

Yiqi Huoxue Method for Treating Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia in Elderly Patients

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Abstract: Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) is a common condition affecting the quality of life and health status of elderly men. Its incidence increases with age and is often accompanied by symptoms such as urinary frequency, urgency, nocturia, difficulty voiding, and even urinary retention. While conventional Western medicine can alleviate symptoms, it frequently carries risks of side effects and disease recurrence. Traditional Chinese Medicine approaches this condition based on the characteristic patterns observed in the elderly population: predominantly deficiency and blood stasis, with chronic conditions leading to blood stasis. The Yiqi Huoxue method—aimed at tonifying Qi and activating blood circulation—has been shown to improve urinary symptoms, enhance quality of life, and promote overall health in elderly BPH patients. This article explores the application of the Yiqi Huoxue therapeutic principle in managing benign prostatic hyperplasia.

Keywords: Lower urinary tract symptoms; Benign prostatic hyperplasia; Kidney deficiency with blood stasis; Tonifying Qi and activating blood

Online publication: September 8, 2025

1. Introduction

According to the data from China's seventh national census, there are approximately 267 million people aged 60 and above, accounting for 18.9% of the total population. China has entered an aging society ^[1]. Lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) are common symptoms among elderly men and the main reason for their hospital visits. They seriously affect the quality of life of patients. The incidence of LUTS increases with age, and more elderly people will be troubled by LUTS. Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) is the most common cause of LUTS in men. Histologically, it shows the hyperplasia of the prostate stroma and glands, and anatomically, the volume of the prostate increases. Common symptoms include frequent urination, frequent nocturia, urgent urination, difficulty in urination, and even inability to excrete urine. The onset of the disease usually begins around the age of 50. The incidence rate is over 50% for those aged 60 and as high as 83% for those aged 80. It seriously affects the quality of life of elderly patients and imposes a heavy economic burden on individuals and society ^[2-4].

2. Understanding of benign prostatic hyperplasia in traditional Chinese medicine

Although ancient Chinese medical books do not have a direct corresponding disease name for benign prostatic hyperplasia, based on its clinical manifestations such as difficulty in urination, frequent urination, urgent urination, and increased nocturia, it can be classified into categories such as “retention of urine”, “seminal urinary tract”, or “urinary tract syndrome”. Among them, difficulty in urination with short and scarce drops is “urinary tract”, and urinary tract obstruction with no drops at all is “urinary tract closure”, which is relatively consistent with the urinary tract symptoms of BPH. The “Jin Jian of Medical Canon: Retention of urine Theory” states, “In men, retention of urine is often caused by deficiency of kidney Qi and damp-heat in the bladder.” The “Suwen: Xuanming Wuqi” states, “If the bladder is not functioning well, it is considered as urinary retention; if not, it is associated with enuresis.” This indicates that the abnormal Qi transformation function of the bladder leads to difficulty in urination, and it also suggests that the location of the disease lies in the bladder. The Medical Practice of retention of urine states: “The diseases of retention of urine are often caused by deficiency of the kidney meridian, failure of Qi transformation, and internal retention of water and dampness.” Or due to damp-heat in the bladder, the waterways are not in good condition; Or due to liver depression and qi stagnation, the waterways are blocked. In the “Medical Record of Integrating Chinese and Western Medicine - Difficulty in Urination”, it is stated that “it may be due to internal obstruction of blood stasis, resulting in blocked waterways.” Therefore, traditional Chinese medicine holds that bladder dysfunction, kidney deficiency, blood stasis and damp-heat are the main causes of BPH ^[5, 6].

