

Prospect of Ayurveda in Palliative Care of Cancer

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Theme- Integration of Ayurveda in Palliative care: Case studies and Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

Cancer is the leading cause of death worldwide, where the conventional therapy is used for its recovery. Chemotherapy, radiation therapy and surgery form the backbone of conventional treatment. But these conventional therapy have many challenges which gives poor impact in patient's quality of life by the side effects of chemotherapy and radiotherapy, recurrence of the disease etc. So, in cancer, palliative treatment by Ayurveda shows promising results in bringing benefit to the patient. Through this narrative view, here we can explore the scope of Ayurvedic interventions in improving palliative care practices of terminally ill cancer patients. Ayurveda can play a major role in palliative care through some suitable treatment procedures along with conventional treatment. Ayurveda interventions like Vrana ropana karma (wound care), bringhaniya basti (per rectal drug administration), kavala-gandusha (gargling), nasya (nasal instillation), daiva-vyapasraya chikitsa (psychotherapy), snehan-svedan (massage-fomentation) etc. may contribute as alternative to the ongoing palliative care practices of wound care, oral hygiene, malnutrition, stress and pain management etc. Conventional treatment measures can be supported by these Ayurvedic interventions for better convenience of the patients. The study deals with the various prospects of Ayurveda in relation to palliative care of cancer.

Keywords- Cancer, palliative care, Ayurveda,

I. INTRODUCTION

Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychological and spiritual¹. Thus, Palliative care and curative care are often complementary and are intricate over

months to years to improve the quality of life of the patient.

As per World Health Organization (WHO) Global Atlas of palliative care at end of life², there were approximately 54.6 million deaths worldwide in 2011. Globally in 2011, over 29 million people died from diseases requiring palliative care. The estimated number of people in need of palliative care at the end of life is 20.4 million. This fact highlights the need of focus on palliative care in such disease conditions.

Cancer is generic term for a large group of diseases that can affect any part of the body. "One defining feature of cancer is the rapid creation of abnormal cells that grow beyond their usual boundaries, and which can then invade adjoining parts of the body and spread to other organs; the latter process is referred to as metastasis, the primary cause of death from cancer. Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for nearly 10 million deaths in 2020³. Cancer mortality is reduced when cases are detected and treated early. Treatment includes surgery, radiotherapy and/or systemic therapy (chemotherapy, hormonal treatments, immunotherapy, targeted biological therapies). Palliative care gives relief from physical, psychosocial, and spiritual problems in 90% of advanced stages of cancer.

Ayurveda is the science of life which deals with advantages and disadvantages as well as the happy and unhappy status of life along with what is good & bad for life, its measurement & the life itself⁴. Cancer as a chronic disease creates imbalance of tridosha, dhatus and triguna. Certain types of chemotherapy causes delayed side effects which may discourage the patient about how long the treatment will last affecting their quality of life. The quality of life⁵ aims to capture the well-being regarding both the positive and negative elements in the entity. Ayurveda can reduce the side effects of chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy as well as assist the body in its recovery process. Psych

immunological and rehabilitation and palliative care of advanced cancer patients can be possible through Ayurveda therapeutic procedures and medications as mentioned in the classics.

II. REVIEW & DISCUSSION

Surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy are used as specific conventional treatment of cancer. Palliative care is a holistic approach used to provide symptomatic relief to the patients. Medicines used in palliative care can be common medications but used for a different indication based on established practices with varying degree of evidence. As the chemo drugs travel throughout the body very fast, the normal cells of the hair follicles, mouth, digestive tract and reproductive tract, blood forming cells in the bone marrow are most likely to be affected. Sometimes, the side effects may go away fairly quickly but some might stay over years. The common side effects of chemotherapy⁶ include fatigue, hair loss, bruising and bleeding, anemia, nausea and vomiting, mouth ulcers, weight changes, infertility, skin and nail changes, constipation, concentration problem, peripheral neuropathy while the side effects of radiation therapy include early affects-headache, radiation burn, hearing loss, seizures, memory loss, sterility, sore throat, jaw stiffness etc. The

specific side effects of radiation therapy depends on the area where radiation is given. For instance, many chemo drugs lower the number of platelets for a time. People often become discouraged about how long their treatment lasts or the side effects they have. Some symptoms are relatively easy to control with medications such as metoclopramide, for nausea and vomiting, morphine for pain while others such as depression and neuropathy require a multimodal approach combining pharmacological and non-pharmacological approach. But these palliative medicines have got noted negative impacts on the body as tabulated in (Table 01) as like constipation caused due to over use of morphine, shortness of breath due to excessive use of clonazepam etc., so to overcome these, a supportive palliative care by Ayurveda may be helpful. Palliative care in Ayurveda for cancer can be attained by three folds of treatment i.e Daivavyapasraya chikitsa (divine therapy), Yuktivyapasraya chikitsa (rational therapy) and Sattwavajaya chikitsa (psychotherapy). This therapeutic principles in Ayurveda based on several things which includes pacification of doshas, potentiation of dhatus, restoring function of Agni, cleaning the obstruction in the Srotas and preventing the formation of Ama.

