

Review Article

Conceptual Study of Ayurvedic Management of A.D.H.D. (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) in Children: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is an ancient science dealing with mostly prevention from diseases and cure if needed. A.D.H.D. (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) is mostly found in children of 6 to 12 age group. Affected child commonly suffers trouble in paying attention, acts without thinking and suffers trouble in sitting still. Behavioral changes can cause problems at home, at school and with relationships. Diagnosis of the disease is mostly dependent upon behavioral tendencies. There is no cure for A.D.H.D., but treatment controls the symptoms.

The article reviews the literature for Ayurvedic management to battle the symptoms of A.D.H.D.

Key words: A.D.H.D., *Ayurveda*, children.

INTRODUCTION

ADHD is neurodevelopmental ⁽¹⁾ disorder characterized by problems in paying attention, excess activity, uncontrolled behavior which is inappropriate for the age of child. The disease most commonly affects the children of age group 6 to 12. Despite being most commonly studied and diagnosed mental disorder in children and adolescents, the cause is yet not known in majority case. W.H.O.(World Health Organization) estimated that it affected about 39 million people as of 2013. 5 to 7 % children are getting affected with similar rates in various countries. It is found more commonly in boys than in girls (ratio 3:1). Stimulant medicines are recommended for treatment but their long-term effectiveness is unclear. Behavioral therapy with medications is also a good line of treatment but its use is contradictory. The controversies involved physicians, clinicians, teachers, policymakers, parents, and media. *Ayurveda*

consider every life as a different ⁽²⁾ combination of *Doshas*. There are three *Doshas* namely *vata*, *pitta* and *Kapha*. Balancing them is the prime protocol of treatment, as per *Ayurveda*. Normally *Kapha* dominates in the pediatric age. ⁽³⁾ By considering modern and classical *Ayurvedic* literature we can have a standard treatment for A.D.H.D. which could be safe, not having any side effects leading controversies.

Aims and objectives: To review the literature for Ayurvedic management of A.D.H.D (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Classical texts of *Ayurveda* and modern texts including digital media, internet regarding the subjects were used as source material in the study.

Signs and symptoms of A.D.H.D.

- Inattention ⁽⁴⁾
- Hyperactivity (common in adults) ⁽⁵⁾

- Disruptive behavior and impulsivity⁽⁶⁾
- Associated features are academic difficulties, problems with relationships.

Mostly signs and symptoms appear before age of seven.⁽⁷⁾ It makes difficult to distinguish between A.D.H.D. and normal behavior. Other symptoms include decreased appetite, sleep disturbances, tics (abruptive and sudden movements or sounds), pain in abdomen, headache, increased anxiety etc. Symptoms are detailed in symptomatic classification as under.

Types of A.D.H.D.:

A symptomatic classification is discussed below which will explore symptoms of specific type in details.

1. Predominantly inattentive: Child has all above symptoms with easy distraction, common forgetfulness. He also have difficulty in focusing on a particular task, becomes bored with a task within a few minutes. He has difficulty in learning something new; have trouble completing homework, often losing things (e.g. Pencils, toys, assignments, books). He don't listen parents when parents interact with him. He struggles to follow instructions, have difficulty in understandings.

2. Hyper active-impulsive: Child talks non-stop, dash around, touch here and there, plays with anything and everything, have troubles with sitting silently, constant in a motion, have difficulties in doing quiet tasks or activities, very impatient, acts without regard for consequences, show out emotions without restraint, often interrupt conversations or activities of other children.

3. Mixed: both types of characters are found in the child inattentive and hyperactive.

Causes of A.D.H.D.:

- 1. Genetics:** Studies indicate that the disorder is often inherited from parents with genetics determining about 75% cases. Siblings of children with A.D.H.D. are 3 to 4 times more likely to develop the disorder.

2. Environment diet and abuse:

Some environmental factors might play a role. Alcohol intake during pregnancy can cause A.D.H.D. Lead, organophosphates, increases the risk of A.D.H.D. Abuse of tobacco during pregnancy may develop A.D.H.D.

3. Infections: Premature birth, LBW (low birth weight), infections during pregnancy, brain injury during labor may increase risk. Allergies to certain foods worsen A.D.H.D. symptoms in children.

