

**SIGNIFICANCE OF PANCHAKARMA THERAPIES IN
DEGENERATIVE DISORDERS****Dr. P. L. Alaekhya^{*1}, Dr. C. R. Pujar², Dr. Jyoti R. Ankalagi³ and Dr. G. S. Hadimani⁴**^{*1}Post Graduate Scholar, ²Professor, ³Associate Professor, ⁴Professor and H.O.D.Department of Panchakarma, Sri Shivayogeeswar Rural Ayurvedic Medical College and
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ABSTRACT

This is an age of occurrence of many new diseases or syndromes. The human system with its natural vitality and strength is able to alleviate the natural variations of the body's humors. These variations are tolerated only to a certain extent and further variation beyond the threshold may lead to manifestation of varied presentations. The term of degeneration cannot be defined very precisely and is often used vaguely. Degeneration is a "retrogressive change. The methods may differ in their form and content but the essentials of approach remain the same. It is the result of a continuous process based on degenerative Cell changes, affecting tissues & organs. The degenerative phases can be explained in three stages namely congestive stage, inflammatory stage and the disintegrative stage. An area of Ayurveda known as Panchakarma is a comprehensive system of knowledge and practices to purify the body from degenerative influences of toxins and restore it to balance with natural law. It is not only a major therapeutic component of the Ayurvedic system of medicine but

also the fundamental basis of treatment in this system. The uniqueness of Panchakarma is that it puts the attention on the patient and the specific qualities of the physiological makeup to heal rather than the pathology and its presentation. No single procedure appears to be solely responsible for the end result. All the processes might be contributing together simultaneously to different extents in overall recovery or relief in degenerative disorders.

KEYWORDS: It is not only a major therapeutic component of the Ayurvedic system of medicine but also the fundamental basis of treatment in this system.

INTRODUCTION

The diseases which are related to or caused by the process of degeneration or deteriorative state of tissues resulting in the interference of their functions are known as degenerative diseases. The process of degeneration is regarded as a physiological phenomenon due to old age. But the variability of its incidences suggests that it is not solely related to age. It is a deteriorating change of cell or tissue or organ in structure or in chemical composition by which its vitality is lowered leading to interference of its functions. It starts basically at the cellular level.

The etiology in many cases is obscure but the basic phenomenon behind the process has been identified as cellular injury manifested in the form of hypo,hyper or altered function and local degeneration occurring in a single cell either simultaneously or sequentially. These diseases by character begin insidiously and run a gradual progressive course that can extend over many years.

A survey of Ayurvedic Classics and other subsequent works keeping in view the modern knowledge of degenerative diseases revealed that the description of Gramya dosha janita vikara or Dhatu Shaithilya is having a striking resemblance with the process of degeneration. The other conditions like Dhatu paka and Dhatu kshaya also have certain similarities.

Degenerative diseases are usually associated with considerable endocrine, metabolic abnormalities, vascular insufficiencies, adreno-cortical deficiencies, and increased rate of connective tissue degradation. It is very difficult to identify each disease condition among a vast number of degenerative conditions explained in Ayurvedic literature. According to Ayurveda, it is not necessary to know every disease by its name. Understanding the causative factors including Dosha, Dushya, Adhishtana (Site of lesion), Samutthana (site of origin) etc. is essential to design an effective treatment protocol for a disease condition.

CAUSATIVE FACTORS

Dietetic Factor	Behavioural Factor	Psychological Factor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Katu, Amla, Lavana Rasa Guru Ahara 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Day Sleep Excessive Sexual acts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fear Anger

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Viruddha Ahara ● Alkaline & Vitiated foods ● Withered, Dry & Stale foods ● Processed, Refined ● Artificially flavoured ● Dry Meat ● Deep Fries & Roasts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Excessive exercise ● Improper exercise ● Sedentary Life ● Over fasting ● Alcoholism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Misery ● Stinginess ● Exertion ● Emotion ● Anxiety ● Stress
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The above mentioned factors lead to impaired Agni and consequent disturbed enzymatic activity resulting in production of Ama leading to formation of substances like amyloids, improperly metabolized fats, fibrinoid degeneration, hyaline and vascular changes. The psychological factors mentioned cause improper neuro-hormonal influences resulting in decreased immunity and more susceptibility.

Ayurveda is the world's oldest existing healthcare system, scientific discipline of theory and practice emerged and evolved in India. It is a record of experience justified by repeated administration by generations.

