

MANAGEMENT OF DYSMENORRHEA: AN AYURVEDIC LITERARY REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Dysmenorrhea, defined as painful menstruation, is a common gynecological condition with a significant impact on women's health and quality of life. In Ayurveda, it is understood under the concept of Kashtaartava, which is primarily associated with vitiation of Vata dosha, particularly Apana Vata. This literary review aims to explore the classical Ayurvedic understanding of dysmenorrhea, its etiopathogenesis, and the treatment modalities described in various Ayurvedic texts.

KEYWORDS: Dysmenorrhea, Kashtaartava, Apana Vata, Ayurveda, Rajapravartini Vati, Basti.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dysmenorrhea is a prevalent condition affecting approximately 50–90% of menstruating individuals, characterized by lower abdominal pain during menstruation, often accompanied by backache, nausea, vomiting, and psychological symptoms. Modern management largely includes non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and hormonal treatments, which provide symptomatic relief but may cause side effects or recurrence.

In Ayurveda, Kashtaartava is classified under Yonivyapad and is caused primarily due to Vata vitiation, obstructing the normal flow of Artava (menstrual blood). Ayurvedic management focuses not only on symptomatic relief but also on correcting the root cause by balancing doshas and rejuvenating the reproductive system.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a literary review based on.

- Classical Ayurvedic texts: Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Bhavaprakasha Nighantu.
- Nighantu (Ayurvedic Materia Medica) and commentaries.
- Recent articles and published journals (AYU Journal, Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine).
- Online databases like PubMed, AYUSH Research Portal for supportive contemporary research.

The collected data were categorized under etiopathogenesis, clinical features, and therapeutic approaches in both Shodhana (purificatory) and Shamana (palliative) modalities.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Etiopathogenesis (Samprapti)

Vitiated Apana Vata causes Sanga (obstruction), Stambha (stagnation), and Shoola (pain) in Artavavaha Srotas. Improper diet and lifestyle, including excessive dry, cold food, suppression of urges, and emotional stress aggravate Vata.^[1,2]

3.2 Symptoms (Lakshana)

Lower abdominal cramping pain, backache, constipation, mood changes, and fatigue are common. Kashtaartava may present as primary (without organic cause) or secondary dysmenorrhea (due to underlying pathology).^[3]

3.3 Ayurvedic Line of Treatment

Shodhana Chikitsa (Detoxification)

Basti Karma (medicated enema) is the most effective therapy for Apana Vata regulation.^[1,2]

- Niruha Basti: Dashamoola Kwatha
- Anuvasana Basti: Narayana Taila, Ksheerabala Taila

Shamana Chikitsa (Palliative Treatment)

Formulation	Dose	Indication
Rajapravartini Vati	250–500 mg twice daily	Stimulates menstruation, reduces pain ^[5]
Ashokarishta	15–20 ml with equal water	Uterine tonic, Vata-Pitta balancing ^[4]
Kumaryasava	15 ml twice daily	Corrects irregular periods, relieves cramps ^[4]
Dashamoola Kwatha	15–20 ml twice daily	Anti-inflammatory, balances Vata ^[2]
Hingvashtaka Churna	1–2 gm before meals	Relieves bloating and colic pain ^[6]

Local Applications

- Abhyanga with medicated oils like Dhanwantharam Taila
- Swedana for muscle relaxation
- Lepa with herbs like Dashamoola on lower abdomen

4. DISCUSSION

The Ayurvedic understanding of dysmenorrhea as Kashtaartava aligns well with the pathophysiology of Vata disturbance. Treatment emphasizes normalizing the flow of Apana Vata, alleviating obstruction, and nourishing the reproductive tissues (Shukra Dhatu).

Basti therapy is especially highlighted in Sushruta Samhita and Charaka Samhita for its profound effects on Vata regulation and pelvic organ detoxification.^[1,2] Classical formulations like Rajapravartini Vati are time-tested for stimulating menstruation and relieving pain without the side effects associated with NSAIDs.^[5]

The holistic management also includes dietary adjustments and yoga, addressing both the physical and psychological components of the condition.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda offers a multi-faceted approach to the management of dysmenorrhea through its focus on dosha balance, detoxification, and strengthening of reproductive health. With increasing interest in integrative medicine, Ayurvedic modalities can serve as a valuable alternative or complementary option in the treatment of painful menstruation.

Further clinical research and controlled trials are essential to validate the efficacy and safety of these traditional practices for global acceptance.

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