

## Amy

### **1. ABOUT THE PATIENT**

**1.1** This patient was a 44 year old lady. She was married with 5 children ranging between the ages of 10 and 21 years. She had worked on the farm until her husband and she had to sell it a few years ago and since then she had worked around the house at home. On our first encounter with her she seemed very agitated, nervous and shaky.

**1.2** She was suffering from an overactive thyroid which had been diagnosed 4 years previously and had got better only to be re-diagnosed just before Christmas (4 months ago). Her main symptoms were as follows :- shaky hands  
Panic attacks when her heart would race until she sat down and calmed down.  
Feeling very anxious over small things and at the same time her chest would go tight.  
Skin itches all the time, it feels very irritated and "she scratches all the time and all over". She has very itchy ears. She does not have any deafness or tinnitus.  
She gets feelings of intense heat all over which come and go. These tend to be worse towards the evening and night.

She gets thirsty at night and tends to drink cold drinks which she does not enjoy as they make her feel nauseous.

She suffers from insomnia on and off. When she does have it, it takes her a long time to get to sleep.

Her eyes tend to feel "they have bits in them".

She has a bad memory.

When the thyroid is playing up she has irregular periods and gets a short cycle about 21 to 25 days. The periods are very heavy for two days and then it tails off very quickly but the tail off lasts a long time. The blood is dark and clotted and the tail off is brownish. She has a little breast soreness and tends to be a little more irritable premenstrually. She has very little pain during or before period.

Her aim for coming for treatment was to try to avoid radioactive thyroid treatment.

### **1.3 Additional diagnostic information**

She rarely gets headaches.

She suffers from palpitations more at night

She had a malar flush

She has a good digestion and reasonable appetite.

She tends to be quite thirsty as she drinks 8 - 9 cups of coffee per day. She does not like cold drinks and would prefer to drink boiled water instead.

She has some pain along the GB channel of right foot.

She described her emotional temperament as laid back until riled and then she blows. But she has been more irritable and more tensed up since the thyroid problem came back.

### **1.3 continued**

She has lumbar pain.

Pulse was over all deep and thready. It was deep and thready in both first positions, wiry on the left second position and very weak in both Kidney positions.

Tongue was normal colour but redder at tip. Tongue coat was peeled at tip otherwise there was a thin white coat. There were fine horizontal cracks on the root area of the tongue. Tongue was also quite little and stiff.

**1.4** There was a family history of goitre. Her mother had a lump removed from her thyroid gland. Mother also had a skin problem related to a pituitary malfunction. The medication Amy was on to help her thyroid problem was neo-mercazole a trade name for carbimazole but this was discontinued prior to her first acupuncture treatment at GP's advice.

**1.5** She is a non smoker and her alcohol consumption per week is about one bottle of wine over the week and one unit of spirits per evening. Most of her exercise is running round clearing up after the kids and husband. She finds her husband difficult to live with as he is very uncommunicative so home life is quite stressful. She does not go out to work and works around the house.

## **2. IDENTIFYING THE PATTERNS**

### **2.1 Heart Yin Xu (including Heart Blood Xu)**

Palpitations

Panic attacks with severe anxiety

Anxiety with tightness of chest

Insomnia - finds it hard to get off to sleep

Poor memory

Malar flush

Feelings of heat in afternoons and evening

Dry mouth at night with no desire to drink

Tongue red and peeled at tip

Pulse thready and deep

### **Liver Yin Xu ( including Liver Blood Xu)**

Shaky hands (Liver Blood Xu producing Liver Wind)

Feeling of bits in eyes

Malar flush

Irritability and tense

Pulse wiry liver pulse and over all thready

### **Kidney Yin Xu**

Feelings of heat inside which are worse at night

Very dry throat and thirst for cold drinks at night

Poor memory. Lumbar pain.

Very weak kidney pulses

Horizontal cracks on tongue in Kidney area

**2.2** Heart Yin Xu. The palpitations lead me to suspect that there is a heart pattern and as this tended to be more in the evening this would suggest Blood or Yin Xu. As she tended to have panic attacks which are severe this was more than just a little

anxiety or restlessness which would lead to Yin Xu rather than Blood Xu. The anxiety with tightness of the chest demonstrates that it is more Yin Xu than Blood Xu. She also demonstrated the empty heat signs of the malar flush and the peeled tongue at tip with also a red tip. As “the Blood belongs to Yin” with the Heart it is not possible to be Yin Xu without being Blood Xu as the Yin encompasses the Blood. Therefore Blood Xu signs of insomnia and finding it hard to get to sleep, poor memory and palpitations can occur but so do also the empty heat signs and symptoms which make the problems more acute and progress to Yin Xu.