4. Social: poor educational and social status is also said to be one of the reason to develop the risk of A.D.H.D.

Diagnosis:

1. By assessment of child's behavioral and mental development: A.D.H.D. is diagnosed mostly by the feedbacks and observations from the parents, teachers, and relatives about the behavior of the child. In many cases teacher raises the concern. Diagnosis should be differentiated by anxiety disorders⁽⁸⁾ and depression.
2. By quantitative E.E.G

Ayurvedic management:

Because of the controversies of the opinion about the disease progress, the diagnosis of the disease becomes difficult and so the treatment also; but behavioral therapy combined with stimulant drugs stands as better line of treatment in Allopathic medicine. As per Ayurveda, disease symptoms can be related to *Unmada*. Acharya Charaka described mental illness (*Unmada*⁽⁹⁾) is a disease featured by unstable mind, intellect, consciousness, knowledge, memory, inclination, bad manners and poor conducts of behavior. Adult Hyperactive impulsive type of A.D.H.D. may be directly correlated with *Unmada*. Here behavioral therapy and some herbal preparations, single herbs, *kalpas* (combinations), herbomineral preparations

acting beneficially on symptoms of A.D.H.D. are illustrated.

1. Behavioral therapy (SatvaAvajayachikitsa):⁽¹⁰⁾

A sound mind dwells in the sound body. So the indulgence of the senses (indriyas) from their respective performance (bad habits) should be curtailed.⁽¹¹⁾ It is assisted with the daily diet regulation and making sleep time-table of an affected child. Diet should be of nutritional balance, on proper time, avoiding excess oil and spice, rich in antioxidants and immunity boosters. Sound sleep and a good amount of water intake is also a must. Scalp massage (shiro abhyanga), massage of soles of feet with sesame oil is also beneficial in hyperactive type of A.D.H.D. Daily work should be listed and overcoming problems (e.g. during writing) should be handled one by one and slowly. Cow's ghee, cod-liver oil, vitamin D3 are playing good role to develop brain activities.

2. Nootropic herbs:⁽¹²⁾ following herbs have possible action on psycho-neurological deficits:

- **Shankhapushpi**⁽¹³⁾ (**convolvulus pluricaulis**): it is one of the nature's precise remedy for preventing brain weakness. It has been used since ages to sharpen intellect and to promote mental power. In Ayurveda *shankhapushpi* is believed to be *medhyarasayana* (brain tonic). Half teaspoonful powder of the herb with milk should be taken twice a day. It is beneficial in insomnia, anxiety, stress, loss of memory.
- **Brahmi**⁽¹⁴⁾ (**centella asiatica**): it is another useful brain tonic. It can be taken in powder or paste form along with milk. Fresh juice of leaves in a dose of 10ml once a day is also proved beneficial.
- **Jatamansi**⁽¹⁵⁾ (**nordostachys jatamansi**): it tones up the brain and strengthens mental abilities. It is specially used in mental diseases like depression, epilepsy; insomnia nice results are shown by jatamansi extract.

- **Kushmanda**⁽¹⁶⁾ (**white gourd/benincasa hispida**): it is useful in treatment of pitta vikara, bleeding disorders, epilepsy, and insanity. The juice of the fruit is prescribed by *Susruta* for mental disorders and insanity.
- **Kalyanakaghrita**:⁽¹⁷⁾ Described by *Acharya Charaka*, useful in *Unmada* patients. It proves useful in children A.D.H.D.
- **Dhoopana chikitsa**:⁽¹⁸⁾ *Acharya Kashyapa* described various herbs incinerated and their fumes are inhaled in dhoopakalpadhyaya. It may prove useful.
- **Herbo-mineral preparations**: as per Ayurveda, metals like gold in their soluble form (*suvarnaprashana*⁽¹⁹⁾) are prescribed in *MedhyaChikitsa* (treatment of intellect). They may seem useful. Minerals and heavy metals should be avoided in their metalloid form in pediatric group.
- Changes of environment, tranquil music at bed time, decoration of rooms of children as per their likings also modify the behavior of child.

DISCUSSION

A.D.H.D. is the disease with conflicts about its opinion with respect to diagnosis, line of treatment. So the disease remains ignored though it is commonly affecting in children. Some herbs, therapeutic techniques are discussed above and comparison between Ayurvedic psychological disorders with A.D.H.D. is done. Ethical Ayurvedic preparations play useful role in treating A.D.H.D.

CONCLUSION

A.D.H.D. is a neurobehavioral disease where the behavior is affected greatly in child affected by it. Ayurveda has a collection of wonderful herbs, preparations of herbs, and some techniques discussed above showing nice results in controlling the symptoms of A.D.H.D. It can be concluded that Ayurvedic treatments can be safely employed to treat A.D.H.D. Also

there is an urgent need to standardize these Ayurvedic preparations for A.D.H.D. in children.

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