



A Preliminary Study on the Treatment of Hemorrhoids in the *Four Sages Study*

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Abstract: Objective: Based on the theory of "neutrality circulation" in *Four Sages Study*, Huang Yuanyuan of Qing Dynasty put forward his unique personal views on the etiology, pathogenesis and treatment of hemorrhoids. Methods: The authors had read all the literature related to Huang Yuanyu's theory and explains his views by exploring the theoretical basis. Results: The chapter *Root Cause of hemorrhoids* in *Four Sages Study* specifically discussed hemorrhoids disease, and the sections "Yin and Yang", "viscera formation" and "neutrality" also involved the causes of hemorrhoids disease. Conclusion: (1) The root cause of hemorrhoids is the sinking of spleen, and the pathogenesis is lack of neutrality and descent of small intestine. This paper proposes a method of nourishing "yang" and suppressing "yin", combined with clearing heat and resolving dryness, and adjusting the prescription according to the specific condition of the patient. (2) Huang Yuanyu's academic thought is a significant guidance for the research and treatment of hemorrhoids in later generations.

Keywords: hemorrhoids, *Four Sages Study*, Huang Yuanyu, lack of neutrality, descent of small intestine

1. Introduction

Four Sages Study is a work by the Qing Dynasty physician Huang Yuanyu, who elaborated on the connotations of the four books: *Huangdi Neijing*, *Nanjing*, *Shanghan Lun* and *Jinkui Yaolue*, which not only includes the basic theories of traditional Chinese medicine but also clinical medical content of traditional Chinese medicine. Huang Yuanyu systematically elaborated on his personal views on the classic *Four Sages Study* in the article, and proposed the theory of Neutrality Circulation, Earth Axis and Four Symbols[1]. He emphasized the regulation of the neutrality in the spleen and stomach, believing that dampness is the main factor that disrupts the balance of yin and yang in the spleen and stomach. In terms of treatment, he proposed that "the first priority of a family's medicine is in the neutrality. The book *The Root of Hemorrhoids and Leaks* is included in Volume 9 of the book, which explains the causes and treatment of hemorrhoids and leaks. In hemorrhoid and leak diseases, the focus is on discussing the causes of hemorrhoids. Huang Yuanyu's understanding of hemorrhoids is not only limited to the appearance of dampness and heat, but also uses the theory of neutrality to explain the causes and pathogenesis of the disease. This article explores the relevant theories of Huang Yuanyu's theory on treating hemorrhoids and leakage, providing diagnostic and therapeutic ideas for clinical treatment of hemorrhoid and leakage diseases.

2. The understanding of hemorrhoids in the book *Four Sages Study*

Building on the foundation of the *Huang Di Nei Jing* and the *Nan Jing*, Huang Yuyuan utilizes the theory of "circulation of vital energy" to discuss the etiology of hemorrhoids. He further proposes key principles for diagnosis and treatment, as well as rules for medication, providing a detailed discussion on the origin and essential points of diagnosis and treatment for hemorrhoids.

3. Discussion on the causes of hemorrhoids by Huang Yuanyu

The theory of "circulation of vital energy" runs through the entire book, so the understanding of the diagnosis and treatment of hemorrhoids in the book should revolve around this theory.

3.1 Insufficient middle vital energy is the key to the formation of hemorrhoids

Huang Yuanyu said, "The ascension and descent of Wu and Ji rely entirely on middle vital energy. If middle vital energy fails, the soil of Ji will not ascend and the clear yang will sink, and the soil of Wu will not descend, causing the turbid qi to rise. This is the result of yin deficiency and yang deficiency[2]." Middle vital energy is the driving force behind the ascension of the spleen and the descent of the stomach. Ji soil relies on middle vital energy to drive the liver (wood) and the kidneys (water) to nourish the heart (fire) and maintain the ascent of clear yang. Wu soil relies on middle vital energy

to promote the descent of metal (gold) and fire (fire), warming the kidneys (water) and simultaneously expelling turbid qi. "The movement of the three yang channels in the hand is the ascent of clear yang[3]." Among the five elements, the small intestine is associated with the fire of Bing. It should ascend along the hand Taiyang meridian to the meeting point of all yang channels. However, in the book "Plain Questions: Discussion on Qi Stagnation," it is mentioned, "The small intestine transfers heat to the large intestine, which must be considered for accumulation and sinking hemorrhoids. Huang Yuanyu believes that the direct cause of hemorrhoids is the descent of the fire of the small intestine to the lowest part of the large intestine, where it does not ascend but descends, passing to the place it overcomes and descending to the lowest point, which is why hemorrhoids occur in the anus. Ultimately, the insufficient middle vital energy is unable to push the ascent of clear yang, causing the fire of Bing to sink to the anus and form hemorrhoids.

