RASAYANA AND YOGA: AN ADJUVANT TO PALLITATIVE CARE OF CANCER

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ABSTRACT

The Cancer is such a disease, which is very complicated in nature with complexity at every level—anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, molecular biology and gene expression. So treating such disease is a big challenge. Numerous techniques are employed to combat these diseases, including surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, interferon therapy, hormone therapy, and blood transfusion. But the remedies that are currently in use are either only for reducing the immediate complications associated with these diseases or for slowing down the proliferation of the diseases. Thus the mortality and morbidity rates are more in cancer person. Ayurveda which is not only a system of medicine but a way of life, this focus on healing the body, mind and spirit with variety of healing modalities including nutrition herbs Rasayana therapy and Yoga therapy. In recent researches also shows that use of yoga has been evaluated in many studies looking at cancer. Some benefits seen in symptoms like insomnia, Fatigue, Loss of Appetite, Pain, Stress.

Keywords: Cancer, Ayurveda, Yoga therapy, Rasayana.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is Science of life. We know that Cancer is one of the most dreaded disease of 20th century and spreading further with continuance and increasing incidence in 21st century. Classical Ayurvedic texts have several references to cancer. Some terms used to describe the condition are general while others are much more specific. According to Ayurveda, there are various diseases entities which resembles new growths for purpose of the malignant nature of the disease. The description of Granthi and arbuda come nearest to cancer than any other disease.

Patients who present with cancer have three basic options for treatment. The first and most conventional treatments utilize chemotherapy, surgery and radiation. Second are a wide range of alternative therapies and third is combined approach. Conventional treatments for cancer have varying success rates. For some
cancer when caught early conventional med-

cine can do to affect a cure even if it is
cought early. A majority of the present day
disease are reported to be due to the shift in
the balance of pro-oxidant and the antioxi-
dant homeostatic phenomenon in the body.
Pro-oxidant condition dominates either due
to the poor scavenging in the body caused
by depletion of the dietary antioxidants.

The ancient Ayurvedic physi-
cians understood the delicate cellular me-
chanisms of body and the deterioration of
the functional efficiency of the body tissues.
These ancient Ayurvedic masters had thus
developed the certain dietary and therapeutic
measures to arrest or delay ageing and reju-
venating whole functional dynamics of the
body organs. This revitalization and rejuve-
nation is known as the Rasayan Chikitsa.

Rasayana (rejuvenation) is a ther-
apy through which one can achieve the aim
of Ayurveda. It not only helps maintaining
health, it also enhance the bala (strength)
thus developing the vyadhikshamatwa (im-
munity) bala (strength) a person depends on
vyadhikshamatwa (immunity), Rasayana
boosts ojas (life span) and immunity system.
Yoga is basically a preventive life science
and dealing with all life style disordered. It
helps to patients understanding their condi-
tions, finding the root cause of the problem
and creating a healthy opportunity for them
to change themselves.
The change in life style of man has resulted
in the enormous upsurge of chronic diseases
like heart disease, Stroke, Diabetes mellitus,
cancer etc. leading to mortality and morbidi-
ity. The reduction of load of chronic disease
through healing promotion is very essential
for the welfare of the society. Yoga acts
through psych-immune- modulator pathway.

**AYURVEDIC CONCEPT OF CANCER:**

Charak and Sushrut samhitas, are two well known Ayurvedic classics, de-
scribed cancer as in inflammatory or non-
inflammatory swelling and mention them in
either Granthi (minor neoplasm) or Arbuda
(major neoplasm). Whatever the sign and
symptoms are mentioned by acharyas are
totally based on observation. Cancer in each
person differs according to the person’s ex-
posure to pathogens and genetic constitution
which make each of them to react differently
to the same diet. The factors responsible for
the vitiation of doshas are like excessive in-
take of bitter, pungent, dry foods, aggravat-
ing Vata, excessive intake of sour, salty food
aggravates Pitta dosha, excessive intake of
sweet oily aggravating Kapha and exassive
anger or severe emotional upset aggravating
rakta. Pathogenesis of Cancer in Ayurveda
describes different stages of tumor genesis
as chronic inflammatory and intractable dis-
eases with the possibility of developing ma-
lignancy, precancerous growth or probable
malignancy, Granthi (benign glandular
swelling), and Arbuda (definite malignan-
cy). Sushruta have mentioned 6 types of Ar-
buda like Vataja, Pittaja, Khaphaja, Rakta-
ja, Mamsaja, Medoja.

**SIGN AND SYMPTOMS OF ARBUDA:**

Vrinttam, shiram, mandru-
jam, mahantama, unalpa-moolam, chira-
vruddhi, apakam these are the symptoms
which is mentioned by sushruta (Su.Ni.13/20).
In the modern era also these symptoms we are getting in the case of be-
ign and malignant stage of carcinoma.

