

## Case Report – Pediatric Bell's Palsy Treatment with Acupuncture

Jihe Zhu<sup>1</sup>, Blagica Arsovska<sup>2</sup>, Kristina Kozovska<sup>1, \*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Medical Sciences, University Goce Delcev, Shtip, Republic of Macedonia

<sup>2</sup>Institute of Biology, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

### Email address:

tongdatang-tcm@hotmail.com (K. Kozovska)

\*Corresponding author

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**Abstract:** Bell's palsy is a facial paralysis that affects one side of the face accompanied with facial weakness. The condition is less common in children, but if it appears the possible causes are trauma, infections, tumor, inflammation or it may be idiopathic. In the 8 year old treated patient the condition appeared because of stressful situation, experiencing dreadful fright. The facial muscle weakness was present on the left side of the face with inability to close the eye and drooped corner of the mouth. Before coming to our clinic doctors prescribed him Neurobion, Amoksiklav and Acyclovir, but none of the medications helped him. Five days after the situation we started the acupuncture treatment in our clinic for Traditional Chinese Medicine and acupuncture. Treatments were done once weekly, with duration of 35-40 minutes, indoor. After 10 treatments the function of the facial muscles recovered completely, with normal muscle tone, full range of motion and no accompanying symptoms. In the treatment were used acupuncture points located on the meridians of Dumai, Liver, Stomach and Large Intestine. Acupuncture as part of the 5000 years old Traditional Chinese Medicine is very effective treatment and gave very fast and positive results in our pediatric patient with Bell's palsy, improving the condition fully.

**Keywords:** Treatment, Acupuncture, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Bell's Palsy, Children

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## 1. Introduction

Bell's palsy or facial paralysis is a neurological disorder that affects one side of the face accompanied with facial weakness. The Bell's palsy affects the 7<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve (facial nerve) and it is considered as acute or temporary paralysis. It is seen as inflammation that affects the facial nerves and leads to weakened facial muscles. The condition is less common in children, but if it appears the possible causes are trauma, infections, tumor, viruses (herpes zoster, herpes simplex, rubella, influenza B, Epstein--Barr, adenovirus), metabolic abnormalities, congenital or it may be idiopathic. At high risk are children with diabetes, flu or cold. Bell's palsy usually appears in children in about 6-7%. Girls and boys are usually equally affected. The symptoms appear suddenly. Of the most common symptoms are complete paralysis of the nerves, weakness of the facial muscles, facial twitches, dryness and inability to close the eye, eyelid widening, drooped corner of the mouth, blurred vision,

headaches, pain behind the ear on the affected side, numbness of the face, drooling, inability to whistle, loss of the sense of taste and etc. About 70% of the cases have favorable prognosis and can resolve within 3 months. Some severe cases are possibly sometimes to result with permanent facial nerve damage. The damage may be complete loss of the vision or spontaneous movements of the eye muscles. If the condition doesn't recover completely, it can have significant psychological and social consequences. To confirm the diagnosis are made test like EMG (electromyography), CT (computerized tomography) or MRI (magnetic resonance imaging). Also a good physical examination is needed to be done with examination of all the facial muscles, the ears and palpation of the parotid gland. If the patient is diabetic, a A 1 C test needs to be done. The Western medicine options for treatments include use of drugs (antiviral drugs or corticosteroids to reduce the inflammation), physical therapy, massage, facial nerve decompression and etc. [1-7] In the Traditional Chinese

Medicine (TCM) as treatment options for Bell's palsy are considered acupuncture, dietary therapy and herbal treatment with tea formulas. Acupuncture treats not only the symptoms but the focus is more on the underlying cause of the condition, finding it and treating it directly through the related meridians located all over the body. According to the TCM the condition may occur due to invasion of external pathogens - Wind or extreme Heat, disharmony in the Liver (Yang rising), deficient collaterals, blocked Qi and blood deficiency. The treatment should be started immediately after the situation. [8] The aim of the acupuncture treatment in Bell's palsy is to open the channels, unblock the pathways so the Blood and Qi energy can flow freely, expel the exterior pathogen factors, eliminate the Wind and toxins from the body, invigorate the Blood, benefit the Qi and etc. [9]

