

Modern Interpretation and Research Progress of Classical Characteristic Needling Method in the Treatment of Breast Hyperplasia

Yang Li^{1*}

¹ Clinical College of Acupuncture and Rehabilitation, Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine, Guangdong, China

Email Address

2407188386@qq.com (Yang Li)

*Correspondence: 2407188386@qq.com

Received: 29 April 2025; Accepted: 17 May 2025; Published: 3 June 2025

Abstract:

The classical characteristic needling method is one of the traditional therapies in traditional Chinese medicine and is closely related to various diseases such as gynecology. By consulting the literature, it was found that the classical characteristic acupuncture therapy has a good therapeutic effect on breast hyperplasia. The author takes some of the acupuncture methods in “Ling Shu: Official Acupuncture” as examples and summarizes the therapeutic effects of breast hyperplasia diseases according to the five body levels of acupuncture, meridian and zone acupuncture, local multiple acupuncture, special operation acupuncture and each of the following classical acupuncture methods. Elaborate on its evolution in modern therapy and its advantages in treating this disease. Classical characteristic acupuncture techniques are expected to exert their clinical application value further and assist in the diagnosis and treatment of breast hyperplasia.

Keywords:

Breast Hyperplasia, Classical Characteristic Needlework, “Ling Shu: Official Needle”

1. Introduction

Breast hyperplasia is common in women. The main pathological change is that the normal physiological structure of the breast is disrupted due to the imbalance of proliferation and the disorder of regeneration and repair of the breast glandular units and interstitial tissue [1]. In the diagnosis and treatment of this disease, the main symptoms often present include breast pain, breast discharge, and palpable nodular lesions [2]. Surveys show that patients with breast hyperplasia may have a higher probability of developing cancer [3]. In the theoretical system of traditional Chinese medicine, breast hyperplasia is called “intramammary nodules”. This disease is believed to be characterized by qi stagnation, phlegm coagulation, and blood stasis, with disharmony of the Chong and Ren meridians, deficiency of the liver and kidneys, and insufficiency of the liver, spleen, and pivot as the fundamental deficiency

pathogenesis. Its essence is the imbalance of the kidney-Tian-Gui-Chong and Ren meridians axis [4]. Early intervention and preventive care have become the key to treating this disease. Classical characteristic needling techniques are the special methods used in ancient Chinese medicine to treat diseases. These needling methods demonstrate the needling techniques of that time and also provide systematic support for the diagnosis, treatment, and further development of modern needling therapy. They mainly include the classical needling techniques in “Acupuncture and Moxibustion Classic A and B” and “Huangdi Neijing” [5]. The following is a discussion on the classical needling techniques in “Ling Shu: Official Needles”.

2. Acupuncture Techniques and Breast Hyperplasia in “Ling Shu: Official Needles”

Under the basic theories of traditional Chinese medicine, when the Yin and Yang in the human body are out of balance, diseases arise. Acupuncture regulates the deficiency and excess of Yin and Yang through the combination of the four diagnostic methods, making the body correspond to the physiological state of “Yin in balance and Yang in harmony”. In the ancient acupuncture book “Ling Shu: Official Needles”, the needling techniques are initially classified: nine needling techniques for different diseases, twelve needling techniques for flexibly dealing with various diseases of the twelve meridians, and five needling techniques corresponding to diseases and syndromes related to the five internal organs [6]. The classification of ancient acupuncture and moxibustion methods is based on the principles of “selecting acupoints based on syndrome differentiation”, “selecting meridians based on syndrome differentiation”, and “selecting methods based on syndrome differentiation”, which is in line with the modern idea of “syndrome differentiation and treatment” [6]. Weiyang Zhang [7] holds that the etiology and pathogenesis of breast hyperplasia primarily lie in liver depression and qi stagnation. Jin Zhang proposed and analyzed that when phlegm pathogen combines with the five internal organs, it is prone to cause intramammary nodules [8]. Huizhi Li Liang [9] found through meridian detection of patients with breast hyperplasia that the disease is related to all twelve meridians. Therefore, the traditional acupuncture methods in the “Official Acupuncture Chapter” of the “Ling Shu” have significant implications for the diagnosis and treatment of breast hyperplasia. Thus, by consulting the literature and ancient books of the past five years in the database, the clinical application value of the traditional acupuncture methods in the “Official Acupuncture Chapter” of the “Ling Shu” for breast hyperplasia diseases was classified and summarized, assisting with the subsequent application of classical acupuncture methods in breast hyperplasia disorders.

