEDICAL HISTORY



No remarkable history of chronic diseases.
Supplements: thyroid support supplement,
vitamin B12, fiber capsules

FAMILY HISTORY



Father is currently prediabetic;
other family members are relatively healthy

LIFESTYLE

Social History



Works from home;
occasionally makes time for friends after work/on the weekends

Habits



Denied smoking and drinking alcohol;
No tea or coffee

Exercise



2-3 times a week
Pickleball
Walks everyday

Emotions



Body is always in a state of panic
Paces constantly
Feels depressed
Used to have palpitations

PHYSICAL EXAM



No physical exam was performed during the intake.

TCM 4 DIAGNOSIS METHODS



OBSERVATION

He looked tense during the intake;
Slightly puffy in the face and abdomen. The thyroid does not appear to be swollen. Hands are slightly cold to the touch.



LISTEN/SMELL

Respiration, Speech and Odor were unremarkable

TCM INQUIRY

Appetite: low; forces himself to eat at least three meals a day

Diet: variety of foods; eggs, toast, fruits, oats, rice, quinoa, beans, chicken, cooked vegetables

Stool: has not been formed for years; loose and comes out in bits; improved during the past week since taking fiber capsules

Thirst: does not feel thirsty; has to force himself to drink water; drinks about 6 cups/day; prefers room temp water



TCM INQUIRY

Temperature: feels cold throughout the day; particularly his hands and feet

Perspiration: has not been able to sweat for the past year, even with exercise

Urine: nocturia 1-2 times a week; particularly at 3AM then falls asleep

Sleep: hard to fall asleep but usually stays asleep; happens 2-3 times a week; not consistent; difficulty getting out of bed – remains extremely tired

Head, Eyes, Ears, Nose & Throat: wears glasses/contacts



■ TONGUE & PULSE DIAGNOSIS



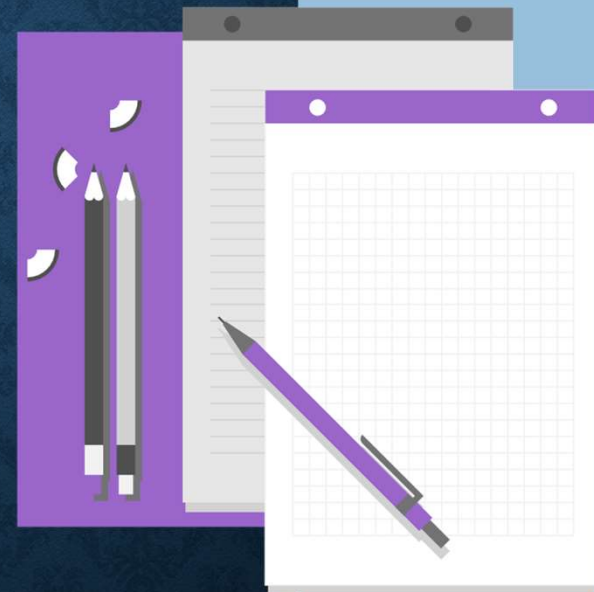
TONGUE

Slightly puffy and red around the edges; slight red papules; few cracks in the MJ; thin white coating



PULSE

Wiry and thin bilaterally





ASSESSMENT

Impression:

Slow Thyroid Symptoms (ICD-10: R94.9)

TCM Differentiation:

Liver Qi Stagnation with Depressive Heat;
underlying SP/ST Qi Def

TCM ANALYSIS



After doing a thorough intake with the patient, we have concluded that his symptoms stem from a psychological root. After experiencing personal and environmental struggles, he let himself generate into a volatile state of an unbalanced life. As the emotions consumed him, they affected his digestion and overall quality of life. In TCM, it is known that our abdomen is the second brain, and once it is affected, there is a domino effect of symptoms that can occur.

The Liver is the main contributor to his symptoms, as his emotions were the ones steering the wheel. Long-term, the Liver affected the patient's middle jiao causing consumption and alleviation symptoms in his digestion.

