



Exfoliative Cheiliti Treated with Chinese Medicine: A Case Report

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Abstract: *It is reported that a patient with exfoliative Cheiliti was successfully treated with Chinese medicine when routine western medicine was ineffective. Clinical features and results: A 24-year-old young female patient with recurrent lip infections, whose lip infections reappeared and worsened one month ago, with swelling, flaking and scabbing of both lips, which could not be relieved by conventional Western medicine. Due to the painful itchiness and facial damaging character of exfoliative Cheiliti, the patient was affected both physically and mentally, she was depressed and socially limited, so she sought Chinese medicine treatment. After three weeks of treatment with a self-formulated formula, her symptoms improved significantly, and no recurrence was seen on follow-up. In this case, we found that TCM has advantages in the treatment of exfoliative Cheiliti, and there are few case reports of TCM compound treatment of exfoliative Cheiliti. We hope that this report will provide some experience in the clinical treatment of this disease and also lay the foundation for the study of its mechanism.*

Keywords: Exfoliative Cheiliti; Case report; Chinese Medicine; Psychosocial support; Physically and mentally.

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1. Introduction

Exfoliative Cheiliti (EC) is a recurrent, reversible damage and a rare inflammatory disease of the lips. It can involve both lips and shows mainly dry exfoliation, skin cracking, scale shedding, oozing and yellow incrustation on the lips. The lips are overall swollen and painful, and opening of the mouth is restricted [1-3]. The etiology and histopathological studies of EC are unclear, and current research suggests [3,4], that it may be associated with the following factors: vitamin B12 or iron deficiency, hypersensitivity reactions, bacterial or fungal infections, psychosomatic disorders, and some human factors such as lip licking, lip picking, and dietary intake, etc. Due to the cosmetic damage caused by EC, as well as the restriction of mouth opening and speech, patients may experience social avoidance, emotional anxiety and depression [5]. Therefore, effective treatment is needed to reduce patients' clinical signs and improve their quality of life. However, conventional Western medical treatments such as vitamins, corticosteroids, Antidepressant treatment for example diazepam or amitriptyline hydrochloride, antibiotics, and tacrolimus and pimecrolimus have limited efficacy, individual differences, and their own shortcomings [6,7].

It has been found in previous studies [7], that there are possible advantages of Chinese medicine for the treatment of exfoliative cheiliti. In this paper, we report a case of exfoliative cheiliti treated by prescription of Chinese medicine, the recurrent painful itching and damage to the image of the labyrinthitis made this young woman emotionally anxious, hoping to provide some clinical experience and psychological support in the treatment of this disease.

2. CASE REPORT

2.1 Case

The patient was a 24-year-old female who had recurrent episodes of labyrinthitis when she was young and could

not be cured by repeated visits to the doctor. One month ago, she developed increased swelling of both lips with no obvious cause, flaking, pain and itching, crusting, and restricted mouth opening, so she was diagnosed with labyrinthitis after visiting a western hospital. Based on the patient's medical history: no allergic exposure, prolonged sun exposure, etc., other labyrinthitis subtypes were ruled out, so the diagnosis of exfoliative cheilitis could be made. No significant improvement was observed after treatment with B vitamins and topical drugs, so she was consulted in traditional Chinese medicine. At the first visit, the patient's symptoms were seen as follows: lip flaking, crusting, swelling, painful itching and discomfort (see Figure 1), the patient looked thin, with a weak constitution, depressed mood, poor appetite, fair sleep, and normal bowel movements. The tongue was red with little coating and the pulse was empty and weak.



Figure 1: Before treatment: the lips are swollen, dry, desquamate and crusted

2.2 Treatment and Intervention

According to the clinical symptoms, Tongue image, and pulse condition, the diagnosis of Chinese medicine is that the patient belongs to "deficiency of spleen and kidney, deficiency of qi and blood stasis", and the treatment should follow the method of "strengthening spleen and kidney, benefiting qi and resolving stasis". with "Sini Decoction" and "Erchen Decoction" as the base prescription for addition and subtraction. After 7 days, the swelling and dandruff were significantly reduced (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Swelling and desquamation were significantly reduced

After the prescription was fine-adjusted, the symptoms of lip swelling, peeling and itching were basically relieved. The tongue was thin and white, the pulse was slow and strong, and the meridians were unobstructed (Figure 3). It was changed to the method of tonic therapy and continued to take medicine for 7 days. The symptoms were completely relieved and no recurrence was observed during follow-up. See supplementary material for specific prescriptions.