3. Classification Method

3.1. The five body level

In the “Official Acupuncture” section of the “Ling Shu”, it is expounded that the objects of pathogenic factors can be classified as deep or shallow, and the corresponding acupuncture methods should also be both superficial and internal, deep or shallow. For general diseases, the location where pathogenic factors invade follows the rule of moving from the surface to the interior over time. Breast hyperplasia is no exception. Clinically, breast hyperplasia is generally classified into stages I to IV [10]. The five-Body grading method is closely related to the “Five-Body Theory” in the

ancient Chinese medical text “Huangdi Neijing”, which is divided into five types: skin, meridians, flesh, tendons, and bones [6].

3.1.1. Pricking skin method

Also known as the “shallow spinous method”, the half-puncture among the five spines and the rough spines among the nine spines all fall into this category. When pathogenic factors invade, they first target the “skin”. Once inside, it becomes difficult to treat. Therefore, one should “perform shallow needling to cut off the skin” and “perform shallow internal needling to quickly release the pathogen” [11]. Fang He mentioned that the therapeutic effect of the multi-needle shallow puncture method in treating 120 patients with dysphoria of the Chong and Ren meridians type was higher than that of the conventional group. The advantages were reflected in the number of days of pain and the size of the mass [12].

3.1.1.1. The half spines and the rough spines

Jiebin Zhang believed that: “half-puncture are taken from the shallow and sharp hairs, in a hair-pulling manner, to extract the qi from the skin.” [13] Shallow spines acting on the fur are called hair spines, which do not penetrate the cortex, nor do they enter the vein layer or the flesh layer. Both belong to the treatment of diseases by needling the superficial skin. Lulu Liu [14] applied the spiculation method among the “New Five Needles” to carry out interventional treatment for patients with breast hyperplasia. The results showed that the pain level of the patients could be alleviated in a short time, and the spiculation method of the “New Five Needles” was significantly superior to the conventional acupuncture group.

3.1.2. Pulse stimulation method

The Leopard vein among the five spines, the collateral vein among the nine spines, and the Zan vein among the twelve spines all fall into this category. The three types of needling techniques are different, but all involve pricking and bloodletting at the superficial surface to draw out evil spirits. In modern times, it has developed into the therapy of bloodletting through the meridians. Guangfeng Yang achieved therapeutic effects in treating breast hyperplasia by using thread embedding and blood pricking therapy at the third Foot acupoint and proposed that blood pricking therapy is helpful for unblocking qi and blood [15]. When the blood-piercing therapy promotes blood circulation, the qi and blood flow will be smooth, and chronic and stubborn diseases will be cured. Since blood is the mother of qi and qi and blood are interrelated and mutually beneficial, most breast hyperplasia diseases are caused by qi. Therefore, the bloodline needling method has a good therapeutic effect on breast hyperplasia diseases.

3.1.3. Acupuncture on the Flesh Layer

The floating spines among the twelve spines fall into this category. They are used to treat diseases by needling the subcutaneous muscle tissue layer. In the basic theories of traditional Chinese medicine, the spleen governs the muscles of the limbs. The onset and pathological conditions of breast hyperplasia are closely related to the spleen among the five internal organs [4]. Clinically, if breast hyperplasia is diagnosed as “spleen disease” or the corresponding stage of breast hyperplasia where the disease is located in the meridian layer, stabbing the meridian can expel the

pathogenic qi in the meridium, provided that the treatment is based on the syndrome differentiation.

3.1.3.1. Floating Needle:

Floating needle refers to the insertion into the superficial layer of the muscle surface. The method of needle insertion is shallow and upward floating. In modern times, it has developed into the intradermal needle. Shan Zhao's research shows that intradermal needle periodic point selection therapy combined with external application of traditional Chinese medicine significantly improves the quality of life and symptoms of patients with breast hyperplasia [16].

