# Application of Guizhi Fuling Pill in Gynecology

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Abstract This paper reviews the research progress of Guizhi Fuling Pill in the clinical application of gynecology, such as the treatment of uterine leiomyoma, ovarian cyst, infertility and dysmenorrhea, in order to provide further research ideas for clinical researchers.

Key words Guizhi Fuling Pill, Gynecological diseases, Synopsis of Golden Chamber, Research progress

### 1 Introduction

Guizhi Fuling Pill first appeared in Synopsis of Golden Chamber: Twentieth Treatment of Women's Pregnancy Diseases and Pulse Syndrome written by Zhang Zhongjing, a medical sage in Han Dynasty. It is recorded that a woman has a history of chronic disease, which occurs after less than three months of menopause, and the fetal movement is located on the navel, which is caused by lump in the body. Fetal movement with normal menstruation in the three months before pregnancy is normal movement. Menstruation is out of balance in the first three months before menopause, blood stasis is seen three months after menopause, and the blood clot is purple-black. The reason for the bleeding is that the intra-abdominal lump has not gone away, so it should be removed and treated with Guizhi Fuling Pill. The composition and usage of this prescription are as follows: Cinnamomi Ramulus, Poria cocos and Moutan Cortex, Persicae Semen, and Paeoniae Radix Alba are ground into powder, and made into pills as large as rabbit excrement. One pill is taken on an empty stomach, and three pills can be taken if efficacy is not so good. It has the functions of promoting blood circulation, removing blood stasis and relieving disease, and is mainly used for treating uterus blood stasis syndrome. With the continuous in-depth research and combined treatment with Western medical drugs, it has been widely used in obstetrics and gynecology diseases such as uterine fibroids, infertility, hyperplastic mass diseases, endocrine and metabolic diseases, circulation and vascular diseases, etc., with good curative effect. In view of this, this article reviewed the clinical application of Guizhi Fuling Pill in gynecology research progress in the recent five years, in order to provide further research ideas for clinical researchers.

#### 2 Gynecological diseases

**2.1 Uterine fibroids** In traditional Chinese medicine, "uterine fibroids" falls into the category of "abdominal mass" [1]. In Western medicine, the conservative treatment methods of uterine fibroids are generally using gonadotropin-releasing hormone agonists, mifepristone, tamoxifen, tonorgestrel intrauterine slow release system, uterine artery embolization, radiofrequency abla-

tion, high intensity focused ultrasound and other drugs or surgical treatment  $^{[2]}$ .

Tao Meng<sup>[3]</sup> treated 25 patients with uterine fibroids with Sijunzi Decoction combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill, with a total effective rate of 96%, which can effectively reduce the incidence of adverse reactions, recurrence rate, tumor marker level and hormone level, and improve the quality of life of patients. Wang Wenjie et al. [4] treated 53 patients with uterine fibroids with Guizhi Fuling Pill combined with mifepristone, with a total effective rate of 96.23%. The effect is good, and it has a good effect on regulating immunity, hemorheology and improving sex hormone level. Wang Chunhong<sup>[5]</sup> treated 71 patients with uterine fibroids with Sijunzi Decoction and Guizhi Fuling Pill, with a total effective rate of 92. 26%, suggesting that the combination of Sijunzi Decoction and Guizhi Fuling Pill had better clinical effect on uterine fibroids, can improve its immune function and hormone level, and can also reduce the expression level of carbohydrate antigen 125 (CA125) and vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), having certain clinical application value. Pan Oingjie et al. [6] used acupuncture combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill to treat 40 patients with uterine fibroids, with a total effective rate of 97.5%. Studies have shown that Guizhi Fuling Pill can significantly reduce serum VEGF and HIF-1α levels, inhibit the formation of neovascularization, significantly reduce the metastasis, proliferation, shedding and differentiation of endometrium, improve the clinical treatment effect and speed up the recovery of patients.

**2.2 Ovarian cyst** Ovarian cyst falls into the categories of "abdominal mass" and "lump in the abdomen" in traditional Chinese medicine. The conservative treatment of ovarian cyst in Western medicine is mainly to use tamoxifen, gestrinone, mifepristone and other drugs, or to use non-conservative treatment such as surgical treatment. [7]

Yang Qiujie et al. [8] used Guizhi Fuling Pill combined with Jiawei Xiaoyao Pill to treat 39 patients with polycystic ovarian cyst, with a total effective rate of 94.87%, which can obviously improve the clinical efficacy, regulate the level of sex hormones and reduce the recurrence rate. Wang Fei et al. [9] used Fuke Qianjin Capsule combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill to treat 53 patients with ovarian cyst, with a total effective rate of 94.34%, which can improve ovarian function and hemorheological indexes

of patients and reduce the level of inflammatory factors. Peng Huangqing *et al.* [10] used Guizhi Fuling Pill combined with Dahuang Zhechong Pill to treat 30 patients with ovarian cyst, with a total effective rate of 83. 33%, which was significantly higher than in the treatment group with conventional drugs for promoting blood circulation and removing blood stasis (60.00%). The incidence of adverse reactions in the study group (6.67%) was significantly lower than that in the control group (30.00%), and the curative effect was better, which can reduce the focus volume, quickly relieve symptoms and improve sex hormone levels.

