

Role of Ayurveda in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

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Abstract

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is most common psycho neurobehavioral disorder of childhood affecting about 3-5 % of school aged children. It often continues into adolescence and can lead to a lifetime frustrated dreams and emotional suffering. To develop the overall personality and good future of children, it requires efficient learning capacities. For this purpose, a healthy mental status is required which is influenced by the mental disorders. In Attention deficit/ hyper activity disorder, the children with combine ADHD have inappropriate restlessness, behavioral and cognitive impulsivity and difficulty in paying attention. They have a hard time controlling their impulses and regulating their activity, attention, interaction to a degree consistent with relevant age and cultural norms. In Ayurveda, neither this disease nor the symptoms of ADHD are described but some references about abnormal behavior are discussed under features of *Anavasthitachittatvam*, *Mano Vibhrama*, *Buddhi Vibhrama*, *Smriti vibhrama* etc. Ayurveda holding a different view regarding the etiopathogenesis of disease can provide novel theory of ADHD and thus novel dimension to its management. This paper aims at highlighting the Ayurvedic perspective of ADHD and its management.

Keywords

ADHD, Anavasthitachittatvam, Mano Vibhrama, Buddhi Vibhrama, Smriti vibhrama



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INTRODUCTION

Attention deficit/hyper activity disorder is one of the most common childhood disorders. ADHD is a syndrome of inattention, hyper activity, impulsivity, poor impulse control, decreased self-inhibitory capacity, and motor over activity and motor restlessness. The 3 type of ADHD are predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyper activity-impulsive, and combined. This disease has been classified as developmental disorder, although increasingly it is considered a disruptive behaviour disorder. The prevalence of ADHD in general population school age children is about 3-5%¹ in the west, ADHD is 4-6 times more common in boys than in girls². Unless managed properly it can be very disturbing to the parents and can lead to considerable secondary problems in the child such as low academic achievement, retention in grade, conduct and emotional problem and impaired social competence as they progress into adolescence and young adulthood. To develop the overall personality and good future of children, it requires efficient learning capacities. For this purpose, a healthy mental status is required which is influenced by the mental disorders. There is no precise description of

any disorder matching that of Attention deficit / hyperactivity disorder in *Ayurvedic* texts, there are so many varied opinions on concept of ADHD, conditions like *Anavasthit chittatvam*³, *Mano Vibhrama*, *Buddhi Vibhrama*, *Smriti vibhrama*⁴ etc were correlated with ADHD. According to *Acharya Charaka*, naming of disease is not as important as it serves only the purpose of communication⁵. Though these terms have been mentioned collectively under the description of *UnmadaVyadhi*⁶, when considered individually they closely resemble some of the clinical features and related features of ADHD. The cause of ADHD in *Ayurveda* can be inferred, with the vitiation of *Dhee* (rational thinking), *Dhriti*(retaining power of mind), *Smriti* (memory) which causes abnormality and abnormal conduct resulting in improper contact of the senses with their objectives and give rise to inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity⁷. *Ayurveda* holding a different view regarding the etiopathogenesis of disease can provide novel theories of ADHD and thus novel dimensions to its management.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1) To find out effective drugs and *Panchakarma* procedures helpful in the treatment of ADHD
- 2) To find out a safe and effective treatment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material for this paper was collected from *Ayurvedic* and modern literature, all the related research articles, clinical and experimental studies, pub med etc.

GENERAL TREATMENT

The management of the disease ADHD can be given under two headings.

(1) Prophylactic measures

(2) Specific measures

(1) Prophylactic measures:

Our science has laid lot of emphasis on the avoidance of the causative factors of disease and has described it as the first line of treatment. Since the ADHD has a strong genetic predisposition and antenatal etiopathogenesis, this line of treatment is very important. The pregnant woman has to follow various norms of health so as to keep her and the foetus healthy. Every physiological and psychological variation in the mother exerts its influence on the

growing foetus. The perinatal insults to CNS have known to lead to ADHD. Thus the *Jatakarmas* mentioned in the *Paricharya* of *Navajata* should be followed. *BalaParicharya*, use of various *Prasha* and the *Medhya Rasayanas* mentioned in the classics should be done so as to prevent the disease ADHD.