3.1.4. Stabbing Tendons

Among the five stabbing tendons, the Guan Stabbing and the twelve stabbing tendons, the Hui Stabbing, both fall into the category of "stabbing tendons". The "tendon piercing" method, based on the fundamental theory of the Five Elements, responds to the liver. In patients with breast hyperplasia, the common cause and pathogenesis is "qi stagnation" [4]. The application of the "tendon piercing" method in treating breast hyperplasia of the "liver disease" type can achieve the goal of similar energy seeking similar results. Chaoyuan Zhang mentioned that based on modern anatomy, the application of the long round needle knot removal method (the Guan needling method and the Hui needling method) in the treatment of breast hyperplasia at the "Tian zong" acupoint has achieved good therapeutic effects, especially in reducing breast pain and eliminating breast lumps [17].

3.1.5. Bone-piercing

Bone-piercing, also known as the bone-penetrating method, is divided into short piercing and delivery piercing. It involves deep piercing to the bone and then performing the technique of lifting and inserting the needle up and down, or twisting it left and right, like rubbing or scraping the bone, which has the meaning of deep stimulation. Yi Xu mentioned that in the treatment of breast hyperplasia with short needling, the bone friction of the needle tip at the corresponding acupoint can effectively improve its clinical symptoms [18].

3.2. Points Distinguish the types of needling

In classic ancient Chinese medical texts such as "Ling Shu: Official Needles", various differentiated meridian thrusting methods are introduced, and the classical fixed thrusting methods are selected based on the conditions of different parts of the body [19].

3.2.1. Concurrent Needling

The concurrent needling method is also known as the abdominal and back Yin-Yang Matching point method. The specific operation is to insert the needle obliquely beside the pain points in the front and back, with the needle pointing towards the affected area. The front and back of the needle body correspond to each other, and the Yin, Yang, qi, and blood flow mutually. Clinically, Jiamin Song [20] applied the needling method to treat breast hyperplasia, it showed significant effects in terms of the degree of pain and other aspects for patients with breast hyperplasia both before and after the treatment.

3.2.2. The method of combining distant and proximal acupoints

The treatment principle of distant needling follows the principle of “selecting from the lower part of the upper organ to treat the internal organ in combination”. In modern times, it is often used to needle the local lesion area and add the corresponding lower combined acupoints of the internal organ to diagnose and treat the disease based on syndrome differentiation. Xianqiu Lu [21] for local breast hyperplasia, based on the treatment principle of “the location of Yangming in the breast”, selected the “Zu san li” point belonging to the Stomach Meridian of Foot Yangming and local acupoints for acupuncture treatment, achieving good clinical efficacy.

3.2.3. Meridian Point Selection Method

Meridian needling refers to the act of needling along the meridians, which is suitable for diseases and syndromes of qi and blood stagnation along the meridians. Min Qian selected the corresponding acupoints based on the meridians where the breast hyperplasia nodules of the patients were located and performed meridian warming and unblocking acupuncture, which could alleviate the pain degree of the patients and had a remarkable therapeutic effect [22].

3.2.4. Method for Selecting the Five Shu Points

The Shu Points of the Nine Thrusts: Select the Five Shu points of the meridians and the corresponding back-Shu points of the five internal organs to treat diseases of the five internal organs. The etiology and pathogenesis of breast hyperplasia are closely related to the five internal organs. Tianfang Chen [23] demonstrated through data mining that the five infusion points (mainly selected from the He-sea points) ranked second in the acupuncture treatment of breast hyperplasia, fully demonstrating the clinical application value of infusion and acupuncture in the modern treatment of breast hyperplasia.

3.3. Local multi-acupuncture method category

In the “Official Acupuncture” section of the “Ling Shu”, it is mentioned that the local multi-acupuncture method includes side acupuncture, parallel acupuncture, and raised acupuncture, which refers to the application of multiple needles (two or more) at the lesion site or related acupoints to treat diseases [11].

3.3.1. Two Needles

In the classical needling technique, the adjacent needling method has two needles. One needle is directly inserted into the lesion site, while the other is inserted diagonally beside the lesion site. The direction of both needles is “towards the lesion site”. Kejing Yin’s [24] research indicates that the selection of the paraphenesis method in the Tianchi acupoint combined with the external application of traditional Chinese medicine has a significant impact on the therapeutic effect of patients with breast hyperplasia, and it has distinct characteristics in the treatment of breast hyperplasia.