**2.3 Infertility** Western medicine believes that ovulation disorder, fallopian tube factors, uterus, vulva and other factors are the female factors causing infertility. Western medicine often considers gynecological diseases such as polycystic ovary syndrome, endometriosis and pelvic inflammatory disease sequelae in the treatment of infertility, and usually adopts correcting pelvic organic diseases, inducing ovulation and using assisted reproductive technology<sup>[11]</sup>.

Wang Wenjuan et al. [12] used Guizhi Fuling Pill, ozone injection combined with mechanical dredging to treat 52 cases of infertility caused by fallopian tube obstruction, with a total effective rate of 76.92%, which was higher than that of the control group (57.69%). The fallopian tube dredging rate and pregnancy rate of patients in the observation group were significantly higher than those in the control group, which can improve the fallopian tube dredging rate and pregnancy rate, reduce the fallopian tube re-occlusion rate, improve the TCM syndrome and hormone level of patients, and reduce the inflammatory factor level of the body. Xu Yugui et al. [13] used Guizhi Fuling Capsule combined with hysteroscopic surgery to treat 41 patients with pelvic inflammatory infertility. The short-term total effective rate of patients in the combined group was 95.12%, which was higher than that of patients in the operation group (80.49%). After 2 months of treatment, the TCM symptom scores of patients were lower than those before treatment, and the scores for patients in the combined group were significantly lower than those in the operation group, which can improve the serum sex hormone level of patients and was of great significance for improving pregnancy rate. Fu Jing et al. [14] treated 60 cases of infertility with phlegm and blood stasis with Kaiyu Erchen Decoction and Guizhi Fuling Pill. The serum hormones were improved and the TCM syndromes were relieved, which was helpful to improving the psychological state of patients and promoting ovulation and pregnancy. Yang Zhiyuan<sup>[15]</sup> used Bushen Huoxue Egg-promoting Prescription combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill to treat 48 patients with irregular menstruation infertility. After 1, 3 and 6 months of treatment, the TCM syndrome scores of patients in the study group were significantly lower than those in the control group, and the incidence of adverse reactions in the study group was 6.3%, which was significantly lower than that in the control group (25.0%). After treatment, the intimal thickness and follicle diameter of the two groups were significantly larger than those before treatment, and the intimal thickness and follicle diameter in the study group were significantly larger than those in the control group.

**2.4 Dysmenorrhea** In Western medicine, dysmenorrhea is mainly treated by drugs, including oral prostaglandin synthase inhibitors such as ibuprofen, ketoprofen and diclofenac, and oral contraceptives.

Li Cuiyun<sup>[16]</sup> used Xionggui Jiaoai Decoction combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill to treat 28 patients with adenomyosis dysmenorrhea. The total effective rate was 96.43%, which was higher than that of the control group (71.43%). The recurrence rate and side effect rate were 3.57% and 7.14%, respectively, which were lower than those of the control group (32.14% and 39.29%). The effect was good and can reduce the pain degree. Some scholars<sup>[17]</sup> have found that Guizhi Fuling Pill can significantly relieve the pain degree of primary dysmenorrhea due to blood stasis and fever, and there is no obvious adverse reaction. Wang Yujie et al. [18] used Wenjing Huayu Decoction combined with Guizhi Fuling Capsule to treat 48 patients with primary dysmenorrhea, with a total effective rate of 93.75% and remarkable analgesic effect. Its mechanism may be related to regulating the expression of PGF2α, P and E<sub>2</sub> in patients' serum, and high medication safety.

**2.5 Hyperplasia of mammary glands** Hyperplasia of mammary glands falls into the category of "mammary lump" in traditional Chinese medicine. Hyperplasia of mammary glands is commonly treated in Western medicine by oral tamoxifen, vitamins, Danazol and other drugs<sup>[19–20]</sup> and surgical or physical microwave external therapy<sup>[21]</sup>. Although Western medicine can control the disease, it can't cure it. Long-term use of hormone drugs can easily induce adverse reactions such as endometritis and alopecia, and some patients have drug dependence<sup>[22]</sup>.

