



Review Article

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Pain Management through Para-surgical Procedures in Ayurveda: A Review

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Abstract

Ayurveda described several approaches for pain management including para-surgical measures which includes *Agnikarma*, *Jalaukavacharana*, *Siravedham* and *Viddhakarma*, etc. *Agnikarma* advocated in Ayurveda for effective pain relief. *Agnikarma* ensures that the disease doesn't reoccur post-treatment. *Viddhakarma* involves a sterile process of piercing specific points using specialized hollow needles, taking into account the anatomy of vital points. *Marma* therapy entails the systematic examination of vital points across the human body. *Jalaukavacharana* is utilized in *Raktmokshana*, as a para-surgical practice in the surgical stream of Ayurveda, to treat a range of painful conditions. *Siravedham* is a para-surgical technique particularly suitable for conditions with poor venous drainage. It promptly alleviates symptoms, including pain, associated with various diseases such as *Gridhrasi* and *Vatarakta*, etc.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Para-surgical, *Agnikarma*, *Jalaukavacharana*, *Siravedham*.

INTRODUCTION

Pain is an intricate sensory and emotional encounter linked to term *Vedana* in Ayurveda. Its impact extends beyond physical discomfort, infiltrating cognitive faculties such as attention control, memory, mental flexibility, troubleshooting and the speed of information processing. Prolonged exposure to chronic pain can even lead to conditions like depression, anxiety and in severe cases, mortality. Regardless of its intensity, whether mild, moderate, or severe, pain significantly disrupts a person's daily activities. It can be viewed as a symptom indicating an underlying disease or as a complication of other health issues. Often, pain serves as a primary symptom in various medical conditions, prompting individuals to seek medical consultation. Based on intensity *Shoola* (pain) can be of three types; *Teevra*, *Madhya* and *Mruda Shoola* [1-3].

Modern medical science offers many therapeutic approaches including uses of pain killers pills or pharmacological approaches, however these approaches suffers some drawback including drowsiness, feeling dizzy, heartburn, indigestion and constipation, etc. Therefore para-surgical approaches can be recommended for pain management which overcomes disadvantages of painkiller medicines.

Shalya Tantra indeed plays a vital role in Ayurveda, focusing on the surgical and non-surgical management of various diseases and conditions. Para-surgical approaches of *Shalya Tantra* also provide relief in the pain symptom. Ayurveda's approach to pain management includes various therapies encompassing a wide array of therapeutic practices such as; *Snehan*, *Agnikarma*, *Jalaukavacharan*, *Vedhankarma* and *Lepankarma*, etc. Amongst them para-surgical approaches play vital role in the management of pain [2-4]. These para-surgical approaches of pain management are depicted in Figure 1.

1. *Kshara Sutra*:

It is a specialized technique used to manage conditions such as fistula and piles along with other anal disorders. The procedure involves using a medicated thread made from natural herbs and alkaline compounds, which aids in the healing of affected tissues and drugs used in this therapy also offers analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties.

2. *Bandaging*:

In *Shalya Tantra*, proper wound management is crucial for effective healing. Various bandages and

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dressings are applied to wounds and injuries to facilitate the healing process and prevent infections.



Figure 1: Ayurveda para-surgical approaches for pain management

3. Agnikarma:

Ayurveda offers diverse methods to manage pain effectively. One of these methods is *Agnikarma*, an advanced para-surgical technique that involves transmitting actual heat into the affected tissues to alleviate pain. *Agnikarma* works by pacifying the *Vata* and *Kapha doshas*, eliminating *Srotovarodha*, enhancing the flow of blood to the treated area, and promoting the digestion of *Ama* by increasing *Dhatwagni*. These combined actions help to neutralize the disease process and provide relief in various musculoskeletal and arthritic conditions including severe pain. The process of *Agnikarma* involves creating an epidermal burn using a red hot *Panchdhatu Shalaka*, for joint pain, spondylosis, sciatica and frozen shoulder. Similarly, for heel pain, the *Mruttika Shalaka* is mainly recommended. *Agni karma*, known for its *Ushna* properties, counteracts the qualities of vitiated *Doshas*, thereby effectively treating various *Vataja* and *Kaphaja* disorders. *Agni karma*, functioning as an *Ushna chikitsa*, offers immediate relief from pain. Furthermore, the heightened local metabolic activity during *Agni karma* leads to the elimination of waste products, which in turn facilitates the normalization of blood circulation, ultimately contributing to the reduction in the intensity of pain. *Agnikarma* cauterize specific points on the body to stimulate the body's natural healing processes and alleviate inflammation in the affected area [4-6].

