



PERIMENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS MANAGEMENT WITH AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

The Streeroga comprises of genital disorders of females starting from menarche (13 years) to menopause (40-50 years). These streerogas include Arbuda, Granthi, Yoniroga, Pradar and Artava vyapad and Yoni vyapad. Ancient ayurveda approaches for the treatment of gynaecological disorders with shaman and shodhana therapies. The therapy which possesses Tridoshahara, Balya, Medhya, Smritivardhaka and Vrishya properties are suggested for stree rogas to control Apana Vata dushti (deranged Apanvayu). In present era women are working in the corporate world, so with their peaking careers and demanding lifestyle one's health does not get the required attention and time.

Acharya Chakrapani emphasised the importance of panchakarmas-

Doshahkadachitkupyantijitaahlanghanpachitah

Jitahshanshodhanaih ye tunateshampunarudbhavah.. (Cha. Su. 16-20)

In terms of medicine various schools give special considerations to the care of women. The science of Ayurveda on the other hand accentuates for need of specialized care. The therapies of panchakarma along with the need of their indications and contraindications also put special emphasis on these major categories of patients, Bala, Vriddha, Durbala and Garbhini. In spite of falling under these categories, if therapies are to be given to these individuals then they are administered with appropriate precautions and modifications.

In normal female patient the therapies to be given are not much different from the ones given to male patients as females being soft and tender the therapies to be administered are to be selected wisely and vigorous procedures are avoided. For instance the dose of Ghrita during snehapana, the pressure during massage, the degree of heat during swedana and height of Shirodhara, intensity of vamana, virechana, basti and sirovirechana all need to be of lower intensity.

Ayurveda provides complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being by adopting some preventive and promotive approaches during menopause. With this holistic treatment approach, ayurveda provides better and safer alternatives to hormonal therapy. A detailed description of gynaecological and the

available ayurvedic alternatives are elaborated in this paper.

KEYWORDS: Menopause, Dosha, Dhatukshaya,, Rasayan, Panchakarma.

INTRODUCTION

Aging is an unavoidable, inevitable, irreversible physiological process which makes many changes in our body. With growing age various organ functions deteriorate leading to some unavoidable physiological changes and diseases. Three phases comes in everyone's life namely childhood, adulthood and old age or bala, madhya and vriddha awastha during their lifespan. According to ayurveda all three phases of life are predominated by different doshas, like bala – kapha dosha, Madhya awastha – pitta, vriddha awastha – vata dosha.

Vriddhawastha dominated by vata dosha is more challenging for the women as it marks the rajonivritti kala i.e. the menopausal period in a women's life. Menopause is a physiological process which universally affects all women around 45-55 years of age⁽¹⁾. Menopause marks the end of fertile period of a woman which indicates the end of menstrual period and ovulation. Perimenopausal period relates to before, during and after menopause. As per Ashtang Hridayam, just as the Lotus closes at the end of the day, so also the Yoni after ritukaal (suitable period for conception; thereafter she will not be receptive for shukra (semen)⁽²⁾. In the same way after the woman attains menopause, the loss of ovarian follicular activity is biologically exhibited as decline in fertility and clinically by a variation in the length of menstrual cycle and experience of various associated symptoms and her reproductive function ceases.

In ancient time (1900's), in the western countries menopause was considered as a disease or a crisis in a women's life⁽³⁾. During that time Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) was considered the only successful treatment for menopause, and symptoms were the result of hormone (estrogen) deficiency. But with the advent of natural therapies and Ayurvedic therapies, a lot of natural alternatives to HRT with less side effects and more successful results are taking popularity now a days.