Lin Yicen et al. [23] treated 43 patients with hyperplasia of mammary glands with acupuncture combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill, with a total effective rate of 97.67%, which can effectively relieve breast pain and negative emotions, reduce breast lumps and improve their quality of life. Cui Genrong<sup>[24]</sup> used Xiaoyaosan Prescription combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill to treat 25 patients with hyperplasia of mammary glands, and the clinical treatment effect was good. Yan Zhibo<sup>[25]</sup> treated 70 patients with hyperplasia of mammary glands with Rupixiao Tablet combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill, with a total effective rate of 91.43%. Yang Bin et al. [26] used Guizhi Fuling Pill combined with tamoxifen citrate tablets to treat 61 patients with hyperplasia of mammary glands, with a total effective rate of 88.52%, which was higher than in the control group only taking tamoxifen citrate tablets (73.77%), and the incidence of adverse reactions (11.48%) was significantly lower than that in the control group (31.15%), which can effectively improve the clinical symptoms of patients with hyperplasia of mammary glands, subside breast masses, improve endocrine level, improve treatment efficiency and have higher safety.

**2.6** Pelvic inflammatory diseases There is no name of "pelvic inflammatory disease" in ancient Chinese medicine books, and it can be put into the categories of "leukorrheal diseases" and

"abdominal mass" according to its symptoms. The commonly used Western medicine treatments are metronidazole and aminoglycoside antibiotics, ultrashort wave, microwave physiotherapy, TDP therapy machine and other physiotherapy methods, as well as surgical treatment and interventional therapy<sup>[27]</sup>.

Si Oingchen et al. [28] used Guizhi Fuling Pill combined with microwave therapeutic instrument to treat 47 patients with chronic pelvic inflammatory disease of gi stagnation and blood stasis, with an effective rate of 95.74%. The disappearance time of symptoms such as fever, mass, abdominal pain and abnormal secretion of patients was shorter than that of patients under conventional treatment, and the clinical curative effect was obviously improved, which can improve symptoms, and reduce the level of inflammatory factors, with better safety. Wang Lingling et al. [29] used thunder-fire moxibustion combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill to treat 51 patients with chronic pelvic inflammatory disease. The total effective rate was 92.2%, which was significantly higher than that of Western medicine group (76.5%). It can inhibit the activation of TGF-\(\beta\)1/Smads pathway, relieve symptoms and inflammatory reaction, improve hemorheology and imaging indexes, and improve the curative effect, and the medication was safe and reliable. Dong Yanshuang et al. [30] used Guizhi Fuling Capsule combined with azithromycin to treat 148 patients with pelvic inflammatory disease, with a total effective rate of 94.59%, which was significantly higher than that of Western medicine treatment group (85.14%). The clinical effect was definite, and it can improve ovarian hemodynamics, improve patients' antioxidant capacity, reduce inflammatory reaction and had high safety.

**2.7 Endometriosis** There is no record of "endometriosis" in ancient Chinese medicine books, which can be classified as "dysmenorrhea", "abdominal mass" and "menorrhagia" according to its clinical manifestations. The commonly used methods in Western medicine for endometriosis are surgical treatment and taking oral contraceptives, anti-progesterone, gonadotropin-releasing hormone agonists, and progesterone such as medroxyprogesterone acetate, norethindrone acetate or levonorgestrel acetate [31].

Wu Yuhua et al. [32] treated 33 patients with endometriosis with Guizhi Fuling Pill combined with Digestrol Acetone, with a total effective rate of 96.97%, which was higher than that in the treatment group with Digestrol Acetone Tablets alone (75.00%). The clinical effect was good, and it can more effectively reduce the level of sex hormones, inhibit the proliferation of endometrial cells, reduce the recurrence rate of diseases, improve the pregnancy rate and have higher safety. Chen Shunxia [33] found that Guizhi Fuling Pill combined with levonorgestrel intrauterine sustained-release system and gonadotropin-releasing hormone agonist can not only improve the quality of life of patients with moderate and severe blood stasis endometriosis, but also meet the needs of patients to preserve uterus and fertility under certain conditions, with a certain clinical practical value. Huang Chunsheng [34] found that Guizhi Fuling Pill combined with goserelin acetate sustainedrelease implant can obviously improve the ovarian function of patients with endometriosis, reduce the expression levels of serum CA125, VEGF and TNF- $\alpha$ , and had good clinical effect, with a certain popularization and application value.

