



ROLE OF AGNIKARMA IN PAIN MANAGEMENT

Dr. Suman Yadav^{1*}, Dr. Vikramaditya Dubey² and Dr. Ashutosh Kumar Yadav³

¹Reader and H.O.D. PG Dept. of Shalya Tantra, Government Ayurvedic College, Varanasi.

²P.G. Scholar, PG Department of Shalya Tantra, Government Ayurvedic College, Varanasi.

³Reader, Department of Rachana Shareer, Government Ayurvedic College, Varanasi.

***Corresponding Author: Dr. Suman Yadav**

Reader and H.O.D. PG Dept. of Shalya Tantra, Government Ayurvedic College, Varanasi.

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ABSTRACT

The pain is prominent symptom of many diseases which disturbs the normal routine of the patient. The patient takes Pain killers for the relief of symptoms but pain killers are having so many adverse effects. Agni karma act as a very good analgesia and it has to some extent less chance of complication in respect to other treatment modalities. The Agnikarma is very economical and safe for the patient and subsides the symptom.

KEYWORDS: Agnikarma, Shoola, Dosha, Upakrama.

AIM: To establish the role of Agni karma in pain related disorders such as tennis elbow, calcaneal spur, sciatica, joint pain.

INTRODUCTION

Pain is a very common symptom and all of us must have experienced pain in our life at some point of time. The word pain is derived from Latin word 'poenea' which means penalty or punishment.^[1] We are suffering from many type of pain in our daily life, which affects our performance, economical, physical and mental wellness. Person takes different kind of pain killers at the same time takes steroids also. Sometimes surgery may be required for the relief of pain. The medicines and surgery both are having their own risks. Sometimes it may create more dangerous situations. On the other hand; Agni karma is very economical, easy to perform, does not required special or big set up, almost no side effect, fast acting and can be done as a day care procedure.

Concept of pain (shoola) in ayurveda

There is no special chapter for pain or its related synonyms in the Brihatrayee (greater treatise) of Ayurveda, but its discrete description is available in several chapters during elaboration of diseases either as its prodromal symptoms or complications.

In Charak samhita, sutrasthan, 4th chapter there are two Mahakashaya directly mentioned for the management of pain i.e. Shoola prashamana and Vedana sthapana Mahakashaya,^[2] also there is another Mahakashaya, which is directly related to pain management named as Angamarda prashman. In Madhav Nidan for the first time a special chapter is mentioned for 'Shoola'. In Ayurveda all type of pain are considered under Vata

aggravation. Pain can only occur due to Vata involvement and it cannot occur if Vata is not involved in it. There are different synonyms related with pain in Ayurveda i.e. shoola, ruka, rooja, vedana, arati etc. As Vatadosha is responsible for every movement and action in the body. The hindrance in Vata flow leads to the pain. There are two main cause of aggravation of Vata.

1. Dhatu Kshaya
2. Margavarodha

Ayurvedic management

According to Ayurveda, Vata is the main doshas involved in pain. It is responsible for generating and spreading the pain. However specific fraction of Vata, which is responsible for pain in a specific reason such as generalized pain is caused by Vyana vayu, abdominal pain by Samana vayu and Apana vayu, headache by Prana vayu and Vyana vayu. Shoola occurs due to vitiation of Vata dosha. Vata dosha is vitiated by srotavarodha and dhatukshaya. The main aim of treatment is to pacify vitiated Vata dosha.

Therapeutic procedures for pain management in ayurveda

There are so many procedures in Ayurveda which are very useful in pain management:

- Snehana
- Swedana^[3]
- Lepana
- Basti karma^[4]
- Viddha karma

Sira moksha^[5]

Agnikarma

Other miscellaneous upakrama

Agnikarma

In today's life several type of pain are more common due to bad posture, stress, improper food habits and other bad lifestyle. Some common pain like cervical pain, lumbar pain, tennis elbow etc. The most reliable Ayurvedic treatment for all these is Agnikarma. In procedure of Agnikarma the application of heat on the affected area is enough to cause therapeutic burn. Agnikarma does not produce any discomfort after procedure. The heat is applied on the most painful point of that area.

