

IMPACT OF MATRA BASTI IN MANAGING ADHD: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common neurobehavioral disorders in childhood, significantly impacting social, learning, and behavioral abilities. In India, the prevalence of ADHD is reported to be 1.3 per 1000 individuals. The primary features of ADHD include inattention, heightened distractibility, poor impulse control, and hyperactivity. The etiology of ADHD is multifaceted, with a strong genetic predisposition and various maternal and environmental factors playing pivotal roles. The conventional management of ADHD involves pharmacological intervention, which carries inherent risks, particularly in young adults. This review explores ADHD from an Ayurvedic perspective, focusing on the potential of Matra Basti, a therapeutic intervention involving the administration of medicated oils or ghee through the rectal route, in managing ADHD symptoms. By examining the principles of Ayurveda and the evidence surrounding Matra Basti therapy, this review aims to shed light on its efficacy and potential as an adjunctive or alternative treatment for individuals with ADHD. The discussion includes the Ayurvedic understanding of ADHD-like symptoms, the role of dosha imbalances, and the action of Matra Basti in pacifying Vata dosha and promoting cognitive health.

KEYWORDS: ADHD, Panchkarma, Matra basti, Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common neurobehavioral disorders in childhood, significantly affecting social, learning, and behavioral abilities. In India, the prevalence of ADHD is reported to be 1.3 per 1000 individuals.^[1] The primary features of ADHD include inattention, heightened distractibility, poor impulse control, and hyperactivity, which can create challenges in academic performance and interpersonal interactions.

The causes of ADHD are multifaceted, with a strong genetic predisposition being a key factor. Maternal factors, such as birth complications like prolonged labor, toxemia, and complicated deliveries, have been implicated in its development.^[2] Additionally, maternal drug abuse and addiction are recognized as contributing risk factors. Environmental elements, such as food colorings and preservatives, have also been linked to exacerbating hyperactivity in susceptible children.

Diagnosing ADHD typically follows the criteria outlined in the DSM V, requiring the presence of more than six specific symptoms.^[3] The disorder presents in three primary subtypes: predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive-impulsive, and combined

type. Symptoms can vary across age groups, with preschoolers often displaying motor restlessness and disruptive behaviors, while older adolescents tend towards inattentiveness and disorganization.

Management of ADHD primarily involves pharmacological intervention using presynaptic dopaminergic agonists, commonly known as psychostimulants. However, these medications carry inherent risks, particularly in young adults, including adverse cardiovascular events like sudden cardiac death, myocardial infarction, and stroke.^[4]

In addition to conventional approaches, there is a rich tradition of alternative therapies that seek to address ADHD through a holistic lens. Ayurveda, an ancient system of medicine, offers a comprehensive approach to healthcare that emphasizes the interconnectedness of the body, mind, and spirit. Through dietary modifications, herbal medicines, Panchakarma therapies, yoga, and meditation, Ayurveda aims to restore balance and harmony within the individual.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this review is to understand ADHD from an Ayurvedic perspective and to explore the potential of

Matra Basti in managing ADHD symptoms. By examining the underlying principles of Ayurveda and the evidence surrounding Matra Basti therapy, we aim to shed light on its efficacy and potential as an adjunctive or alternative treatment approach for individuals with ADHD.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

For drafting this review, online research, review articles, and various Ayurveda Samhitas and modern medicine books were studied. The keywords used to find data included ADHD, Ayurveda, Unmad, and Matra Basti.

DISCUSSION

ADHD in Ayurveda

In Ayurveda, while there is no direct mention of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), certain parallels can be drawn with the concept of *Unmada*, a condition characterized by various cognitive and behavioral disturbances. *Acharya Charaka* delineates the causative factors for *Unmada*, which include the consumption of incompatible, contaminated, or unclean foods, possession by spiritual entities like gods, and mental trauma stemming from recurrent exposure to fear or exhilaration.^[5] These factors lead to the vitiation of *Doshas*, particularly in individuals with low levels of *Sattva Guna*, ultimately affecting the mind, which is regarded as the seat of intellect.^[6]

Common features of *Unmada* include intellectual confusion, unsteadiness of mind, impatience, restlessness, incoherent speech, and a pervasive feeling of emptiness and anxiety.^[7] Additionally, Ayurvedic texts discuss abnormal behaviors under the features of *Vataprakriti*, such as *Anavasthita Chittatva* (Unstable mind), *Mano Vibhrama* (delusional thinking), *Buddhi Vibhrama* (Impaired intellect), *Smriti Vibhrama* (Impaired memory), *Sheela Vibhrama* (abnormal conduct), *Cheshta Vibhrama* (Abnormal actions), and *Achara Vibhrama* (Abnormal behavior), which can be correlated with ADHD.^[8]

According to Ayurveda, the primary reason for ADHD-like symptoms lies in the vitiation of essential mental faculties, including *Dhee* (rational thinking), *Dhriti* (Retaining power of the mind), and *Smriti* (Memory). This imbalance leads to abnormal conduct and cognitive functioning, resulting in inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, among other manifestations.^[9]

Ayurveda elucidates the role of *Dosha* imbalances in neurological disorders, attributing anxiety, fear, and mental instability to *Vata* imbalance, anger and irritability to *Pitta* imbalance, and lethargy and depression to *Kapha* imbalance. Recent research in Ayurveda has explored the effectiveness of various interventions in managing symptoms resembling ADHD, with significant results reported.

