

AN APPRAISAL ON AYURVEDA PERSPECTIVES ON POST COVID ANXIETY DISORDERS W.S.R. TO CHITTODVEGA

Dr. Chitra Karekar^{1*}, Dr. Vipeen Atram² and Dr. Pooja Kombe³

¹Assistant Professor, Kayachikitsa Department, BMAC&RH, Butibori, Nagpur.

²Assistant Professor Shalyatantra Department, BMAC&RH, Butibori, Nagpur.

³Assistant Professor, Kayachikitsa department, D.Y.Patil College, Pune.

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*Corresponding Author: Dr. Chitra Karekar

Assistant Professor, Kayachikitsa Department, BMAC&RH, Butibori, Nagpur.

ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the holistic science having its roots back in ancient times still the principles explained in Ayurveda classics are immensely scientific and applicable in present era also. SARS- Cov 2 means Covid 19 infection affected the population worldwide. People suffered from respiratory illness in this disease but the recent studies and clinical data shows that this Covid 19 infection do not simply affect the respiratory system but it has long term effects on overall immune system. Post covid anxiety disorder is the new challenge for medical fraternity. Ayurveda signifies such pandemics as Janpadoddhvansa. Post covid anxiety disorders can be correlated with Chittodvega mentioned in Ayurveda classics. Ayurveda has a very promising treatment module for Manas Roga and these principles are applicable to anxiety disorders also. This article is aimed to review the data from various sources related to Covid 19 and anxiety disorders.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Covid 19, Post covid anxiety, Chittodvega.

INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of 2019, a novel coronavirus nominated as SARS-CoV-2 was declared as a global pandemic by WHO.^[1] The pandemic has high global impacts including high rates of mortality and morbidity and loss of income and sustained social isolation for many people which leads to an impact on mental health.^[2] People faced many challenges and problems in this pandemic. Concerns about potential increases in mental health conditions had already prompted 90% of countries surveyed to include mental health and psychosocial support in their COVID-19 response plans, but major gaps and concerns remain.^[3] The isolation stigma, sufferings due to infection, fatigue, tiredness and mental depression are commonly found symptoms in many patients. Mental anxiety patients caught the attention of practitioners globally. However, mental illnesses need a wholesome treatment plan for betterment of patients. There is no standard treatment for mental anxiety depression like diseases in modern science. Ayurveda being a holistic science has a key to diagnose and cure such conditions. So, Ayurveda medicines are specifically recommended for such illnesses. Along with this, Yoga, Meditation, Suryanaskara are also found useful.

Ayurveda Panchakarma procedures play a crucial role in treatment plan.

Anxiety according to Ayurveda- Ayurveda is a rich source of ancient heritage and an ocean of knowledge. Acharya Charaka has described Chittodvega (continuous anxious state of mind) as Manas Dosha Vikar.^[4] The signs and symptoms described by Charaka are very much similar to a continuous anxious state of mind.

Depression and Anxiety are often observed to co-exist. Too much mental stress is a trigger that can result in mental disturbances leading to Depression or Anxiety. Stress is actually a normal physical response to events that make one feel threatened. Whenever there is danger, whether it's real or imagined, the body's defense kicks into high gear in a rapid, automatic process known as the "fight-or-flight" reaction, or the stress response. However, excessive stress when left unmanaged can result in several illnesses including mental disorders such as Depression and Anxiety. Ayurveda treatment protocols for mental disorders includes shaman and shodhana therapy along with yoga, meditation and pranayam. A wide description about panchakarma procedures in Anxiety disorders is found in Ayurveda

classics. Details about such procedures are explained below.

1. Abhyanga: It involves the full body massage with medicated herbal oils. Abhyanga therapy increases blood circulation to remove metabolic wastes and toxins from the body. Anxiety is always associated with continuous stress and continuous depressive thoughts in mind. According to Ayurveda continuous thoughts in mind are because of vitiated Vata Dosha. Abhyang therapy is medicated oil massage and this oil is said to be best for Vata dosha disorders. It stimulates vital pressure points, which leads to nervous stimulation and reduction in Stress, Anxiety, and Depression. Abhyanga balances the Doshas and treats Mental, Emotional, and Physical disorders.

