



A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH IN MANAGING SUICIDAL IDEATION AND DEPRESSION: A CASE REPORT

Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT

Background: Depression with suicidal ideation is a major psychiatric emergency requiring comprehensive management. This case study presents a multidisciplinary and integrative approach incorporating Ayurvedic and modern psychological principles in managing a 29-year-old male with major depressive disorder and suicidal ideation. **Case Presentation:** The patient presented with persistent sadness, suicidal ideation, anxiety, guilt, and social withdrawal, worsened over a year. His history revealed childhood trauma, relationship stress, substance use, and psychosocial triggers. Ayurvedic diagnosis indicated kaphaja unmada with vatapitta anubandha, and the patient exhibited features like low mood, psychomotor retardation, and self-neglect. **Management:** A holistic Ayurvedic treatment protocol was administered for 35 days, including snehapana, nasya, virechana, yogavasti, abhyanga, swedana, herbal medications, yoga, pranayama, satvavajaya chikitsa, and cognitive behavioral therapy. Significant improvement was recorded on the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAM-D), with scores reducing from 20 to 11 post-treatment. **Conclusion:** The case demonstrates the efficacy of a multidisciplinary approach combining traditional Ayurvedic therapies and modern psychotherapeutic techniques in managing depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation. Further controlled studies are warranted to validate these findings.

KEYWORDS

Depression, Suicidal ideation, Ayurveda, Kaphaja unmada

INTRODUCTION

Depression is a widespread chronic medical illness that can affect thoughts mood and physical health¹. According to world health organization, there are an estimated 280 million people suffer from depression globally affecting approximately 5%-6% of people worldwide each year². About 11%-15% of people suffer for a life time. In the Ayurvedic literature, kaphaja unmada is closely similar to depression. It comprises a condition where social withdrawal, reduced self-care, reduced intake of food, sitting idly, reduced psychomotor activity/movement is observed.

Mental health disorders are multi-factorial in origin, often demanding a biopsychosocial and holistic management strategy. Major depressive disorder (MDD) with suicidal ideation constitutes a serious psychiatric emergency. Ayurveda, the traditional Indian system of medicine, conceptualizes mental illnesses such as kaphaja unmada as disturbances in manasika doshas and srotas. The management is through general line of treatment explained for manasika vikara, i.e. daivavyapasraya, yuktivyapasraya and satvavajaya. Dhi, dhairya, and atmadi vigyana are indicated for the patients afflicted with predominant features of bhaya, dukha, and kopa³. This case illustrates how integrative psychiatric care using Ayurvedic principles can be employed effectively in managing depressive episodes with suicidal ideation.

CLINICAL PRESENTATION WITH HISTORY

A 29-year-old man approached GARIM IP, presenting with symptoms of Variations in mood, Suicidal ideations and wishes, generalized weakness of body, negative thoughts, Increased fear and anxiety, Guilt feeling, hopelessness, helplessness, reduced interest in doing work since 1 year aggravated since 5 months. According to informant he had increased fear and anxiety, increased tension, Guilt feeling, Sitting alone since 5 months.

The patient, second child of non-consanguineous parents, was born full-term by normal delivery with normal development. Academically good, silent and ambivert, he had early interest in reading. He first consumed alcohol in 5th standard from home, tried beedi once, and used alcohol occasionally during school. His father's alcoholism and parental conflicts were traumatic. He completed M. Com and B.Ed; during college he developed anxiety with intrusive disaster-related thoughts, with occasional alcohol and brief tobacco/cannabis use. He worked as a Swiggy delivery boy and later as a teacher in Uttar Pradesh, where a possessive relationship and severe low back pain led to resignation. After treatment, he returned to delivery work and was diagnosed with hypothyroidism. In late 2023, while teaching in Tamil

Nadu, he immersed in psychology and spirituality, faced relationship conflicts, financial loss of ₹3 lakh via WhatsApp scam, and resumed daily alcohol (1–2 pegs).

By January 2025, he developed depressive symptoms with escalating suicidal ideation without attempts. His relationship conflicts worsened by February and ended in breakup. Despite brief counselling, homeopathic treatment, and a short, poorly tolerated allopathic trial, his condition deteriorated further. He then consulted an Ayurvedic psychiatrist for two weeks and was referred to GARIM IP for further management.

Family History

First cousin is under treatment for depression

Treatment History (SINCE 2023)

Thyronorm 100mg 1-0-0

Clinical Findings

On physical examination, the patient was moderately built, pulse – 85/min, heart rate – 88/min, BP- 100/70 mm of hg, respiratory rate – 14/min.

MENTAL STATUS EXAMINATION

The patient was neatly dressed, cooperative, with good eye contact and coherent, normally paced speech. Mood was sad with congruent affect. Thoughts were continuous but not goal directed, marked by hopelessness, helplessness, guilt, ruminations about his condition, death wishes and suicidal ideation. He was fully oriented, with intact cognition, grade-5 insight, preserved judgment, and suicidal impulsivity.

