USING FOLK THERAPIES TO TREAT NEURASTHENIA: A CASE OF PASSIFLORACEAE

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ABSTRACT

Being a quite common disease in Vietnam and occurs mainly in intellectual workers, neurasthenia is a rather dangerous matter that the patients should take into consideration. If not being handled in time, the disease can lead to depression, affecting the quality of patients’ life and even his or her family. Modern life itself goes along with a hasty lifestyle, if we do not know how to balance everything, we can easily fall into a state of prolonged stress causing nervous breakdown. Since it is a disorder of the brain's cortex function due to stressful work of brain cells or overloading, it might affect our body's recovery, therefore we should pay more attention to our health. This paper focuses on analyzing recent studies and also mentions some solutions to improve neurasthenia. In addition to implementing a number of popular methods, the combinations of passifloraceae into the treatment has had very positive results. The paper’s results found that the vital role of some herbs like passifloraceae is really a good medication we can apply to have a better life.

Keywords: Herbs, passifloraceae, neurasthenia, healthy

I. INTRODUCTION

Neurasthenia is a syndrome that includes symptoms similar to heart disease, fatigue, shortness of breath, fast heartbeat, sweating, etc. Neurasthenia is a closely related and functional neurological disorder, even considered a manifestation of anxiety and depression disorders [1].

Causes of neurasthenia are a dysfunction of the brain and some central areas under the cerebral cortex due to overwork or under pressure, stress leading to depression. Neurasthenia is a disease that is becoming more and more popular in modern society when life and work are under a lot of pressure [2]. The brain change will be proportional to the finger manipulation on the smartphone's touch screen. The use of touch keys requires a much more complex set of movements than using a hard keyboard, making fingers more active, which increases the bonding speed and brain response time. The use of modern smartphone might affect human health, that is, any change in the cerebral cortex will induce pain, spasms, and nerve disturbances, which in turn can induce chronic pain (Figure 1).

![The structure of human brain](image)

Figure 1: The structure of human brain
The next cause is stress. Prolonged emotional stress leads to fatigue, anxiety and irritability. Excess stress unbalances the two processes of excitement and inhibition [3]. These two processes increase or decrease, causing the patient to develop neurasthenia. The causes of excessive stress might lead to difficult life, prolonged family conflict, failure at work, study; failing to control excessive emotions leading to inhibition, excessive work, etc.

Besides, some studies suggest that people with introverted personality, little outside communication, always cautious or anxious have a higher risk of neurasthenia than those with extroverted personality. Intense intellectual workers are also susceptible to disease [1]. People who often have to work intensively intellectually in a stressful environment always demand precision, with effort leading to neurasthenia [4].

Neurasthenia can be caused by an unhealthy lifestyle, that is, we often use stimulants, drink a lot of alcohol, coffee, and smoke. Neurasthenia can be caused by the impact of external environment such as noise, environmental pollution, stressful working conditions, and prolonged insomnia leads to neurasthenia. In addition, neurasthenia can originate from acquired conditions such as high blood pressure, sinusitis, stomach ulcers, etc. making the body fatigue, prolonged stress and anxiety lead to neurasthenia [2].

II. SYMPTOMS OF NEURASTHENIA

The first symptom is sleep disturbance. This is both a cause and a consequence of neurasthenia [5]. Common symptoms of sleep disturbance include restless sleep, frequent waking up in the middle of the night, frequent nightmares, etc.

The second symptom is fatigue. Fatigue is a normal phenomenon of the body when involved in vigorous exercise; overwork for a long time, etc. The patient's health will gradually recover after resting and eating well. However, fatigue relating to neurasthenia does not appear to have a specific cause [6]. Going along with fatigue is a state of mental frustration, discomfort or restlessness. That makes other organs of the body often feel uncomfortable, such as nervousness, heart palpitations, chest tightness, shortness of breath, and discomfort in the stomach.

The third symptom is headache. The patient often has a heavy sense of the mind; the pain is usually in the forehead, temples or the head. In addition, vision loss may be impaired, sometimes, eye fatigue is observed [4]. Headaches worsen when there are pressures at work, headaches sometimes occur when we wake up in the morning, affecting life and work.

The fourth symptom is loss of emotional control. The patients are easily irritable, easily psychologically stimulated, impatient leading to discouragement, giving up early; they might feel irritable, sometimes overreacting, etc. These irritating manifestations were easy to occur and also disappear.

Then, the fifth symptom is an anxiety disorder [7]. Although the patient is often angry, they are easily afraid, other manifestations may be encountered such as fear of dirt, fear of communication, fear of being sick, etc. They always think that they have a very serious illness, even though they can not see any signs of illness when being checked. If not diagnosed and treated in time, it can lead to more serious illnesses such as depression, dementia, etc.

Patients with neurasthenia also experience musculoskeletal and neurological symptoms, spinal pain, neck pain, low back pain, muscle aches, sensory disturbances, headache and dizziness. There are some gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, loss of appetite, flatulence, constipation, etc. There are also cardiovascular symptoms such as tachycardia, anxiety, shortness of breath, heart attack when changing movement positions [8].