(2) Specific measures

i) *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa*-It is the major treatment protocol for the psychological disorder. Counselling of the parents, family members, teachers and child itself is of great help. The modern medicine also makes use of cognitive behavioural therapy in combination with the pharmacotherapy of ADHD-Meditation, *Yoga*, *Vedic* Chanting are probably most important self-help techniques employable in the treatment of ADHD. When the body is stressed, cortisol levels are elevated. These all can be used to balance cortisol levels, synchronize the brain hemisphere, and stimulate the frontal lobe (the area responsible for executive functioning which is said to be faulty in ADHD.)

ii) *Yuktivyapashraya Chikitsa*

1. *Shamanachikitsa- Medhya rasayana yoga*

2. *Panchakarma* procedures- *Abhayanga*, *Nasyakarma*, *Shiro Basti*, *Shirodhara*.

Shamana Chikitsa- in *Ayurveda*, many drugs under the heading of *Medhya Rasayana* are present which are not only appropriate for the cure of the disease but they also promote the mental health. These drugs effectively correct the body metabolism and maintain the proper functioning of all organs. Examples of herbs are- *Ashwagandha* (*Withania Somnifera*), *Shankhapushpi* (*Convolvulus Pluricaulis*), *Jatamansi* (*Nardostachys Jatamansi*), *Vacha* (*Acoruscalamus*), *Bramhi* (*Bacopa Monneri*)

-Ashwagandha (*Withania Somnifera*)⁸: It is a *Rasayana* and act as a general health tonic to the body. It is the best stress buster and improves the coordination among neuron. It strengthens the muscle and enhances the physical stamina. In ADHD; it strengthens the brain and corrects the nervous breakdown. Thus keep the brain calm and active.

-Shankhapushpi (*Convolvulus Pluricaulis*)⁹: It effectively improves memory and coordination. It is a rejuvenator, psycho stimulant, and tranquilizer. It induces good sleep and keeps brain cool and calm. Thus it effectively treats ADHD.

-Jatamansi (*Nardostachys Jatamansi*)¹⁰: It is well known brain tonic and imparts a sense of calm and peace to the brain. It effectively treats mental retardation and mental disorders. It reduces hyper activity, restlessness and aggressiveness in children. Thus it is the best *Ayurvedic* approach to treat ADHD.

-Vacha (*Acoruscalamus*): It contains active and potent psycho-pharmacological molecules which improves memory and learning capabilities. It has been used as anti epileptic and anti hysteric herbs since centuries. Thus it is a very potent herb for depression and anxiety. It is very effective to treat the forgetfulness and inattention disorder of ADHD.

-Brahmi (*Bacopamoneri*)¹¹: *Brahmi* has been traditionally used for its medicinal properties. The herbal extract of *Brahmi* contains various active molecules like alkaloids, saponins, sterobacoside, herpestine etc. It is a neuro-protective and protect the nerves degeneration. It effectively treats depression and epilepsy and it has been observed that *Brahmi* treats depression equal to commercially available anti-depressant drugs.

Thereby Ayurveda has a very vast scope to treat attention deficit/hyper activity disorder effectively by *Shamana* therapy.

Panchakarma procedures: *Panchakarma* presents a unique approach of *Ayurveda* with specially designed procedure of internal cleansing of the body. It provides not only a purification on a cellular level but also deep calm and subsequent access to one's own being or consciousness. *Panchakarma* has a full therapy role as promotive, preventive & curative procedure. The *Vedic* concept of *Pragyapradh*¹² "the mistake of the intellect", is credited as the cause of all disease. *Ayurveda* is dedicated to the restoration of this reality. Some procedures like *Abhayang*, *Nasya*, *Murdha Tarpan* etc. are indicated in neurological and psychological disorders and can be also useful in ADHD, as these all procedures give calm and peace of mind.

Abhayang(oleationtherapy):- *Abhayanga* is a form of *Ayurvedic* therapy which involves massaging the whole body with luke warm medicated oils. Oleating the body helps in pacification of *Vata* which is responsible for hyper active behaviour in ADHD patients. So, massage therapy can be successfully used in ADHD patients.

Shiro Basti:-*ShiroBasti* is a one of the treatment of *Ayurveda* in which oil is made to retain on the scalp for a prescribed time. This procedure can lead to a state of alertness and calmness which can be very useful in ADHD

Other procedure *Nasya*, *Murdha Tarpana* can be also very useful in ADHD, as these procedures may lead to improves the cerebral function, enhances the alertness and concentration abilities.

CONCLUSION

The absence of specific treatment for Attention Deficit Disorder makes it all the more imperative to consider complementary and alternative approaches of treatment. *Panchakarma* procedures, *Medhya* drugs have definitely shown outcome on the disease and thus pave way to further researches in employing *Ayurvedic* methods towards the management of neurological disorders. This field of study still remains a obscurity and needs lot to be done.

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