Symptoms of benign tu-
mor grow slowly don’t invade and metastas-
ize. These are the well differentiated. Vrinn-
tam (round), shiram (immoveble), manda
ruja (slightly painful), mahant (big size),
unalpa moolam (deep seated), chirvruddhi
(slowly increasing) and *apakam* (non-supurating) are the classical symptoms of benign growth. Benign tumors have minimal tendency to invade surrounding tissues. It is almost like well differentiated from the surrounding tissues. *Sushruta* have mentioned *adhyaarbuda, dwirarbuda*, this type of *Arbudas* can be correlated with malignant stage of cancer or metastasis of cancer. Malignant cancer has rapid growth it have the property to invade surrounding tissues and capacity of rapid metastasis.

**SAMPRAPTI AND CAUSES OF ARBUDA (ETIOLOGY)**

Etiopathogenesis of *Arbuda* is based on *doshic* theory. Human body is made up of *Tridosha* (*Vata, Pitta, Kapha*), it is believed that equilibrium of *Vata, Pitta* and *Kapha* ensure good health. If any of the factors of *tridosha* gets vitiated due to the changed dietary habit and life style, body becomes diseased. Though vitiated “*Dosa*” are responsible for the development of *Arbuda*, almost all *Ayurvedic* texts have given maximum importance to *Kapha*. *Susruta* has mentioned that due to excess of *Kapha Arbuda* does not suppurate (S. N. 19/15), which is considered to be the common and important factor for any growth in the body. Thus, it seems justified to postulate that excess of vitiated Kapha in the body might be responsible for the precipitation of cancer.

**FREE RADICALS AND THEIR ROLE IN CANCER**

Free radicals are natural by products of our own metabolism. These are electrically charged molecules that attack our cells, tearing through cellular membranes to react and create havoc with the nucleic acids, proteins, and enzymes present in the body attacks by free radicals. Collectively known as oxidative stress, are capable of causing cells to lose their structure, function and can eventually destroy them.

They are continuously produced by our body by using of oxygen such as in respiration and some cell-mediated immune functions. They are also generated through environmental pollutants, cigarette smoke, automobile exhaust, radiation, air-pollution, pesticides, etc. Normally the antioxidant defense systems in the body can only protect the body when the amount of the free radicals is within the normal physiological level. Free radicals may be designated as sharks that damage molecules in cell membranes.

The tumor cells are spread through the bone marrow or lymphoid tissues and circulate in the blood. DNA damage plays a very important role in carcinogenesis and any agent, which is capable of chemically modifying DNA could be carcinogenic. Behavioral or psychological factors such as chronic stress may influence occurrence or progression of cancer through several mechanisms:

1. Influence of stress on natural killer cells
2. Poorer repair of damaged DNA
3. Modulation of apoptosis

**The Ayurvedic Approach To Healing**

The physical level: *Ayurveda* approaches the patient on several levels of causes including physical emotional and spiritual. The most superficial level is approaching the symptom, which is the tumor itself. *Rasayana* herbs can be taken internally or applied over the tumors as paste, acting directly on the cancer and supporting a deeper healing when used in accordance with patient’s *vikriti*.
The practitioner must also decide if the patient requires tonification or purification therapy. Strong patients with Ama require purification therapies in accordance with their prakruti and vikruti. Purification therapies reduce Ama along with excess Do-
sha by cleansing the srotas and the suitable Nadis of the body. Prana can flow freely
and support the healing process.

Purification is a reducing therapy, reducing the dhatus of the body as well as
the dhatus. Since this weakness the body, it should be only performed in patients who
are strong enough. Purification therapy can be similarly viewed as cytotoxic, meaning it
destroys cells. When applied properly, cellular destruction is directed primarily toward
the cancerous cells. Patients who are weak should undergo strengthening or tonification
therapy. These therapies attempt to build up the strength (ojas) of patient. These ther-
apiess are not for destroying cancer cells.

In addition to the management of Ama and Ojas the most important system of
the body to manage is the digestive system supports the healing of all tissues of the
body. The mental level: The role of the mind in healing must be emphasized as mental dis-
turbance are a more stable cause than the physical imbalance in the Doshas. Many
studies have indicated that positive thinking activates the immune system and supports
healing. Yet positive thinking is not easy to sustain.

Mental and emotional challenges produce blockages in the flow of energy in
the physical body. The physical body is cap-
able of manifesting what the mind imagines. Unhealthy imaginings appears first
in the astral body (dream body) and can eventually manifest in the physical body as
disease. In addition to the internal use of these Rasayana herbs, Shirodhara can help
produce inner silence while tonifying the mind. Nasya supports mental purification.

For patients with a more Ta-
masic nature this path of healing is very dif-
cicult. Hence mental purification is the
process of removing there negative feelings.

The Spiritual level: Our spirit is essentially pure, perfect and is not truly in need of
healing. However our spirit is bound to the
cycle of birth and death through the karma
generated by the actions of our ego.