Ayurveda states menopause is a natural phenomenon and is not a disease or imbalance, unless it occurs unnaturally early. Menarche and menopause both phenomenon comes in every women's life. The discomforting menopausal symptoms or early onset of menopause are the result of inherent imbalance in three shareerik doshas. Kapha, pitta and vata dosha dominates Bala, Madhya and Vriddhavastha respectively⁽⁴⁾. Any imbalance in tridoshas leads to menstrual irregularities, infertility or early menopause and other associated symptoms. Menstruation or Rajodarshan begins during the end stage of Bala awastha when the women acquires complete maturity (dhatu paripurnata)⁽⁵⁾. Raja is considered as rasa dhau's upadhatu in ayurvedic samhitas⁽⁶⁾. The fertile period of a women's life (14 yr to 45 yr) is dominated by pitta dosha along with kapha in the beginning and vata in the later stage as natural process⁽⁷⁾. Also, Acharya Sushruta states in Hrashkram with progressive age that after the age of 40 years there is a gradual qualitative and quantitative decline in the ojas, bala, veerya, indriya, dosha and dhatus leading to the kshaya of artava as well⁽⁸⁾. There may be variation in the age of onset and cessation of Menstruation based on prakriti, ahara, vihara and environment of a particular individual.

Some definitions as per WHO⁽⁹⁾

Menopause – The permanent cessation of menstruation resulting from the loss of ovarian follicular activity.

The clinical diagnosis is confirmed following stoppage of menstruation for twelve consecutive months without any other pathology.

Perimenopause – It includes the period immediately prior to the menopause with endocrinological, biological and clinical features approaching menopause and at least the first year after the menopause. It is indicated by the change in the pattern of menstruation with increased or reduced menstrual intervals or both. This usually lasts for 3-5 years or can be relatively sudden.

Postmenopause – It should be defined as dating from the menopause, although it can not be determined until after a period of 12 months of spontaneous amenorrhea has been observed.

Climacteric – Derived from a greek word means ‘a step of a stair’. Climacteric is the physiological period during which there is regression in ovarian function which may start 2-3 years before menopause.

Menopausal transition – The years prior to menopause that encompass the change from normal ovulatory cycles to cessation of menses. The term climacteric and menopause are used interchangeably in practice.

Early menopause – That occurs between age of 40 – 45 years naturally i.e. not medically or surgically initiated.

Surgical menopause – As a result of hysterectomy, oophorectomy and other pelvic surgeries.

Medical menopause – It occurs after medical treatment such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy during course of various drug regimens.

DISCUSSION –

In Ayurveda, ‘Rajonivrutti’ term is used for menopause and is derived from Rajah + Nivrutti which means cessation of pravrutti of artava i.e. menstrual blood.

Causes – Aging is Nishpratikriya (inevitable change) and swabhava bal roga (natural disease) as per ayurvedic texts⁽¹⁰⁾. Menarche and menopause are age related physiological changes in female body. Early menopause can be genetic (family history of premature menopause) or due to other reasons like- poor nutrition, poverty, smoking, alcohol consumption, stress, strain and mental tension, chemotherapy, radiotherapy or extreme fluctuations in level of hormones.

Signs and Symptoms⁽¹¹⁾ – 1) Irregular periods for 12 months

2) Hot flushes or flashes

3) Night sweats

4) Changes in skin elasticity

5) Headache and other joints pain

6) Weight gain

7) Fatigue

8) Dizzy spells

9) Osteoporosis

- 10) Vaginal dryness
- 11) Dyspareunia
- 12) Dysuria
- 13) Depression
- 14) Palpitations
- 15) Insomnia
- 16) Mood swings
- 17) Altered cognitive abilities
- 18) Dementia.

Types⁽¹²⁾ – In Ayurveda types are according to type of dosha predominance-

- 1) **Vataj** – symptoms- Anxiety, mood swings, pain, vaginal dryness, changes in skin, feeling cold, irregular periods, insomnia, mild hot flushes, constipation, palpitations, bloating and joint pain.
- 2) **Pittaj** – symptoms- Hot flushes, irritability, anger, feeling hot, night sweats, heavy periods, excessive bleeding, urinary tract infections, skin rashes and acne.
- 3) **Kaphaj** – symptoms- Weight gain, lethargy, fluid retention, laziness, depression, lack of motivation, slow digestion.