Figure 3: Complete remission of symptoms

Table 1: Specific prescriptions

The first formula	The second formula	The third formula
Chinese and Scientific Name (daily dosage)		
Huang Qi(90g) Astragali Radix	Huang Qi(90g) Astragali Radix	Hei shun Pian(50g) Aconiti Lateralis Radix Praeparata
Chuan Wu(50g) Aconiti Radix	Chuan Wu(50g) Aconiti Radix	Huang Qi(120g) Astragali Radix
Bai Zhu(45g) Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma	Bai Zhu(45g) Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma	Bai Zhu(50g) Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma
Xiao Hui Xiang(50g) Foeniculi Fructus	Xiao Hui Xiang(50g) Foeniculi Fructus Zhi Gan Cao(15g) Radix Glycyrrhizae Preparata	Xiao Hui Xiang(50g) Foeniculi Fructus
Zhi Gan Cao(15g) Radix Glycyrrhizae Preparata	Zhi Gan Cao(15g) Radix Glycyrrhizae Preparata	Zhi Gan Cao(15g) Radix Glycyrrhizae Preparata
Gan Jiang(50g) Zingiberis Rhizoma	Gan Jiang(50g) Zingiberis Rhizoma	Gan Jiang(50g) Zingiberis Rhizoma
San Qi(20g) Notoginseng Radix	San Qi(20g) Notoginseng Radix	San Qi(20g) Notoginseng Radix
Chen Pi(50g) Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium	Chen Pi(50g) Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium	Chen Pi(50g) Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium
Ban Xia(45g) Pinelliae Rhizoma	Ban Xia(45g) Pinelliae Rhizoma	Ban Xia(45g) Pinelliae Rhizoma
Bai Mao Gen(50g) Rhizoma Imperatae	Bai Mao Gen(50g) Rhizoma Imperatae	Gui Zhi(20g) Cinnamomi Ramulus
Wu Gong(3) Scolopendra	Wu Gong(3) Scolopendra	Niu Xi(15g) Achyranthis Bidentatae Radix
Zhi Zi(10g) Gardeniae Fructus	Zhi Zi(10g) Gardeniae Fructus	Zhi Qiao(15g) Aurantii Fructus
Lian Qiao(10g) Forsythiae Fructus	Lian Qiao(10g) Forsythiae Fructus	Dang Gui(15g) Angelicae Sinensis Radix
Bai He(10g) Bubus Lili	Bai He(10g) Bubus Lili	Lu Jiao (15g) Cornu Alcis
	Gui Zhi(15g) Cinnamomi Ramulus	

3. Discussion

We reported that patients, after three weeks of drugs, oral symptoms such as swelling of the lips, desquamation, cracked complete remission, no follow-up recurrence, anxiety improved markedly. Through "spleen and kidney, replenishing qi blood" of TCM, in the treatment of sexual cheilitis peeling shows good curative effect. In the past, some people have paid attention to the treatment of exfoliative cheilitis by traditional Chinese medicine, and through systematic evaluation, it is believed that traditional Chinese medicine can be used as a substitute for corticosteroids as the first-line treatment of exfoliative cheilitis, and without the adverse reaction of corticosteroids [7].

Exfoliative cheilitis belongs to the category of "lip wind" in traditional Chinese medicine. It is characterized by complex causation and easy to relapse, which seriously impacts the life-quality of patients. We believe that the Chinese medical mechanism of this disease is simultaneous insufficiency and excessive, with deficiency of spleen and kidney, as well as the inability of Qi deficiency to drive the normal blood flow, stagnation and lack of moistening of the lips, so in the treatment, the first priority is to pass, and after the meridians are unblocked, the prescription is based on tonicity. Following this line of treatment, the patients' symptoms basically disappeared and their condition improved. The initial prescription followed the "Chuan Wu method", which is actually a formula derived from the theory of the classic TCM book "Shang Han lun", based on the combination of Si Ni Tang and Er Chen Tang with addition and subtraction. In this formula, the Aconiti Lateralis Radix Praeparata in Si Ni Tang is replaced by Aconiti Radix, which is used to take advantage of the tumultuous nature of Aconiti Radix, with the addition of Foeniculi Fructus to relieve the liver and regulate the qi, and to strengthen the spleen and stomach, while San Qi tonifies the qi and invigorates the blood. At the third follow-up visit, the patient's meridians were clear, and he continued to supplement the deficiencies of the spleen and kidneys using the "Fu Zi

method". Psycho-psychological causes are one of the potential causes of exfoliative cheilitis, and the treatment with herbal medicine acts as a dissipative and relaxing agent for the patient's "qi stagnation", that is, depression and blockage in the chest. Therefore herbal medicine is an important emotional support therapy.

It was found in modern pharmacological studies that the constitution of the herbal formula used in the treatment reported in this case has pharmacological effects that target the possible etiology of exfoliative cheilitis. *Astragali Radix* has pharmacological properties of showing anti-inflammatory and anti-infective as well as on immunomodulatory effects, the anti-infectious activity may include anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and anti-viral [8]. *Aconiti Lateralis Radix Praeparata* has neuropharmacological effects and can play an antidepressant role, so it can fight against the etiology of exfoliative cheilitis [9]. *Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma* has anti-inflammatory, anti-depressant and immune - regulating effects. It can reduce inflammatory factors and treat external inflammation and swelling [10]. *Zingiberis Rhizoma* and *Foeniculi Fructus* can have anti-inflammatory and antibacterial effects [11,12], while *Pinelliae Rhizoma* can play a role in the treatment of infectious and inflammatory diseases [13], and *Notoginseng Radix* has significant antidepressant effects [14]. Therefore, behind the miraculous effect of TCM prescription, modern pharmacology also provides objective and powerful support.

4. Conclusion

It is suggested that Chinese medicine has shown some strengths in the treatment of exfoliative cheilitis. In the meantime, there is a significant improvement in the negative emotions that accompany exfoliative cheilitis. The mechanism of action of Chinese herbal medicine is complicated, which is still to be further studied, and we hope that this report can provide some help for clinical treatment and basic research.

Ethical Approval

This case report was a recap of a previously treated case; therefore it was not part of the Ethics committee review, which meaning that ethical approval was not required.

Patient Consent

Patients' consent was obtained for taking lip photos during all sessions.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

CWL did the main work in drafting the manuscript, LHX was the one who treated the case and analyzed it, LZN performed a joint case analysis during CWL's drafting of the manuscript, and XF、ZJY revised the manuscript. All authors approved the final version for submission.

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Author Profile

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