

PANCHAKARMA THERAPY FOR HEALTH PROMOTION AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT: A NARRATIVE REVIEW

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Article Received on 02 June 2026,

Article Revised on 22 June 2026,

Article Published on 01 July 2026,

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2102667>

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How to cite this Article: *Dr. Akriti Rathore. (2026). Panchakarma Therapy For Health Promotion And Disease Management: A Narrative Review. World Journal of Pharmaceutical Research, 15(13), 517-524. This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

ABSTRACT

Background: Panchakarma is a specialized therapeutic modality of Ayurveda that aims to eliminate accumulated toxins, restore doshic balance, and maintain physiological homeostasis. It has been widely practiced for disease prevention, health promotion, and management of chronic disorders. **Objective:** To review the role of Panchakarma therapy in health promotion and disease management and summarize available scientific evidence regarding its therapeutic applications. **Methods:** A narrative review was conducted using classical Ayurvedic literature, including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, along with published articles indexed in databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Literature related to Panchakarma, detoxification therapies, preventive healthcare, and chronic disease management was reviewed. **Results:** The

reviewed literature indicates that Panchakarma therapies may contribute to improved metabolic function, enhanced immunity, stress reduction, better quality of life, and symptomatic relief in chronic disorders such as osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, obesity, diabetes mellitus, respiratory diseases, neurological disorders, and dermatological conditions. Several studies have reported favorable clinical outcomes; however, methodological limitations remain. **Conclusion:** Panchakarma represents a holistic therapeutic approach with potential benefits in health promotion and disease management. Further well-designed clinical studies are required to establish standardized protocols and strengthen the evidence base.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Panchakarma, Health Promotion, Disease Prevention, Integrative Medicine, Detoxification, Chronic Disease Management.

INTRODUCTION

Health promotion and disease prevention are increasingly recognized as essential components of modern healthcare. The growing prevalence of lifestyle disorders, including obesity, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and mental stress, has led to renewed interest in traditional systems of medicine that emphasize preventive and holistic healthcare.

Ayurveda, one of the world's oldest healthcare systems, focuses on maintaining equilibrium among the three Doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. According to Ayurvedic principles, disturbances in this balance lead to disease. Panchakarma, the principal purification therapy of Ayurveda, is designed to eliminate accumulated toxins (Ama), restore doshic equilibrium, and improve bodily functions.

The concept of Panchakarma extends beyond disease treatment and includes preventive healthcare, rejuvenation, and promotion of physical, mental, and social well-being. Due to increasing global acceptance of complementary and integrative medicine, Panchakarma has gained attention as a potential therapeutic approach for chronic disease management and wellness enhancement.

The present narrative review explores the classical foundations, therapeutic procedures, clinical applications, and contemporary evidence regarding Panchakarma therapy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This narrative review was conducted through an extensive review of classical Ayurvedic texts and contemporary scientific literature.

Sources of Literature

The following sources were consulted

- Charaka Samhita
- Sushruta Samhita
- Ashtanga Hridaya
- PubMed
- Scopus

- Google Scholar
- AYUSH Research Portal

Search Strategy

Keywords used for literature retrieval included

- Panchakarma
- Ayurveda
- Health promotion
- Disease management
- Detoxification
- Basti therapy
- Virechana
- Vamana
- Nasya
- Integrative medicine

Inclusion Criteria

- Articles discussing Panchakarma therapies
- Clinical studies involving Panchakarma interventions
- Review articles on Ayurvedic detoxification
- English-language publications

Exclusion Criteria

- Non-English articles
- Conference abstracts without full text
- Duplicate publications

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Panchakarma

Panchakarma comprises five primary therapeutic procedures aimed at eliminating vitiated Doshas and restoring physiological balance.

Vamana (Therapeutic Emesis)

Vamana is primarily indicated for Kapha-dominant disorders. It removes excess mucus and toxins from the upper gastrointestinal tract and respiratory system.

Virechana (Therapeutic Purgation)

Virechana facilitates elimination of excess Pitta through controlled purgation. It is commonly employed in skin disorders, liver diseases, and gastrointestinal conditions.

Basti (Medicated Enema)

Basti is considered the most effective treatment for Vata disorders. It is extensively utilized in musculoskeletal, neurological, and degenerative diseases.

Nasya (Nasal Administration)

Nasya involves administration of medicated oils or herbal preparations through the nasal route and is beneficial for diseases affecting the head and neck region.

Raktamokshana (Bloodletting)

Raktamokshana is traditionally used for selected dermatological and inflammatory disorders involving vitiated blood.

Panchakarma and Health Promotion**Enhancement of Digestive Function**

Ayurveda emphasizes that optimal digestion is fundamental to health. Panchakarma improves Agni, thereby enhancing digestion, nutrient absorption, and metabolism.

Detoxification and Metabolic Regulation

Accumulation of Ama is considered a key factor in disease pathogenesis. Panchakarma therapies facilitate removal of toxins and restoration of metabolic balance.

Immune Modulation

Studies suggest that Panchakarma may positively influence immune responses through reduction of inflammatory burden and improvement of physiological homeostasis.

Stress Reduction and Psychological Well-being

Therapies such as Abhyanga, Shirodhara, and Nasya have demonstrated beneficial effects on stress, anxiety, and mental fatigue.

Healthy Aging and Rejuvenation

When combined with Rasayana therapy, Panchakarma may contribute to improved vitality, longevity, and quality of life.

Panchakarma in Disease Management

Musculoskeletal Disorders

Clinical evidence supports the use of Panchakarma in

- Osteoarthritis
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Cervical spondylosis
- Lumbar spondylosis

Basti therapy has shown particular effectiveness in reducing pain, stiffness, and functional disability.

Metabolic Disorders

Panchakarma has been investigated in

- Obesity
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus
- Dyslipidemia
- Metabolic syndrome

Improved metabolic parameters and weight reduction have been reported in several studies.

Neurological Disorders

Therapeutic benefits have been observed in

- Stroke rehabilitation
- Parkinson's disease
- Facial palsy
- Sciatica

Respiratory Disorders

Vamana and Nasya therapies are frequently employed for

- Bronchial asthma
- Allergic rhinitis
- Chronic sinusitis

Dermatological Disorders

Panchakarma interventions have demonstrated potential benefits in

- Psoriasis

- Eczema
- Acne vulgaris
- Chronic dermatitis

Scientific Evidence and Emerging Mechanisms

Recent research suggests that Panchakarma may exert therapeutic effects through multiple mechanisms

- Reduction of systemic inflammation
- Neuroendocrine modulation
- Improved autonomic nervous system regulation
- Enhanced circulation and tissue perfusion
- Improved gut health and microbiome balance
- Reduction of oxidative stress

Several observational studies and clinical trials have reported improvements in quality-of-life scores, pain indices, metabolic markers, and psychological well-being.

Limitations of Existing Evidence

Despite encouraging findings, limitations include:

- Small sample sizes
- Lack of standardized Panchakarma protocols
- Limited multicentric trials
- Variable outcome measures
- Inadequate long-term follow-up

Future research should focus on randomized controlled trials and evidence-based standardization.

CONCLUSION

Panchakarma remains one of the most significant therapeutic approaches within Ayurveda for both health promotion and disease management. By addressing the root causes of disease through detoxification, dosha balancing, and rejuvenation, it offers a comprehensive strategy for preventive and therapeutic healthcare. Existing scientific evidence supports its beneficial role in chronic disease management and wellness enhancement. However, robust clinical

research is necessary to validate traditional claims and facilitate broader integration into contemporary healthcare systems.

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