An area of Ayurveda known as Panchakarma is a comprehensive system of knowledge and practices to purify the body from the degenerative influences of toxins and restore the balance with natural law. It is not only a major therapeutic component of Ayurveda, but also the fundamental basis for the treatment in the system. The uniqueness of panchakarma is that it puts the attention on the patient and the qualities of his specific physiological make up to heal than the pathological changes happening and their presentations. It takes the advantage of naturally occurring cycles of doshic migration and utilizes the active phases of each dosha to draw the specific toxins out of tissues and eliminate them from the body.

It is very interesting to observe that the three most important vital organs Hridaya, Vasti and Siras are the most vulnerable target organs in degenerative diseases. Hence Acharya Charaka says that Vata dosha is the important factor causing damage in these organs and they should be protected from it. He further says that therapies of Vata pacification are to be adopted in degenerative disorders.

Therapies constituting Samana, Brimhana are to be considered along with controlled diet and life-style in degenerative diseases. However, the role of Shodhana therapy is of paramount importance and cannot be replaced by any other measures. It is highly

effective and accomplishes radical and sustained cure particularly so in the cases of degenerative diseases the nature of which is persistently progressive.

PURVA KARMA

SNEHANA

- a) Induces the tissues to give up their accumulated toxins.
- b) Enhances the secretions through which the doshas carry the toxins and waste products of GIT for elimination.
- c) Lubricates & protects the tissue damage while removing the toxins.
- d) Removes obstructions if any in the channels of circulation.
- e) Pacifies Vata dosha through unctuous properties.

SWEDANA

- a) Counteracts the coldness of Vata & Kapha.
- b) Softens / melts the density of toxins and makes it easier to carry them out of the tissues.
- c) Heating action mobilizes the toxins and transports them from deepertissues to the GIT.
- d) Dilates the channels of circulation facilitating easy transportation of medicaments to the tissues and toxins out of the tissues.
- e) Produces tissue expansion facilitating Ama's release.
- f) Reduces body's heaviness, Spasm in muscles, tendons, stiffness in joints, improves facilitation of joints and their suppleness.

Most of the purva karma procedures involve an element of physical massage in addition to local application of Oil & heat along with some medicaments. Application of heat causes relaxation of muscles, tendons and improves blood supply and activates local metabolic processes. The massage may cause displacement of exudates and the medicaments used produce nutritive value and restorative effect on the tissues through trans-cutaneous absorption.

PRADHANA KARMA

VAMANA

Vamana is not so effective as a Shodhana therapy in degenerative diseases except in conditions associated with predominance of Kapha Dosha and also as a pre-virechana

procedure. It helps in accomplishing more effective Shodhana when followed by Virechana.

VIRECHANA

Virechana is the safest and very effective method of Shodhana advocated for diseases due to vitiation of Pitta, Rakta and also in some cases of Kapha involvement as the origin of Kapha & Pitta is Amasaya. It is very effective in treating the diseases of Blood, Liver, spleen, Arteriosclerosis, Atherosclerosis, Cardio-vascular diseases as it eliminates fibro-fatty material derived from these organs. Several studies reveal that both Vamana & Virechana act as Gastric and Colonic lavage mechanisms eliminating fibro-fatty materials, Cholesterol, Triglycerides and Bile material. Virechana induces changes in Blood – Electrolytes, Acid – Base balance, Nitrogen breakdown products. It accomplishes Ama-pachana, regulates Kayagni (enzymatic activity), stimulates tissue metabolism. According to Ayurvedic Classics, Virechana causes Srotosuddhi and Dhatu-sthiratwa (opposite to Dhatu-shaithilyata) justifying its effectiveness in degenerative diseases.

VASTI

Vasti is one of the most important components of Panchakarma therapies and this fact is always intriguing. It is specially designed and indicated to counter Vata disorders (most difficult class of diseases). According to Charaka, there is no other treatment that alleviates Vata as effectively as Vasti. It is believed that the Vasti causes Shareeropachaya. The drugs immediately on entering pakwashaya, strike at the very root of vitiated Vata dosha. By virtue of their permeability, the entered drugs influence the bacterial flora of the colon. By doing so, they modulate the rate of endogenous synthesis of Vitamin B₁, B₁₂ and Vitamin K which are normally synthesized by the bacterial flora of the intestines. The B₁₂ thus generated may have a role to play in regeneration and maintenance of nerve – cell. It has been observed experimentally by the modern physiologists that the Vasti-dravya enter even the stomach and thus causes alleviation effects of cicatric degeneration in Gastric-Ulcers. Vasti karma reverses the effects of degeneration by enhancing the body's immunity.