In addition, some scholars have found that Guizhi Fuling Pill can induce apoptosis of ectopic endometrial stromal cells by promoting the stability of VPS53 protein<sup>[35]</sup>.

**2. 8 Irregular menstruation** Irregular menstruation, also known as menstrual disorder, mainly refers to the abnormal menstrual period, cycle and menstrual volume of women<sup>[36]</sup>. In treating menstrual disorders, Western medicine generally gives patients appropriate sex hormone drugs to adjust their menstrual cycle and improve their clinical symptoms<sup>[37]</sup>.

Zhou Weiwei<sup>[38]</sup> used Guifu Dihuang Pill combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill to treat 50 patients with irregular menstruation, which can improve the clinical symptoms of patients with irregular menstruation, increase the levels of estrogen and progesterone, improve the level of serum hormones, reduce the incidence of adverse reactions, and have high safety. Chejian et al. [39] used Leonurus heterophyllus granules combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill to treat 24 patients with irregular menstruation, with a total effective rate of 95.83%, which was significantly higher than that of the treatment group only using Mudanpi granules. It shows that Mudanpi granules combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill can effectively regulate patients' menstruation, protect female endometrium, dissipate stagnation, dredge channels and promote blood circulation, improve hemostatic effect, improve patients' normal menstrual cycle and menstrual blood volume, accelerate patients' menstrual recovery speed, and have high safety. Liu Fang<sup>[40]</sup> used Guifu Dihuang Pill combined with Guizhi Fuling Pill to treat 23 patients with irregular menstruation due to kidney deficiency and blood stasis, and achieved good results. Guo Mingyan<sup>[41]</sup> used Guizhi Fuling Pill combined with Taibao Capsule to treat 63 patients with irregular menstruation, with a total effective rate of 94%, which was higher than that of pure Western medicine treatment group (81%). It can guickly improve their clinical symptoms, help stabilize their menstrual time, menstrual volume and menstrual cycle, improve their dysmenorrhea symptoms, and significantly improve their quality of life, having positive significance for ensuring their disease recovery and improving their pregnancy rate.

**2.9 Polycystic ovary syndrome** There is no name for this disease in traditional Chinese medicine, and it can be classified as "infertility", "amenorrhea" and "hypomenorrhea" according to its symptoms. At present, the commonly used treatment methods in Western medicine are oral contraceptives and symptomatic treatment [42].

According to experiments<sup>[43]</sup>, Guizhi Fuling Pill can inhibit autophagy of granulosa cells in rat polycystic ovary syndrome model, promote follicular development, and alleviate ovulation disorder in rat polycystic ovary syndrome model, which is related to the activation of PI3K/AKT/mTOR signaling pathway. In another study<sup>[44]</sup>, the rat model of polycystic ovary syndrome was established by injection of dehydroepiandrosterone, and Guizhi Fuling

Pill combined with rosiglitazone was given. The results showed that the combined treatment inhibited the weight and ovarian weight of rats with polycystic ovary syndrome, reduced fasting blood glucose and fasting insulin, inhibited total cholesterol, triglyceride, low density lipoprotein, enhanced high density lipoprotein, improved oestrous cycle, ovarian histological changes and follicular development, and alleviated ovarian dysfunction in rats with polycystic ovary syndrome, which may be related to PI3K/AKT/NF-KB, Nrf2/HO-1 pathway. Li Jiannan et al. [45] treated 46 patients with polycystic ovary syndrome with Guizhi Fuling Pill combined with Western medicine, with a total effective rate of 93.02%, which was significantly higher than that of Western medicine group. The study showed that Guizhi Fuling Pill combined with Western medicine can improve the curative effect, promote ovulation, regulate sex hormone level and insulin resistance. Wang Yun et al. [46] used Guizhi Fuling Pill, Erchen Decoction and conventional Western medicine to treat 41 patients with polycystic ovary syndrome, with a total effective rate of 87.80%, which can improve clinical efficacy, improve ovarian function and sex hormone level, and reduce insulin resistance, with relatively good safety.