4. Raktamokshan:

This technique involves the controlled removal of a small amount of blood from the body to eliminate impurities and toxins, promoting the purification of the circulatory system. It is believed to help in the management of various diseases caused by impure blood. Two common techniques of *Raktamokshan* are *Jalaukavacharan* and *Viddha karma*.

I. *Jalaukavacharan* (Leech therapy):

Leeches are used to draw out impure blood from the body. This method is particularly beneficial for conditions such as painful cracked heels or palms due to excessive dryness, headaches, skin ailments and swelling in joints. Leech therapy proves effective in cases where the source of pain lies within the blood tissue. The removal of impure blood by leeches often leads to the immediate disappearance of pain. The saliva of leeches contains analgesic and anti-inflammatory agents which providing relief from pain. Medicinal leech saliva comprises several key component; "Bdelins" which serve as anti-inflammatory agents, inhibiting trypsin. The saliva also contains a substance similar to histamine and acetylcholine, which act as vasodilators.

II. *Viddha karma*:

This procedure involves a small puncture made using a needle. Knowledge of vital and symptom-related points is crucial for this technique. *Viddha karma* serves multiple purposes, especially in addressing ailments like headaches, tonsillitis, renal colic, nerve-related pain, radiated pain and joint discomfort [6-9].

5. Marma Chikitsa:

It is an effective, non-invasive and convenient method of holistic healing. It aligns with the concept of *Marma* in Ayurveda, *Chakras* in Yoga, and

the meridian system in Acupressure or Acupuncture. *Marma* points correspond to organs, nerves, and bodily systems. By stimulating these points through techniques such as *Mardana*, *Raktamokshan* and *Agni karma* the *Marma* points can be directed to remove blockages and promote energy flow. This results in a balanced state of well-being for the body, mind, and spirit. By eliminating obstructions, even in distantly related areas, and promoting the flow of energy, *Marma Chikitsa* fosters a state of well-being and relieves various conditions associated with pain. *Marma Chikitsa* has shown potential in addressing a range of pathological conditions, including muscular pain, respiratory blockages, disorders of the nervous system, joint discomfort, headaches, migraines, paralysis and spondylosis, etc [2-4].

6. Cupping Therapy:

Cupping therapy is an ancient method of bloodletting, has gained widespread popularity. This has demonstrated notable efficacy in managing various degrees of regional pain. In Ayurveda, it is described as *Alabu*, primarily indicated for *Kapha-Vata dosha* and *Avaghadatarau dushta rakta*. It specifically targets pain characterized by stiffness *Sthamba*, *Grathita*, *Supta* and *Chimchimayana*. This therapy works by extracting blood from the vascular system and the surrounding tissue, thereby eliminating inflammatory cytokines, leading to reduced pain sensation. It also promotes dilation of topical capillaries, augments dermal blood flow and activates the immune system, ultimately inducing relaxation and comfort in the musculoskeletal system. By alleviating the dull aching pain associated with muscle spindle tightness, this therapy enhances blood circulation, eliminates harmful substances and improves microcirculation, thereby offers benefits of pain relief. The localized process of wet cupping involves multiple pricks in the targeted area, creating an inhibitory mechanism that suppresses the sensation of pain, attributed to the diffused noxious inhibitory control mechanism. Furthermore, the act of bloodletting triggers the body's production of endogenous opioids, contributing to the effective management of pain [9-11].

CONCLUSION

Agnikarma, commonly recommended for *Vata* and *Kapha* related ailments, serves as a potent pain management procedure by interrupting the pain pathways. Bloodletting, on the other hand, alleviates pain by eliminating pain-causing agents and restoring balance to the aggravated *Doshas*. *Kshara Sutra* used for the treatment of anal disorders, this therapy aids in the healing of affected tissues, and the therapeutic drugs utilized in this procedure possess analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties. Various bandages and dressings are employed to facilitate the healing process and reducing pain sensation. *Viddha karma* helps in the alleviation of ailments such as headaches, nerve pain, radiated pain, joint discomfort and tonsillitis. Collectively, these interventions yield remarkable results and offers rapid relief from the discomfort and pain sensation.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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