

## GERIATRIC DISEASE MANAGEMENT: CONTRIBUTION OF AYURVEDA WITH EVIDENCE BASED RESEARCH

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### ABSTRACT

Geriatrics is a progressive irreversible phenomenon of body rather than disease. It is manifested as a medical as well as social problem world over. It is natural phenomenon of becoming old and decaying. Conventional system of medicine is not very satisfactory in this problem as lack of holistic and comprehensive approach towards this problem. Ayurveda emphasizes holistic sense to offer curative as well as promotive way to explore the problems and provide remedy also. Evidence based medicine and treatment has become the need of the hour. For upliftment of level of disease management, it is a strong need to follow evidence based researches rather than only follow the principles. Hence there is a strong urge to strengthen this evidence based research system in Ayurveda to explain its magnitude on a worldwide level. *Rasayanachikitsa*, *Panchkarma* therapies and other principles of treatment of Ayurveda is a well proven fact in old age disease management. To resist the frigidity of old age, we must combine conceptual as well as evidence based researches also.

**Keywords:** *Ayurveda*, Geriatric health, *Rasayanachikitsa*, *Panchkarma*, *Ayurveda* medicines, Evidence based research

### INTRODUCTION

Ageing is an irreversible consequence of the human body. The old age is frequently associated with set of illness as well as discomfort in healthy life style. Old age also creates different life style disorders like diabetes, hypertension, cardio-vascular disease, dyslipidaemia etc. Ageing requires special attention in diagnosis of disease as well as their treatment. The biggest challenge with geriatric diseases is that in most of the cases the condition cannot be attributed to a single cause or in certain conditions of neuropsychiatric disorders like, Senile dementia, Alzheimer's disease, depression, the structural cause is unknown. In such cases conventional system of medicine fails to come

out with effective management. It makes sense to offer new innovations at the level of Ayurvedic approach also by evidence system of medicine to explain the questions arising worldwide. Evidence based Researches not only support the principles of Ayurveda but also pave a new pathway for the management. *Ayurveda* cannot stop this inevitable process, but can provide an adaptable and comfortable medical management to retard the process as well as and can provide a healthy aging with the help of evidence based Researches

### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ADULT AND GERIATRIC MANAGEMENT<sup>1</sup>

Geriatrics differs from standard adult medicine because it focuses on the

unique needs of the elderly person. The aged body is different physiologically from the younger adult body, and during old age, the decline of various organ systems becomes manifest. Previous health issues and lifestyle choices produce a different constellation of diseases and symptoms in different people. The appearance of symptoms depends on the remaining healthy reserves in the organs. Geriatricians distinguish between diseases and the effects of normal aging. For example, renal impairment may be a part of aging, but renal failure and urinary incontinence are not. Geriatricians aim to treat diseases that are present and achieve healthy aging.

### GERIATRICS IN AYURVED

*Ayurveda* quotes Human body (*Sharira*) — ‘*Shiryateitishariram*’ Human body is bound to destroy, it is continuously destroying. *Ayurveda* has given the description of some diseases which are irreversible and related with nature and considered as *swabhavaja vyadhies*<sup>2</sup> (natural disorders). *Jara* viz. aging process is one among them. Such changes start right from the birth and get advancement with chronological age. *Ayurveda* divides life cycle of a person into 3 phases-*Baala, madhyama, jeerna*<sup>3</sup>. Every person has to pass through these decaying changes. During these *jeernavastha* or *vriddhavastha*, there is predominance of *vatadosha* in the body. Aging can be timely or untimely. As it is fact, *Ayurvedic* concepts believe in prevention of disease as well as cure of disease. It does not aim at creating only the health of the individual but simultaneously provide the preservation of health. It has a focused branch termed *Rasayana* or *Jarachikitsa* in *Ayurveda*. According to *Shrangdhara* which destroys *Jara* (aging) and *vyadhies* (disease)<sup>4</sup> is called *Rasayana*. *Rasayana* is a method to arrest or retard the degenerative changes in old age as well

as increase the energy of a healthy person<sup>5</sup>. Many *Rasayana* drugs are also can also be very well practiced in age related problems. Undoubtedly the *Rasayana* therapy in *Ayurveda* is a unique and promotional therapeutic methodology in context of geriatrics concerns. *Ayurveda* opines about maintenance of homeostasis of *Doshas, Dhatus, malas, agni* to retain a healthy life<sup>6</sup>. Various principles have been elaborately described for the maintenance of health in *Ayurveda*. Hence, if these principles are applied in context of ageing with a practical approach keeping in view status of current scenario, ageing can be comfortable and related diseases can be prevented.