Table 01-

Sl.no	Side effects of Chemotherapy or Radiotherapy	Modern palliative care	Side effects of the palliative care ⁷
01	Any kind of pain	Morphine, Fentanyl, Codeine, Paracetamol, Methadone	Constipation, chest pain, severe muscle stiffness
02	Diarrhea	Loperamide	Bloating, drowsiness, constipation
03	Nausea & Vomiting	Metoclopramide, Cyclizine, Ondansetron	Diarrhea, dizziness, palpitation, blurred vision
04	Breathlessness	Dexamethasone	Heartburn, headache, stomach upset
05	Agitation	Midazolam, Haloperidol	Hiccups, vomiting, cough, headache,
06	Anxiety & Depression	Diazepam, Fluoxetine, Amitriptyline, clonazepam	Confusion, Drowsy, tremors, hypoxia, shortness of breath
07	Convulsion	Sodium Valproate, Carbamazepine	Stomach pain, dry or sore mouth, tremors, headache, weight gain

Daivavyapasraya chikitsa⁸ is a non-pharmacological therapy based on faith in God or worship and rituals. Chanting of mantra and Japa

are major practices come under this chikitsa. This therapy directly or indirectly influences Manasa, reducing stress and enhancing inner positivity.

Every cancer patient is asked to perform these type of spiritual practices irrespective of religion to reduce their psychological stress and to live a peaceful life by incorporating positivity in them.

Yuktivyapasraya chikitsa⁹ is a logical or rationale approach of disease management based on the type of diseases and requirements of patient's conditions. This therapy mainly encompasses two

types of treatments i.e. internal and external therapy along with various potent Ayurvedic formulations and single herbs. The treatment principle followed here can be used to treat the various side effects of chemotherapy and radiotherapy as an alternative to the modern palliative care which is tabulated in Table 02-

TABLE 01-

Sl.no	Side Effect of chemotherapy /radiotherapy	Ayurvedic Intervention ¹⁰	
		Upakrama	Ekadravya/ Ousadha
01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cachexia ● Patient who cannot have oral feeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brighaniya basti (mamsa rasa, vasa, ● Snehana-Abhyanga 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indukanta ghrita ● Chyawanprash avaleha
02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Various kinds of pain including neuropathic pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Swedana-Nadisweda,Pindasweda, upanaha sweda ● Basti- Niruha basti, Anuvasana basti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dasamula kwath ● Rasna ● Nirgundi ● Shallaki ● Guggulu
03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nausea ● Vomitting 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eladi gutika ● Charidirupi Vati ● Morich ● Elaichi
04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Constipation ● Bowel incontinence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Basti- Matra basti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eranda taila ● Icchabhedi Rasa
05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mouth ulcer ● Sore throat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vrana Ropana ● Vrana dhupana ● Vrana Prakshalan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kamdudha Rasa ● Jatipatra swaras ● Irimedadi taila
06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Loss of appetite 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lavanbhaskar churna ● Agnisandipan Vati ● Chitraka Vati
07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Insomnia ● Mental stress ● Depression ● Amnesia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shirodhara ● Shiropichu ● Shirovirechan ● Nidrajanan drugs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tagara ● Aswagandha ● Jatamansi ● Medhya rasayan
06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Xerostomia ● Radiation burn ulcer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kavala ● Gandusa ● Vrana ropana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Triphala kwath ● Irimedadi taila ● Yashtimadhu ghrita
07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Skin changes ● Radiation burn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lepana karma ● Dagdha vrana chikitsa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jatyadi taila ● Haridra ● Ghritakumari
08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bedsores in bedridden patients ● Non healing cancer wound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vranadhoopana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jatyadi ghrta ● Neem

Sattvavajaya chikitsa¹¹ utilized for mental illness and used as psycho-behavioral therapy. This

therapy helps to control kama, krodha, bhaya, moha, lobha, irsha, visada and dwesa. These

elements are considered as causes of mental illness. Asanas(yoga) and Pranayam (breath exercises) along with dhyana (meditation) and Aptwakya (counselling) is mainly the base of this therapy. All of the cancer patients are advised to take counselling from the psychologists and perform Yoga , Pranayam and meditation at regular intervals to provide relief to stress, anxiety, depression etc of the patient and hence, strengthening the mental health of the patient.

III. CONCLUSION

Palliative care for cancer can be supported by the Ayurvedic principles of treatment along with the conventional treatment for bringing the most benefit to the patient. Daivavyapasraya chikitsa like the spiritual practices and Sattvavajaya chikitsa like yoga, pranayama, meditation and counselling helps to boost the mental health of the patient by reducing the psychological stress leading to a positive life. Yuktivyapasraya chikitsa by various upakarmas and potent Ayurvedic formulations and single herbs can reduce the side effects of chemotherapy and radiotherapy of the conventional treatment. Thus, Ayurveda have a wide scope in palliative care with its concept and treatment modalities for the betterment of patient's condition by reducing the suffering of the patient and improving the quality of life.

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