

The patient is a 34-year-old female presenting with insomnia over the past few years. The patient reports that she goes to sleep around midnight, and falls asleep without difficulty. She then routinely wakes up at 4:00 in the morning, and then experiences "spotty" sleep (dozing and waking frequently) until about 8:00 in the morning. When she wakes up in the middle of the night, she tends to feel wide awake and uses the time to send email and do work while in bed. She attributes much of the insomnia to stress from her highly demanding job, and states that her sleep on weekends and vacations is not better than during the work week. She says she does not dream much. She has tried to address her insomnia with melatonin, but has not found it to be effective. When she wakes in the middle of the night, she is often hot or extremely sweaty, although she does not sweat much during the day.

The patient has a history of panic disorder. She used cognitive behavioral therapy to address the panic attacks, and now only experiences them about once per month. She takes Ativan a few times per year, on an as-needed basis. She states that she does not know how to manage day-to-day stress, and that this contributes to her overall stress and insomnia.

The patient is generally in good health. She has some stomach upset which started a few months before, and which she attributes to an episode of food poisoning. Since then, she has diarrhea once every morning, before eating breakfast. There is a strong odor and the stool is reddish-brown in color. She says that she is rarely thirsty, and therefore does not drink enough and is probably dehydrated. She wears glasses, and says that her hearing is very sensitive. The patient's menstrual cycle is regular (28-day cycles, 5 days of bleeding). Her periods are usually not heavy, and the blood starts out bright red, then turns black or brown towards the end. She reports that she sees large blood clots during her period. She used an oral contraceptive pill for many years, and her periods were regular while she was on the Pill. She recently stopped taking the Pill because she wants to get pregnant.

At the first visit, the patient's pulse was about 72 beats per minute, and very thin and wiry. Her tongue was tender looking: very scalloped on the edges with a "chewed up" appearance, very red (almost slightly orange) in color, with a white coat that was medium thick and dry.

The patient's diagnosis was stagnation of Liver qi, Kidney yin deficiency with heat, and Liver blood deficiency. The treatment principles were to move and smooth the Liver qi, to tonify and support Liver blood and the Kidney yin, and to clear heat from deficiency.

At the first visit, points were selected primarily for their ability to move Liver qi, to supplement yin and blood, and to calm the spirit. There were also several points to clear heat, in an effort to reduce the agitation and stress that the patient experienced and that contributed to her sleep problems. Several points that have empirical functions to help sleep were also used. Most of the points chosen for this patient are found on the lower body (lower abdomen, legs, and feet) in an effort to draw qi

(energy) down, which exerts a calming influence on the patient. The patient was also advised on several lifestyle changes she could make; most importantly for this patient, she was counseled to *not* do work when she woke up in the middle of the night. This is important because the use of light-emitting devices (such as Blackberries and smart phones) can "trick" the brain into thinking it is daytime and trigger an alertness that should be avoided during normal sleep hours. She was also advised to avoid looking at the clock during night time awakenings.

The patient returned to the office one week later and reported that she slept very well the night of her first treatment. Subsequent nights were more typical for her (waking around 4:00am). At this visit, similar acupuncture points were used to move Liver qi, clear heat, and tonify Kidney yin and Liver blood. In addition, the patient was instructed to start taking a Chinese herbal formula called Yi Guan Jian, which is used to smooth the Liver and tonify Kidney yin, and which can be very effective for this particular pattern of insomnia. The herbs were prescribed in tablet form.

At the third visit, the patient stated that her sleep was better overall: she was still waking up in the middle of the night, but was able to get back to sleep pretty quickly most nights, and then could sleep until about 7:30-8:00 in the morning. She continued to take the herbs with no adverse effects.

At the fourth visit, the patient said that she was able to sleep through the night, going to bed around midnight and waking for the day at about 6:00 in the morning. She also stated that she was no longer experiencing night sweats. In addition, her stomach symptoms cleared up and she did not have daily diarrhea anymore.

The patient continued to come for treatment on a weekly basis. During that time, she reported that her sleep was occasionally restless during the night, but that she was able to stay asleep most nights. About 2 months after her initial visit, she reported that her sleep was regular, usually restful, and generally uninterrupted. She felt that her sleep was significantly improved (as was her stomach) and that she no longer needed acupuncture for insomnia.