

AYURVEDIC VIEW OF DYSMENORRHOEA (KASHTARTAVA)

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ABSTRACT

Dysmenorrhoea is defined as painful cramps that occur with menstruation incapacitating enough to interfere with routine activity. Dysmenorrhea is an important health problem of adolescents in school, as well as health practitioners, that badly affects the daily activities and quality of life. Dysmenorrhoea is the most common Gynaecological problem faced by women due to abnormal anatomical and functional aspect of uterus, psychosomatic factors, release of Prostaglandins, Pelvic congestion etc. Dysmenorrhoea can be correlated with kashtartava or conditions like Udavartini Yonivyapada in Ayurveda. It is Tridoshaj vyadhi with Vata Predominance. There is dearrangement of Apan and Vyan vayu along with vitiation of Rasa dhatu. In present day life women are effectively facing challenges encountered by stressful life resulting in Mithya Ahar, vihar, over exertion & malnutrition this may direct to vikruti in "Rutuchakra" leading to various vyadhi allied to menstruation. Ayurveda recommends rutucharya and dinacharya, diet modulation and yoga in the form of asanas, pranayam and meditation on a regular basis so as to alleviate dysmenorrhoea effectively. Similarly, Uttarbasti, Garbhashaya balyaashadhi, anuvasan or matrabasti can also be administered if necessary.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Kashtartava, Menstruation, Dysmenorrhoea, Udavartini.

NIRUKTI

The term Dysmenorrhoea is derived from the greek words Dys (difficult, painful or abnormal), Men (monthly) and Orrhoea (flow or Discharge).

INTRODUCTION

Kashtartava can be defined as painful menstruation (Dysmenorrhoea) which is a symptom complex in many gynaecological disorders.^[1] The condition of dysmenorrhoea is explained in Ayurvedic literature in terms of Kashtartava / Kukshishoola, Vatala Yoni, Udavartini Yonivyapad (Ayurvedic names of disease under Striroga – Gynecology).^[2]

The causative factors, pathogenesis, symptoms and treatment are also described in Ayurveda and based on that, the increased 'Vata' type of humors in the body is responsible for disease creation.^[3]

This common problem results in number of physical and emotional symptoms and it also affects their quality of life. In many conditions, girls suffers a lot and use OTC medications to manage the discomforts without medical supervision. It ultimately leads to mismanagement of Kashtartava. These types of self-medication and continuous medication affect the health.

One of the studies says that dysmenorrhea can be better managed by mental preparation and by appropriate changes in lifestyle like regular physical exercise. The etiology of uterine pain in primary dysmenorrhea is still not established. But several risk factors have been identified, such as young age, early menarche, positive family history, nulliparity, stress /depression and smoking.^[4]

Risk Factors

Age < 20 years
Attempts to lose weight
Depression / Anxiety
Disruption of social network
Heavy menses
Nulliparity
Smoking

Modern view: Dysmenorrhoea means painful menstruation.

Classification: 1) Primary Dysmenorrhoea 2) Secondary Dysmenorrhoea.

Primary Dysmenorrhoea: is the pain associated to ovulation cycles without demonstrable lesions that affect the reproductive organs. Primary dysmenorrhea is related to myometrial contractions induced by prostaglandins

originating in secretory endometrium, which result in uterine ischemia and pain.

In terms of hormones, medical science proposes that Primary dysmenorrhoea is caused by excess production of Prostaglandins (hormones like chemicals that regulate uterine contractions) following a decline in progesterone levels.

Secondary Dysmenorrhoea: is the pain associated with ovulatory cycles caused by a demonstrable pathology.

Diagnosis of Dysmenorrhoea^[7]

Salient features of Dysmenorrhoea	Primary Dysmenorrhoea	Secondary Dysmenorrhoea
Age	After 6-12 months of onset Of menarche with establishment Of ovulatory cycle, peak at 15-19 years.	In active reproductive period (30-35 yrs)
Relation with Menstruation	First 12-48 hours of flow.	3-5 days or more days before menstruations
Nature	Spasmodic type of pain	Dull,dragging pain may also be cramps.
Pelvic Pathology	Nil	Endometriosis, adenomyosis, PID, Uterine myomata, polyps, cervical stenosis.