Liver Yin Xu. Liver Yin Xu contains many of the signs and symptoms of Liver Blood Xu. But in this case there are empty heat signs of the malar flush etc. plus the very dry eyes which indicates more Yin Xu than just Blood Xu. She also tends to be more irritable and tense which shows that there may be some of the Liver Yang Rising pattern showing here. The over all pulse is thready which is typical of the Liver Yin Xu pattern but in the Liver position the pulse was wiry which may be due to the Yang aspect if the Liver not being controlled by the Yin because of the deficiency of the Yin. There is one symptom that I have included here which is the shaky hands and this is more due to the Liver Blood Xu which causes emptiness in the blood vessels and so internal Wind arises to fill the space. The stiffness of the tongue may also indicate some of the Wind aspect although this is more likely to be deviated which is not so in this case. The tongue was also little / short which is probably due to the deficiency of the Yin fluids not allowing the tongue to be extended.

Kidney Yin Xu. The feeling of heat at night along with the thirst and dry mouth at night are the Kidney Yin Xu which produces Empty heat which rises and then tends to affect the upper part of the body. The poor memory is also partially due to the Kidney Yin failing to produce enough Marrow in connection with the Brain being the ‘sea of marrow’. The Kidneys also support the back and so weakness here leads to lumbar pain. The very weak Kidney pulses show the deficiency in the Kidneys and that it is both Yin and Yang (as the Kidneys are the root of both Yin and Yang and it is not possible to have a deficiency of one without there being a deficiency of the other) but in this case the predominant symptoms and signs are Yin Xu. The cracks on the tongue as they are in the Kidney area demonstrate that it is Kidney Yin Xu although the tongue body is normal colour and it might be expected to be red but this probably shows that the pattern is not too advanced.

Signs and symptoms not covered by the above are the itchy skin, irregular periods and pain in Gall Bladder channel of right foot. Firstly the itchy skin, this is probably due to the empty heat heating up the Blood and manifesting on the skin. Both the Heart and the Liver have a part to play in this because emotional stress affects these organs and then they tend to produce more heat which then produces the itching. Incidentally, one of the side effects of the drug she was taking is to cause pruritus. This may deplete Kidney Yin which then causes more empty heat, which heats the Heart and Liver more which then causes the Blood to get hot. Secondly the irregular periods may be attributed to Heat in the Blood. This tends to be worse when the thyroid is over active and this is usually when the Yin Xu is more extreme which leads to much more heat being present. The excess heat heats up the Blood which will tend to escape from the Blood vessels and hence the uterus more easily. Thirdly, the pain in the Gall Bladder channel of the right foot may indicate problems with the Liver as the Gall Bladder channel is paired with the Liver channel and if

## **2.2 continued**

there is deficiency of Blood there may be some stagnation or lack of nourishing action taking place and the muscles of the foot are not receiving this action.

## **3. AETIOLOGY AND PATHOLOGY**

### 3.1 Aetiological factors

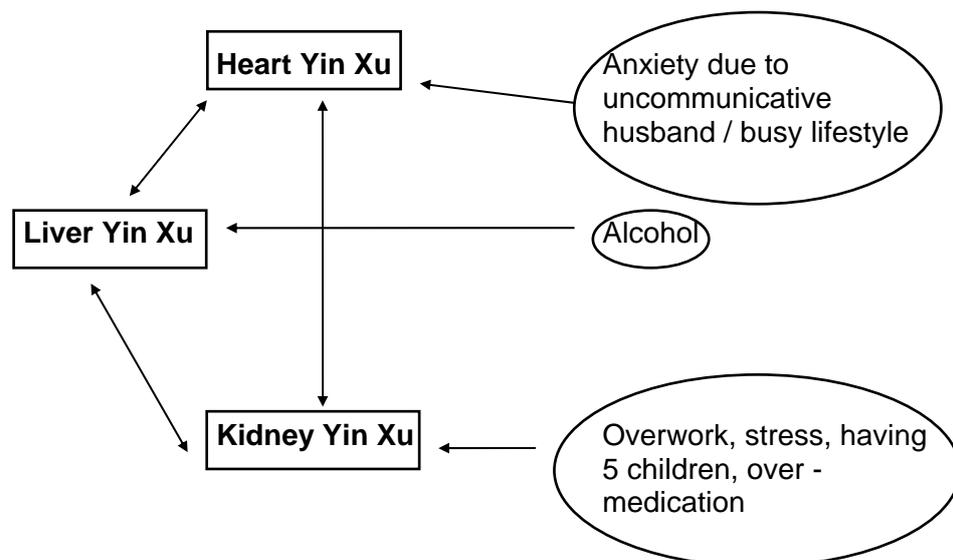
Heart Yin Xu and Blood Xu aetiological factors in this case are emotional and miscellaneous. The emotional aspect is due to the long standing emotional problems from having an uncommunicative husband who causes her great anxiety , worry and sadness. The miscellaneous is due to an excessively busy lifestyle being always on the go looking after all the children. The Blood Xu also is due to emotional aetiological factors which are anxiety and worry over a long period of time which then can disturb the Mind and then depress the Heart function of governing Blood which then leads to Heart Blood deficiency.

