



MARMA THERAPY IN PAIN MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Pain is commonly occurring problem and it is particularly prevalent in older adults. Persistent pain may be the result of musculoskeletal conditions, cancer and cancer treatments, neuropathic conditions, trauma or limb amputation, surgery and other invasive procedures or therapies are also associated with pain, as are various psychological conditions. Ayurveda is a part of the older spiritual heritage of humanity that contains secret knowledge and profound wisdom. The science of Marma (like vital points according to modern concept) is an extra ordinary and dynamic part mentioned in ayurvedic texts, having importance regarding traumatic effect. These points should be protected from injury during surgical treatment. On the other hand these Marma are considered as healing points. Marma therapy provides Tridosha – Triguna samya (balance) as these points are seat of Prana. Marma therapy supplements and supports all ayurvedic therapies, increasing their effectiveness and ability to awaken the healing power of the body. Another form of therapy related to body surface point is acupressure and acupuncture. These therapies use various meridian points to cure and prevent several diseases. The present study reveals correlation with various Marma points involved in Marma chikitsa and meridian points on with regards to its mode of action against pain mechanism.

KEYWORDS: Marma chikitsa, Marma, Meridian points, Pain mechanisms.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda literally means traditional science of life. Ayurveda believes complete normal state of health. Marma is one of the important aspects described in various ancient texts of Ayurveda. The concept of Marma persists from vedic period. Although it is very much old by time frame but it's principles are applicable even today like earlier era.^[1] Concept of Marma also given by Acharya Charak but has focused mainly on Trimarmas^[2] (Sira, hridaya, basti). Acharya Susruta and Acharya Vagbhata have described in detail about each Marma in their respective Sharir sthana^[3,4] Acharya Susruta has described the locations of these Marma points, as well as how these influence Prana and also defined Marma as the points of the body which shows various fatal signs and symptoms on traumatic injury. These are superficial and deeply seated points on body that involves Mansa, Sira, Snayu, Asthi, Sandhi where vital energy resides or flows through^[5,6] [Marmani naam mansa sira snayu asthi sandhi sannipata, tesu swabhat ev viseshena pranastisthanti, tasmanmarmasu abhitan styan bhavanapadyante].^[7] There is no direct mention of therapeutic use in Ayurvedic literature. Now a day special therapy that is Marma therapy evolved. Marma therapy is based on the utilization of 107 points in the body which are considered as access points to body,

mind and consciousness. Marma points can be used to balance the tridoshas and trigunas.

Marma points are specific areas on the body, which has relation to various internal organs, doshas and srotas^[14] An important principle of marma therapy is quite simple, where a strong blow can cause injury, a mild touch can cause healing and this is the most important principle of marma massage.^[9] As the technique of massage developed, some of these points were used to stimulate the internal organs. As in Susruta samhita there is description of siravedha, agnikarma and kshara karma as treatment procedures having effect on pathogenesis, may be away from that areas. Likewise marma points are specific areas on the body having inter relation with various internal organs and shrotas that's why stimulation to these points can have effect on different areas. One can control (stimulation or suppression) internal organs, doshas and channels through various marma points.^[14]

Most pain clinics today have adopted some form of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). The use of pressure points for massage and acupuncture has become a popular topic in natural healing today. In Ayurveda, the traditional medicine of India, these pressure points may be called as Marmas, meaning

“vulnerable or sensitive zones”. Such points can be used specifically for the diagnosis and treatment of disease or generally for promoting health and longevity.^[10]

In acupressure, muscular tension is released by applying pressure with hand at specific acupoints or pressure of the thumbs on specific points or the application of pressure to acupoints is used to balance the flow of the physiological energy.^[11]

Acupressure demand application of the physical pressure on trigger points/ acupoints/ specific pressure points which are positioned along the meridians^[11]

DISCUSSION

The word Marma is of Sanskrit origin “Mrin Maranae”. The Sanskrit phrase, “Mriyatae Asminiti Marma” means there is possibility of death or serious damage to health when these points are got injured.^[16]

Skill of human being lies mainly in his efficiency to perform various actions with his hand. Acharya Susruta has mentioned “Hastamevam Pradhanatamam Yantram”(which means human hand is the most important instrument).^[14]