NASYA

Nasya karma or Sirovirechana though being a localized procedure of Oil & Steam therapy is effective in obtaining not only immediate results but also in imparting

lasting and permanent cure for the majority of the systemic disorders. The drug is absorbed initially by a passive process across the cell-wall in frontal and sphenoidal sinuses where Ophthalmic, Olfactory and other veins are spread out. The traversing is carried out through capillaries and veins located in the mucus membrane on the peripheral surface. The surface has a direct link with brain and other intracranial structures through neural pathways with the important communication being the Olfactory – hypothalamic pathway from the fibers of the Olfactory bulb.

Some of the recent studies suggested that the nasal drops containing growth factors make their way past the olfactory section of the brain into the areas which are not linked with smelling. The same drug when injected never made it to the brain. This observation has paved the way for a revolutionary therapy for certain degenerative disorders like Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Epilepsy and certain brain tumours.

Certain other studies suggested that certain groups of drugs have shown promising results in exerting changes in CNS, hormonal levels without entering the systemic circulation of the brain. Thus Nasya karma prevents senile changes of the organs of Head, Chest and brain apart from promoting the strength, vitality and capacity of sense organs.

RAKTA MOKSHANA

Rakta mokshana is a unique contribution of Ayurveda to medical Science. Rakta is a subject of consideration in the practice of surgery and this specialized technique was developed by Susrutha, the pioneer in Surgery. This is found even in times of Hippocrates where we find reference of Leeching for Glaucoma and Varicose – veins. Rakta mokshana is indicated mainly in Raktaja, Pittaja and Kaphaja rogas but it can also be recommended in diseases in which Pitta or Kapha are associated with Vata. In cases where degenerative symptoms are manifested due to pitta or kapha dosha causing avarana of vata causing subsequent vimargagamana of vata, raktamokshana helps in removing doshas which eventually helps in correcting Vata dushti thereby treating the disease. In Jalaukavacharana method, saliva secreted by leech contains enzymes like Hirudin etc which help in preventing the blood clotting and certain vasodilators, anaesthetic and anti-inflammatory enzymes reduce the pain at the site of the disease.

Rakta mokshana eliminates the accumulated morbid substances from blood so that it

stimulates Hematopoiesis. It releases the congestion on hematopoietic system such as Liver, Spleen, and Heart etc. Amyloid material and Fibro-fatty substances get diminished and the congestion on vessels is relieved. Thus Rakta mokshana prevents and corrects, thrombosis, atherosclerosis, arteriosclerosis and prevents complications like Heart – Diseases etc.

DISCUSSION

The effects of degenerative changes are varied and many changes are asymptomatic. These changes may lead to a disease only when they reach clinically significant levels resulting in impairment of functions of respective cells, tissues and organs. The adoption of Panchakarma procedures may not necessarily eliminate these degenerative changes completely but they may reduce the intensity so as to bring back the functions of the affected organ to normal or near normal to produce relief.

It is very difficult to give assessment of prognosis in degenerative diseases with Panchakarma therapies as the works carried out for the scientific evaluation on these lines are meager. However the explanations presented, the data available till date and the notable changes observed in laboratory reports suggest the normalization of rate of connective tissue breakdown as reflected in lowered urinary excretion of Hydroxy-proline and Mucopoly-Saccharides.

The endocrine studies carried out in the form Urinary Corticoid and Catecholamine levels have shown a trend of restoration of adreno-cortical function and appreciable degree of vascular recovery after Panchakarma therapies. It suggests that the Panchakarma procedures not only produce symptomatic relief but also control disease processes thus resulting in lasting relief of otherwise incurable diseases. They increase Kayagni, regulate metabolism and enzymatic activity leading to the alleviation of degenerative diseases. The individual gradually regains health, functional integrity of the cognitive organs and intellectual functions are restored to normalcy.

CONCLUSION

Degeneration is a part of the natural process of ageing (Kalaja vyadhi). It cannot be completely avoided but can be delayed to a certain extent. However, the signs of early degeneration have been observed nowadays due to changing lifestyle, food habits, genetic mutations, environmental changes, infections, stress etc. The common mechanisms underlying degeneration are inflammation, disturbance in cellular homeostasis and

metabolism, oxidative stress etc.

Panchakarma procedures help in removal of the toxins out of the body thereby providing relief from the diseases. As a matter of fact, a single panchakarma procedure cannot help in reversing or slowing down the degeneration. All procedures have their own importance in attaining the end result. Hence, based on the condition of the patient and the disease, one should judiciously administer these procedures either individually or in combination to achieve the ultimate goal i.e. slowing down the degenerative process, reversal or remission of degenerative changes in order to lead a healthy life.

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