### 3 Other diseases

Lan Haili et al. [47] used modified Guizhi Fuling Pill to treat 33 cases of chronic radiation proctitis of damp-heat stasis type, and achieved good results, which can reduce intestinal inflammatory reaction, improve clinical symptoms and improve patients' quality of life. Yan Zhenguo et al. [48] used Guizhi Fuling Pill and earthworm to treat 53 patients with minimal brain lesions, with a total effective rate of 88.46%, which can reduce the levels of glycosylated hemoglobin and total cholesterol in patients with minimal brain lesions, and reduce the occurrence of minimal brain lesions. Liu Ying et al. [49] used Linggan Wuwei Jiangxin Decoction and Guizhi Fuling Pill to treat 37 patients with acute exacerbation of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease of cold fluid and blood stasis type, which can effectively improve the clinical symptoms and lung function of patients, reduce the level of serum inflammatory factors and improve the quality of life of patients. Some studies have inferred that Guizhi Fuling Pill may be used as a therapeutic drug to alleviate liver fibrosis $^{[50]}$ . Zheng Yunpeng et al.  $^{[51]}$  used Chaihu Guizhi Ganjiang Decoction and Guizhi Fuling Pill to treat 30 elderly patients with diabetic skin pruritus, which can reduce the index level of serum inflammatory factors in patients, stabilize the blood sugar level, and accelerate the disappearance of skin pruritus symptoms, and the treatment safety was relatively high. Liu Yunlin et al. [52] used Mufangji Decoction and Guizhi Fuling Pill to treat 40 patients with acute exacerbation of pulmonary heart disease (heart, lung and kidney yang deficiency syndrome), with a total effective rate of 95.00%, which can effectively improve patients' lung function, relieve patients' clinical symptoms, reduce patients' blood viscosity and reduce the number of attacks in acute exacerbation, with definite curative effect.

#### 4 Conclusion

Guizhi Fuling Pill is created by Zhang Zhongjing to treat women with concretion lumps and blood stasis. In the prescription, Cinnamomi Ramulus is used to warm and dredge blood vessels, to achieve the effect of reducing stasis, and to take the role of monarch medicine. Persicae Semen is "a special medicine for blood stasis and blood occlusion", which is used as adjuvant medicine. Moutan Cortex and Paeoniae Radix Alba can be used to cool blood, remove blood stasis and relieve pain; Poria can be used to remove dampness and phlegm to help eliminate the lump and strengthen the spleen, benefit the stomach and calm the heart to strengthen the gi, all of which are used as adjuvant medicines. Pills coated with white honey are sweet and moist, and it can be used as conductant medicine to alleviate the effect of various medicines. This prescription is a common prescription for the syndrome of blood stasis blocking the uterus, and it is also the representative prescription for relieving the lumps. Later doctors took Guizhi Fuling Pill as the basic prescription, or combined it with other prescriptions, and used TCM syndrome differentiation thinking to treat various gynecological diseases caused by lumps and blood stasis. Women's Prescription changed its name to Death Pill to treat pregnant women with cold sweat and shortness of breath when they have a miscarriage and the fetus died in the womb; Synopsis of Treating Women's Diseases changed it to decoction, and changed its name to Cuisheng Decoction, which can cure abdominal pain, low back pain and hasten parturition. Nowadays, doctors flexibly combine Guizhi Fuling Pill with Western medicine or other therapies, and bring into play a greater role of Guizhi Fuling Pill in treating various kinds of diseases in addition to women's diseases, which promotes the combination of Chinese medicine and Western medicine to a certain extent, and promotes doctors to explore Guizhi Fuling Pill in a deeper level, so that Chinese medicine can continuously develop and innovate.

Although the research of Guizhi Fuling Pill in treating women's diseases and other diseases has made great progress, it is thought that there is still room for improvement. One is that Guizhi Fuling Pill in treating diseases caused by blood stasis has unique Chinese medicine characteristics, but it is not effective for some diseases such as uterine fibroids with large tumor body, so it can be further combined with Western medicine therapy to make clinical research, and to expand the research scope of Guizhi Fuling Pill in treating related diseases on the premise of ensuring patient safety, in order to obtain qualitative and quantitative standards. Furthermore, at present, they are mostly clinical observations of combined Western medicine therapy, and there is still a lack of pharmacological analysis on the effective components and mechanism of action of the acting drugs, and the related research on whether the use of drugs combined with Western medicine will change the mechanism of action of Guizhi Fuling Pill is insufficient. In order to identify the main effective components of the drugs, the related pharmacological mechanisms of combined drugs can be further studied in the future. Third, we should actively carry forward the tradition of seeking root causes and syndrome differentiation of traditional Chinese medicine, and focus on the possibility of Guizhi Fuling Pill to cure the root cause.

The aforementioned research in this paper shows the clinical application of Guizhi Fuling Pill, but we can still make a study continuously to expand the research scope as much as possible, increase the experimental samples to improve the credibility without losing precision, and further explore the feasibility of treating other diseases with this prescription. At the same time, we should explore the deep mechanism and principle of this prescription combined with Western medicine or other therapies, so as to control the application range of Guizhi Fuling Pill more accurately in clinic.

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(From page 50)

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