

Does fibromyalgia begin in the digestive system?

by Joel Whitehead

Recently someone called me to the Kootenays. She was pondering going to Calgary for a treatment for fibromyalgia that would cost her \$5,000 and require her to stay there for three months.

I was astounded at the price, for I have successfully treated many cases of fibromyalgia and none of them required but a fraction of that price or time span. So, I took a shot. I asked her:

1. Do you get filled up easily when you eat?
2. Do you get lots of gas and bloating when you eat?
3. Do you have a heavy feeling in the lower abdomen?
4. Do you eat sometimes because you are afraid not to?

Are some of the most profound aches on the left side, especially in the left shoulder and hip—perhaps down the side of the leg?

I could have gone on, but needless to say I wouldn't be writing this article if her answers hadn't all been "Yes!" All of these complaints and the ongoing aching are the extensions of a prolapsed stomach. In fact, so consistently is this a part of all my patients who come in with a diagnosis of fibromyalgia, that I always find myself smiling as I am taking down the case because of the inevitability of its involving the symptoms mentioned above. I still maintain that fibromyalgia is little more than meridian pain, so I don't find consistency in the findings of the syndrome surprising at all. Of course, it is not all left-sided either.

Some patients come in with a diagnosis of fibromyalgia that is almost all right-sided. Very clearly in the annals of Chinese medicine is it stated that balance must be maintained between the forces of the spleen/stomach and the liver/gallbladder. When this balance is lost, the liver and gallbladder can manifest a very different and 'liverish' picture of who we are. We ache down the right side; neck to shoulder, behind the scapula, down the right arm, and possibly the right hip and leg. We become irritable without cause. We don't sleep well. We find ourselves waking up between the hours of midnight and four in the morning and find it very hard to get back to sleep. This brings us back to our original position, as even this meridian pain was only made possible when the digestive tract was compromised.

When food is not digested properly, our digestion becomes weaker. If the digestion is blocked, dampness can settle into the body, and can result in a type of stagnation that makes us feel heavy in the limbs, slow-moving, tired all the time, and just generally cumbersome. This is of course not to mention a certain amount of weight gain that refuses to budge. We know that in Chinese medicine, when you find stagnation you find pain, and where you find pain there is also stagnation. Of course, when the blocking of the digestive tract gives way to constipation, the whole back can feel stiff and we can begin to fear even the slightest unanticipated movement.

When the digestion is inefficient, our muscles and organs suffer from lack of support. When they are not supported nutritionally by blood and Qi (energy), they tire and hurt when overused. Furthermore, a body that is deficient can't spare energy or blood as a healing force, so our muscles don't bounce back. We become listless and pale, and we suffer.

When the blood stagnates, as is the case when fibromyalgia begins with an automobile accident or some other trauma, a person can feel acute pain almost anywhere they are touched. In such cases we must get the blood to move again. Rudimentary to achieving this, we must raise the stomach prolapse to alleviate the otherwise resultant stagnation. In a perfectly robust person, blood stagnation is the type of fibromyalgia that often ensues.

Each of these is a trail that leads us back to the probability of a prolapsed stomach and a failing digestive system as the root of all that pain. The person suffering from fibromyalgia survives a cruel daily misery, but solutions to regaining one's life needn't be hidden behind the fade of the seemingly dark and unfathomable disease it has been made out to be. We believe that once we set the digestive system back on its original path, returning the body to pain-free health is well within your reach.

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