



SCOPE OF RESEARCH IN PAIN MANAGEMENT THROUGH PANCHAKARMA

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ABSTRACT

Background: Pain is the most common clinical presentation in every, day to day OPD's and IPD's. Globally, it has been estimated that 1 in 5 adults suffer from pain and that another 1 in 10 adults are diagnosed with chronic pain each year^[1]. Panchakarma procedures form the back bone of samsodhana therapy (purification) in Ayurveda. The complete spectrum of Panchakarma include clinically well potent purvakarma and paschaat karma procedures also which is very promising as far as pain management is concerned.

Aim: The present article aims at exploring the scope of research in management of pain through panchakarma procedures.

Review results: Pain management strategy through Panchakarma therapy has to be designed and standardized on scientific lines which should be systematic, practical and cost-effective.

Discussion : Panchakarma forms as an effective pain management strategy whether it is acute or chronic in nature. The main lacuna in this area is the lack of sufficient clinical documentations and trials.

Conclusion: The present article explores the scope of Panchakarma to explore and develop it as an effective pain management strategy.

KEYWORDS : *Panchakarma*, Pain management, Research

Introduction:

Pain has now become the most common clinical presentation and global health problem. Globally, it has been estimated that 1 in 5 adults suffer from pain and that another 1 in 10 adults are diagnosed with chronic pain each year^[1]. Evolving a strategy for pain will not only reduce the health burden of the society, but also prevent many pain sequel like decreased working efficiency, sickness absenteeism, disrupted psychologic, financial and social equilibrium. The challenge of formulating a potent weapon for pain lies in the fact that it has got multiple causes and a very wide range of clinical presentation.

Panchakarma includes the penta – level process of bio-purification mechanism with five pradhana karma (main procedure) and very effective purva karma (pre-procedure) and paschath karma (post-procedure). In the present article, Panchakarma is viewed as an umbrella term which include all the procedures which can be utilized in one or other way to tackle the stigma of pain.

The procedures can be utilized in two angles – as a powerful purificatory mechanism which remove all the accumulated cellular toxins (“aama”)^[2] deposited in micro and macro cellular channels (“srothas”)^[3] there by making the body elements free from toxins and preventing the initiation of any pathological process contributing to disease spectrum and pain. On the other side, these procedures, by the combined procedural effect and drug effect reverse al-ready initiated pathological process and pain.

1. Exploring purva karma procedures as a pain management tool:

The first step needed while formulating a panchakarma protocol is eliminating these cellular toxins by drawing them into alimentary canal through a process called “abhishyandana” (liquefaction) of cellular toxins which adhere into srothas (channels) due to pichilatwa (stickiness) in their character^[4]. This can be possible by internal administration of ghee/ oil/fat which is medicated or non-medicated in a scientifically designed dose schedule for 7-9 days duration. This process is called sodhananga snehapaana (consumption of ghee/oil/ fat for purification). This process with purification therapy like vama (vomiting therapy) or virechana (purgation) leads to ultimate reduction of pain.

Snehapana is also possible in a samana pattern (subsidence) by

giving medicated sneha suitable for disease condition without much increase in dose since it aim not for purification or elimination, but , mere subsidence of pathology and related pain. It is possible only for those pathologies in which not much purification is required, that is, not much accumulation of cellular toxins had occur. As per traditional medicine practice and classical literature, a large spectrum of medicated sneha are used for subsidence of different variety of pain. Guggulu thiktaka ghee for different presentations of pain in vatarakta (rheumatoid arthritis), mahathiktaka ghee in pain presented in kushta (skin diseases including psoriasis), kottamchukkadi taila for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS), Dhanwantharam ghee in diabetic patients with osteoarthritis pain, shad pala ghee in amavata (pain in rheumatic fever), eranda taila in acute low back pain etc.

Third option in purvakarma is a glossary of sneha sweda including pinda sweda (potalis) and abhyanga with ushma sweda (oil massage with steam). These treatment modalities include scientific external manipulation along with medicinal application. So, the working principle includes both procedure effect and drug effect. Different variety of pinda sweda are specifically indicated like, sarshapa pinda sweda for calcaneal spur pain, nirgundi patra pinda sweda for severe low back pain etc. Valuka sweda proved to be useful in severe pain in amavata with swelling, jambeera pinda sweda, haridra pinda sweda, anda pinda sweda, shashtika pinda sweda has wide range of action in different stages of disease presenting with pain. The procedure called kayaseka in which warm oil is poured from a specific height through a cloth dipped in specific sneha at indicated temperature is used to relieve pain associated with stiffness.