Some diseases where agnikarma is most effective

1. Calcaneal spur
2. Tennis elbow
3. Sport injuries
4. Carpal tunnel syndrome
5. Achilles tendonitis
6. Plantar fasciitis
7. Degenerative joint disease
8. Corn

Dahanupakarana (Material used for agnikarma)

Dahanupakarana are various accessories like drugs, articles and substance used to produce therapeutic burns (samyaka dagdha) during Agnikarma chikitsa. They are classified as follows-

1. Tvakgata Vata Vikara- Pippali, Ajashakrita, Godanta, Shara, Shalaka.
2. Maamsagata Vikara- Jambavaushtha, Panchadhatu Shalaka.
3. Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Marma - Madhu (Honey), Guda (Jaggery), Sneha(oil).

Procedure of agnikarma

Purva karma

Snigdha and pichhila annapana^[6]

Site of Agnikarma is cleaned with Triphala kwath and dried with the help of sterile gauze.

Shalaka (probe) is heated over the flame upto red hot.

Pradhana karma

In Agnikarma treatment, first identify the most painful area and its marked with help of ball pen, after that Shalaka is heated up and applied directly to the most sensitive areas and the apply Aloe vera leaf pulp over the affected part after each application of heat. The heat is transferred from the Shalaka to the applied body part.

Type of agnikarma^[7]

1. Valaya
2. Bindu
3. Vilekha
4. Pratisarana

Paschat karma

Apply Madhu/ Honey and Ghrit/clarified butter on the area where heat was applied^[8] and followed by sprinkling of Haridra/ turmeric powder.

Give instruction to the patient to keep dagdha/burnt body part away from water.

Benefits of agnikarma

- Agnikarma is very short duration process.
- Result is visible in 2 to 4 weeks and in some cases just after end of procedure.
- Convenient for busy professional.
- No formation of lethal scar.
- The process give long lasting relief from pain and other associated benefits like improvement of blood supply to the region, reducing cramps and stiffness, relaxing muscles and decreasing the chance of infections.

Probable mode of action of agnikarma

After Agnikarma, Ushna guna of agni pacifies the Sheeta guna of Vata and Kapha and reduces the pain.

According to Charak, Agni is the best treatment for Shoola. Ushna guna of Agni helps to remove the 'Avarana' effectively and stabilize the movement of Vata, which provides relief from pain.

As per modern medicine there are many theories, that therapeutic heat increases blood circulation at that area which leads to proper nutrition of the tissue. This induced circulation help to flush away a pain producing substances from affected site and ultimately relief from pain.

Pain receptor of skin and motor end plate get stimulated at 45 degree Celsius. Pathway for pain and thermal signal run parallel and end up at same area but only stronger can be felt, therefore complete exclusion of pain impulse by heat occurs.

Pain perception varies across different individuals according to their mood, emotional condition and prior experience, even if the pain is caused by similar physical stimuli and results in a similar degree of damage. In 1965, Ronald Melzack and Patrick Wall outlined a scientific theory about psychological influence on pain perception; the 'gate control theory'. If not for this theory, pain perception would be still associated with the intensity of the pain stimulus and the degree of damage caused to the affected tissue. But Melzack and Wall made it evident that pain perception is far more complex. According to the gate control theory, pain signals are not free to reach the brain as soon as they are generated at the injured tissues or sites. They need to encounter certain 'neurological gates' at the spinal cord level and these gates determine whether the pain signals should reach the brain or not. In other words, pain is perceived when the gate gives way to the pain signals and it is less

intense or not at all perceived when the gate closes for the signals to pass through. This theory gives the explanation for why someone finds relief by rubbing or massaging an injured or a painful area. Though gate control theory can not present the complete picture of the central system and underlies pain, it has visualised the mechanism of pain perception in a new dimension and it has paved the way for various pain management strategies.^[9] It was suggested that various indigenous opioid such as beta endorphins, enkephalin and dynorphins are involved in Agnikarma induced analgesia. This working hypothesis about the role of endogenous opioids in Agnikarma action has been widely accepted.

CONCLUSION

Use of modern painkillers affect the function of liver, kidney and other vital organs. The Agnikarma therapy effectively subsides pain, stiffness, swelling and tenderness of the affected part, enhance circulation, promotes strength, improve mobility and provides comfort thus enabling to carry out daily activities without hindrance such as in tennis elbow, calcaneal spur, sciatica, joint pain etc. Main aim of the treatment is to pacify vitiated Vata dosha. The Ayurvedic pain management therapies are safe and natural in the way that it helps in the management of different kind of pain. Among all these therapies the Agnikarma is most effective treatment for pain management. It increases the pain threshold and there is reduction in the cause of pain and it is a whole new approach towards pain management. Thus it can be said that Agnikarma is providing whole new dimension towards pain management.

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