During Marma therapy, an extremely light stimulation of points on the body is applied by hand. This gets rid of obstructions from that vital point and provides physical and psychological recreation and potency. Marma therapy is a dominant process and a therapy that works with these subtle and responsive liveliness points to unlock the energy outlets in the body are called Srotas. Marma points, when gently pressed on the skin can stimulate a chain of positive events.^[12]

Just as acupuncture points are used in both Chinese medicine and in Chinese martial arts, Marma points are also used in the martial arts of india. Originally Marma was part of vedic martial arts or Dhanurveda. In Siddha system “Varma” term is used for these points by sage Agastya. In Siddha thought, Varma points are invisible but can be traced where body, mind and psychic energies concentrate together.^[10] Varmam points and Vermology has been meticulously described in various tamil literatures. Also ancient Indian martial arts called kalari utilizes the knowledge of varmam points to a great extent.^[14]

Acupressure, one of the known CAM (complementary and alternative medicine), originated in ancient china is based on the principle of acupoints activation across the meridians which correct the imbalance between qi^[12]. Acupressure demand application of physical pressure on trigger points/ acupoints/ specific pressure points which are positioned along the meridians.^[13] Qi or chi is the energy flow created along the pathways that connect the acupuncture points on the body. Pathways between the points are called meridians, which also connect to internal organs in the body. Activation of specific points

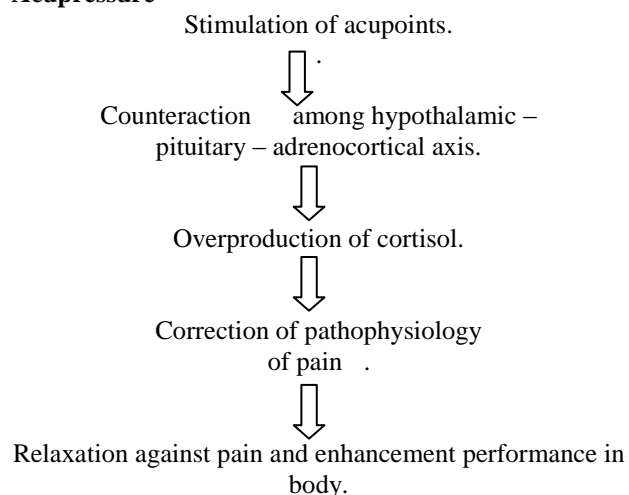
on the meridians is known to facilitate reduction of pain at the local sites. It also reduces the pain from other body parts.^[14]

Acupoints are any specific points for needle insertion/pressure apply in acupuncture/ acupressure respectively, mostly these are area of high electrical conductance on the body surface. Acupressure uses pressure to stimulate specific acupoints for therapeutic purposes and stimulating these points can correct imbalance between qi through channels and subsequently treat the disease. Re- equilibrium of qi achieve therapeutic benefits by improving the physiological functions of body systems or zang-fu (human organs).^[11]

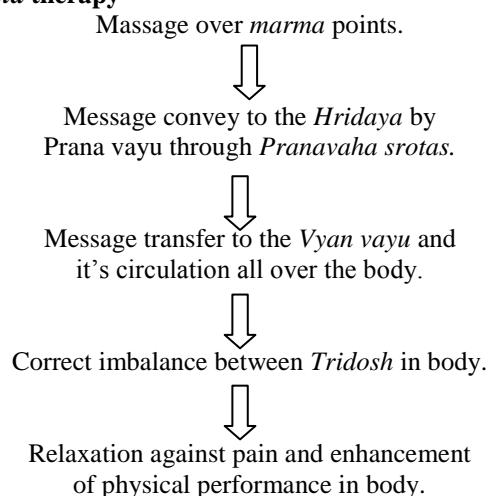
It is the massage of acupoints performed with the fingertips, knuckles, thumbs, elbows or suitable devices to achieve effective treatment that would last for several minutes to hours post a single treatment.^[11]

