



Apitherapy, Hormesis and Homeopathy*

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Background

This article is intended to be a refresher course on **apitherapy**,^{1,2} a type of health treatment utilizing bee products, including bee venom. Incidentally, another term 'apiotherapy'³ is used in the international medical dictionary (but not anywhere else) and it denotes treatment with bee venom containing apitoxin. The present author, however, prefers the term apitherapy.

Hormesis and homeopathy signify biological mechanisms that might be involved in the therapeutic use of bee venom as follows:^{4,5}

Hormesis⁶ is the term for generally favorable biological responses to low exposures to toxins and other stressors; it has the opposite effect in small doses as in large doses. The biologic response phenomenon characterized by low-dose stimulation or a high dose inhibition results in either a J-shaped or an inverted U-shaped dose response.

Homeopathy⁷ is a system of therapeutics in which diseases are treated with drugs which are capable of producing in healthy persons symptoms like

those of the disease to be treated, the drug being administered in minute doses in succession.

Professor Dr. Fang Zhu, President of the Kunming-based International Apitherapy & Bee-Products Society (IABPS), has been recognized as the first modern medical doctor to have introduced in China treatment techniques using bee materials.¹

Apitherapy Techniques

According to Professor Fang Zhu² there are four therapeutic techniques: bee acupuncture, beeswax treatment, introduced electrohydronium of bee venom, and ultrasonotherapy with bee products. The present author, however, will cover clinical practice using bee venom only;³ thus, the techniques covered in this article would comprise only three modalities, namely bee acupuncture, electrohydronium of bee venom and ultrasonotherapy with bee venom.

The following definitions³ are terms concerned with bee venom treatment.

- Apidae, bees, a family of flying insects with relatively large bodies, of the order Hymenoptera; many species can sting. Genera include *Apis* and *Bombus*.

- *Apis*, a genus of bees of the family Apidae, smaller than the bumblebee (genus *Bombus*). *A. mellifera* is the most common type of honeybee, which

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sting if bothered.

- *Bombus*, a genus of bees of the family Apidae; the bumblebee. This type of bee is larger than honeybees, produces smaller amounts of honey, and sting when bothered.

- Apitoxin, the toxic protein constituent of bee venom.

Bee acupuncture²

The use of the sting organs of bees to carry out needling along meridians and points to treat diseases is called *bee acupuncture* (Fig. 1). It is a mixed type of Chinese acupuncture, which would normally combine the use of needles, medicine and moxibustion. The method not only gives people mechanical stimulus, but it also provides a pharmacological effect by injecting the right amount of liquid into the skin automatically.

In bee acupuncture, the sting pulled out from live bees is used to carry out scattered needling on the affected area or the cutaneous region of the meridian related to the relevant diseases or where there is pain. Usually the stingers of 3-5 bees are used to perform scattered needling on an area. The number of *Apis mellifera* that can be used is about 10 but not more than 25, while that of *Apis cerana indica* can be more.

Bee acupuncture, performed once every two days in 10-15 treatments, constitutes a period; the second period begins 5-7 days after the first.

When treating facial paralysis, cerebral embolism, cerebral thrombosis, bronchial asthma, migraine, hypertension, and thromboangiitis obliterans, it is better to do scattered needlings 1-2 mm apart, 1-2 times a week. In combining bee acupuncture with Apitherapy activilin (Figs. 2 & 3), the number of bees



Fig. 1 Bee acupuncture using a live bee.



Fig. 2 Bee acupuncture

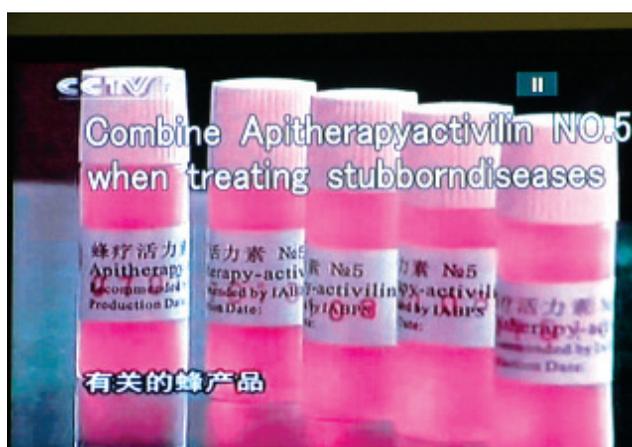


Fig. 3 Bee venom combined with apitherapy activilin

needed to strengthen the therapeutic effect and get a surprisingly curative result is reduced.

Scattered needling is also used to maintain health and prevent caducity.

Electrohydronium of bee venom²

The treatment is carried out by directing the ions of bee venom into the human body through the skin using direct current, instead of the sting or injection. After treatment, the skin may suffer hyperemia, a slight swelling and itching. The constituents of bee venom, conducted by direct current, act on the body directly or influence the body through nerve reflection and body fluid. With this technique, the therapist needs to choose the part to be treated

in order to keep a high concentration of the so-called 'ion piles' for gradual releasing the bee venom ions into the blood stream, so that the therapeutic action would last longer than it would with other medicinal therapy.

Ultrasonotherapy with bee venom²

Bee venom therapy can be coupled with ultrasonic therapeutic effects. Conducting the couplant apitherapy through the body surface can be carried out to treat many diseases: it alleviates local inflammation and pain and is claimed to gets rid of the effects of rheumatism, while activating blood circulation to dissipate blood stasis, and soften and resolve masses. In women, lobular hyperplasia of galactophore, chronic adnexitis, oviduct adhesion and oophoritic cyst and so on may be resolved effectively by ultrasonic means through abdomen. Ultrasonic apitherapy conducted through the rectum acts on the prostate to locally treat chronic prostatitis, chronic prostatic hypertrophy; this is performed once a day, 20 minutes at a time, 10 times per course.

Acknowledgement

Figures 1-3 were obtained from the article "Apitherapy" published in the Journal of Thai Traditional & Alternative Medicine 2008;6:265-268.

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