Treatment Principles of ADHD in Ayurveda

As per *Acharya Charaka*, treating *Unmada* involves *Shrotoshodhan* (Cleansing of channels) followed by the use of *Medhya Aushadhi* (Intellect-promoting herbs).^[10] In this context, *Basti* (Enema therapy) can be considered a good choice for ADHD. Other *Shodhan* therapies like *Vaman* (Emesis) and *Virechan* (Purgation) are quite difficult and not suitable for children, whereas *Basti* is capable of performing both *Shodhan* (Cleansing) and *Shaman* (Pacification).

Action of Matra Basti in ADHD

Vayu (air) is said to be the lord responsible for bodily functions and the production of diseases. *Basti*, being the best therapy to control *Vata*, also helps in managing *Pitta* and *Kapha Doshas*. According to *Acharya Charaka*, the *Basti* administered enters the *Pakvashaya* (large intestine) by its *Virya* (potency) and draws the morbid *Doshas* lodged throughout the body, similar to how the sun draws moisture from the earth.^[11] *Basti* performs *Shrotoshodhan*, which is essential for controlling *Vata* vitiation due to *Shrotoavarodha* (blockage of channels).

As per *Ashtanga Sangraha*, the potency of *Basti* drugs first reaches the *Apana Vayu* (Responsible for excretion) and nourishes it, then acts on *Samana Vayu* (digestive process). After nourishing *Samana Vayu*, it nourishes *Vyana Vayu* (Circulation), then acts on *Udana Vayu* (respiration) and *Prana Vayu* (vital functions). When all these five types of *Vata* attain their normal state, they promote health. The *Virya* of *Basti* drugs then acts on *Pitta* and *Kapha* to normalize and nourish them. The *Virya* of *Basti* drugs is carried to different parts of the body by the respective *Vayus*, ensuring comprehensive therapeutic action (A.S.K.5/68-72).^[12]

Basti drugs first reach the *Pakvashaya* and then the *Grahani* (Duodenum). *Pakvashaya* is the site of *Purishadhara Kala* (Layer holding excreta) and *Grahani* is the site of *Pittadhara Kala* (Layer holding bile). Therefore, *Basti* directly acts on *Purishadhara Kala* and *Pittadhara Kala*. Commentator *Dalhana* has mentioned that *Purishadhara Kala* and *Asthidhara Kala* (Layer holding bones) are the same, and *Pittadhara Kala* and *Majjadhara Kala* (Layer holding marrow) are one and the same. This indicates that *Basti* has a direct action on *Asthi* (Bones) and *Majja* (Marrow). *Majja* is present in the bones, and the *Matulunga* is considered as *Mastaka Majja* (Brain marrow). *Vata Nadi* (nerve channels) is also made of *Majja*, and *Majja* is the seat of *Vata* diseases. Therefore, *Basti* is useful in disorders of the central nervous system.^[13]

Matra Basti, a therapeutic intervention in Ayurveda, involves the administration of medicated oils or ghee through the rectal route to address imbalances in the body. It can be given at all times without complications or restrictions and can be practiced at any time in children. It pacifies the *Doshas* and increases strength. The dose of *Sneha* (medicated oil or ghee) is specific to

the individual. According to *Acharya Charaka*, the dose of *Matra Basti* is equal to the dose of *Hrisva Snehapana*, which gets digested in six hours.^[14]

In the case of ADHD, *Matra Basti* addresses *Vata* imbalance, which plays a significant role in the manifestation of symptoms such as hyperactivity, impulsivity, and inattention. By pacifying *Vata Dosha*, *Matra Basti* helps restore balance to the body and mind, thereby alleviating these symptoms. Additionally, the therapy promotes cognitive health by enhancing memory, concentration, and overall brain function.

Matra Basti is lauded for its simplicity, safety, and versatility, making it suitable for administration in various conditions without stringent dietary or lifestyle restrictions. The minimal dosage of *Sneha* used in *Matra Basti* ensures minimal risk of complications while maximizing therapeutic benefits. Drugs used for *Matra Basti* in patients with ADHD include *Ashtamangal Ghrit*, *Kalyanak Ghrit*, *Mahakalyanak Ghrit*, *Mahapaishachik Ghrit*, *Lashunadya Ghrit*, *Brahmi Ghrit*, *Ashwagandha* oil and *Jyotishmati* oil.

CONCLUSION

This review highlights the potential of *Matra Basti* as an adjunctive or alternative treatment approach for managing ADHD symptoms. By leveraging the principles of Ayurveda, *Matra Basti* offers a holistic and natural method to address the underlying imbalances contributing to ADHD, promoting overall well-being and cognitive health. Further research and clinical trials are warranted to substantiate its efficacy and establish standardized protocols for its use in ADHD management.

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