

IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID PANDAMIC

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ABSTRACT

The global pandemic of Corona virus (COVID-19), also termed as health emergency affecting nearly 200 countries and territories has led to negative emotions of fear in the general population. The healthcare regulators and the governments have imposed emergencies and lockdowns in their countries which has led to an adverse effect on the mental health of general public giving rise to anxiety, depression, and associated mental illness. The fear and rising COVID-19 crisis is putting extreme limitations on our finite resources. This aims to improve status of mental health altered as a result of pandemic, help the general public to improve the wellbeing in this detached period of isolation. With no standard treatment or vaccine yet, the goal is primarily symptomatic relief for those affected and preventive for those at risk. Most countries have limited the spread of COVID-19 through measures such as lockdowns, social distancing and voluntary self-isolation. Although such measures and the disease itself may have an adverse impact on mental health. In view of research from previous pandemic crisis, it is known that such situations are likely to increase stress levels and have negative psychiatric effects. The impact is likely to be felt by the general public, COVID-19 cases, their families and friends, also persons with pre-existing mental health conditions and healthcare workers. COVID pandemic related psychological distress in the general public, including symptoms of anxiety and depression, is associated with alterations in immune function includes elevated risk of respiratory tract infection.

Keywords: Mental health, COVID-19, *Swasthavirtta*, *Janapadodhwansa*.

INTRODUCTION

According to Ayurveda, every individual has their own unique characteristics called as the *Prakriti* which continues from birth to death. Further, every individual within the same environment doesn't have an equivalent resistance to an equivalent disease. This resistance which is also responsible to keep a check over severity and progression of the disease called as *Vyadhikshamatva* (Immunity).^[1] Exposure to chronic and daily stress such as quarantine, or severe psychological trauma can affect the circulatory system and therefore the emotional experience of the individual, resulting in an increased risk of developing a cardiovascular disease or mental illness. Subjects with co morbidities between mental diseases and other vital organ diseases are obviously more susceptible to be influenced by emotional stress due to the spread of COVID, with emotional responses characterized by fear, panic, and anger.^[2] Stress provokes two things, vasospasm in the vascular

system and immune suppression of the immune system.^[3] Physiological aspects of body responses towards stress: Almost any type of physical or mental stress can lead to secretion of ACTH and consequently cortisol as well. This increase is believed to result from increased activity in the limbic system, especially in the region of the amygdala and hippocampus, both of which then transmit signals to the posterior medial hypothalamus.

Stress stimuli activate the whole system to cause rapid release of cortisol, and therefore the cortisol successively initiates a series of metabolic effects directed toward relieving the damaging nature of the stressful state.^[4] According to Ayurveda, *Vatadishariradoshas* of *Alpasatva* (weakened *Manas*) person becoming impaired vitiates the *Hridaya* (*Shirohridaya*), the seat of intelligence, get settled in *Manovahasrotas* and soon disturb the function of *Manas*. Another view, *Asatmendriyarthasamyoga*.

Table 1: Stress can be categorized as short term and long term: Body response^[7]

Short term	Long term
Feeling nervous, unable to switch off.	Tension headaches and Migraines
Heart beats harder and faster to improve blood supply to major muscles and vital organs.	Serious cardiac problems
Breathing quickens to improve oxygen supply.	Trouble breathing, Hyperventilation and Panic attacks.
Alter GI mobility or GI secretions due rush of stress hormones.	Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Peptic Ulcers, psychogenic dyspepsia and vomiting.
Skin becomes more sensitive and oilier.	Psychosomatic disorders like Psoriasis
Sexually inactive or less active.	Infertility Problems in both men and women.
Muscles fatigue easily.	Increased risk of Type 2 Diabetes.

(hypo, hyper and dysfunction of bodily organs/systems) leads to aggravation of *Manasikadoshas* (Raja and Tama) and therefore resulting in mental illness.^[5] As per contemporary view, Stress can be defined as the degree to which you are unable to cope as a result of pressures that are unmanageable. Factors that contribute to stress can vary hugely from person to person and differs according to our social and economic circumstances. When we encounter stress, our body is stimulated to supply stress hormones that trigger a 'flight or fight'

response and activate our system. This response helps us to respond quickly to dangerous situations.^[6]

Causes of Deteriorating Mental Health during COVID Pandemic

Just the very fact of somebody's wondering if he's positive for COVID is like having a stigma and something that is threatening his life which affects, of course, his behavior. The most common emotion faced by all is Fear. Fear of being left alone, ending up with life catching infection, Unemployment, Socio-economic crisis. It makes us anxious, panic and may even possibly make us think, say or do things

that are unusual. But the need of the hour is to understand and cooperate with the norms charged by our health care systems.

- Understanding the importance of Lockdown.
- Handling Social isolation
- Focus on facts, reject rumors
- Handling emotional problems
- Emotional issues after recovery
- Recognize mental health problems in your near and dear ones.

Ayurvedic views to enhance general well being

Strengthening body and mind to get appropriate stress response and deal with various stressors, including infection, is the prime objective of Ayurveda practice. In *Charaka Samhita*, epidemic management and immunity is mentioned as the ability to resist disease and avoid its progression. Following *Swasthavritta*, including medicated water prepared using spices like dry ginger (*Zingiberofficinale*), *Yashtimadhu* (*Glycyrrhizaglabra*), and nut-grass (*Cyperusrotundus*) rhizomes; coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*) and fennel (*Cuminumcyminum*) seeds; and cinnamon (*Cinnamomumverum*). Those with co-morbidities or associated risk factors may consider *Pancakarma* (Cleansing Therapies). Use of *Rasayana* therapy for rejuvenation and proper nutrition of *Dhatu*s (tissue elements), and as immune modulators.^[10] Use of warm water as a measure for improving digestion of *Ama* as occurs before onset of fever in Covid patients. The presence of *Ama* is linked to increased susceptibility to infections. The pathogenesis of fever begins in *Aamashaya*, and for its treatment, *Pachaka* (digestive), *Vamaka* (emetic) and *Apatarpak* (catabolic) are administered. Taking warm water, downward movement of *Vata* (flatus) occurs alongside stimulation of *Agni* (digestive enzymes) causing easy digestion and getting rid of unwanted accumulated *Kapha*.

