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A REVIEW ARTICLE ON ROLE OF VIRECHANA KARMA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF AMAVATA

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ABSTRACT

As indicated by its nomenclature, Amavata is a condition that arises from the combined vitiation of Ama and Vata Dosha. The pathological process involves the accumulation and localization of these factors in different body regions, particularly the Koshtha (gastrointestinal tract), Trika (sacral region), and Sandhi (joints). This results in characteristic clinical manifestations such as Shotha (swelling), Shoola (pain), and Stabdhata (stiffness) in the affected areas.

According to Ayurvedic principles, impairment of Jatharagni (digestive fire) leads to improper digestion of ingested food, resulting in the formation of incompletely processed Ahara Rasa. This improperly metabolized material is referred to as Ama, which contributes to the aggravation of the Doshas and the development of pathological conditions. Due to its obstructive nature, Ama accumulates within the Sukshma Srotas (minute body channels), leading to Srotavarodha (obstruction of bodily channels) and disturbance of normal physiological functions.

Virechana Karma is one of the major Shodhana (purification) procedures described in Ayurveda. It involves the therapeutic elimination of aggravated Doshas through the anal route. In the management of diseases associated with Dosha vitiation and Ama accumulation, Virechana is considered an important purification modality. By facilitating the elimination of aggravated Doshas and accumulated pathological factors, it is traditionally believed to help restore the functional balance of the body and support disease management.

KEYWORDS: Ama, Amavata, Jatharagni, Mandagni, Virechana.

INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, all the diseases get manifested as a result of Mandagni[1]. Agni has been the basis of Ayu (longevity), Varna (complexion), Bala (power), Swasthya(health) etc [2]. Thus due to impaired Agni the Aahar rasa formed is in Apakva stage and is known as Ama. Which causes Sarva dosh prakopa (vitiation of doshas)[3]. Ama is described in classical Ayurvedic texts as improperly digested Ahara Rasa that accumulates in the Koshtha due to Ajirna (indigestion) and produces pain (Ruja) in the head and throughout the body.[4]. Ama combines with aggravated Vata Dosha and localizes in the Trika (sacral region) and joints, resulting in stiffness of the body. This pathological condition is termed Amavata.[5].

Pathogenesis:

According to Ayurvedic literature, Amavata develops due to factors such as incompatible diet and activities (Viruddha Ahara-Cheshta), impaired digestive fire (Mandagni), physical inactivity (Nischalata), and excessive exertion after consuming heavy or unctuous food. These factors promote Ama formation, which, under the influence of aggravated Vata Dosha, accumulates in the Shleshma Sthana, contributing to the development of Amavata.[6]

Viruddha Ahara/Chesta/Mandagni/Nisschalta + Heavy Exercise after meal

⇩ ⇩

Ama Vitiation **Vata Vitiation**

AMA+ VATA

Ama, in association with aggravated Vata Dosha, spreads throughout the body and accumulates in the Kapha-dominant sites and Dhamanis (body channels). The accumulation of sticky, viscous Ama (Picchila material), along with the vitiated Doshas, obstructs the normal flow within the channels. This pathological process results in weakness, heaviness, and involvement of the Hridaya (heart) and various joints, including Janu (knee), Gulpha (ankle), Kati (hip/lower back), Ansa (shoulder), and Manya (neck). The condition, characterized by joint involvement and bodily stiffness, is described as Amavata in Ayurveda.[7] Clinical symptoms in which mainly joints are involved along with the chronicity of diseases give a close relation of Amavata with Rheumatoid Arthritis.

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is a chronic inflammatory disorder of uncertain etiology, characterized by symmetrical inflammation of peripheral joints, which may progressively lead to joint destruction, functional impairment, and physical disability.[8]

Prevalence:

The incidence of RA between 25-55 years of age is common, after which it plateaus until the age of 75 and then decreases. RA affects approximately 0.5% to 1% of the adult population worldwide. RA occurs more commonly in females than in males with a 2-3:1 ratio[9].

Clinical features

Body ache, lack of taste, thirst, general weakness, feeling of heaviness, fever, morning stiffness of the joints pain and swelling in the affected part, shifting of pains in joints.