In all the above procedures, simultaneous synchronous movement is required with same pressure and same speed. It is believed that mechanical hydrostatic pressure exerted during the procedure will lead to splanchnic pooling of blood and ultimately lead to dilution of accumulated cellular toxins, thereby breaking of pain pathology. Different kinds of swedana procedure leads imparting of a specific temperature co-efficient into the body. Heat imparted into the body will provide vaso- dialatation which will increase blood flow into the muscles and surrounding tissue. It will increase muscle flexibility and soothe pain-irritated nerve endings and relax painful knots. Nadi sweda with vataghna patra and dhanyamla is documented to have effective in acute para-spinal muscle spasm^[5].

2. Exploring pradhana karma procedures as a pain management tool:

Pradhana karma includes penta level process of purification therapy. The efficacy of pradhana karma depends on the level of perfection with which purva karma has been conducted.

Vamana karma:

Vamana karma is not only indicated for disorders of kapha involvement above chest, but also, in neuro-muscular disorders, like severe pain due to lumbar Intervertebral disc prolapse (Grdhrasi) by Acarya Caraka^[6]. Vamana karma removes the cellular wastes also the surrounding inflammatory materials along the compressed sciatic nerve endings which causes pain. By removing the inflammatory exudates, the nerve entrapped became free, thereby leading to decrease of pain.

Virechana Karma :

Virechana was a strong management tool for pain used by traditional vaidyas. Nirgundi swarasa equally mixed with eranda taila is typically indicated in texts like Cikitsa manjari for acute exacerbation of low back pain^[6].

Niruha karma and anuvasana:

The action of vasti karma is regarded as whole body, from head to foot^[7]. The unique action of basti is attributed to gut-brain axis which explains there is a bi-directional communication between enteric and central nervous system. Basti has got tremendous action on enteric micro-biota layer, thereby influencing the gradation of neuro-transmitters and limbic system^[8].

Basti yoga especially erandamuladi lekhana vasti has immense action on first stages of sciatica. Vaitharana vasti is typically used to relieve pain in initial stages of amavata. Payasyadi vasti is used to relieve redness and swelling in vatarakta.

Basti packages are decided as per the gravity of dosha dushti like karma vasti, kala vasti or yoga vasti in which niruha and anuvasana are placed alternatively.

So, many a time the pain relieving action of basti therapy should be attributed to combined excretory and absorptive action of both rather than alone.

Nasya karma:

Nasya karma many a time regarded as a procedure with local excretory action alone. But, it is believed that, nasya karma is having direct action on brain, because of the patent naso-brain pathway. The radiating pain of cervical spondylosis is proved to be significantly cured by nasya karma with karpasasthyadi taila^[9]. In highly degenerative stages of cervical spondylosis, rasa taila which contain ajamamsa is used for nasya karma. In head ache associated with acute exacerbation of chronic sinusitis, swarasa nasya with thulasi swarasa with honey and saindhava are indicated^[10].

Pain management through allied procedures:

Dhaara:

Dhaara is of many types, differ in action according to the substance used for dhaara. Dhanyamla dhaara is used for relieving pain and swelling in amavata. Dasamula ksheera dhaara is specifically indicated in sudden relief of pain in redness and swelling in vatarakta^[11]. Kayaseka is also a dhaara, which is coming under sneha sweda used in pain with stiffness.

Lepana :

Lepana is an allied procedure having high degree of efficacy especially in pain with swelling.

Kottanchukkadi churna preparation is widely used for lepana in pain associated with kapha swelling and jadamayadi lepa churna in swelling associated with pitta.

Upanaha:

Upanaha is regarded as a type of ekanga sweda (local sudation), very much effective in pain associated with swelling. Different gana (group of medicine) is indicated in different dosha predominance. Salvana upanaha^[12] is typically indicated by Acarya Susruta for high degree of degenerative pain which is normally caused by vaata.

Pichu :

Pichu is nothing other than retaining of particular sneha(oil) in the area for subsidence of pain caused by vata in that region.

Discussion :

Panchakarma procedures including all purva karma and allied procedures can act as a powerful tool for management of both acute and chronic pain. It not only brings purification upto cellular level, but also, scientifically manipulating body parts by imparting pressure, temperature and movements, thereby acting through a cascade of mechanism for the relief of pain. The main lacuna in this area is the lack of sufficient clinical documentations and trials.

Conclusion :

It is now very high time to do urgent researches on pain management through panchakarma procedures and to establish a new pain management strategy in scientific lines through trials and clinical documentation.

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