3.2 The insufficient neutrality is rooted in the spleen earth.

Huang Yuanyu believes that the neutrality is generated between the yin and yang of the spleen and stomach, and it has the function of ascending and descending. Yucao Yi states, "Its ability to ascend clarity and descend turbidity depends entirely on the manipulation of the middle epigastrium[4]." Although it does not explicitly state that the qi of the middle epigastrium is the middle qi, the description of the qi of the middle epigastrium is consistent with the statement in *Four Sages Study*: "When the neutrality is vigorous, the stomach descends and receives well, the spleen ascends and grinds well, water and cereal are fermented and matured, and essence and qi are nourished, so there is no illness[5]." Which indicates that the neutrality has the function of promoting the ascent of the spleen and the descent of the stomach.

Huang Yuanyu states in *Four Sages Study*. Volume 2. Taiyin Damp Earth: "The dampness of the earth is the original qi, and the dryness of the earth is the subsidiary neutrality. Therefore, the dryness of the stomach cannot compete with the dampness of the spleen. There are fewer diseases caused by dryness of the earth, and more diseases caused by dampness of the earth[1]. Taiyin is damp earth, it likes dryness and dislikes dampness, and diseases of the spleen earth are mostly caused by damp evil. "All dampness, swelling, and fullness belong to the spleen[5]." It reveals the close relationship between the spleen and damp evil. Huang Yuanyu also believes that damp evil is the root cause of affecting the ascent and descent of the spleen and stomach. "If the dampness of the earth does not descend, the metal and fire will go against the upper direction, and if the earth does not ascend, the water and wood will fall. The source of all this is due to the dominance of dampness." The dampness of the spleen earth affects the generation of neutrality, and insufficient neutrality will cause diarrhea and hemorrhoids. Huang Yuanyu based on his understanding of the *Neijing* believes: "If there is diarrhea, both the spleen and the colon are sinking, and the fire is sinking to the anus, which is the cause of hemorrhoids[3]." It is also consistent with the phenomenon that patients with long-term diarrhea are more prone to hemorrhoids. In addition, based on the theory of neutrality circulation, Huang Yuanyu proposed that "Taiyin controls the ascent, and the damp earth of the self-earth rises, and both the water and wood of the Gui and Yi rise. The reason why the earth can generate is the generation of the spleen yang. If the damp earth of the self does not ascend, the water and wood will sink[1]." When the spleen is damp and sinking, the generation of is insufficient, and the insufficient neutrality cannot assist the ascending of the spleen yang. The sinking of the spleen yang leads to diarrhea, and the sinking of the spleen yang is the manifestation of insufficient generation of neutrality.

Huang Yuanyu also said, "If the stool is red, it is the sinking of wood qi. Because the relative fire is in the water, it is the root of the yang line. When it is warm and rises, it transforms into wood. The warm qi in the wood generates fire, and when it sinks, it accumulates and produces heat[1]." When the liver wood is accompanied by the generation of self-earth, the relative fire can rise with the kidney water and transform into wood qi, and then rise to become heart fire. If the liver wood is stagnant and sinks, the fire evil will go against and rush down. "When the spleen earth sinks, the liver wood stagnates and the blood does not ascend, resulting in loss of stool[1]." When the self-earth of the spleen is damp and sinking, the neutrality is weak and unable to drive the liver wood to ascend. The liver wood stagnates and generates heat; the liver loses its function of spreading and draining, the blood does not ascend and is deposited in the anus, causing the meridians to rupture, and the heat breaks the blood and causes bleeding.

Therefore, Huang Yuanyu proposed, "The heat of hemorrhoids is in the anal gate, and the spleen and small intestine are all cold and damp... If it sinks and does not ascend, the heat is in the anal gate instead of the intestines and stomach[1]. The formation of hemorrhoids is due to damp evil, abnormal transformation and transportation of neutrality, and the obstruction of the pivot mechanism of ascent and descent, which leads to the insufficient ascending and lifting of neutrality, and the fire evil is transmitted to the large intestine, sinking to the lowest end of the large intestine, the anus, and forming hemorrhoids. Therefore, the heat is not in the intestines, but in the anus. Whether hemorrhoids bleed or not depends on the liver wood, which is rooted in the sinking of self-earth. When the liver wood stagnates and sinks, the blood accumulates in the anus, and the heat forces the blood to flow, causing bleeding[4]. Since the key factor for the formation of hemorrhoids is the sinking of the spleen earth, the treatment of hemorrhoids should focus on regulating the relationship between earth and wood,

invigorating spleen yang to nourish middle qi, and making the pivot mechanism of ascent and descent of the spleen and stomach smooth, so that the "four aspects" are balanced. Huang Yuanyu believes: "When the heat of hemorrhoids occurs, it is all caused by the internal production of cold and dampness, and the workers and doctors do not know it[1]." Physicians only focus on the local manifestations of dampness and heat in the anus, without using holistic thinking to diagnose, and focusing on clearing heat and promoting dampness will only damage the spleen and stomach, aggravate internal cold and dampness, and make the disease more severe.