### PREVENTION OF OLD AGE DISORDERS WITH THE HELP OF AYURVEDA

It's not the aging but the consequences of ageing which make panic the peoples in old age. By acquiring some basic principles of *Ayurveda* we can attain a healthy aging. Broadly all types of conduct in *Ayurveda* are described as *Aahara* (Diet), *Vihaara* (activities). These are wholesome set of rules which can retard premature ageing as well as troubles associated with it. Maintenance of healthy life by proper and acceptable actions in physical and mental level is *swasthavratta*. By adaptation of *swasthavratta*, one can achieve a healthy life. Elaborate description of *swasthvrattais* available in *Ayurveda*.

These can be-

- Follow the proper *dincharya*<sup>7</sup> (daily activities) as per *Ayurveda* e.g. *anjana, abhyanga*
- Follow the proper *ritucharya*<sup>8</sup> (seasonal regimen)
- Never suppress the natural urges (which are described 13 in number)<sup>9</sup>
- Follow the proper diet rule as per day and season which is very well empha-

sised in *Ayurveda* as elderly people has different nutritional requirement as compare to younger ones. Old age peoples are more vulnerable to malnutrition as anorexia, dementia, and poor dentition; delayed gastric emptying and many other disorders may develop with ageing. Dehydration is also very common. Hence these should be supplemented in a proper manner prior to development of any disease.

- Code of conduct should be followed in order to maintain mental wellbeing along with physical health. Stress is an inherent part of most people's lives. These can be overcome by following proper ethical code of conduct in life<sup>10</sup>.

### RASAYANA CHIKITSA IN AGING

*Ayurveda* has a focused branch of medicine called *Rasayana* (rejuvenation therapy) which deals with diseases as well as problems related with ageing. Benefits of *Rasayan* therapy<sup>11</sup> are the promotion of memory and intelligence; immunity against disease and decay; the preservation of youth, lustre, complexion and voice; the maintenance of optimum strength of the body and sense; it confers the capacity or the achievement of what is said; and the command of the respect and regard of people and the promotion of bodily glow. It can minimise the impacts of ageing and also improves intelligence, memory, complexion, etc. It is quite effective for immune-enhancement, free-radical scavenging and anti-stress.

*Rasayana* is normally advised during this degenerative phase of life. *Ayur-*

*veda* has advised two basic methods for *Rasayana*<sup>12</sup> depends upon the tolerance or *satva* of the patient of the body for eliminating the toxins from the system by a three to four months rigorous and organized process known as *Kutipraveshika Rasayana*. This process needs for utmost care to be taken by the physician and subject including the environment where the treatment is done. Hence this *Kutipraveshika* remains theoretical tale and practically difficult for physician as well as the patient. The second approach of *Ayurveda*, which is quite popular and practiced today, is called *Vataatapika-Rasayana*, which is suitable in current busy life style as it has a relatively easy mode of administration without any restrictive pre-conditions.

*Rasayana* therapy will be fruitful only when the body has removed the toxins with the help of preceding *panchkarma therapy*. We get ill response of *Rasayana* if the body has not purified fully and simultaneously not followed the *pathyaapathya* (do's and don'ts).

### RASAYANA ACCORDING TO AGE

*Sarangadhara* mentioned a very beautiful quotation about aging. With each passing decade childhood, growth, luster/beauty, intellect, lustre of skin, Vision, sexual ability, physical ability, thinking ability, and locomotion starts to loss from the body (*Saragadharasamhita*). A monograph prepared by K.N.Udupa and R.H.Singh shows the guidelines for selecting drug for specific decade

**Table 1: Selected drugs for specific decade of life**

Age in years	Bio-values which are on decline	Suitable <i>Rasayana</i>
1-10	<i>Balya</i> (childhood)	<i>Vacha, Kashmari, Swarna</i>
11-20	<i>Vridhhi</i> (Growth)	<i>Kashmari, Bala, Ashwagandha</i>
21-30	<i>Chavi</i> (colour and complexion)	<i>Aamlaki, Lauha Rasayana</i>