AYURVEDIC MENTAL STATUS EXAMINATION

Ashtavibhrama refers to distortions in cognition, behavior, and emotions, affecting various mental faculties. Manovibhrama led to increased negative thoughts, death wishes, failed to control his thoughts, suicidal ideations. No vibhrama noted in domains of Budhi, Smriti, Samjna jnana. Bhakti vibhrama present with reduced interest in job. Seela Vibhrama manifested as changes in behavior, crying spells. Chesta vibhrama present like to sit alone. Achara Vibhrama noted when he has reduced interest in personal care.

DASAVIDHAPAREEKSHA

The patient has Kapha Vata prakruti, with avara satwa bala, sarvarasa satmya and vishamagni. Aharasakthi and jaranasakthi was found to be Madhyama, with madhyama roga bala and rogi bala. Main doshas

involved in him was kapha and vata and the dathu was rasadhathu.

Diagnostic Assessment

The patient has diagnosed as depression and the symptoms can be related to kaphaja unmada lakshana. So, in Ayurveda the case was considered as kaphaja unmada with vatapitta anubhanda.

Table 1: Treatment Procedure with Duration

Treatment	Days	Medicine	Rationale	Observations
Nasyam	3	Vilwadi gulika	Kapha vata samana, Srothosodhana	Reduction in sad mood
Siro kashaya dhara	2	Purana dhatri+usheera+guduchi		Heaviness over head
Rookshana	2	Gandharvahasthadi kashayam 90ml bd Shaddharanam gulika 1-0-1		Heaviness reduced, increased appetite
Snehapanam	7	Panchagavya grutham 30ml-250ml	Snehana , kapha vata hara	Initially fluctuations in mood was present later mood improved, reduced negative thoughts
Abyangam + ushmasweda	2	Dhanwantharam taila	Dosha vilayana	Improvement in irritability and anger, improvement in fatigue
virechana	1	Avipathy choorna 30gm with luke warm water	Srotovisudhi, indriya suddhi, pittahara	Appetite normal, sleep improved, improvement in social mingling
Samsarjana krama	1		Deepana pachana	Patient comfortable
yogavasthi	8	Snehavasti (5 days) with panchagavya ghrita Kashayavasti (3 days)- erandamooladi	Manobhuddhi prasadanam, indriya prasadana	Patient comfortable
Kalka nasya	7	Vilwadi gulika	Kapha vata samana, Srothosodhana	Patient became active, started to mingle more
Doopana	Daily	Hingu, sarshapa, brahmi, maricha, siresha		Improvement in mood
Yoga	Daily	Swasthikasana, thadasana, padahastasana, veerabhadrasana, janusheershasana, savasana	Helps in reducing the level of cortisol which is related to brain changes in the hippocampus, prefrontal cortex and amygdale of depressive patients.	Feels relaxed
Pranayama	Daily	Nadishuddhi pranayama, bhramari, seethkari, chandrabhedana, bhastrika	Pranayama induces the body relaxation response and helps in lowering the cortisol level.	Feels relaxed
Psychotherapy	Daily	CBT, Psycho education		Reduced negative thoughts
Satvavachaya	Daily	Counseling to boost confidence and for self-realization	Helps to improve the intellect which helps in reducing negative thoughts and building positive attitude towards life.	Reduced negative thoughts, positive attitude towards life

FOLLOW UP AND ASSESSMENT

The patient undergone treatment from the inpatient department of GARIMH, Kottakkal for a period of 35 days. After treatment the following follow up medicines were given for one month. Assessment was done before and after treatment using Hamilton depression rating scale (HAMD)

1. Varavishaladi kasayam -15 ml ksm + 45 ml luke warm water BD, B/F
2. Kalyanaka grutha – 2 tsp, HS
3. Manasa mitra vatakam 1-0-1 A/F

RESULT

After the course of treatment, it was noticed that patient got 50% relief in his symptoms. Thoughts reduced, fear and anxiety reduced.

Table 2: Hamilton Depression Rating Scale

Date	Score
13/05/2025	20 (Before treatment)
16/06/2025	11 (After treatment)

DISCUSSION

The patient is presented with kaphaja unmada lakshanas like rahaskamadha, shouchadwesa, annana abhilaksha, stanam ekadesam, alpasa cankramana. paittika lakshanas like amarsha, krodha. vataja lakshanas like rodhana, parooksha vak, karkasa vak. Based on these, the diagnosis was kaphaja unmada with vatapitta anubhanda.

