

# Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) View of Fibromyalgia (August 2006)

Fibromyalgia syndrome is a condition characterized by chronic widespread pain and diffuse area of tenderness. Often associated with Fibromyalgia are symptoms such as fatigue, sleep disorders, headaches and irritable bowel syndrome. It resides within a larger terrain of patients with chronic widespread pain. It is estimated to occur in about 10-12 % of the general population in the U.S predominantly in females. It may be induced or intensified by physical or mental stress, poor sleep, and trauma, exposure to dampness or cold and occasionally by systemic disorders which are usually rheumatic disorders. Viral or other systemic infections may precipitate the syndrome in an otherwise predisposed host. It tends to occur in "healthy" young women who tend to be stressed, tense, depressed, anxious and driven. There are many therapeutic approaches in Western Medicine, such as antidepressants, low dose sleeping pills, anti-inflammatory medication, and hydrocortisone acetate injection along with physical therapy.

## How Does Chinese Medicine Approach Fibromyalgia?

Chinese Medicine believes that internal organ functional imbalance, especially within the heart, liver, spleen and kidney lead to the condition of deficiency and stagnation of Qi and blood. It further impairs the function and balance of other organs in the body. If the heart is not nourished there may be a case of sleep disorders or emotional disorder. Since the liver yin energy is in charge of tendons and the spleen energy is related to muscles, if both organs are not mutually working together and harmonized then there will be a resulting energy deficiency or blockage to the muscle and tendon. The patient will experience muscle pain, tension, decreased muscle endurance and tendon rigidity. The same applies to sexual organs; related muscles and tendons will not function properly due to Qi and blood deficiency and stagnation. Patients may have a lower libido, sexual function disorder, fertility difficulties, and menstrual disorders.

In Chinese Medicine, it is believed that each organ hosts a certain emotion. So if the liver energy is in disharmony, the patient may be easily angered, frustrated and short tempered. Likewise if the spleen energy is in disharmony, the patient may be easily depressed, worried and an obsessive thinker.

**What can cause Fibromyalgia?** Any internal and external factors that can cause body Qi and blood deficiency or/and stagnation, will eventually, lead to organ imbalance and Fibromyalgia.

1. Emotional stress: there are seven emotions and each one is host of an internal organ. Extreme emotional stress related to family, work or the environment will overly consume body energy which leads to deficiency, stagnation and imbalance.
2. Overly physical activities beyond one's physiology capacity: this includes hard labor, uncontrolled sexual activity and the use of drug stimulants in order to force body to perform better.
3. Any chronic disorders and chronic infections in the past that the body has not properly recovered from. Such chronic disorders are persistently consuming body energy and immunity.

After a bodily injury such as those that are related to work, car accident injuries and any other kind injuries, if there is no proper treatment and a proper recovery, the body may form a build up of scar tissue that will continue to block meridians, blood circulation and normal range of motion. It causes muscle pain; interrupts daily activity, and also causes stress of the body



## Can Chinese Medicine Help to Manage Fibromyalgia?

Chinese Medical Doctors evaluate Fibromyalgia by analysis of the underline pattern related to the patient. It may involve one or more organs. Some patients may have pains involved with a different meridian, with chronic fatigue; other may have more different emotional problems, sleep disorder, sexual disorder and many other issues. The treatment plan has to be tailored to the underline pattern of each individual.

For example, for a Spleen and Heart deficiency pattern, the treatment should focus to strengthen the spleen, nourish the heart, and tonify qi and blood in order to calm heart and spirit. For Spleen and Kidney yang deficiency, the treatment should be in tune with the Kidney and Spleen yang, along with nourishment of the heart and calming spirit or lifting spirit if there is depression.

**Herbology:** When formulating herbal formulas for each pattern of Fibromyalgia, it is very important to stress underline disharmony. There are several forms of herbal formulas which one can use, such as herbal formula teas that require one to prepare and extract tea from raw herbs, herbal formula pill, concentrated herbal powder formula and herbal tincture that contains 25-35% alcohol and that patients should be aware of.

**Acupuncture and Moxibustion Therapy:** It has the best results when used for pain management, and also to reduce stress and improve sleep which results in an overall increase in body energy, immunity and promotes well being. Acupuncture combined with herbal formulas is very beneficial, especially for patients who suffer from chronic conditions. Some acupuncturist treat any pain with electricity stimulating in order to "strongly" reduce pain without analysis of the patient's pattern. If there is deficiency pain, electricity stimulating acupuncture may make the deficient pain worse. **Food therapy:** Chinese Medicine stated thousands of years ago that herbs and food come from the same source (have same property). Therefore if one knows how to modify one's diet according to one's condition then foods can be used for nourishing organs, improving circulation, and to detoxify the body just like herbal formulas. **Other therapies:** Auricular acupuncture, Herbal pillow therapy, Acu-herbal paste therapy and many other therapies combined together.

If you or your friends, relatives have any question regarding Fibromyalgia and want to know more about how Chinese Medicine can work for them. Please call Dr. Helen Hu, Traditional Chinese Medicine Clinic at (619)226-6506