Spiritual healing is the process of removing
our karma and freeing ourselves from suffer-
ing and the wheel of rebirth is the greatest
journey of all. It is often the difficult and
lengthy.

RASAYANA CONCEPT OF AYURVEDA:

Ayurvedic pharmacology classifies medicinal plants into different
groups according to their action one of these
is the Rasayana group. The word Rasayana
literary means the path that rasayana takes
(Rasa: Plasma, Ayana: Path). it is believed,
in Ayurveda that qualities of the Rasadhatu
influence the health of other dhatus (tissue)
of the body. Hence any medicine that im-
proves the quality of Rasa should strengthen
or promote the health of all tissues of the
body.

Rasayana drugs act inside the
human body by modulating the neuro-
endocrine immune systems and have been
found to be a rich source of antioxidants.

These Rasayana plants are
said to possess the following properties, they
prevent ageing reestablish youth, strength
life, brain power and prevent disease and
increases the resistance of the body.
Rasayana chikitsa is specialized section of Ayurveda, which mainly deals with the preservation and promotion of health by revitalizing the metabolism and enhancing immunity. Rasayana drugs are very rich in powerful antioxidants and good hepatoprotective an immune-modulating agents.

**Rasayana as an adjuvant therapy**

*Rasayana* drugs are reported as rejuvenators, nutritional supplements and possess strong antioxidant activity. They have antagonistic actions on the oxidative stressors which giving rise to the formation of different free radicals. Their anti-stress/adaptogenic actions have made the therapeutically for more important. *Rasayana* preparations also increased stem cell proliferation and also prevented free radical induced injury produced by radiation.

According to clinical studies *Rasayan* drugs have shown very impressive effects on protecting body from the side effects like alopecia, nausea, constipation, anorexia and vomiting, thus *Rasayana preparations* are very effective as chemo preventive and radio preventive agents.

**Concept of Yoga in Ayurveda**

Yoga chikitsa is virtually as old as Yoga itself, indeed the return of mind that feels separated from the universe which is exists represents the first Yoga therapy. Chikitsa could be termed as Man’s first attempt at until understanding of mind - emotions- physical distress and oldest holistic concept and therapy in the world. Yoga is basically preventive life sciences and helping the patients understand their condition finding the root causes of the problem and creating a healthy opportunity for them to change themselves.

The chronic diseases are spreading very fast as epidemic putting a break for this epidemic is today’s need. This can be done by health promotion through healthy diet and of simple, cheap and cost effective measures, proper management and care of the patient. *Yoga, Meditation and Pranayam* are century old, time tested processes, these are known to relax mind and energize the body.

**Meditation**

Meditation is an art of doing nothing with eyes closed. Several techniques are available to make one reach meditative state. Meditation can play a useful role for cancer patients. It can relieve the stress and physical and emotional pain. Meditation can be useful to some people in dealing with side effects of treatment and in overcoming the sense of loss of control and to promote health and reduce the risk of recurrence. Meditation has been used to great advantage in caring for terminally ill and dying patients in hospice settings and at home. Healthy persons at higher genetic risk of cancer also may be drawn to meditation to reduce environmental and lifestyle risk factors and to control anxiety and stress.

These measures change the hopeless and helpless attitude to the active fighting spirit. They reduce the stress associated with the diagnosis as well as treatment of cancer. By reducing the stress they may alter the treatment outcome. Meditation can lead to prevention as well as progression of cancer.

**Pranayama –**

*Pranayama* is very beneficial in this case for cancer patients as it combines the ‘prana’ or the breath, with ‘yama’ which means the extension or control and this is crucial practice in yoga. This is the science
of breathing and involves paying close attention to the way you breathe i.e. inhalation, exhalation and retention or holding of breath. Especially during rechaka which involves conscious effort with the help of cerebral cortex of brain.

In some researches it was proven Sudarshan kriya and Pranayam are highlighted to induce relaxation, increase antioxidant defense and NK cell in the body. Sudarshan kriya and Pranayam may have a preventive role against cancer. Both may be effective as secondary preventive measures after curative treatment of cancer and in metastatic cancer, Sudarshan kriya and Pranayam may delay progression of cancer improve survival and quality of life.

CONCLUSION

Cancer is not a single disease rather a syndrome. It is the largest killer disease in world. Due to change of lifestyle and food habits, its prevalence has been increased. The Ayurvedic line of supportive therapies is highly beneficial. It helps in reducing the adverse effect of chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Ayurveda can be helpful in the management of cancer in many ways such as prophylactic, palliative, curative and supportive. Ayurvedic medicines help to improve the quality of life of patients. Stress relieving techniques like rasayana therapy, Sudarshan kriya, Pranayam, meditation have been found to be effective in maintaining both mental and physical health. These techniques can be incorporated in the management of cancer patients to potentiate the effects of conventional treatment.

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