Liver Yin Xu and Liver Blood Xu aetiological factors are emotional due to the chronic frustration with the husband and factors affecting Kidney Yin Xu and Heart Yin Xu see 3.2. There may also be a miscellaneous aspect due to her alcohol and coffee consumption.

Kidney Yin Xu aetiological factors are miscellaneous due to long term over work looking after a large family, chronic stress of this pressure and added emotional worries (emotional factor), the strain on her energies of bearing five children. The drug she was on for her thyroid problem also may have damaged her Kidney Yin.

The key aetiological factors in this case are emotional due to the relationship problems and miscellaneous due to over work, stress and multiple child births.

### 3.2 Pathology diagram



### 3.2 continued

In this case as the patient has had a large family which will deplete the Kidneys energy it is more likely that this is the root or Ben. This deficiency has lead to the depletion of both Heart and Liver Yin which are the Biaos. In 5 element terms this can be described by looking at the Sheng cycle where water (Kidneys) are not nourishing the Wood (Liver) element which in turn does not nourish the Fire (Heart) element. Also the Heart and Liver in their child roles in the Sheng cycle can also

deplete their Mothers so in this case the Liver can affect the Kidneys because the Liver Blood nourishes and replenishes the Kidney essence. The Heart also can affect the Liver because if the Heart Blood is deficient it can lead to general Blood deficiency as the Liver stores Blood. In this case this child role is not so evident but should be borne in mind. The Kidneys also can over-act on the Heart because if the Kidney Yin is deficient then Empty Heat forms and can be transmitted to the Heart. Likewise, the heat produced by the empty heat in the Heart also draws upon the Ke cycle which is when water controls fire and this will lead to further depletion of the Kidney Yin. This is the reasoning behind the double arrows on the diagram. I believe that in this case it will be necessary to treat the Heart as most of the clinical manifestations are of the Heart and so the biao is very dominant but it will also be necessary to treat the Kidney Yin Xu because this is the actual root.

#### **4. TREATMENT**

##### **4.1 Treatment Principle**

Nourish Heart Yin, clear empty heat and calm Shen. Nourish Kidney Yin. Later in treatment it may be necessary to nourish Liver Yin.

##### **4.2 Treatment Plan**

Initially it was agreed with the patient that she would come once a week for 10 weeks and then be reviewed. Initially in the treatment it was felt important to concentrate on nourishing Yin and especially the Kidney Yin as this was so weak. I would expect to keep treating the Kidneys throughout the treatment plan. As the patient was also so nervous and anxious it was also necessary to calm the Shen. I would expect to see within the first 5 treatments an improvement to her panic attacks, anxiousness, shakes palpitations and sleep pattern. The empty heat symptoms and palpitations should go by about treatment 10.

##### **4.3 Lifestyle issues**

The first area to look at was for her to cut down on her consumption of coffee as she was drinking 8 to 9 cups daily. It was suggested that she cut down gradually which she did initially to only 3 cups daily and then cut it out after about 2 months. She also tried the coffee alternative of Barley Cup. She also at the same time cut down on her alcohol consumption. Both of these are stimulating and heating and so will tend to encourage the tendency to overheat due to the Yin deficiency. She also needed to be encouraged to use food as a tonic for her Yin and so by choosing foods which are nourishing, sweet and cooling such as eggs, pork, tofu, rabbit, clam, apple, pear, tomato, peas, beans, cheese and milk. The dairy foods should be

##### **4.3 Lifestyle issues continued**

used in moderation because they are Damp forming. Therefore by favouring sweet, sour and salty foods over the bitter and pungent the Yin may be nourished. The next area to look at was to try not to work so hard which she found extremely difficult as she had such a large family. Her husband was also not very communicative or helpful so most of the work was landed on Amy. Although it was not suggested at the time it was felt that a lot of the emotional aspect was due to her relationship with her husband and so perhaps some form of counseling might have been useful.