3.3.2. Five Needles

Raising the needle means that one needle is directly inserted into the lesion site from the center, and the other four needles are inserted diagonally from the top,

bottom, left, and right of the lesion site, or twisted along the skin. All five needles are directed towards the lesion site. In modern times, raising thorns has mostly developed into the “encircling thorn method” [25]. Xianqiu Lu [26] used the peripheral needling method to puncture the local mass of the breast hyperplasia lesion and combined it with acupoint application, which is beneficial for unblocking the meridians and promoting blood circulation and lactation.

3.4. Special Operation piercing Method category

3.4.1. Pus Discharge and Heat Dissipation Method

The large purging needle in classical acupuncture has been developed into a needle knife, which is often used for pus discharge and heat dissipation from abscesses. Hanyan Jiang [27] used micro-needle knife therapy to cut and separate the positive points of patients with breast hyperplasia, achieving prestantious effect of softening and dispersing hard lumps.

3.4.2. Warm Needle Method

In “Ling Shu: Official Needle”, it is discussed to use burnt needles for treating arthralgia. Modern needling is mostly fire needle [28]. For patients with breast hyperplasia of liver depression and spleen deficiency type, Baohong Liu[29] used fire needle needling on “Wu yi”, “Qi men” and other acupoints to achieve the effect of reducing swelling and removing blood stasis, and unblocking the meridians.

4. Conclusions

In traditional Chinese medicine theory, the cause of breast hyperplasia is mostly liver depression, and the pathological factor is mostly phlegm coagulation. The treatment should focus on unblocking qi, reducing swelling, and dispersing nodules. Dialectical application of techniques is the commonality between classical characteristic acupuncture and modern acupuncture in treating diseases. The clinical efficacy of using the classical characteristic acupuncture from the “Huangdi Neijing” to treat breast hyperplasia is worthy of recognition. In conclusion, the treatment of breast hyperplasia should be based on “syndrome differentiation”, “disease differentiation” and “meridian differentiation” to select the appropriate acupuncture method. For instance, based on the depth of the lesion and the duration of the breast hyperplasia disease, one can choose whether to “Pierce the skin”, “Pierce the veins”, “Pierce the tendons”, “Pierce the flesh” or “Pierce the bone”. The choice of “occasional puncture”, “distant puncture”, “transport puncture” or “meridian puncture” should be determined based on the symptoms, affected meridians, and affected internal organs of breast hyperplasia. Various local multi-acupuncture methods are selected based on the lesion range of breast hyperplasia. Choose “thorn” or “great laxative thorn” according to the nature of the hyperplasia of the breast. The reports and research on the application of classical acupuncture techniques in the “Inner Classic” to breast hyperplasia diseases are not yet complete and comprehensive, and further exploration of this issue is needed in the future.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- [1] Zhang, Y.H. Observation on the Clinical Effect of Color Doppler Ultrasound in the Diagnosis of Breast Hyperplasia. *Imaging Research and Medical Applications*, 2025, 9(06), 144-146.
- [2] Wang, B.J. Research Progress on the Pathogenesis of Breast Hyperplasia. *Enterprise Health in Urban and Rural Areas of China*, 2021, 36(11), 50-52.
- [3] Yu, Q.Y.; Wan, H. Research Progress on External Application of Traditional Chinese Medicine in the Treatment of Breast Hyperplasia. *Shandong Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2021, 40(04), 434-439.
- [4] Zhang, P.; Zhang, W.H. The experience of National Master of Traditional Chinese Medicine Guo Chengjie in treating breast hyperplasia with medicine. *China Journal of Information on Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2022, 29(09), 132-134.
- [5] Huang, L.X. *Outline of Chinese Classical Acupuncture*. People's Medical Publishing House, 2019.
- [6] Zheng, D.X.; Huang, L.X. "Analysis of the Needling Technique in the Official Needle Section of the Ling Shu" and Its Application Before the Han Dynasty. *Shanghai Journal of Acupuncture and Moxibustion*, 2025, 44(03), 369-374.
- [7] Zhang, W.Y., etc. Research Status of Pathogenesis and Syndrome Differentiation and Classification of Breast Hyperplasia. *Journal of Practical Internal Medicine of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2021, 35(11), 112-115.
- [8] Zhang, P. etc. Analyzing the influence of the interaction between phlegm pathogen and the five internal organs on the onset of milk mania. *Liaoning Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2022, 49(05), 50-52.
- [9] Li, L.; H.Z. Research on the Distribution Characteristics of Meridians and Traditional Chinese Medicine Constitutions in Breast Hyperplasia Based on Meridian Detection, Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, 2021.
- [10] Lu, X.L.; Huang, W.L. The Value of Color Doppler Ultrasound in the Differential Diagnosis of Breast Cancer and Breast Hyperplastic Nodules. *Chinese Medical Guidelines*, 2023, 21(29), 91-93.
- [11] Ling, S.J. People's Medical Publishing House. 1963.
- [12] He, F. etc. Clinical Research Progress of Multi-needle Shallow Puncture Method. *Journal of Gansu University of Chinese Medicine*, 2022, 39(03), 119-123.
- [13] Guo, A.C. Annotated and translated by the Ling Shu of the Huangdi Neijing. Guizhou Education Press, 2010.
- [14] Liu, L.L. Clinical Observation on the Treatment of Breast Hyperplasia with the "New Five Spices" - the Spicle Method, Shandong University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, 2021.