4. Nourishing the yang and restraining the yin, the key is to focus on the neutrality

According to the theory of traditional Chinese medicine, the core of treating diseases lies in regulating the middle neutrality. Huang Yuanyu proposed in *Four Sages Study* that the treatment of diseases should first focus on the neutrality. The neutrality is located between the two Earth elements. Earth is generated by Fire, and Fire is extinguished by Water. When Fire is excessive, Earth becomes dry, and when Water is excessive, Earth becomes damp." The key is to the circulation of neutrality. The neutrality is generated between the Yin and Yang of the Spleen and Stomach. Therefore, when the Spleen and Stomach are stable, the neutrality is harmonious[1]." This shows that regulating the Spleen and Stomach and supporting the neutrality is the core of using medicine. The treatment principle is "promote the Fire to subdue the Yin, and make the neutrality circulate, so that the clear and turbid can return to their proper places, and achieve the method of dispelling disease and prolonging life[1]." The key to regulating the neutrality lies in nourishing the Yang and supplementing the Fire. In clinical practice, ginseng and dried ginger are often used to nourish the middle burner Yang[5]. Fuling and licorice are also used to promote water metabolism and regulate the neutrality. Licorice can elevate the depressed Liver and Spleen, nourish the Earth and regulate the middle. This shows the importance of licorice in assisting the neutrality. Huang Yuanyu pioneered the use of Fuling Shizhi Decoction to treat hemorrhoids with swelling, pain, and bleeding. Dried ginger and licorice were used to assist the Spleen Yang and nourish the Earth. Guizhi can not only warm the meridians and assist the Yang to transform neutrality, but also relieve Liver neutrality stagnation. Fuling can promote water metabolism and eliminate Dampness while invigorating the Spleen, promoting urination to dispel Dampness. The combination of these four ingredients can assist the Spleen in its transformation, promote the generation of neutrality, and relieve Liver neutrality stagnation. Shengma can elevate the Yang and assist the neutrality in rising. It can support the Liver Wood and the Kidney Water to ascend to nourish the Heart Fire. Shaoyao can clear the dryness of the Wood and nourish the Liver Wood, relieve the stagnation of the Wood and promote the upward movement of the blood[6]. Danpi can treat bleeding hemorrhoids. Danpi can clear heat and cool the blood, and treat the condition of heat pathogen damaging the blood and causing reckless movement. Chishizhi has a sweet and neutral nature and can dry the Earth of the Spleen and constrict to stop bleeding, so it can treat diseases such as hemorrhoids. If there is severe burning sensation in the anus, *Coptis chinensis* can be added to clear away Damp-Heat; if there is blood deficiency and dryness of the Wood, Ejiao can be added to nourish Yin and moisten dryness. The symptoms of hemorrhoids with a hot sensation in the anus are caused by internal Cold and Dampness. It is not appropriate to use only clearing and purging drugs based on the local hot symptoms. Doing so will only suppress the Earth and damage the neutrality, exacerbating the Cold and Dampness symptoms and worsening the condition of hemorrhoids.

5. Conclusion

In summary, Huang Yuanyu's understanding of the etiology and pathogenesis of hemorrhoids adheres to the principles of the Huangdi Neijing. It not only inherits the traditional knowledge but also provides personal insights, offering a deeper explanation of the causes of hemorrhoids. Based on the theory of "circulation of neutrality," it explains that the deficiency of neutrality caused by spleen earth dampness affects the functioning of liver wood and kidney water, ultimately leading to the phenomenon of excessive heat and blood stagnation in the anus. The fundamental cause of hemorrhoids is not the invasion of external pathogenic factors but the influence of internal pathogenic factors. Therefore, the treatment should focus on tonifying yang rather than purging heat. This fully embodies the holistic concept and flexible adaptability of TCM diagnosis and treatment. Huang Yuanyu's unique academic ideas and treatment methods have a guiding role for future treatments.

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