Samprapti⁽¹³⁾ – Vata vitiation leads to precipitation of soshana and kshaya (involution and atrophy) of different dhatus. As a result of this degeneration, there is loss of perception by sensory organs (indriya kshaya), loss of strength (bala kshaya) and loss of reproductive strength (virya kshaya). It is manifested as urogenital atrophy, thinning of membranes and loss of elasticity in vulva, vagina, cervix and outer urinary tract, reduced libido and dyspareunia.

Slow digestive power leads to ama formation which increases medo dushti. The uttarottar dhatus namely asthi, majja and shukra don't receive proper nutrition leading to osteoporosis, weight gain or other problems. Kshaya of medo dhatu may result in hot flushes and excessive night sweats. Rasa dhatu kshaya leads to disturbed sleep, irritability, dryness of vagina etc.

when vata gets accumulated in joints it causes arthralgia, osteoarthritis, osteopenia, osteoporosis and increased risk of fractures.

Management

Removing discomfort due to the deficiency of hormones and to slow down the degenerative process of old age is the aim of treatment in perimenopausal symptoms. HRT solves only half of the problems hence, to provide optimum physical and mental health better alternatives are needed. Ayurveda has acknowledged menopause as a natural transition, not a mistake by nature that it requires hormone treatment therapy. Use of hormonal therapy is not natural and brings many dangerous side effects. Hence, it is no longer recommended for treatment and prevention.

In ayurveda the regimens mentioned in dincharya and ritucharya must be properly followed. Regular

utilization of vayashtapak drugs (age stabilizers), jeevanaeeya drugs (vitalizers), rasayan (rejuvenating therapies) and vajikaran (aphrodisiacs) is recommended. Ayurveda assures that menopause can be health promoting, spiritually transforming and free of troubles and adverse symptoms.

As in vriddhavastha predominance of Vata dosha is seen and to prevent provocation of vata dosha, excessive use of amla, lavana, katu, tikta nad kashaya rasa in diet, day sleeping, nightawakening, excessive coitus, alcohol consumption and excessive physical exercise must be avoided. Our daily life style and routine affects our body too much directly and indirectly both.

Due to bad dietary habits, change in hormone levels, lack of exercise, poor life style and genetic factors lead to disorganisation of digestive enzymes, metabolic factors, hormones and agni which results in accumulation of toxins throughout the body. In Ayurveda treatment includes removal of cause first then correction of damage or symptoms of disease.

Panchakarma therapy helps to loosen, liquify and ultimately remove the vitiated substances (ama) and doshas via their natural pathways. Rasayan therapy slows down the degenerative changes of body in old ages. Other symptoms due to predominance of doshas are managed by different Ras aushadhis, powders, kwatha, asava and arishta preparation etc.

Panchakarma therapies –

Snehan (oleation)⁽¹⁴⁾ with Mahanarayan taila, ksheerbala taila, etc. and swedan⁽¹⁵⁾ (sudation) karma relieves vata vitiation. These two are purva karma of ayurvedic (panchakarma) management.

- Uttarbasti with jatyadi taila or ghrít, phalaghrit, shatawari ghrít, triphala ghrít.
- Yoni dhawan with Ksheerpaka medicated milk or kwatha. Matra basti with Sukumar ghrít, dhanvantara taila etc.
- Tikta ksheer basti for asthi kshaya⁽¹⁶⁾.
- Use of medicated ghrít like amalak ghrít, shatawari ghrít, Guduchi ghríta, chitrak ghríta, panchakola ghríta and panchatikta ghríta to pacify vata and pitta dosha⁽¹⁷⁾.
- Ghríta improves agni, bala, veerya and acts as vayashtapaka.

Paschat karma(Shaman Chikitsa) -

Ras aushadhies – Praval panchamrita rasa, godanti bhasma, pushpadhanva rasa, Amalakirasayan, triphala rasayana etc.

Powders – Shatawari churna, ashwagandha churna, varahi kanda, Guduchi

Kwatha – Dashamoola kwatha

Asava and arishta – Ashokarishta, dashamoolarishta, drakshasava, amritarishta, Sarasvatarishta

Vati – Rajah pravartini vati, Arogyavardhini vati, Yograj guggulu, Brahmi vati

Ksheerpak – Arjuna ksheerpaka

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