Bi Syndrome

Painful Obstructive syndrome, bi syndrome, or Bi Zheng, is caused by invasion of exterior pathogenic factors, such as wind, cold, dampness, and heat, which obstruct the channels and collaterals, disturbing the blood circulation and Qi flow. The syndrome is characterized by localized discomforts in the muscles, joints and tendons. Major complaints include soreness & pain, numbness, heaviness, difficulty in movement, and/or swollen joints that are warm to the touch. In some cases, deformity of the joints is apparent. Bi Zheng may affect the muscles, tendons, bones and joints.

Relevant Western Diseases
Rheumatoid Arthritis, Rheumatic Arthritis, Degenerative Arthritis, Osteoarthritis, Gout, Sciatica, Subacromial Bursitis, Olecranal Bursitis, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, Fibromyalgia

Pathogenesis & Etiology
- Vacuous zheng Qi is the underlying etiology of Painful Obstruction Syndrome.
- Unconsolidated interstitial layers between the muscles and skin allow for invasion of exogenous Wind, Cold, Dampness, or Heat.
- These pathogens obstruct the flow of Qi and Blood in the channels and collaterals, causing pain and restricted movement.

Invasion of Exogenous Pathogenic Factors:
- Exogenous Wind, Cold, and Dampness invade causing obstruction of the channels and collaterals, muscles and joints. This can result from one’s living or working environment or from sudden exposure to cold or rainy weather.
- Exogenous Heat invades, usually in combination with Wind and Dampness, causing Wind-Damp-Heat Bi.
- Heat Bi can also form when Wind-Cold-Damp invade a body that has pre-existing Heat, either through Yang excess or Yin vacuity. Qi stagnation itself can potentially generate Heat, and in individuals with pre-existing Heat this process is greatly facilitated.

Distinguishing Pathogens
Wind/Wandering Bi: characterized by pain that migrates from joint to joint; pain tends to be sore and aching
Cold/Painful Bi : characterized by severe, excruciating pain in the affected joints with limited ROM
Damp/Fixed Bi : characterized by heavy aching with possible swelling and numbness in the joints and limbs
Heat Bi: characterized by red, swollen, painful joints that are warm to the touch

Complicating Factors
The following complications are usually seen in chronic cases:
- Phlegm accumulation and Blood stasis: long-standing Bi Zheng affects Qi and Blood flow. Blood stasis forms obstruction and Phlegm accumulates in the channels.
- Qi and Blood vacuity: chronic, intractable Bi Zheng leads to depletion of Qi and Blood.
- Various degrees of Liver and Kidney vacuity with Blood and Essence vacuity are also common.

Differential Diagnosis
Atrophy Syndrome (Wei Zheng) is characterized by weakness and flaccidity of the limbs and atrophy of the muscles, leading to loss of musculoskeletal function. Pain is not common

General Treatment Principles
Acute/Excess Stage: Expel Wind, scatter Cold, eliminate Dampness, clear Heat, open the channels and collaterals, stop pain.
- Wind Bi: Expel Wind while nourishing Blood. “Treat the Blood prior to expelling Wind. As Blood circulation is restored, Wind is inevitably arrested.”
- Cold Bi : Scatter Cold while fortifying Yang. “Warmth can unblock concealed Cold.”
- Damp Bi : Drying and draining Dampness are the primary strategies, along with tonifying the Spleen. “Bank up Earth to check Water.”
- Heat Bi: Clear Heat and employ other strategies according to the pathogens that are present.
- Chronic stage (mixed excess and deficiency): Tonify underlying deficiencies (Qi, Blood, Essence, Liver, and/or Kidney), eliminate pathogenic factors and stop pain.
Acupuncture Treatment

Wind-Cold-Damp Bi, Differentiation of Syndrome:
Wind: BL12, BL17, SP10, GB31, LI4
Cold: GV4, CV4, BL23 + moxa
Damp: SP9, SP6, ST36, BL20

Local points (based on the location of pain):
Shoulder: LI15, TB14, SI10, SI9, Jian Qian
Elbow: LI11, LU5, PC3, HT3, LI10, TB10, SI8
Wrist: LI5, TB4, PC7, LI4, TB5
Fingers: Ba Xie, LI4, LI3, TB3, Si Feng
Hip: GB30, GB29, GB34, ST31, Huan Zhong
Acupuncture for Bi Zhèng
Sacrum: BL32, BL27, BL28
Low back: BL23, BL27, BL28
Knee: ST35, Nei Xi Yan, ST34, BL40, GB33, LV8, GB34, SP9, KI10, SP10, He Ding
Ankle: BL60, KI3, ST41, GB40, SP5, KI6
Toes: Ba Feng, ST44, SP3
Spine: GV14, GV12, GV3, Jia Ji
Neck: GB20, BL10, BL11, Jia Ji

Wind-Damp-Heat Bi
General points: GV14, LI11
Local points: same as Wind-Cold-Damp

Stagnation of Phlegm and Blood
General for Phlegm: ST40, SP9, SP6, CV12, CV9, BL20
General for Blood stasis: SP10, BL17, BL11, (GB39), SP6
Local points: same as Wind-Cold-Damp

