Effect of Apamarga Kshara Lepa in Vicharchika (Eczema) – A Case Report

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ABSTRACT

Vicharchika, a type of Kshudra Kushta (Eczema) is a chronic disease analogous to eczema in contemporary medical science. Eczema is a disease difficult to cure by its nature, so it is a difficult task for the patients as well as doctor. In the present day scenario, the management of eczema with modern medicine is temporary and may produce annoying problems and side effects. Ayurvedic management, especially in such conditions, seems to be more satisfactory because of their long lasting effects and multiple systemic regenerative actions without any harm. A large number of drugs and medicinal preparations are mentioned in Ayurvedic system, but results of a very few have been documented on scientific lines. One such drug, Apamarga (Achyranthes aspera Linn) Kshara can be especially useful in this condition because it possesses caustic, anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial properties. A noticeable effect of Apamarga Kshara Lepa was observed in this particular case of Vicharchika and hence it is being presented here as a case report.

Key words: Apamarga Kshara, Eczema, Kshudra Kushta

INTRODUCTION

Today’s modern medical science is equipped with lots of facilities and sophisticated technologies, but then also satisfactory management is not available for many diseases. Eczema is one of such disorder, which has a substantial psychological and social impact upon the patient’s life. Being a skin manifestation, eczema goes beyond a cosmetic problem. The term Eczema is derived from the Greek word ekein, which means ‘to boil’. It is in fact a clinical and histological pattern of inflammation of skin, seen in a variety of dermatoses with widely diverse aetiologies. The eczematous dermatoses are clinically characterized by variable intensity of itching and soreness, and a range of signs in variable degrees, such as dryness, erythema, excoriation, exudation, fissuring, hyperkeratosis, lichenification, papulation, scaling and vesiculation. Histologically, the clinical signs are reflected by a range of epidermal changes including spongiosis (epidermal oedema) with varying degrees of acanthosis and hyperkeratosis, accompanied by a lymphohistiocytic infiltrate in the dermis.

The features of eczema are somewhat similar with that of Vicharchika, a variety of Kshudra Kushta mentioned in Ayurveda. Symptoms of Vicharchika mentioned by Charaka correlate with wet eczema or acute eczema, whereas the symptoms mentioned by Sushruta correlate with dry eczema or chronic eczema. Though the disease Vicharchika is not life threatening, it has a great impact on the overall quality of life as it keeps the patient constantly worried due to its appearance, severe itching and the chronic and recurrent nature.

In Ayurvedic system of medicine, a large number of drugs and medicinal preparations are mentioned for this disease. Kshara of Apamarga (Achyranthes aspera Linn) is a strong alkali and can perform Chhedana (Excision), Bhedana (Incision) and Lekhana (Scraping or Scarification) karmas out of the 8 types of Shastrakarma (Surgical procedure). By the virtue such qualities, the Apamarga Kshara not only debrides the thick and lichenified lesions, but also promotes the growth of healthy skin. Hence its local application can prove to be a potentially useful, yet cost effective management of Vicharchika. A noticeable effect of Apamarga Kshara Lepa was observed in this particular case and hence it is being presented here as a case report.

CASE REPORT

A 35 year old female patient visited OPD of National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan, with complaints of –

1) Blackish and lichenified lesion on both hand fingers dorsal aspect—since five years,
2) Scaling lesion with secretions—since five years,
3) Itching all over body—since five years

No concomitant illness was present. On local examination, erythematous lichenified lesions were seen on the dorsal aspect of hands and fingers. These lesions were dry, but scanty secretion was present.

History of present illness

As per patient, she was completely well before five years. Then, the patient started suffering from erythematous plaque on dorsal aspect of...
fingers of both hands, along with itching. For this, the patient took treatment from different allopathic doctors, but got no relief. So now the patient decided to take Ayurvedic management.

**Investigations**

Routine hematological (i.e., CBC and ESR) and biochemical (random blood sugar, blood urea, serum creatinine, SGOT and SGPT) investigations were done and they were reported within normal limits.

**TREATMENT**

Firstly, a paste of Apamarga Kshara was made with the help of water and then this paste was applied locally over the affected area. It was allowed to dry by itself and that it was washed with lukewarm water.

