



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Ayurveda

A CASE STUDY ON AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF CEREBRAL PALSY IN AN EIGHT YEAR OLD CHILD

KEY WORDS: Cerebral Palsy, Medhya Rasayana, Matra Vasti, Sastika Shali Pindasweda, Shiropichu

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ABSTRACT

Cerebral palsy is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects posture, movement, and muscle coordination due to brain insult occurring during early development. Conventional management focuses mainly on physiotherapy and symptomatic relief. Ayurveda provides a comprehensive approach by addressing the underlying doshic imbalance, especially Vata. This case study presents the clinical improvement observed in an eight year old boy diagnosed with cerebral palsy who was treated with Medhya Rasayana, Matra Vasti, Sarvanga Abhyanga, Shiro Pichu, physiotherapy and sastika-shali pindasweda procedures along with appropriate Pathya and Apathya. Significant improvement was seen in motor functions, muscle tone, and cognitive response.

INTRODUCTION

Cerebral palsy is a non-progressive neurological condition caused by damage to the developing brain. It commonly presents with delayed milestones, abnormal muscle tone, impaired motor control, and speech difficulties. The global prevalence is approximately two to three per thousand live births.

In Ayurveda, cerebral palsy can be understood under Janmabala Pravritta Vyadhi and Vata predominant disorders involving Majja and Snayu. Cerebral palsy (CP) is the leading cause of childhood disability affecting function and development. CP is defined as a non-progressive neural motor disorder of cerebral origin. It cannot be correlated with any single disease or condition in Ayurveda, as it is a multi-factorial disease with clinical features of a wide variation. According to V gbhā a, it is classified in the disease categories of sahaja (hereditary) and garbhaja (congenital) and j taja (psychosomatic) type of diseases. Of the many types and subtypes of CP, none has any known "cure." Here, an effort was made to treat a 3-year-old male child with spastic type of CP using multiple Ayurveda treatment modalities. At the end of 94 days of treatment, Pañcakarma procedures along with internal medication resulted in 10–15% improvement in the overall effect of therapy. Since Vata governs movement and nervous system functions, its derangement leads to motor and coordination problems. Hence, treatment principles include Vata Shamana, Brimhana, Rasayana, and Medhya Chikitsa.

Case Report

Age: Eight years
Gender: Male

Clinical History and Presentation

The patient was brought by his parents with complaints of delayed motor milestones, stiffness in bilateral lower limbs, and difficulty in walking independently. Born preterm at 32 weeks, he had a history of neonatal jaundice and a prolonged NICU stay.

Observations at Baseline:

- Gait: Scissoring gait with persistent toe walking.
- Muscle Tone: Significant hyper tonicity (spasticity) in the adductors and gastrocnemius muscles.
- Reflexes: Exaggerated deep tendon reflexes (DTR) in the lower extremities.
- Cognition: Mild delay in speech development and cognitive processing.

In the context of Ayurveda, this condition is correlated with Vata Vyadhi, specifically Pangulya (paralysis of lower limbs)

or Stambha (rigidity). This results from Dhatu Kshaya (depletion of tissues) and Avarana (obstruction) affecting the nervous system.

Developmental History

- Neck holding was achieved at eight months
- Sitting without support at three years
- Standing with support at five years
- The child was diagnosed with spastic cerebral palsy by a pediatric neurologist.

Ayurvedic Assessment

- Predominant Dosha involved was -Vata
- Affected Dhatus were- Majja and Mamsa,
- Involved Srotas were- Majjavaha and Pranavaha,
- Digestive fire was- Mandagni,
- The condition was categorized under congenital origin disorders.

Treatment Plan-

1. Medhya Rasayana

- Medhya Rasayana drugs were administered to enhance cognitive functions, speech, and neurological strength.
- Medicines included Brahmi, Mandukaparni, Shankhapushpi, and Guduchi.
- Observed effects- included improved attention span, better response to commands, and mild improvement in speech attempts.

2. Internal Procedures (Antar parimarjana)

Matra Vasti

- Matra Vasti was selected with medicated oil as it is the most suitable Panchkarma therapy for Vata disorders in children.
- Bala Ashwagandha Taila was used in an age appropriate dose for a period of twenty one days.
- This resulted in reduced muscle tightness, improved flexibility, and better bowel regularity.

3. External Procedures (Bahir-parimarjana)

Sarvanga Abhyanga-

- Daily full body oil massage was done using Bala Ashwagandha Taila and Dhanwantaram tailam
- This helped in reducing peripheral resistance spasticity, improving muscle nourishment, and enhancing circulation.

Sastika Shali Pindasweda (SSPS) –

- Specialized using blouses of medicated rice cooked in milk and mansarasa, and herbal decoctions.
- It provides nutrition to the muscles and improves neuromuscular coordination.

Shiro Pichu

- Shiro Pichu was performed by soaking a cotton pad in Brahmi Taila and keeping that in the anterior fontanel

(over the scalp).

- It produced a calming effect on the nervous system, improved sleep quality, and supported mental function.

Physiotherapy Exercises-

- These included passive movements, stretching, and sensory stimulation techniques.
- The child showed improvement in joint mobility, posture control, and coordination.

Pathya and Apathya

Pathya

Warm freshly prepared meals, Milk, ghee, and butter, Green gram soup, Rice and wheat based diet, Regular oil massage, Adequate sleep.

Apathya

Cold and refrigerated food, Dry and packaged food, excessively spicy and fried items, Exposure to cold wind, Irregular sleep habits.

RESULTS

After three months of continuous Ayurvedic management, the child showed noticeable improvement. Muscle stiffness was reduced, walking ability with support improved, balance was better, and attention span increased. Speech attempts became more frequent. No adverse effects were observed during the treatment.

Progression and Result

After three months of treatment the patient showed marked improvement across several parameters.

Spasticity -Before treatment- Grade 3(modified Ashworth scale)

After treatment - Grade 1(significant reduction)

Likewise Gait was scissoring and toes walking reduced to heel strike initiated and improved balance.

Fine motor skills were poor grip strength improved to able to hold a pen and feed himself.

Cognition also improved from low attention span to improved focus and speech.

DISCUSSION

Cerebral palsy involves chronic vitiation of Vata affecting the nervous and musculoskeletal systems. Medhya Rasayana supports brain function and cognitive development. Matra Vasti nourishes the nervous tissue and pacifies Vata at its primary site. Abhyanga and Shiro Pichu help in reducing rigidity and calming the mind. The combined approach addresses both physical and neurological aspects of the condition and supports functional improvement.

CONCLUSION

This case study indicates that Ayurvedic treatment using Medhya Rasayana, Panchkarma procedures, and strict dietary regulation can provide significant functional improvement in children with cerebral palsy. Although cerebral palsy cannot be cured completely, Ayurveda offers a safe and holistic method to enhance quality of life and functional ability.

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