Comparison between mechanism of Marma therapy and acupressure therapy –

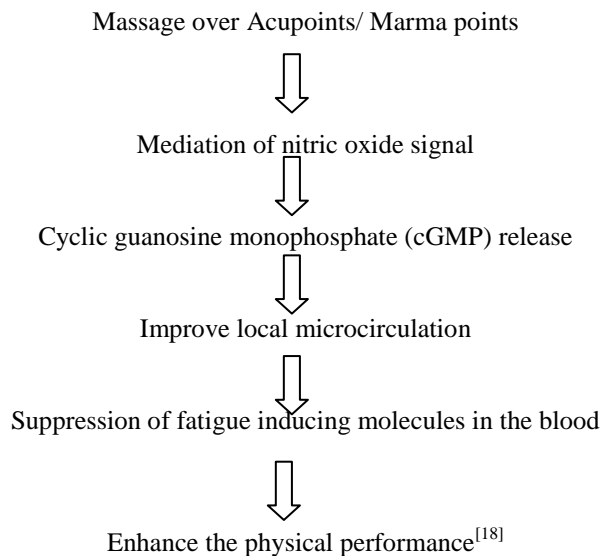
Acupressure^[17]



Marma therapy



It also modulates the physiological response by increasing endorphin and serotonin transmittance to the brain and specific organs through nerves and meridians.



Researches says that major marma points correspond to the several chakras, or energy centres of the body, while minor points radiate out along the thorax, abdomen, head, neck and limbs. A marma point is the junction between physiology and consciousness. Touching a marma point change the body's biochemistry and can unfold radical, biochemical change in one's make up. Stimulation of these inner pharmacy pathways signals the body to produce exactly what it needs, including hormones and neurochemicals that heal the body, mind and consciousness^[14].

Unique features and advantages of this Marma therapy include –

1. Low cost of treatment
2. Medicine- less treatment possible
3. Non invasive technique
4. Can also be used in conjunction with other medical treatment- allopathy, Ayurveda, siddha, unani, homeopathy.
5. Almost no adverse effects or side effects when done properly.
6. Rapid action, less time consuming and easy to use.

Marma Chikitsa can be used in the following ways –

1. To treat the diseases of nerves and brain.
2. In traumatic neurological or neuro- surgical lesions, traumatic paraplegia, hemiplegia and monoplegia.
3. To treat Respiratory obstructions.
4. To treat Heart diseases and Blood pressure.
5. In Orthopaedic lesions, especially prolapsed inter-vertebral disc etc.
6. To reduce the pain of nerves, muscles, ligaments, bones and joints.
7. To reduce Mental stress.
8. To produce anaesthesia during any surgical interference.

9. To improve the function of body organs by achieving homeostasis.
10. To activate the mal- developed or deformed body parts or musculature etc.

Technique of marma therapy –

1. **Identification** – Identification of each marma is very important for optimum result and should be done under expert guidance only.
2. **Stimulation** – 3 to 4 times a day, each marma for 20 to 25 times in one setting.
3. **Rhythm** – As our respiration, approx 18 times per mint.
4. **Position** – It can be done both in sitting and supine position, however for optimum results various Asanas and postures have been described in various texts.
5. **Treatment duration** – Duration of therapy depends on various factors viz. Severity, duration of disease, cause of the pain.

The art and technique of stimulation varies for each of the Marma. Care has to be taken for adequate pressure application only to avoid complication and initially should be done under expert guidance only^[14].

CONCLUSSION

When the knowledge of Marma is combined with an ability to both perceive and direct the flow of Prana, Marma Chikitsa becomes a powerful tool for influencing the healing of every known condition. Till date Marma therapy is not well known or practiced except by a few practitioners in India.

Marma therapy is an important tool of both disease prevention and disease treatment in ayurveda. It can be used to balance Doshas to increase Agni (the digestive fire), for detoxification (reduce Ama), as well as to promote energy (Vajikaran) and aid in rejuvenation (Rasayan). It can be part of special clinical methods (like Panchakarma) but also part of self care and our daily health regimen.

Major Marma points correspond to the seven chakras, or energy centres of the body, while minor points radiate out along the thorax, abdomen, head, neck and limbs.

The concept of acupressure and Marma Therapy is too much similar. The mechanism of action of marma therapy can be correlated with acupressure mechanism in terms of srotas and prana & vyana vata.

The Chinese believe that energy flows through the human body continuously. This is a vital motivating force, which burns like a fuel all through one's life. It is called qi or chi or vital energy. Indian philosophers who share this idea know it as Prana. Indian yogis call it Prana wayu which is deeply described in ayurveda and our Vedas. The principle of prana is quite similar to the traditional Chinese concept of Qi or chi or the energy of

life. If the flow of qi ceases, it is death, same concept belongs to Prana vayu.

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