Differential diagnosis of Dysmenorrhoea

- **Primary dysmenorrhea:** Supra-pubic pain/cramps occurring just before or during menses and lasting two to three days; pain may radiate into the lower back and thighs, and may be associated with nausea, fatigue, bloating and general malaise pelvic findings normal.
- **Endometriosis:** Cyclic (can be noncyclic) pelvic pain with menses; associated with deep dyspareunia, dysuria and subfertility, rectovaginal examination findings include fixed or retroverted uterus or reduced uterine mobility, adnexal masses and uterosacral nodularity.
- **Adenomyosis:** Usually associated with menorrhagia, may include intermenstrual bleeding, physical examination findings include enlarged, tender, boggy uterus.
- **Leiomyomata:** Cyclic pelvic pain with menorrhagia and occasionally dyspareunia, particularly with anterior and fundal fibroids.
- **Pelvic inflammatory disease:** H/O lower abdominal pain in sexually active women, cervical motion tenderness, uterine tenderness and/or adnexal tenderness, other associated clinical features include oral temperature > 101⁰ F and abnormal cervical or vaginal muco-purulent discharge.
- **Ectopic pregnancy:** Amenorrhoea, abnormal uterine bleeding, severe sharp lower abdominal pain and /or cramping on the affected side of the pelvis, may present with complications . (e.g. hypotension, shock).^[8]

It should be suspected in older women with no history of dysmenorrhoea until proven otherwise.^[5]

Ayurvedic concept of pain related to Kashtartava

Acharya Charaka has mentioned none of the gynecological disease can be arise without affliction of aggravated Vata. Vata is the main responsible factor, though other doshas only be present as Anubandhi to it. So pain is produced due to vitiation of only vatadosha or in combination with other Doshas.^[6]

Management

Prevention

Educating young girls about menstruations, sex and health lower the intensity of spasmodic dysmenorrhea ,or the incapacitation it causes.

General

- Unfavorable environment factors, malnutrition, general ill health and any errors in the patients mode of life should be corrected.
- Open air exercises, games, gymnastic exercises should be encouraged.
- Constipation should be treated by simple laxatives.
- Anaemia should be treated with iron..
- General advise -reassurance and empirical relief of pain are necessary.
- Patients attention is diverted from her menstrual functions and a sensible mother
- Can do it.

Nutrition

The supplement programme below should be taken for at least three months in order to achieve best results.

- Vitamin E (300iu per day) as d-alpha tocopherol
- Zinc citrate (15mg per day)
- Vitamins C with bioflavonoids (1000 mg twice per day)
- B complex (100mg of each B vitamin per day)
- Magnesium (300 mg per day)^[9]

Treatment as Per Ayurvedic Classics

- These disorders (gynecological disorders) do not occur without vitiation of Vata, thus first of all Vata should be normalized, and only then treatment for

other doshas should be done.^[10]

- In all these gynecologic disorders, after proper oleation and sudation, emesis etc. all five purifying measures should be used. Only after proper cleansing of dosas through upper and lower passages, other medicines should be given. These emesis etc. cleansing measures cure gynecologic disorders in the same way as they cure the diseases of other systems.^[11]
 - In menstrual disorders caused by Vata Dosha, the specific treatment prescribed for suppressing that particular Dosha should be used. Recipes prescribed for Yoni Rogas and Uttarbasti etc. should also be used after giving due consideration to the vitiated Doshā.^[12]
 - Unctuous, hot, sour and salty articles should be used for the relief from menstrual disorders due to Vata. Sweet, cold and astringent substances for the purification of Pitta and hot, dry and astringent for Kapha¹³.
 - For Avrita Apana Vayu, treatment should be Agnideepaka, Grahi, Vāta, Anulomana and Pakvashaya Shuddhikara.^[14]
 - **Yoga:** Yoga activities can help to reduce and prevent the severity of many ailments that specifically women's health and give strength, stability, and suppleness. Yogasanas are considered as the most convenient, drugless, and inexpensive method. Yoga is also found to have encouraging effect on increasing the pain threshold capacity in individuals. In Yoga, various types of Asanas have been mentioned. Among them Ushtrasana, Bhadrasana, Gomukhasana, and Vajrasana have a pain relieving effect.
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CONCLUSION

Ayurveda view to dysmenorrhoea as a doshic imbalance that can potentially be impacted through balanced living that is characterized by dosha appropriate diet, herbal supplements, exercise, routine, yoga, meditation as well as nourishing inputs through all five senses. It takes a good beneficiary effects from ayurvedic remedies to Dysmenorrhoea. The coverage to the painful menstruation achievable with the herbal way.¹⁵

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