Acupuncture for Vomiting.
Three Key Points

Tonify Zhongwan (Ren12) Qihai (Ren6) Shanzhong (Ren17)

Translated by Michael Max

Translator's note: When I lived in Taiwan I would practice my Chinese by translating short articles or passages from the medicine books that I was learning to read in Chinese. This article is from one of the books my teacher gave me. I don't remember the title of it, but the method discussed is both simple and useful.

For gastric disorders with vomiting of food regular doctors just needle Zhongwan (Ren12), but there is a better method, about which few people know.

There are many causes for vomiting, for example weakness of Stomach qi, Stomach receiving a cold pathogen, Stomach fire rising, Liver invading and causing the qi to go up, the seven emotions causing internal depression-stagnation, as well as phlegm-dampness, and retained fluids or food accumulation blocking the ascent and descent of the central qi mechanism. All of these in excess can lead to vomiting.

The Stomach is the Sea of Grains and Fluids, and is in charge of receiving. Therefore common cases of vomiting are all considered Stomach disease. While the result is Stomach qi rebelling upwards, when looking from the point of view of differential diagnosis vomiting can be due to deficiency, excess, cold, or heat.

Zhang Jie Gu (張潔古) looks to the San Jiao to better understand vomiting. He holds that upper burner vomiting is due to a problem with the qi. While middle burner vomiting is due to a problem with food accumulation, and lower burner vomiting is due to a problem involving cold. This way of classifying, brings a valuable point of view to both differential diagnosis and treatment. So you can say "或針吐，中脘氣海膻中補," "to treat vomiting with acupuncture, tonify Zhongwan (Ren12), Qihai (Ren6), Shanzhong (Ren17)." Using this method of treating the three burners of the San Jiao all together, will resolve vomiting disorders.

In this passage the meaning of 補 bu (tonify) in these cases implies we are dealing with deficiency cold types of vomiting. From the point of view of treating the three burners, the principle here is by combining the points of all three burners, you get a

synergistic effect. This point combination effectively promotes the upper and lower Jiao to work together in concert.

Because the vomiting is due to deficiency cold, most of these cases are due to a decline of Spleen and Stomach yang, the transportive function being derelict in its duty leads to abdominal distention with vomiting. Another aspect is that due to deficiency, the Stomach's capacity to digest food is impaired. There can be vomiting when the chest is congested and closed due to cold, or if there is lingering cold dampness. The Stomach likes warmth, so when it is cold there will be signs of poor appetite and no desire to drink. Should another cold pathogen be encountered, this quickly results in vomiting. In addition to the above mentioned signs and symptoms, look for a feeling of cold in the four limbs, lack of thirst, undigested food, and vomiting of fluids, phlegm and saliva.

In treating this kind of illness Zhongwan (Ren12) is the most important point, not only is it the Mu point of the Stomach which rules the middle burner, it is important in treating all middle burner illnesses of the Spleen and Stomach. Additionally, use moxa on this point to treat illness due to deficiency and cold. As to symptoms such as chest and upper abdomen distention, food retention with long transit time, poor appetite and such, it is even more important to warm the Stomach, tonify deficiency, and support the upright qi. This method is notably effective in dispelling/eliminating distention, improving digestion and stopping vomiting.

Next, in line with Zhongwan (Ren12) you have Shanzhong (Ren17) above and Qihai (Ren6) below. The clinical efficacy and benefit of using these three points together is clearly obvious.

Because Shanzhong (Ren17) is located in the center of the sternum, and is the front Mu point of the Pericardium, it is also called Qihui, Qi Meeting—it functions to regulate the qi of the upper burner.

Concerning chest and diaphragm pressure or discomfort that comes along with vomiting, shortness of breath, fatigue, or fluids stagnating in the area of the upper thorax. Use moxa on this point. It can immediately open the chest, harmonize the middle, and smooth the qi mechanism.

When the qi transformation works correctly, the fluids are properly transformed. When the qi moves, vomiting stops on its own accord.

Simultaneously using moxa on Qihai (Ren6) is especially effective in nourishing and moving the qi of the lower burner. This reestablishes the normal physiological dynamic of ascent and descent, which rectifies counterflow Stomach qi and restores normal digestion. Vomiting ceases once phlegm has been transformed.

As for gastric disorders with the symptom of vomiting undigested food, this is either due to Stomach yang deficiency or a decline of Ming Men fire. Grains and fluids can not be properly digested, resulting in the Stomach's loss of harmony and ability to send (foods and fluids) downward. The emblematic characteristic of this problem is that what is eaten in the morning is vomited in the evening, or what is eaten in the evening is vomited in the morning.

In considering the progression of this illness. Patients with signs of undigested food, mostly this is due to Spleen and Stomach deficiency cold.

If there is stuffiness in the chest, vomiting of phlegm and salvia accompanied with undigested food, mostly this belongs to Stomach deficiency with phlegm.

If food is retained a long time before being vomited back out, along with a deep or delayed pulse, this because the Ming Men fire has declined to such a point that Fire can not produce Earth.[1]

If there is vomiting accompanied by constipation, this is due to yang deficiency with inability to control the proper movement and function of the intestine.

Concerning the pathology of these kinds of gastric vomiting disorders, use these three points of the Ren channel [Shanzhong (Ren17), Zhongwan (Ren12) and Qihai (Ren6)], and employ the use of moxa as already stated above. In so doing you will successfully dredge and regulate the qi mechanism of the upper burner, warm and move the yang qi of the middle burner, benefit the Fire that produces Earth of the lower burner, tonify deficiency, and reverse counterflow.

Treating in this way has a remarkably good effect. So you can therefore say "For gastric disorders with vomiting of food regular doctors just needle Zhongwan (Ren12), but a better method—few people know" This is a sneaky way of emphasizing that treating all the three points we've discussed on the Ren channel are marvelously effective.

1 One of the interesting things I noticed in the way Chinese doctors in Asia speak, and the way many texts and articles are written, is that they will very easily and fluidly shift lens and theories. It is not at all uncommon to be discussing something from a Zangfu point of view and then to shift into a 5 phase explanation of a process. This is not seen as a contradiction nor limitation within the system of Chinese medicine. It is expected that a practitioner of Chinese medicine can fluently apply the tools and theories of Chinese medicine.