The depressive heat is evident on the tongue with the red papules and slightly redder sides. This is logical because there has been a stagnation of the Liver for years. The heat is beginning to affect the MJ as the tongue is forming cracks in the MJ region displaying insufficient fluids. Excess or deficient heat symptoms have yet to surface.

TREATMENT PLAN

Principle of treatment:

Soothe the Liver, Regulate the Qi in the MJ

Acupuncture Treatment:

DU20: calm the Shen

Ear Shen Men: calm the Shen

HT7: calm the Shen

LR2: Soothe the Liver and regulate the Qi

LR3: Soothe the Liver and regulate the Qi

SP3: tonify

LU9: tonify

LI11: tonify

ST36: tonify

SI5: sedate

LI5: sedate

GB41: tonify

SI3: tonify

BL66: sedate

SJ2: sedate

Ah Shi Points: surrounding the four corners of the thyroid gland to stimulate the thyroid gland



TREATMENT PLAN

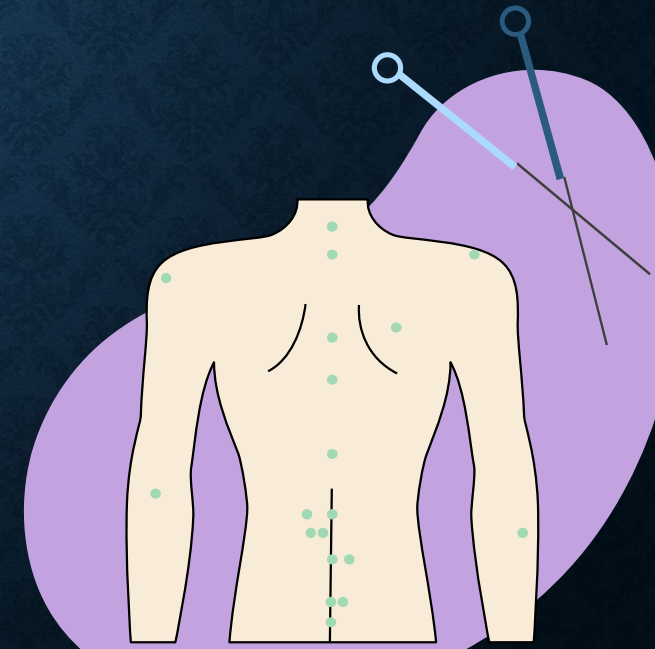
Needle technique: Tonification & Sedation using Korean 4-needle technique including SJ, SI, and LI Jung Gyunk; Bilateral

Duration: 20 minutes

Position: Supine

External: Heat lamp on the feet

Treatment Plan: Once a week for four weeks; after four weeks, reevaluate.

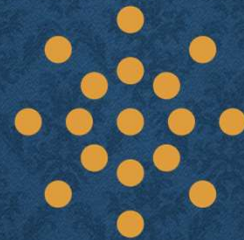


WESTERN DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS



HYPOTHYROIDISM

High TSH levels are an indication that the body is under too much stress



DEPRESSION

Feeling of solitude and isolation

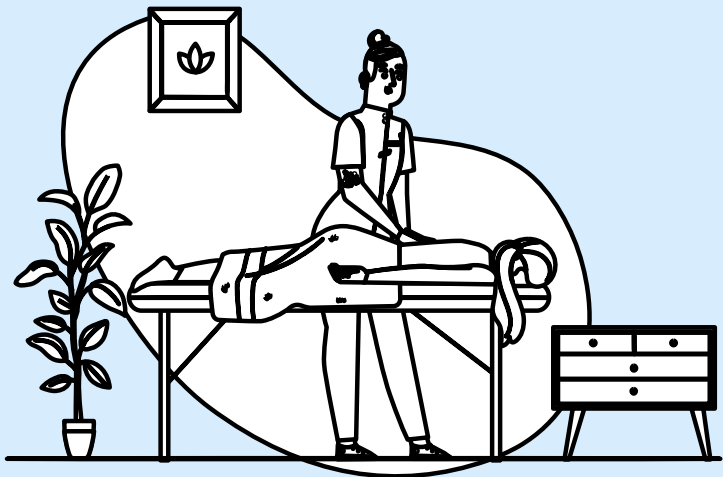


ANXIETY

Feeling of uneasiness with the inability to relax

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

1. According to a randomized control trial, it was reported by Cheng in 2018, acupuncture was beneficial to patients suffering from thyroid dysfunction. After 29 treatments, the patient's TSH level was within the normal range.