In “Suwen: The Ancient Theory of Innocence”, it is mentioned: “Husband...” On the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, when kidney Qi declines, hair becomes sagging and teeth become dull. On the sixth and eighth lines, when the Yang energy is exhausted from the upper body, the face becomes flushed, and the temples turn grey. At the seventh or eighth point, the liver Qi declines, the tendons cannot move, the heavenly essence is exhausted, the essence is scarce, the kidneys are weak, and the body is extremely weak. “Eighty-eight, then the teeth spread out.” As people age, the deficiency of kidney qi and kidney essence in elderly men is a normal physiological process. In the “Suwen; Linglan’s Secret Treatise”, it is mentioned: “The bladder is the official of the state capital. When the body fluids are stored there and transformed, they can be discharged.” Although the bladder is the official of the state capital and is responsible for the function of Qi transformation and opening and closing, this function of Qi transformation and opening and closing is accomplished through the Qi transformation of the kidneys. The elderly often suffer from kidney deficiency with weak qi transformation, poor circulation of Qi and blood, and obstructed distribution of body fluids. At the same time, it is often accompanied by blood stasis, damp-heat, and other factors, leading to the onset of the disease. This results in the interweaving of kidney deficiency, blood stasis, and damp-turbidity, which are mutually causal ^[7].

3. Contemporary medical experts’ understanding of benign prostatic hyperplasia

Academician Wang Qi of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a master of traditional Chinese medicine believes that the basic pathogenesis of benign prostatic hyperplasia is “deficiency at the root and excess at the symptoms”. Deficiency at the root refers to the decline of the functions of the kidneys, spleen, liver, and other organs, with insufficiency of kidney Qi being the core. In fact, the key issue is internal obstruction of blood stasis, accompanied by Qi stagnation, damp-heat, and phlegm turbidity. Aging and physical decline lead to kidney deficiency and weak qi transformation, resulting in poor blood circulation and blood stasis. Blood stasis is not only

a cause of hyperplasia but also a pathological product that compresses the urethra and hinders microcirculation after hyperplasia, forming a vicious cycle of “stasis–deficiency–stasis”. In treatment, emphasis is placed on both strengthening the body’s fundamental constitution and promoting blood circulation to remove blood stasis, supplemented by clearing heat, promoting diuresis, resolving phlegm, and dispersing nodules^[8].

Professor Li Haisong from Dongzhimen Hospital of Beijing University of Chinese Medicine holds that the pathogenesis of benign prostatic hyperplasia is centered on kidney deficiency with poor Qi transformation and internal obstruction of blood stasis. He believes that “deficiency” is the fundamental pathogenesis and the prerequisite for the onset of the disease, while “blood stasis” is the core pathogenesis and an important pathological product. The two are interrelated as cause and effect. Kidney deficiency leads to the loss of Qi transformation in the bladder, and poor blood circulation results in blood stasis. Blood stasis obstructs the lower part of the body, aggravating difficulty in urination. This forms a vicious cycle of “mutual accumulation of deficiency and blood stasis”. The treatment advocates tonifying the kidney and benefiting Qi to restore the function of Qi transformation, and promoting blood circulation and removing blood stasis to unblock the waterways^[9].

Professor Li Yueqing from Dongzhimen Hospital of Beijing University of Chinese Medicine proposed that the core pathogenesis of benign prostatic hyperplasia is kidney deficiency and blood stasis, with the principle that “kidney deficiency in old age is the root cause, and the internal formation of blood stasis is the symptom.” Deficiency of kidney Qi leads to weak Qi transformation and poor blood circulation, resulting in blood stasis. Blood stasis blocks the lower jiao waterways and compresses the urethra, causing difficulty in urination. This creates a vicious cycle of “kidney deficiency generating blood stasis and blood stasis damaging kidney Qi”. The treatment emphasizes tonifying the kidney and replenishing essence to consolidate the root cause, promoting blood circulation, and resolving nodules to eliminate symptoms^[10].

Professor Zeng Qingqi, a renowned traditional Chinese medicine doctor in Jiangsu Province, believes that blood stasis obstruction is the core pathogenesis of benign prostatic hyperplasia. Elderly people with kidney deficiency or long-term accumulation of damp-heat can lead to poor circulation of Qi and blood, causing blood stasis to accumulate in the lower part of the body, directly blocking the urethra and the meridians of the prostate, resulting in glandular hyperplasia, urethral compression, and difficulty in urination. Blood stasis is not only a pathological product but also further hinders Qi transformation and blood circulation, forming a vicious cycle of “blood–hyperplasia–blood stasis”. The treatment mainly focuses on promoting blood circulation, removing blood stasis, and unblocking meridians, supplemented by tonifying the kidney and benefiting Qi or clearing heat and promoting diuresis^[11].

