

Syndrome Differentiation of 292 COVID-19 patients according to TCM Theory

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This study aimed to analyze the different elements of syndromes of patients suffering from COVID-19 and the changes of those elements from admission to discharge from hospitals. A deeper understanding of COVID-19 infection and how it develops can help determine the correct path of treatment. Treating a disease according to its position and stage of development is an integral part of treatment within the Traditional Chinese Medicine. That is also combined with the individual characteristics of how a particular patient's body and mind are reacting to the disease. As such, this type of research helps enable healthcare practitioners to individualize treatment through holistic treatment.

The study was conducted from January 17, 2020 to March 4, 2020 at Shandong provincial hospital. During that time, 292 patients were admitted into the research program with only 4 who died. Of those, conventional medicine standards for diagnosing COVID-19 (as used in China) separated patients into light, common, severe, and dangerous types. For TCM standards, the status of COVID-19 of patients was analyzed according to its position, pathogenic elements, and stage development. The stages were separated into stage 1 (mild pathogenic changes), stage 2 (some pathogenic changes), and stage 3 (severe pathogenic changes). SPSS 22.0 was used to analyze the data.

Of the 292 patients, 130 (44.5%) were female, and 162 (55.5%) were male. The average age was 45.46 ± 17.49 years. The level of infection was categorized as follows: 39(13.4%) light, 198(67.8%) common, 38(13%) severe, and 17(5.8%) were in as severe condition.

When analyzing the location of the disease, most of them resided within the lung (65.1%) and exogenously (34.6%). The elements of the TCM syndrome mainly included toxic (56.2%), phlegm (39.7%), and dampness (28.8%). Upon discharge of the patients, the elements of the disease had changed some. The disease location was still mainly within the lung (67.5%), but the TCM syndrome had changed to mainly showing deficiency of Yin, Yang, or Qi (67.5%), phlegm (45%), and dampness (27.5%).

So, it can be concluded that the location of a COVID-19 infection are mainly within the lung and exogenously, especially at the onset of the diseases. It may then expand into the spleen and stomach. The characteristics of a COVID-19 infection according to TCM reveal that phlegm and dampness play a major role in its pathogenic mechanism. Blockage of Qi and circulation may occur in severe stages. During the latter pathogenic developmental stages, the patient may then begin to exhibit deficiency. As phlegm and dampness seem to be universal, clinical treatment plans should focus on it while adjusting according to the slight changes of the disease according to location, type, and syndrome type from admission to discharge.

Source: 宋雅琪, 朱雪, 沈宁, 岳淼, 郑建, 袁成民, 王业震, 韩健, 张兴彩, 陈宪海, 张伟. 292 例新型冠状病毒肺炎患者中医证素特点分析. 山东中医杂志. 2021, 40 (10) : 1035 – 1043.