EFFECTS OF SCIENTIFIC COMPOSITION OF PASSIFLORACEAE

Passifloraceae is known to be a medicinal herb originating from Mexico, Central America, South America and the Caribbean. It can be seen that this tree is quite easy to live and distribute in many areas. In Vietnam, we can easily find this herb on the roadside, in the forest or in mountainous areas of 100m or higher. Unlike many other varieties which are only distributed in a few provinces, this medicinal plant appears in all regions of Vietnam. In recent years, with increasing demand for Passifloraceae, this medicinal herb has been propagated and grown in many medicinal establishments and centers nationwide.

The use of this medicinal herb has also been verified in modern scientific studies. Ingredients in this medicinal herb have good biological pharmacological properties for health [9]. The main chemical ingredients include
Passiflorin, Sapomarin, Harmalol, Hermalin, Saponaretin, Vitexin, etc. The fruit of Passifloraceae contains nutrients such as mineral salts, protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, glucose, etc. With these ingredients, drugs extracted from Passifloraceae are effective in preventing and supporting diseases such as insomnia, skin diseases, cough, etc. Passifloraceae also contains alkaloids, flavonoids, narigenin, apigenin, vitexin, etc. (Figure 2).

![Figure 2: Three main compositions of Passifloraceae](image2)

In Vietnam, Passifloraceae has been considered as a great treatment which has “cooling” effect on the liver. Passifloraceae is used to treat insomnia, neurasthenia and anxiety. One dosage contains about 20-40g / day and it can be cooked until condensed and then, we can drink it as tea.

![Figure 3: The image of Passiflora. incarnata L.](image3)

In addition to Passifloraceae, in Vietnam, people also grow and use Passiflora. incarnata L., this is a form of passion fruit used for food, beverage, canned food, confectionery, ice cream, after-meal desserts and a tonic for nerve stimulant effects and help the digestion is better. This plant is precious since the fruit of Passiflora. incarnata L. contains vitamin C, essential oils, leucin, 85 valine, tyrosin, prolin, threolin, glycin, arginin, lysine) and β-carotene.

**SOME METHODS OF TREATING NEURASTHENIA**

Tests and procedures used to diagnose neurasthenia may include blood tests, X-rays, etc. Patients can be treated for neurasthenia by limiting strenuous activities or leading a healthier lifestyle. If suffering from this disease, patients should sit with backrest or rest in bed because these are two best positions for health [10].

Proper exercise, wearing loose clothing at the waist and avoiding changing positions such as hunching over, lying on our left or on the right side or lying on our back are in some cases effective. The above methods can help reduce anxiety and reduce chest pain. Ideally, the patient should stand up slowly to prevent vertigo caused by
postural hypotension in some cases [11]. Medicines like digitalis are also recommended because they act as ATPase sodium-potassium inhibitors in reducing heart rate.

Neurasthenia encompasses a diverse symptom set and there is currently no cure for this problem. The main methods of treatment are lifestyle changes, eating habits and most importantly solving psychological problems for the patient.

On the other hand, the doctor may use certain drugs to treat physical symptoms [12]. Patients need to eat scientifically, properly, with adequate nutrition, diverse groups of substances, and supplement with many vegetables and fruits. In addition, the patient also needs a sufficient amount of vitamins (C, B1, B2, etc.) because they help accelerate metabolic activities in the body, making the body healthy against fatigue. In addition to vitamins, trace elements such as calcium should also be in full supply [9]. Calcium helps strong teeth and bones, is necessary in regulating the functioning of the heart and nerves, and maintaining muscle capacity.

Patients should avoid using drugs such as alcohol, tobacco, etc. because these substances weaken nerves and cause fatigue. Patients also need to exercise regularly, at least 30 minutes per day. Useful exercises like yoga or meditation can also help rebalance our psychological state and improve our physical and mental health.

If the work needs to be done too much or is too stressful, we need to plan and break it down [13]. We avoid stress both physically and emotionally. We must take time to rest, relax and participate in favorite activities. Neurasthenia is largely associated with long-term stress or depression, therefore, drugs to relieve symptoms such as pain relievers, heart pacemakers, antipsychotics, sleeping pills, etc. are also used depending on each specific case. The use of probiotics is also a novel and highly regarded therapy for its effectiveness and safety in preventing and improving mood and stress symptoms.

III. CONCLUSION

Neurasthenia can be seen in many subjects, especially in women. People with neurasthenia are often subjective in the treatment, if prolonged can affect health, quality of life, even cause negative consequences for the family and society. In addition to handling early and properly, we also need to develop a healthy lifestyle, avoid stress, and have a reasonable working and resting regime. Nowadays, many people with neurasthenia also believe in choosing to use herbal products to help fight the disease. Passifloraceae seems to be very normal, but its effect is extremely miraculous that we need more attention in the therapy of neurasthenia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to send my sincere thanks to those who gave me great advice to complete the research paper.

REFERENCES