Professor Men Chengfu, a renowned national traditional Chinese medicine expert, believes that although the onset of benign prostatic hyperplasia can be attributed to pathological factors such as Qi deficiency, Qi stagnation, damp-heat, and blood stasis, the key to its pathological mechanism lies in blood stasis. The occurrence, development, evolution, and outcome of this disease are all closely related to blood stasis. Blood stasis is not only a pathogenic factor of this disease but also a pathological product, running through the entire course of the disease. It is also the main reason for the recurrence and persistence of benign prostatic hyperplasia^[12].

Professor Zhao Fan believes that in elderly patients, kidney deficiency leads to weak propulsion, and the bladder’s Qi transformation function declines. Qi deficiency causes blood stasis, which accumulates in the lower part of the body and forms accumulations that obstruct the urethra^[13]. In the “Guidelines for the Management of Chronic Diseases of Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia in the Elderly”, it is mentioned that in the early stage, the disease is mainly characterized by a mixture of deficiency and excess, while in the later stage, it is mainly based on

fundamental deficiency. It emphasizes that “treating both the symptoms and root causes”, “combining attack and tonification”, and “regulating Yin and Yang” are the main therapeutic principles, and has determined therapeutic methods such as “clearing heat and promoting diuresis”, “promoting blood circulation and removing blood stasis”, “warming and tonifying kidney Yang”, “nourishing kidney Yin”, and “tonifying the middle and benefiting qi”.

4. Analysis of the syndrome types of benign prostatic hyperplasia

The PH lesion sites mostly involve the spleen, kidney, lung, bladder, and the three jiao. The pathogenic factors include Qi deficiency, Yang deficiency, damp-heat, and blood stasis, among which “kidney deficiency, damp-heat, and blood stasis” are particularly important in the progression of the disease ^[14]. Han *et al.* conducted a study on the distribution pattern of TCM syndrome types in 1052 patients with BPH and found that kidney qi deficiency syndrome was the most common, accounting for 43.2%, while blood stasis and turbidity obstruction syndrome accounted for approximately 20.7% ^[15]. It can be concluded that kidney Qi deficiency and blood stasis, and turbidity obstruction syndrome are the most frequently witnessed types. Xu *et al.* identified the TCM constitutions of patients with benign prostatic hyperplasia and found that they were mainly characterized by Yang deficiency and Qi deficiency ^[16]. Professor Guo Jun found in clinical practice that BPH of kidney deficiency and blood stasis type is the most common ^[17]. The treatment involves tonifying the kidney and benefiting Qi, promoting blood circulation, and removing blood stasis. Pan *et al.* analyzed the data of 506 patients with BPH collected and found that among all the cases, the proportion of kidney Yang deficiency type was the highest, followed by spleen and kidney qi deficiency type, qi stagnation and blood stasis type, and then kidney Yin deficiency type and damp-heat descending type in sequence ^[18]. Chen *et al.* analyzed and summarized the frequency of the collected literature on the treatment of BPH with traditional Chinese medicine to explore the rules of syndrome differentiation and treatment ^[19]. The top four frequently witnessed types, accounting for 53.58%, were: kidney deficiency and blood stasis type, kidney Yang deficiency type, middle Qi sinking type, and lung heat congestion type.

5. The method of tonifying Qi and promoting blood circulation for the treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia

As a distinctive therapy in traditional Chinese medicine, the method of tonifying Qi and promoting blood circulation regulates the balance of Qi and blood in the human body and improves local microcirculation to achieve the purpose of treating benign prostatic hyperplasia. The key to the pathogenesis of BPH lies in Qi deficiency and blood stasis. Tonifying Qi and promoting blood circulation will run through the entire course of the disease. The mechanism of action of the method of tonifying Qi and promoting blood circulation in the treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia may involve multiple aspects. First of all, Qi-tonifying drugs can enhance the circulation of Qi and blood in the body. Secondly, blood-activating and stasis-resolving drugs can improve local microcirculation disorders, alleviate the congestion, edema, and inflammatory response of the prostate tissue.