- [15] Yang, G.F. etc. Clinical Observation on the Treatment of Breast Hyperplasia Caused by Liver Depression and Qi Stagnation by Embedding Thread at Jingjiu Point Combined with Bloodpricking. *Modern Distance Education of Traditional Chinese Medicine in China*, 2025, 23(04), 101-103.
- [16] Zhao, S.etc. Clinical Observation on the Treatment of Breast Hyperplasia with Intradermal acupuncture Cycle Point selection Combined with External Application of Traditional Chinese Medicine. *Shandong Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2023, 42(10), 1090-1094+1121.
- [17] Zhang, C.Y. Discussion on the “Knot Unblocking” Method of Acupuncture and Its Application, Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine, 2021.
- [18] Xu, Y.; Fan, X. Clinical Research Progress Based on the “Twelve Spines” in “Huangdi Neijing - Ling Shu - Official Needles”. *Journal of Practical Internal Medicine of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2021, 35(05), 61-64.
- [19] Jin, C. etc. Clinical Research Progress of the “Nine Pricks” Method in “Official Needles” of Ling Shu. *Clinical Journal of Acupuncture and Moxibustion*, 2022, 38(02), 83-87.
- [20] Song, J.M. Observation on the Clinical Efficacy of Needling Therapy in the Treatment of Breast Hyperplasia, Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, 2021.
- [21] Lu, X.Q. etc. Clinical Observation on the Treatment of Breast Hyperplasia with Meridian Syndrome Differentiation Acupuncture. *Journal of Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine*, 2021, 38(12), 2669-2674.
- [22] Qian, M.etc. Analysis of the Therapeutic Effect of Breast Meridian Warming and Unblocking Technique in the Treatment of Breast Hyperplasia. *Chinese Prescription Drugs*, 2024, 22(11), 165-167.
- [23] Chen, T.F., etc. Explored the acupoint selection rules for acupuncture treatment of breast hyperplasia based on data mining. *Chinese Journal of Library and Information on Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2024, 48(04), 102-107.
- [24] Tong, Y. etc. Yin Kejing's Clinical Experience in Treating Breast Hyperplasia with the acupoint of Pangci Tianchi. *Chinese Acupuncture and Moxibustion*, 2024, 44(02), 185-187.
- [25] Zhang, C.G. etc. Research Progress on Peri-puncture Treatment Methods and Their Functions. in the 7th Sunshine Oncology Medical Conference. Beijing, China, 2024.
- [26] Lu, X.Q. etc. Observation on the clinical efficacy of Acupuncture combined with acupoint application in the treatment of Breast Hyperplasia. *Journal of Zhejiang Chinese Medical University*, 2022, 46(11), 1278-1282.
- [27] Jiang, H.Y. etc. Observation on the Effect of Micro-Needle Knife Therapy in the Treatment of Breast Hyperplasia. *Rural Medicine in China*, 2024, 31(17), 25-26.
- [28] Yu, P. etc. Explored the development of the efficacy of fire acupuncture from the changes in the diseases treated by fire acupuncture throughout history. *Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2020, 61(16), 1410-1413.
- [29] Liu, B.H., etc. Clinical Study on the Treatment of Breast Hyperplasia caused by Liver Depression and Spleen Deficiency with Fire Needle Combined with Blood

puncture Therapy. *Clinical Journal of Acupuncture and Moxibustion*, 2020, 36(05), 41-44.



© 2025 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)