This therapy boosts Immunity and leads to well-being by preventing Stress and Depression.^[5]

2. Padabhyanga: This Ayurvedic massage includes the stimulation of nerve endings and vital pressure points present in the foot to balance the Doshas. This promotes mental calmness.

This leads to the improvement in blood circulation in the lower leg, which revitalizes the tired feet.^[6]

3. Nasya: Nasya means the administration of medicated oils or drugs through nostrils. This treatment stimulates the vital centres of the brain to overcome problems such as Stress, Anxiety, Depression, and Insomnia. Nasya starts with a facial massage or steam application to the face, forehead, ears, and neck. Afterwards, instillation of drugs in nasal route, which then spread through venous (blood circulation) and nervous system into the areas present around the nostrils.^[7] It unblocks the energy channels and gets rid of Depression, Anxiety, and Headache. Moreover, it boosts Immunity and improves eye health.

4. Pizhichil: Pizhichil treatment involves the squeezing of warm medicated oils to help the system retune itself thereby inducing both physical and mental relaxation. Pizhichil starts with a gentle and synchronised massage on all parts of the body excluding the head. Pizhichil rejuvenates the body and boosts the functioning of the nervous system. It reduces Vata dosha, Tension, Anxiety, Depression, Muscular aches, Rheumatic problems, Insomnia, and Sexual problems. It also tones the skin by promoting the blood circulation.^[8]

5. Shirodhara: This healing massage involves the continuous pouring of medicated oil on the forehead with pendulum motion for a specific period of time. Shirodhara may also include the pouring of decoctions, buttermilk, or even water.

Continuous pouring of oil on the forehead stimulates and soothes the hypothalamus to induce sleep by reducing

Stress. This therapy is performed for 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the condition of the person. The person is also given a gentle head massage before or during the procedure. Shirodhara boosts the immune system and improves the blood circulation around the head and face to effectively treat Hypertension, Insomnia and Depression.^[9]

Effect of stress on body-When the body perceives a threat, the nervous system responds by releasing a flood of stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol. This actually prepares your body to be more alert. However, when stress becomes a regular phenomenon, high levels of cortisol can show several detrimental effects on the body. Increased cortisol level is associated with High blood pressure, Sugar imbalance, Muscle stiffness, and increased heart rate. These physiological effects lead to health issues such as Pain, Fatigue, Low immunity, Sleep problems, Depression & Anxiety, etc.^[10]

Mode of Action of Ayurveda treatment protocol in anxiety

Depression is caused due to Kapha imbalance which vitiates the Vata further vitiating the pitta resulting in interference in the normal functioning of the nervous system leading to Depression.

As per the Ayurveda theory, aggravation of Prana Vayu affects the normal functioning of the nervous system thereby triggering mental imbalance. Hence Ayurvedic treatments for Depression and Anxiety focus on pacifying the aggravation of Vata to regain normal functions^[11] Practicing Yoga and Pranayama along with Ayurveda therapies has proven to be beneficial in reversing or halting the progression of the disease.

Internal medications for Anxiety depression- Ayurveda classics mention about various medicines for mental health. These includes some Churna like Brahmi, Shankhapushpi, Yashtimadhu etc. Ghrita formulations like Brahmi Ghrit, Kalyanaka Ghrit are also found effective.

Pranayama for anxiety- Pranayama is the yogic breathing in which a practice of deep breathing help to reduce stress and restore balance in the mind. Prana refers to the life force within human body and controlled breathing exercises help to restore the wellbeing of this Prana.^[12] Everyday practice of Pranayam and meditation boosts the mental health and helps to control the negative thoughts in mind. In Covid -19 pandemic, a lot of negativity spread in the world created mental burden over mankind and as a long term effect of this infection many people are experiencing depression. This post covid depression can be cured by proper medicinal treatment by Ayurveda physician along with Pranayama and meditation.

CONCLUSION

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. In the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by a massive 25%, according to a scientific brief released by the World Health Organization (WHO). Anxiety depression needs a holistic approach. Ayurveda is a promising treatment modality for anxiety. Mental health awareness is very important. Post covid anxiety needs to be taken care cautiously. Ayurveda treatment should be practiced and promoted globally.

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