In addition, the method of tonifying Qi and promoting blood circulation may also exert therapeutic effects by regulating the endocrine system, immune system, and other pathways. In the specific drug application of the method of tonifying Qi and promoting blood circulation for the treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia, traditional Chinese medicinal materials such as *Astragalus membranaceus*, *Angelica sinensis*, *Salvia miltiorrhiza*, and *Panax notoginseng* are widely used. These traditional Chinese medicinal materials have the effects of

tonifying Qi and nourishing blood, as well as promoting blood circulation and removing blood stasis. On the basis of tonifying Qi and promoting blood circulation, the drugs are adjusted according to the patient's symptoms, such as damp-heat, Yang deficiency, and Yin deficiency. Professor He Juqiao plans to use a formula for tonifying Qi, promoting blood circulation, and eliminating symptoms for treatment. The entire formula consists of *Astragalus membranaceus*, *Atractylodes macrocephala*, Pangolin, *Trichosanthes*, *Phellodendron amurense*, Wulingzhi, *Fructus aurantii*, and Turtle shell, etc. ^[20]. The *Astragalus membranaceus* and *Atractylodes macrocephala* in the formula exert the effects of tonifying Qi and promoting diuresis. Pu Huang and Wu Ling Zhi have the effects of promoting blood circulation, removing blood stasis, and relieving pain. Pangolin, tricolor, *Fructus aurantii*, and turtle shell have the effects of breaking Qi, eliminating accumulation, softening hardness, dispersing nodules, and relieving symptoms. When used in combination, these herbs work together to achieve the effects of tonifying Qi, promoting diuresis, activating blood circulation, and eliminating symptoms.

6. Case analysis

The patient is a 75-year-old male who sought medical attention due to symptoms such as difficulty in urination, frequent urination, urgent urination, and increased nocturia. Diagnosed with benign prostatic hyperplasia by Western medicine. The patient reported obvious symptoms such as easy fatigue, shortness of breath, and excessive sweating in daily life. The tongue is pale purple with a thin white coating, and the veins at the base of the tongue are tortuous. The pulse is fine and sluggish. It is diagnosed as benign prostatic hyperplasia of Qi deficiency and blood stasis type in traditional Chinese medicine. The treatment adopts the method of tonifying Qi and promoting blood circulation. A prescription is composed of Qi-tonifying drugs such as *Astragalus membranaceus*, *Codonopsis pilosula*, and *Atractylodes macrocephala*, as well as blood-activating and stasis-resolving drugs such as *Salvia miltiorrhiza*, Peach kernel, and safflower for treatment. Two weeks after the treatment, the patient's symptoms, such as difficulty in urination, frequent urination, and urgent urination, were significantly improved. Symptoms such as fatigue and shortness of breath have also been alleviated. After continuing the consolidation treatment for 4 weeks, the patient's symptoms basically disappeared, and the quality of life significantly improved.

7. Conclusion

The condition of patients with benign prostatic hyperplasia is complex and diverse. There are differences among different patients in terms of physical constitution, severity of the condition, and complications. Therefore, future treatments should place greater emphasis on individualization and precision. Through the treatment of syndrome differentiation in traditional Chinese medicine, combined with the specific condition and physical characteristics of the patient, personalized treatment plans for tonifying Qi and promoting blood circulation are formulated to improve the treatment effect and patient satisfaction. In the treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia, the comprehensive treatment model combining traditional Chinese and Western medicine has broad application prospects. The method of tonifying Qi and promoting blood circulation can be combined with Western medical methods such as surgery and medication to complement each other's advantages and enhance the overall therapeutic effect.

Funding

Hebei Provincial Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine Scientific Research Project (2025576).

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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