#### **4.4 Points**

Key points used :-

REN4 - This point was used for the nourishing of Blood and Yin. It also tonifies the Kidneys and calms the Mind. In this case it was particularly useful for the anxiety angle due to the Yin deficiency, as it nourishes Blood and Yin and also tonifies the Qi of the Lower Jiao which helps to root the Qi and stop it from rising to the head causing anxiety. Reinforcing method.

SP6 - This point is where the Liver, Spleen and Kidneys channels all meet and so is very useful for treating all 3 channels. It promotes Qi and Blood for all Blood Xu symptoms, tonifies Kidney Yin for night sweats and calms the Shen for anxiety and insomnia. Reinforcing method.

HE7 - Tonifies the Heart for all Heart deficiency problems particularly Heart Blood deficiency and so will help with her palpitations and also calms the Shen (for anxiety, worry and insomnia). It can also stop itching of the skin. Even method.

KID6 - This point nourishes Kidney Yin and clears empty heat. It also calms the Shen for insomnia caused by Yin deficiency. It can also help with Heat in the Blood causing skin problems so might help with the itchiness in the skin early on in the treatment. This point was also used in combination with LU7 to open the Ren Mo. This nourishes the Yin energy of the body and so is good to help night sweats, dry mouth and other signs of Kidney and Heart Yin deficiency. It was also often used along side REN4. Reinforcing method or even method.

KID9 - This point was used for its tonification of Kidney Yin as well as calming the Shen. This was for the anxiety caused by the Kidney Yin Xu. It was particularly good when there were palpitations as it helps the Heart and Kidneys to be harmonised. Reinforcing method.

P6 - This point was used for its calming effect as it is good for any anxiety caused by Heart patterns. This point was often used in conjunction with SP4 and was used to open the Yin Linking Vessel. This is very effective in the deficiency of Blood and Yin particularly when there is insomnia and anxiety. It is very good for calming the Shen in women. It is also good for tonifying the Heart. Even method.

Secondary points used :-

ST36 - To tonify Qi and Blood. Also used in conjunction with LI4 to drain the Yangming. Reinforcing method.

#### **4.4 continued**

KID16 - This point was used to tonify the Kidneys, benefit the Heart and calm the mind. This is useful when Kidney Yin is deficient and fails to nourish the Heart. Reinforcing method.

LI4 - Used for releasing the exterior with a cold and also to descend ascending rebellious Qi for indigestion. Even or reducing method.

HE6 - Nourishes Heart Yin and clears empty heat. Used for the palpitations, dry mouth at night etc. Reinforcing or even method.

Yintang - For calming the Shen when patient was more agitated. Even method.

REN12 - Used for tonifying the Spleen when energy was low and also for regulating ST Qi when suffering from some indigestion. Even method.

KID3 - Tonifies the Kidneys for Kidney Yin when needed with reinforcing method.

Some points which were used only once were as follows :-

LIV3 - Promotes the smooth flow of Liver Qi. Also can tonify Liver Yin and Blood. Even method.

GB34 - Promotes the smooth flow of Liver Qi. Reducing method.

REN14 - clears the Heart and calms the Shen for anxiety and palpitations. Even method.

REN17 - used for dispelling fullness from chest when she had tightness of the chest and breathlessness. Reducing or even method.

Other points that could have been used but were not :-

P7 - Calms the Shen and is particularly good for women especially for relationship emotional problems.

LIV8 - Tonifies Liver Blood and might help some of the Liver Blood Xu symptoms such as the bits in the eyes. Reinforcing or even method.

BL15 - Tonifies the Heart for all Heart Xu syndromes. Reinforcing method.

BL18 - Benefits Liver and Gall Bladder. It is good for the Liver Blood problems. Even method.

BL23 - Tonifies Kidney Yin. Reinforcing method.

P6 + SP4 - to open the Yin Wei Mai to tonify Heart Yin or Blood Xu. This is particularly used for palpitations and anxiety, emotional problems especially in women. This could also be used in conjunction with opening the Ren Mai ie P6<sup>R</sup> + SP4<sup>L</sup> and LU7<sup>R</sup> + KID6<sup>R</sup>, using even technique.

Massage was given from time to time to help Amy relax and calm her with good effect.