## 2. Case Report

Our treated patient is an 8 year old boy diagnosed with Bell's palsy. The condition appeared because of stressful situation, experiencing dreadful fright. The facial muscle weakness was present on the left side of the face with inability to close the eye and drooped corner of the mouth. Initially was affected the eye, then the mouth. The child was also experiencing excessive sweating. Other physiological parameters like appetite and sleep were normal. Before coming to our clinic doctors prescribed him Neurobion, Amoksiklav and Acyclovir, but none of the medications helped him. Five days after the situation and taking the medications, child's parents brought him to the clinic and the acupuncture treatment begin immediately starting from 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2017. The treatments were done in our clinic for Traditional Chinese Medicine and acupuncture in Skopje, Macedonia, by a doctor specialist in acupuncture. Treatments were done once weekly, the first week twice, with duration of the treatment of 35-40 minutes. Treatments were done indoor on a room temperature. In the treatments were used fine sterile disposable needles for one use size 0.25 × 25mm made by Wuijiujiang City Medical & Health Material Co., LTD. Acupuncture points that were used in the treatment are located on the meridians of Dumai, Liver, Stomach and Large Intestine. After 10 treatments the child was able to open and close the eye again, winkle, smile, yawn and chew. With the treatment the function of the facial muscles recovered completely, with normal muscle tone, full range of motion and no accompanying symptoms.

Acupuncture treatment today is very often used in the cases of Bell's palsy with over 90% effectiveness. Recently, it is also very often used as a treatment in variety of diseases of pediatric patients. [10] The treatment should start as early as possible and it should not be allowed to prolong for more time, because symptoms may get worse or do not recover at all. For the treatment are chosen the local points and points on the meridians that are connected to the condition. By choosing the right points the condition is directly affected, the progress is controlled and the recovery is accelerated. [11] The usually used points are located on the meridians of

Stomach, Gall Bladder, Small Intestine, Large Intestine, Lung and Spleen. [12] The acupuncture points that are often chosen to be treated are St 4, St 6, St 7, Li 4, Gb 14 and Te 17. [8]

When the needle is inserted into the skin, it should be wiggled (moved) so the patient can feel that tingling sensation i.e. De Qi. Scientists say when De Qi is felt, the recovering chances are better other than when the needle is just inserted and left there. In one study done for Bell's palsy, the group of patients who received acupuncture treatment with moving the needle until De Qi is felt had better results and faster recover than the group treated with acupuncture with the needles just inserted and left. When De Qi is not felt, then the treatment has no actual effect and it may be very seriously weakened. When the needle is inserted in Bell's palsy patients the blood flow in the face is increased, the inflammation is diminished and more nourishment is provided to the nerves. [13]

Although sometimes children are afraid of needles and need some convincing, the treatment is totally safe for them. [14] When starting the treatment children develop more positive perspective and many families find the treatment helpful and pleasant. When done by a good trained and experienced practitioner, the acupuncture treatment is totally safe for children. Except some bruising and little pain, other side effects are rare. [15] Just as it is an effective treatment for adults, so it is suitable for children too. Acupuncture treatment can help the child to soothe, improve the nerve function, improve the function of the muscles, relax the facial paralysis, stimulate the blood circulation, improve the immune system, stop the pain and etc. [12, 16, 17]

In the terms of TCM, most common cause of Bell's palsy is the Wind as external pathogenic factor. Despite the Wind as a factor, (as in our patient) other influential factor is deficient immune system. Physical and emotional stress have a great impact on the immune system. [18] When the immune system is down, then the organism can be very easily attacked by external and internal pathogens. To enhance the immune system it is necessary to remove all the factors, relieve the stress, eliminate the obstructions, improve the blood circulation and regulate the Qi energy. [19] Acupuncture provides fast and complete recovery by full treatment of the condition, restoring the function and balancing the body by giving it the needed support. [18]

Acupuncture can be also combined with other treatments like herbal treatment, face massage or moxibustion. [11, 12] In the herbal treatment are often used tea formulas that can have benefit on the affected organ, for example to clean the Liver Wind, clean the Stomach Heat or complement the deficient Blood. [8] When the acupuncture is combined with moxibustion or electro-acupuncture, the treatment is strengthened and more efficient. Electro-acupuncture might seem like a painful or uncomfortable treatment, but in fact patients with Bell's palsy usually don't feel anything on the affected side. [20] Some studies done for electro-acupuncture treatment in Bell's palsy prove that it helps improve the healing effect and to shorten the disease course. [21] Patients

are also advised to do daily facial massage in order to reactivate the facial muscles. [20]

### 3. Conclusion

Acupuncture as part of the 5000 years old Traditional Chinese Medicine is very effective treatment in such a rare condition in children as Bell's palsy. The treatment gave very fast and positive results in our pediatric patient with Bell's palsy, improving the condition completely.

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