Role of Virechana karma:

A key principle of Ayurvedic treatment is the removal of accumulated toxins and aggravated Doshas to restore physiological balance and promote health. Panchakarma is

an integral purification therapy in Ayurveda that facilitates internal cleansing through five therapeutic procedures: Vamana (therapeutic emesis), Virechana (purgation), Basti (medicated enema), Nasya (nasal administration of medicines), and Raktamokshana (bloodletting).[10] Vamaka and Virechaka Dravyas produce therapeutic vomiting and purgation, respectively, owing to their specific pharmacological properties (Prabhava).[11]

Ama is a product of disturbed Digestion/ Metabolism, which is carried by Vayu, It obstructs the channels at different sites and causes inflammation of joints.[12]

In Ayurvedic classical texts describe Virechana as an important purification therapy for Koshtha Shuddhi, particularly in Pittaja disorders, Ama-related diseases, Udara Roga, and Aadhmana. [13]

Since Agnimandya (diminished digestive fire) is considered a major cause of Ama formation, its management in Ayurveda primarily involves Langhana (therapeutic fasting), Langhana-Pachana (lightening and digestive therapies), and Dosha elimination (Doshavasechana).[14]

Yogaratnakara describes a formulation for managing Agnimandya that possesses properties capable of stimulating Agni, promoting digestion (Pachana), and inducing purgation (Rechana).[15]

The therapeutic significance of Virechana in managing Agnimandya and its associated disorders can therefore be understood. Although Virechana is primarily considered the preferred treatment for aggravated Pitta Dosha, it also helps in the elimination of vitiated Kapha and Vata to a certain extent. Hence, it may serve as a suitable Shodhana procedure in such conditions. Following Langhana (therapeutic fasting), Swedana (sudation), and the administration of Tikta, Katu, and Deepana Dravyas, the Doshas attain Nirama Avastha, after which their removal from the body may be facilitated through Shodhana therapy.[16]

Although Vamana is generally performed before Virechana in Panchakarma therapy, Virechana is preferred in the management of Amavata for certain reasons. Clinical features such as Aanaha (abdominal distension), Vibandha (constipation), Antrakujana (intestinal gurgling), and Kukshishoola (abdominal pain) indicate the Pratiloma Gati of Vata Dosha. Virechana helps in regulating the abnormal movement of Vata, whereas Vamana may potentially aggravate these symptoms. Additionally, Virechana helps eliminate the obstruction caused by aggravated Kledaka Kapha, thereby facilitating the restoration of normal physiological functions.[17]

Pharmacological Properties of Virechana Dravya:

These are Vyavayi[18] Vikasi[19] Ushna Tikshna Sukshma[20]. Due to its specific properties, Virechana Dravya is believed to reach the Hridaya through its Virya and subsequently circulate throughout the body via the Dhamanis and various large and small Srotas. Its Agneya nature facilitates Vishyandana (liquefaction) of the Doshas, while its Tikshna Guna helps in breaking down accumulated Doshas. Furthermore, its Snehana property promotes the smooth movement of vitiated Doshas without obstruction, directing them towards the Amashaya, from where they are eliminated through the process of Virechana.[21]

Mode of Action of Virechana Dravya:

Virechana is a therapeutic purgation procedure in Ayurveda aimed at eliminating aggravated Pitta Dosha and accumulated metabolic waste through the gastrointestinal route, particularly targeting the liver and biliary system[22]. The Virechana Dravya spreads throughout the bodyof cellular level due to its pharmacological properties. Now, the mode of action of Virechana dravya on the basis of its pharmacological properties has been described[23].

Step 1: Due to Vyavayi Guna, quick absorption of virechana dravya occur

Step 2: Now, Vikasi Guna causes softening and loosening of the bond by Dhatu Saithilya Karma.

Step 3:Ushna Guna of virechana dravya creates the liquification (Vishyandana)[24] of Dosha Sanghata (compactness)

Step 4: Tikshna Guna causes Chedana of the Doshas or able to disintegrate the Sanghata of the Doshas. According to Dalhana this action is due to quick excretion (Dosha Sravana-Karatvam) Thus, liquefied Doshas are dragged towards the Koshtha.

Step 5: Due to Sukshma Guna, virechana dravya reached into micro channels & then disintegrates the endogenic toxins, which are then excreted through micro channels.

Step 6 Due to dominance of Prithivi and Jala Mahabhutas in the Virechana drugs and their potent Adhobhaga Hara Prabhava, the vitiated Doshas are made to pass through anal route andare expelled out of the body.[25]

CONCLUSION

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA), being an autoimmune disorder, is commonly managed in modern medicine using disease-modifying immunosuppressive agents, corticosteroids, and NSAIDs to control disease activity and alleviate symptoms. However, these

medications may be associated with adverse effects, particularly with prolonged use. In Ayurveda, the management of Amavata involves Shodhana therapy, such as Virechana, followed by Samshamana Chikitsa to address the underlying Dosha imbalance. This integrative therapeutic approach may be explored as a potential treatment strategy for Amavata, with its efficacy and safety requiring validation through appropriate clinical studie.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that there was no conflict of interest regarding the publication of manuscript.

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