An example of an actual points prescription early in treatment :-

KID6", HE7", SP6", REN 4"

An example of an actual points prescription later in treatment :-

LU7" + KID6", SP6", KID16", HE7", Yintang

#### **4.5 Referrals and Medication**

Amy went to see her GP before coming to us to say she would like to give acupuncture a try before having the radioactive iodine treatment. At this time she was on Neo-mercazole and the GP decided to take her off this before she had the acupuncture.

After about 10 treatments she went to her doctor again to have her thyroxin levels checked. The results were clear but one of the tests was inconclusive and so would have to be redone.

She did quite well for a while and then a friend of hers was diagnosed as having cancer (Tx 13) and had refused chemotherapy and then the panic attacks and shakes started to reappear, these took a further 6 tx to calm down and maintain well and they were good for about a month then became much worse. She was called back to her doctor as her tests were not good and she went back onto the neo-

mercazole and would be on this for one month before having the radioactive iodine treatment. She stopped treatment soon after this.

## **5. PROGRESS AND OUTCOME**

**5.1** Amy initially improved well particularly as she cut down on coffee she found she slept better. She also found that alcohol made her palpitations worse and so cut this down. Her panic attacks, hot flushes, energy levels, itchininess, indigestion and shaking hands improved greatly by treatment 6. By treatment 8 she had no anxiety, palpitations or panic attacks. By treatment 12 she found that her tests were clear except for one which was inconclusive but this was extremely encouraging. By this time she had no heat feelings, palpitations or panic attacks. She was under a lot of stress from home which was not helping but on the whole it looked a very encouraging picture.

Then unfortunately a close friend was diagnosed as having cancer and would only have a short while to live as they had refused chemotherapy. There was an immediate return of the panic attack along with slight palpitations. These became more frequent and her sleep became disturbed with having trouble getting to sleep and not sleeping deeply. Her energy levels dropped badly by treatment 15. She began to improve gradually by treatment 19 and this continued for a while with the occasional panic and palpitations but the heat began to return and then at treatment 24 the palpitations and panic attacks came back with a vengeance and her GP called her in as her thyroid levels were not good. She then decided to go back onto the medication and came to see us to discuss the situation. Her neck was becoming swollen and she felt very hot and she had decided to go with the medication for a while. She discontinued treatment after this last visit.

At the time of the friends illness we continued to tonify the Kidneys and calm the Shen and to try to harmonise the Heart and Kidneys and nourish Yin. Both P6 and HE7 were used unilaterally which were calming points but perhaps we should have tried to tonify the Heart more by using HE7 bilaterally along with a calming point such as Yintang or Anmian.

The points used in clinic tended to be more for the Kidney Yin Xu than for the Heart Yin Xu which was strange as the main clinical manifestations were for Heart Yin Xu. I feel that we should have treated for both Heart and Kidney Yin Xu and that we should have balanced the prescriptions slightly more towards the Heart Yin Xu than the Kidney Yin Xu.

### **5.1 continued**

I feel that if she had tried to resolve some of her emotional problems at home or even had tried counseling that there might have been a much greater improvement and that the news about the friend might have not set her back so far.

Her periods appear to be a little erratic especially when the thyroid is playing up. The periods mainly tended to be early which may be more due to heat in the Blood which in this case may be more likely to be Empty Heat in the Blood as there was the restlessness, malar flush etc. present. We did not really concentrate on this aspect at all. Perhaps we should have taken more interest in this aspect and tried to clear heat and cool Blood as well as the nourish Yin which we did do. Points also to use could have been KID2 to clear empty heat and with LIV3 to cool Blood, KI5 also cools Blood and stops bleeding from the uterus, LI11 and SP10 cool Blood and stop bleeding.

**5.2** Although this case did not in the end have a successful outcome there was a very considerable improvement with most of the Yin Xu symptoms being greatly reduced if not eliminated for a time. The great reduction in the consumption of coffee made quite a considerable difference to her palpitations and shakes and also the reduction in alcohol consumption made a difference too. Amy felt also that this was an improvement that she had done for herself and I feel that this was an important step in clearing symptoms so that the underlying pathology could be seen more clearly.

It was very unfortunate that the friend became ill midway through treatment as without this great shock and sadness the initial success could have been built upon and the final outcome could have been successful. The shock I feel damaged both the Kidneys and Heart which were the most vulnerable areas of this patient. I feel that it is yet another example of the power of the emotions to manifest in a physical clinical way and how they should be considered carefully as part of the patients wholeness. Perhaps if she had given herself time to get over the bereavement of her friend and then built on the previous success the outcome might have been different. Amy had also come to realised the power of her emotions. Perhaps she was not ready to deal with them at this time, but perhaps she will one day.