Zheng Xu with Xie obstruction
General points for Qi and Blood Xu: CV4, CV6, SP6, ST36, BL20, BL17
General points for LV and KI Xu: BL18, BL23, GV4, KI3, LV3, SP6
Local points: same as Wind-Cold-Damp

Ear Acupuncture: points corresponding to affected parts, Sympathetic, Shen Men
Plum Blossom: used where swelling and distention are significant
TCM Pattern Differentiation & Treatment

Wind Bi
Soreness & pain that migrates from joint to joint, pain in indeterminate location, difficulty in flexion/extention of joints, aversion to cold & in some cases, fever
Symptoms: Aversion to wind, fever & limited range of movement
Tongue: Thin White Coating
Pulse: Floating, possibly wiry
Treatment Method: Expel wind, scatter cold, eliminate dampness, unblock collaterals, & relieve pain
Acupuncture: reducing method: BL-12, BL-17, SP-10
Herbs: Fang Feng Tang

Cold Bi
Excruciating pain in the affected joints & limbs. Pain is localized and aggravated by cold, pain decreased w/ heat, difficulty moving the affected parts
Symptoms: Stiffness of the joints w/ difficulty in movement, possible EPI symptoms
Tongue: Thin White or Moist White Coating
Pulse: Floating & Tight, slippery or slow, often wiry
Treatment Method: Scatter cold, Warm the channels, dispel wind & eliminate dampness, relieve pain
Acupuncture: moxa is primary. reducing method with deep insertion & long retention time BL-23, CV-4
Herbs: Wu Tou Tang

Damp Bi
Swollen heavy, painful joints & numbness of the affected limbs, distention & swelling in some cases, pain in fixed location, limited ROM, worse w/ cloudy or rainy weather
Symptoms: General soreness & heaviness, fatigue & lack of strength w/ difficult movement, possible EPI symptoms
Tongue: White, Greasy Coating
Pulse: Soft & decelerating, slippery
Treatment Method: Eliminate dampness, unblock obstruction in the channels, dispel wind-cold, relieve pain
Acupuncture: acupuncture & moxa. ST-36, BL-20, SP-5, SP-9
Herbs: Yi Yi Ren Tang

Heat Bi
Redness, swelling, and burning pain in joints that are warm to the touch, pain aggravated by pressure, & preference for cold, limited ROM
Symptoms: Aversion to wind/heat, fever, sweating, thirst, irritability & restlessness, sore throat, dark scanty urine
Tongue: Red tongue w/ yellow dry or possibly greasy coat
Pulse: Slippery & Rapid
Treatment Method: Clear heat & unblock the collaterals, dispel wind, eliminate dampness, relieve pain
Acupuncture: Reducing method. GV-14, LI-11
Herbs: Bai Hu Jia Gui Zhi Tang

Phlegm Accumulation & Blood Stasis
Swollen joints w/ intermittent pain, possible deformity, stiffness, difficulty in movement, & subcutaneous nodules
Tongue: Purple or dark tongue w/ White, Greasy Coat
Pulse: Thready & Choppy, Deep-rough, or Deep-slippery
Treatment Method: Transform phlegm, move Blood, expel stasis, unblock channels, & stop pain
Herbs: Sheng Tong Zhu Yu Tang or Tao Hong Yin
**Qi and Blood vacuity**
chronic, aching pain in joints that is worse at night and better with light movement, difficult movement with limited ROM, possible numbness or loss of sensation in affected areas  
**Secondary Symptoms:** fatigue, pale complexion, SOB, palpitations, spontaneous sweating  
**Tongue:** pale with thin, white coat  
**Pulse:** thin, weak  
**Treatment Method:** Boost Qi, nourish Blood, expel Wind, eliminate Dampness, scatter Cold, stop pain  
**Herbal Treatment:** Huang Qi Gui Zhi Wu Wu Tang

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**Qi and Blood Deficiency (Liver & Kidney)**
Intermittent joint pain w/ difficulty in movement, numbness of the limbs, soreness & weakness of the lower back, cold intolerance, preference for warmth, fatigue, lassitude & shortness of breath  
**Tongue:** Pale tongue w/ White Coat  
**Pulse:** Thready & Weak  
**Treatment Method:** Expel wind-dampness & unblock the obstruction to alleviate pain; tonify the Qi and Blood, & nourish the Liver & Kidney  
**Herbs:** Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang or San Bi Tang

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**Further Herbal Modification According to Affected Limbs**  
Shoulders, elbows or joints of the upper extremities: + Qiang Huo, Bai Zhi, Gao Ben, Sang Zhi, Jiang Huang, Chuan Xiong, Wei Ling Xian  
Knees, ankles or joints of the lower extremities: + Du Huo, Niu Xi, Fang Ji, Mu Gua  
Lower back or lumbar intervertebral joints: + Du Zhong, Sang Ji Sheng, Yin Yang Huo, Ba Ji Tian, Xu Duan  
Red, swollen & painful joints that are warm to the touch: + Ren Dong Teng, Shi Gao, Zhi Mu, Lian Qiao, Qin Jiao  

In *chronic cases of Bi patterns* that manifest spasmodic pain and spastic contraction of limbs, entomological medicines such as Quan Xie (2.5) and Wu Gong (1-3) are use to free the collaterals and relieve pain [Wu]