**Frequency and Duration:** Twice a day, for 7 days.

**OBSERVATIONS AND RESULTS**

The response to aforesaid treatment was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Results of local application of Apamarga Kshara on lesions of Vicharchika</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symptoms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rakzha (Dry lesion)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bahusravav (Oozing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kandu (Itching)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Podika (Papules, Pustules)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shyavva (Erythema with Blush-Black Discolouration)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arri (Pain)</td>
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<td>Bhag (Thickening)</td>
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**DISCUSSION**

Vicharchika is a form dermatitis where inflammation of epidermis occurs. Itch and rashes are the two characteristic features of eczema. The immune system over-reacts to these allergens and causes inflammation, oozing, irritation or sore skin. In Vicharchika, Kshudra-Podika (small papules) spreads with Kandu (itching) which is seen as elevations on the surface of the skin, along with other symptoms like Shyavata (whiteness) and Bahusravata (excessive secretions).

The Ksharas mentioned in Ayurveda can be very helpful in this disease because as per Charaka, Kshara is one which scraps the abnormal tissue from the locating viscera and drags it down after dissolving because of its corrosive nature. Kshara means strong caustics. As per Sushruta, Kshara is the best Anushashtra (paramedical procedure). [5] Sushruta defines Kshara as the substance possessing Ksharana and Kshanana properties. [6] Explanation of these two words by Dalhana is as under:

- Ksharana means one which mobilises and removes the deformed skin, flesh etc., or which removes the vitiated Doshas. Although as Dalhana mentioned a few authorities considered the references Ksharana means Shodhana (purification). Probably these two groups of authorities intended to narrate the meanings of Ksharana and Kshapana (complete extraction) as about Pratissaraniya and Paniya Kshara respectively.

Depending upon its route of administration, Kshara is of two types - one is for oral administration, i.e. Paniya Kshara, and the other one is for local application, i.e. Pratissaraneya Kshara. [7] Pratissaraneya Kshara is again classified into Mridu (mild), Madhyama (moderate), and Tikshana (strong), depending upon its strength. [4]

Kshara of Apamarga is a strong alkali with high calcium content, primarily due to which it shows a caustic action leading to cutting of tissues and debridement of unhealthy tissues, and has properties of chemical cauterization, anti-inflammatory and antibacterial. It performs Chhedana (Excision), Bhedana (Incision) and Lekhana (Scraping or Scarification) Karmas out of 8 types of Shastrakarma (Surgical procedure). [4] By the virtue of above qualities of Apamarga Kshara, it not only debrided the thick and lichenified lesions, but also promoted the growth of healthy skin.

Hence, the local application of Apamarga Kshara was planned in this case. Gratifying response to this simple pure Ayurvedic treatment was seen, as evidenced by reduced edematous and lichenified skin lesions. Also, after first 2 days a mild reduction of itching was noticed and it reduced further after next 2 more days. No adverse effects or complications were noted with this treatment and the disease cured uneventfully. All this led to a significant improvement in the quality of life of patient.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Vicharchika is a disease having its impact on body as well as mind. Ayurvedic line of management aims to give a blissful life by improving the immune system of the individual by removing the vitiated Doshas. This study provided important information regarding the effectiveness of Apamarga Kshara Lepa in the management of Vicharchika. On the basis of results of this case, it may be concluded that Apamarga Kshara Lepa can be a cost effective, curative, safe and easy method to manage such cases, although this needs to be further affirmed on a larger groups of patients.

**REFERENCES**

1) DA Burns, SM Breathnach, NH Cox and CEM Griffiths, editor (8th ed.). Rook’s Textbook of Dermatology, chapter 23.


5) Ibidem (3), Sushruta Samhita:Sutrasthana:Chapter 11, verse 3; p 45.

6) Ibidem (3), Sushruta Samhita:Sutrasthana: Chapter 11, verse 4; p 45.

7) Ibidem (3), Sushruta Samhita:Sutrasthana:Chapter 11, verse 6; p 46.

8) Ibidem(3), Sushruta Samhita:Sutrasthana:Chapter 11, verse 11; p 46.


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