

**AYURVEDIC APPROACH IN THE MANAGEMENT OF INSOMNIA IN ELDERLY: A
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ABSTRACT

Insomnia is a persistent difficulty with sleep initiation, duration, consolidation, or quality that occurs despite adequate opportunity and circumstances for sleep, and results in some form of daytime impairment. In *Ayurveda*, Insomnia can be correlated with *Anidra*. In Old age, predominance of *Vata dosha* is the main factor responsible for *Anidra* and results in loss of sleep. Ayurveda has ample options in the form of external application as well as internal medications which are safe as well as effective in the management of Insomnia in Elderly.

KEYWORDS: Anidra, Nidranasha, Insomnia.**INTRODUCTION**

As per International Classification of Sleep Disorder-3 (ICSD-3), Insomnia is defined as “a persistent difficulty with sleep initiation, duration, consolidation, or quality that occurs despite adequate opportunity and circumstances for sleep, and results in some form of daytime impairment.”^[1]

In *Ayurveda*, Insomnia can be correlated with *Anidra*. In Old age, predominance of *Vata dosha* is the main factor responsible for *Anidra* and results in loss of sleep resulting in vague pains all over the body, feeling of heaviness of head, yawning, laziness, tiredness, giddiness, indigestion, stupor and diseases produced by increased *Vata*.^[2]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Literary review of *Anidra* from Classical texts like *Charak Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridayam* along with their modern correlation from relevant textbooks, peer-reviewed journals and relevant articles & websites.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Causes of Insomnia:

1) Primary Sleep Disorders – These disorders do not attribute to any medical or physical condition. These include –

i) Periodic Limb Movements in Sleep (PLMS) – It manifests as frequent and involuntary movements, of arms and legs during the sleep. It may also cause twitch, jerk or flex of the arms and legs.

ii) Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) – It is a condition that causes an overwhelming urge to move the legs, causing twitching or discomfort in the legs and relieves only by movement.

iii) Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA) – It is a disorder that involves blockage of upper respiratory airway during sleep. It occurs due to relaxation of muscles supporting the tongue and soft palate, in the throat, causing the narrowing of the airway leading to the momentarily interruption or stoppage of the breath during sleep.

2) Physical Disorders – It includes diseases like:

i) Bronchial Asthma – It is a respiratory disease, causing inflammation and narrowing of airways and production of mucus leading to difficulty in breathing, especially in night time.

ii) Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia – It is an age associated enlargement of prostate gland causing symptoms like dribbling of urine, urinary incontinence, incomplete voiding of bladder and nocturia.

iii) Rheumatoid arthritis – It is chronic inflammatory joint disorder causing painful swelling of small & large joints, leading to difficulty in sleep.

3) Other Mental Disorders

i) Dementia – Dementia refers to the deprivation of cognitive abilities of brain like thinking, memory and reasoning leading to the impairment of one's daily functioning. The prevalence of insomnia is common in dementia patients.

ii) Anxiety disorder – The most common anxiety disorder in adults are Phobias ranging about 4% to 8%. Though the sign and symptoms of phobia are more

severe in younger individuals than in older adults, but the effects are equally worrisome for older persons.^[3]

iii) Depression – It is a mental disorder characterised by persistent feeling of sadness along with loss of interest in daily activities. It has been found that there is a strong link between sleep and depression, as insomnia has been found among three-quarters of depressed patients.

4) Social & Environmental Factors

i) Alcoholism – Alcohol acts as sedative by slowing down brain's activity but contrary to the belief, research suggests that there is negative impact of alcohol consumption on sleep quality. Majority of individuals, using alcohol, suffer from insomnia.

ii) Elderly abuse – According to American Medical Association, Elder abuse is defined as “an act or omission which results in harm or threatened harm to the health or welfare of an elderly person”. It includes physical, psychological, financial, and material- neglect and abuse. About 10% of people over 65 years of age are abused.^[4]

iii) Spousal bereavement – Sleep disturbances are common in spousal bereaved individuals, affecting their physical and mental health, and is a risk factor for heart trouble, high blood pressure as well as suicide.

Ayurvedic Concept

For ideal functioning of the body systems, normal balance of *Sharirika doshas* viz., *Vata*, *Pitta* & *Kapha* and *Manasika doshas* i.e. *Raja* & *Tama* is required. In Old age i.e., *Vridhdhavastha*, the predominant dosha in the body is *Vata dosha*, which is mainly responsible for causing *Anidra*. Along with it, *Acharya Charaka* mentions that work (activity), time, disease as well as individuals' characteristic prakriti also plays a significant role in causing *Anidra*.

Others factors responsible for causing *Anidra* are fear, anxiety, excessive exercise, fasting, uncomfortable bed, increase in *Satva guna* and loss of *Tamo guna*.^[5]

Optimum level of *Vata dosha* is necessary for normal functioning of nervous system but the conditions like fear, anxiety, anger, fasting etc. leads to *vata prakopa*. Since, in old age there is normal predominance of *Vata dosha*, further these activities act as an adjunct in increasing *vata dosha*, resulting in loss of sleep i.e., *Anidra*.

The population of older adults continues to increase rapidly and one of the most common sleep-disorder in elderly population is insomnia. So, there is a strong need to address this problem. Some effective Ayurvedic solutions that can manage insomnia in elderly are.

A) External applications: It includes^[6]

i) *Abhayanga* (Massage).

ii) *Utsadana* (Application of medicated gel).

iii) *Samvahana* (Rubbing & kneading of muscles & joints).

iv) *Akshi tarpana* (Eye rejuvenation therapy).

v) *Shirolepa* & *Vadanalepa* (Application of cool herbal paste on head & face).

vi) *Padaabhyanga* (Massage of soles).

vii) *Mahisha ksheera* (Buffalo milk) before bedtime.

viii) Regular time for sleep.

ix) *Murdhni taila*^[7] (*Shiro-abhyanga*, *Shirodhara*, *Shiropichu* & *Shiro-basti*).

B) Internal medications: It includes^[8]

1) *Sarpagandha Churna*

2) *Gyanodaya Ras*

3) *Nagaradi Gutika*

4) *Chandravaleha*

5) *Chandrasah arka* etc.

CONCLUSION

Thus, it is clear from the above descriptions that Ayurveda has ample options for management of Insomnia in Elderly, as compared to currently available options in the modern medicines, which are having severe side-effects as well as drug dependency. So, ayurvedic treatments should be used in the management of insomnia in elderly for better results and improving the overall well-being of the individuals.

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