31-40	Medha (intelligence)	Shankpushpi, Yashtimadhu, Ashwagandha, Guduchi
41-50	Tvak (skin lustre)	Bhringraj, Somraji, Priyala, Haridra
51-60	Drishti (vision)	Triphalaghrita, Sap-tamritlauha, Kataka
61-70	Shukra (semen)	Kapikacchubeeja, Ashwagandha, Krishnamusali, milk, ghritec.
71-80	Vikram (valour)	These age groups are not fit for Rasayana karma.
81-90	Buddhi (wisdom)	
91-10	Kaamendriya (Muscles and organs)	

**EVIDENCE BASED RESEARCH:**

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**Kravyadi Rasa, KaseesadiTailaVasti and TriphalaChurna in Hemorrhoids-** A clinical study on the effect of *Kravyadi Rasa*, *KaseesadiTailaVasti* and *TriphalaChurna* in the management of *Arsas*(Haemorrhoids), Journal of Research in Ayurveda & Siddha, Vol. XXV, No.1-2 (2004), PP 1-10.

### AGE STABILISING DRAVYAS<sup>13</sup>

Some *dravyas* are mentioned in *Ayurveda* which are if utilised daily can stabilise the age. They are-Cold water, milk, honey, *ghrita* in morning. Numerous single and compound *Rasayana* medicines possessing diversified actions like immune-modulation, free-radical scavenging, anti-cognitive effect, are described in *Ayurveda* literature for their use in health promotion and management of diseases with improvement in the quality of life.

### PANCHKAMA IN AGEING

Table 2-Types of *Panchkarma*

Disorder	Type of <i>panchkarma</i>
For cognition	<i>Shiro-vasti, Shiro-dhaara</i>
For senses	<i>Netratarpana, Nasya, Karna-poorana, Kaval-gandoosh</i>
For skin	<i>Abhyang, Pizhichil(kaysek)</i>
For <i>Vaata</i> disorders	<i>Basti</i>

### SUGGESTED AYURVEDA MEDICINES AND MANAGEMENT IN OLD AGE DISORDERS

Table 3: Medicine and management

Disease	Ayurveda drugs and management
Cardiac disorder	<i>Arjuna, Guggulu, Pushkarmula</i>
Senile dementia	<i>Brahmi</i> and other <i>medhya</i> drugs
Senile enlargement of prostate	<i>Varuna, Shigru</i>
Senile visual disorders	<i>Triphala</i>
Parkinsonism	<i>Kapikacchu</i>
Immunodeficiency	<i>Amrita, Amalaki</i>
Tension headache and other neurodegenerative disorders	<i>Shirodhara, Shiro-basti, Pindasweda</i>

*Ayurveda* practices a unique approach of bio-cleansing of body at macro as well as micro level of channels. It's best effort is maintaining homeostasis in the *doshas* of body, *agni* (digestive fire), *dhatus*, *malas*. *Panchkarma* is a bio-cleansing regimen which make body in homeostasis condition so that it can adapt the further therapies in a better way. The five-fold measures which are elaborately described in context of *panchkarma* are- *vamana* (therapeutic enema), *virechana* (therapeutic purgation), *asthanabasti* (therapeutic decoction enema), *anuvasanabasti* (therapeutic oil enema), *Nasya* (nasal administration of medicaments). *Panchkarma* is preceded by *snehana* (therapeutic oleation), *swdana* (sudation) and succeeded by *Samsarjan karma*. Thus *panchkarma* therapy is very effective in managing auto-immune disorders, musculo-skeletal disorders, and other chronic diseases.

We can have a concise look for it.

## STRATEGIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OLD AGE

- Calls for specialized training of Health-care in geriatric medicine.
- Promotional health care system in rural areas.
- Ensure good quality geriatric health services at the primary level
- Health care services should be holistic in approach as well as should be based on real needs of elderly peoples.
- Multi-pronged intervention programme should be viable.
- Researches on geriatric medicines of *Ayurveda* and *therapies* should be encouraged at govt.level.

## CONCLUSION

Ageing can be prevented or retarded by a holistic approach to combat geriatric concerns in a winning approach. The Government of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of AYUSH has launched the National Campaign on Ayurveda and Siddha for Geriatric Health Care on 23rd and 24th January 2008 for promotion of merits of Ayurveda and Siddha for the care of elderly in the Country. The whole perspective visualise inevidence based researches to support the principles of Ayurveda, can develop a scientific thinking. The principles should be tested which is the need of the current time. Therapies which are getting success in geriatric disorders should be documented well and further encouragement at government level should be provided.

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