Internally gandharvahasthadi kashaya was administered for amapachana and agni deepana. Aswagandha choorna along with vacha and yashti were given. Aswagandha enhances brain function, memory, and stress resilience. Yashtimadhu is Vata Pitta shamaka, with cerebroprotective and memory-enhancing properties. Vacha has katu,

MANAGEMENT

Internal Medications

1. Yashti¹ + vacha + Aswagandha⁵ ½ tsp BD after food
2. Gandharvahasthadi kashayam⁶ -15 ml ksm + 45 ml luke warm water BD, B/F
3. Kalyanaka grutha⁷ + panchagavya grutha – 2 tsp, HS
4. Manasa mitra vatakam⁸ 1-0-1 A/F

tikta rasa, ushna veerya, is pachana, medya and unmadahara. Kalyanaka ghruta along with panchagavya gritha was given at night which has a property of laghu, ushna, tiktsna, and kaphahara. It is also very effective in thought abnormalities. Manasamitra vataka helps to improve sleep and manodoshara⁹.

Initially nasyam with vilwadi gulika was done. Since the patient shows helplessness, hopelessness, reduced mingling and increased kapha lakshana. Vilwadigulika is the drug predominantly of katu, tikta rasa, katu vipaka, ushna virya, laghu, ruksha guna and kapha vata samana in action¹⁰. nasa is the entrance of siras¹¹. Nasya is medicine that delivered through the nose then it enters in to the brain, helps to eliminate the morbid dosa. Preceded by siro-kashayadhara with puranadhatri, usheeram and guduchi. In shirodhara, prolonged and continuous pouring of liquid on forehead results in nervous stimulation and tranquilizing effect¹². Shirodhara normalizes the two important neurotransmitters serotonin and norepinephrine, which regulates a wide variety of neuro-psychological processes along with sleep¹³. After shirodhara he started complaining of heaviness over head along with headache so dhara stopped. Rookshana was done with gandharvahasthadi kashayam, shaddharanam gulika as it is having amahara and kaphavata hara properties. Rookshana was done prior to snehapanam to maximize its effects. Snehanam is done with panchagavya gritham. The drug is kapha vatahara¹⁴ and cleans the channels in the body which brings clarity to the mind and its function. Blood-Brain Barrier (BBB) has a lipophilic molecular structure. This makes the lipids and lipid-soluble drugs absorb easily through BBB. Hence, the drugs which are given in the form of Ghee can quickly be absorbed through this barrier. Traditionally prepared Ghee contains docosahexaenoic acid, an omega-3 long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acid, that has shown a positive outcome in cognitive decline¹⁵. Ghee is known to have antioxidant property, which acts upon the degenerative

brain cells and helps to repair them¹⁶. Abhyanga and ushma sveda were done to liquefy doshas for elimination. Virechana was done with avipathy choornam (20gm), as the prime pittahara therapy, promotes indriya prasada, budhi prasada, srotosudhi, agnivridhi and vata anulomana¹⁷. Poor diet, stress, lack of exercise, and improper sleep may alter microbial dysbiosis in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract resulting in causing depression¹⁸. Various neuropeptides and hormones of the gut are found in the brain^{19,20}. Virechana might enhance the amount of these neuropeptides by cleansing the GI tract. As a result, the quantity of neuropeptides might rise that in turn might have affected the brain and modify its various functions.

Post virechana yogavasti was done. Snehavasti done with panchagavya gritam. Kashaya vasti done erandamooladi kashayam. Vasti is the main treatment of vata which is considered as controller of mind. Sodhana therapy can modulate gut-brain axis. Gut microbiota plays a potential role in modulating psychological stress via the vagus nerve. Gut microbiota stimulates the stress response and the activity of the corticosterone pathway²¹. Kalkanasya done with vilwadi gulika. The drug is predominantly of katu, tikta rasa, katu vipaka, ushna virya, laghu, ruksha guna and kapha vata samana in action. By virtue of its teekshna guna and ushna virya, vilwadi gulika became capable of traversing through the srotas and is having the ability to attenuate kapha and also normalize vata and so it is found effective in managing depression. Dhupana was given daily, which act as a stimulant and makes it useful when combined with medications that have srotosodhana effects.

Yoga and Pranayama help in reducing the levels of cortisol²². Increased cortisol is related to brain changes in the hippocampus, prefrontal cortex, and amygdala which is present in depressive patients^{23,24}. The added effect of Satvavajaya chikitsa that is Dhi chikitsa, Dhairya chikitsa and Atma vijnana, helps in assurance and replacement of emotions, regulation of thought process, reframing of proper ideas for proper guidance and advice for taking right decisions which finally results in controlling of Manas from Ahita artha²⁵.

CONCLUSION

The case was diagnosed with kaphaja unmada with vatapitta anubhanda. A combined approach of Ayurvedic therapeutic approaches including siro-kashaya dhara, rookshana, snehapan, abyanga, ushma sweda, virechana, yogavasti and kalkanasya along with yoga, pranayama, satvavajaya, psychotherapy is found to be effective in reducing the symptoms. Further researches are needed in order to validate and generalise these findings.

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