[Citations:

1. Cheng, F. (2018). An overview of the contribution of acupuncture to thyroid disorders. *Journal of Integrative Medicine*, 16(6), 375-383. doi:10.1016/j.joim.2018.09.002]

HEALTH ADVICE & REFERRALS



Health Advice:

Incorporate a consistent eating regimen with routine meals at consistent times.
Practice yoga to help move and guide the Qi to the inner organs—focus on deep breathing
After working remotely, take some time outside of the apartment to allow a separation between work and downtime.
TSH values should be examined regularly.

Referrals:

Psychotherapy* to get to the root of the issue and learn how to cope with the underlying emotional aspect
Endocrinologist if TSH level remain at a high level.
A yoga practitioner for therapeutic mind-body practice; relax through breathing and meditation.

PROGRESS

This was the patient's fourth visit to the clinic where we did a reevaluation of the overall improvement of the patient since he has been receiving treatment. The patient said that he feels he has had a 40-50% overall improvement since the first treatment. He feels that he has more energy, especially in the morning when he does not feel like he needs to drag himself out of bed. He feels more rested after sleeping.

He said that he feels more centered and does not feel the need to pace around anymore.

TCM:

His diet is more consistent with small/frequent meals throughout the day. The patient is still taking fiber capsules, so his stool was not as loose as before. Patient is beginning to sweat with exercise.

He was experiencing excessive thirst during his second and third visits, which has been slightly alleviated. He is also experiencing dry skin, cold hands and feet, and intermittent joint pain. However, the joint pain is much more subtle. Occasional nocturia is still occurring (1-2 times a week).

All other systems are unremarkable.

PROGRESS



Objective:

The patient has noticeably lost some excess weight (about 8-10 pounds).

When taking the pulse, his fingers were slightly cool but not cold to the touch.

Tongue: Slightly red and puffy sides; slight red papules; small cracks in MJ

Pulse: Wiry and thin - bilateral

Impression:

Slow thyroid symptoms (ICD-10: R94.9)

TCM Differentiation:

Liver Qi Stagnation with Depressive Heat underlying SP/ST Qi Def

PROGRESS

Principle of treatment: Soothe the Liver, Regulate the Qi in the MJ

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SI3: tonify

BL66: sedate

SJ2: sedate

Ah Shi Points: surrounding the four corners of the thyroid gland to stimulate the thyroid gland

+SP9, SP6 & SP10 with E-stim to regulate the Qi in the MJ

Needle technique: Tonification & Sedation using Korean 4-needle technique including SJ, SI, and LI Jung Gyunk; Bilateral



PROGRESS



Treatment duration: 20 minutes

Treatment position: Supine

External: Heat lamp on the feet

Treatment Plan: The patient will continue to return to the clinic once a week.

We will evaluate during the next visit since he is beginning to take herbal medicines.

HERBAL FORMULA



Focuses on moving the Qi and regulating the digestion including Tong Xie Yao Fang modified.

Prescribed 12 packets for one week. Taken twice a day for six days.

Tian Hua Fen (8g): drain heat and generate fluid for excessive thirst

Zhi Mu (6g): clear excess heat

Fang Feng (6g): Tong Xie Yao Fang to regulate digestion (especially the stool)

Bai Zhu (4g)

Bai Shao (4g)

Dang Gui (6g): nourish the Blood

Wu Jia Pi (4g): nourish the Liver

Zhi Gan Cao (4g): harmonize the formula

Yu Zhu (6g): nourish the Yin to avoid dryness

Xiang Fu (6g): regulate the Qi

Hou Po (4g): regulate the Qi in the MJ

Sha Ren (4g): regulate the Qi in the MJ

Fan Xie Ye (3g): mildly down drain of the stool

Mu Gua (4g): regulate the Qi in the MJ

THANK YOU!!

Q & A