Manas chikitsa (Psychotherapies) in Ayurveda

As most of the diseases develop due to combined psychological and somatic factors, therapies prescribed in Ayurveda are: *Satwavajaya Chikitsa* (Psychiatric Measures): It's done by restraining the mind from desiring unwholesome objects Nowadays,

It is a way out to avoid getting indulge in stressful situations and emotional disturbances. *Daiva Vyapashrya chikitsa* (Spiritual Therapy): this involves use of *Mantra* (incantations), *Aushadha* (sacred herbs), *Mangala* (propitiatory rites), *Homa* (sacrifices), *Niyama* (vows), *Prayschitta* (ceremonial penitence), *Upvasa* (fasting). *Adravyabhuta Chikitsa* or *Upayas* (psychic therapies): *Bhayadarshan* (causing fright), *Vismapana* (causing surprise), *Vismarana* (the obligation of memory), *Kshobhana* (Administration of shock), *Harshana* (causation of elation of spirits), *Bandhana* (bindings), *Swapna* (induction of hypnosis), *Samvahana* (gentle massage).

Rasayana or *Acharrasayana* (immunomodulators, targeting best nutrition to *Dhatu*s). *Yuktivyapashrya chikitsa* (Symptoms oriented management through involved *Dosha* pacifying drugs).[1]

Materials and Methods

This review is to evaluate the pandemic situation of Covid, to understand the range of adverse effects on psychological status of the general public during this crisis. Previous work done on COVID, its pathogenesis, its impact on the general public physically and mentally, published on Pub Med, Google Scholar, and Elsevier has been considered and reviewed. Few interventions to cope with this outbreak have been described after reading few authentic Ayurveda texts.

DISCUSSION

Most major component of COVID crisis preventive measures is wearing a mask. Wearing a mask and staying indoors in poor ventilated situations leads to conditions of hypoxia. Chronic hypoxia develops chronic long-standing headaches. It's evident that 90% of all headaches are psychosomatic in nature.

Also, Poor psychological state, including stress and depression are known to increase the danger of acute respiratory infections. Thus, one should adopt basic measures like *Pranayama* (a scientific way of breathing) known to enhance the status of mental health as well as good to improve lung function. Symptoms of anxiety and depression and stress are common psychological reactions to COVID pandemic

and are associated with acute increase in inflammatory markers. Clinical presentations of COVID are often understood as *Tridosha prakopaj lakshanas*, *Janpadodhvansa janyavyadhi* and *Sannipata Vishamajwara lakshana*. It also involves the psyche of a person thus making their psychological state poor. Similar to Acquired and natural immunity, Ayurveda has the concept of Immunity (*Bala*) as *Sahaja* (natural), *Kalaja* (chronobiological) and *Yuktikrita* (Acquired). This varies with the psycho-physical constitution of a person. Acharya Charaka has mentioned that the *Kapha* in its *Prakrut aavastha* (normal state) promotes strength, lubrication, immunity, resistance and stability in the sort of *Oja* (synonym of *Bala*). Consistent with Acharya Sushruta, *Oja* is the fine essence of all the *Dhatus* which are liable for biological strength, vitality and immunity within the body. Our physical, mental and spiritual strength is completely hooked into *Oja*.^[2-3] Based on this idea, Potential mechanism of *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*) in prophylaxis of COVID is studied as Anti-viral, Immunobooster, management of pyrexia, inflammation and conserving alveoli from viral invasion related clinical targets.^[4] To add on, avoid *Nidanas* (causative factors), Use *Ahara*, *Vihara* (Yoga, *Vyayama* etc) and regime i.e., *Ojaskara* so as to achieve essence of all *Saptadhatus* and increased immunity and follow (*Swasthavrtta*) code of conducts mentioned earlier, for better Quality of life.

CONCLUSION

There is a well-reported relation between the central nervous system (CNS) and the immune system. Growth hormone and prolactin are required for the eventual development of mature lymphocytes. These hormones enable lymphocytes to react to antigen, which is delivered as an adherence signal in the context of major histo-compatibility surface molecules of antigen-presenting cells. The activation process is completed by cytokine signaling, after which lymphocyte proliferation; differentiation and functional maturation happens. Interleukins, hormones and growth factors may all function as

cytokines. Thyroid hormones control nuclear transcription factors as their receptors, and thus are powerful regulators of lymphocyte signaling at the nuclear level. The bioactive sorts of thyroid hormone and of several other hormones are generated locally by immunocytes that function both at systemic and native levels. Glucocorticoids are major regulators of cytokine production and alphas-melanocyte-stimulating hormone, functions as a strong cytokine antagonist. The hormones secreted or regulated by the pituitary gland therefore regulate every level of immune activity, including the competence of lymphocytes to respond to inflammatory stimuli, signal transduction, gene activation, the assembly and activity of cytokines and other immune effectors functions.^[8] Under stress, CNS releases stress hormones that perturb the balance and stability kept by many factions of the immune system, with serious health consequences. Understanding complex physiological changes that occur in stressful situations including psychological disturbance and neuro-immune deregulation is very important for achieving a good quality of life and a better come back overcoming this COVID crisis socially and economically to take care of physical as well as mental health.

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