PCOS – A CRITICAL REVIEW THROUGH AYURVEDA

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is known as science of living beings. It concerns over the maintenance of health of healthy living beings and restoration of health of the diseased ones. In order to keep Tridoshas in state of healthy equilibrium and digestion and metabolism in proper order, Ayurveda recommends a specific daily routine called Dincharya. An uneventful, the ever changing trends in lifestyle have exposed man to a variety of lifestyle disorders. Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) is one such lifestyle disorder affecting 30-40% of young girls in their reproductive age in India. It can be correlated with Artava Kshaya which is vata kapha pradhan rasapradoshaja vyadhi. PCOS is also called as the mother of all lifestyle disorders in women. PCOS is a syndrome manifested by amenorrhea, hirsutism and obesity associated with enlarged polycystic ovaries. The exact cause of PCOS is unknown. However, it has certainly been linked to hormonal imbalance, insulin resistance resulting in hyperinsulinaemia as well as genetic factors. The sedentary lifestyle, lack of exercise, poor diet and stress etc. have also been contributory factors. So adopting vata kaphahara and pitha vridhikara ahaar vihaar & Lifestyle modifications, we can manage this disease through Ayurveda, which is devoid of side effects.

Keywords: Ayurveda, PCOS, Artava kshaya, Lifestyle, Dincharya.

INTRODUCTION

PCOS is most common endocrinopathy in women of reproductive age, resulting from insulin resistance and the compensatory hyper-insulinemia. There is no direct reference in Ayurveda for Polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). The clinical features of the PCOS can be compared with clinical features as seen in Artavakshaya. It is considered under rasapradoshaja vyadhis and have an equal involvement of Dosha, Dhatu and Upadhatu.

Artava is an upadhatu of rasa & pitta is predominant dosha in rakta which is responsible for agneyatav of it. Among menstrual disorders, Artava Kshaya is the one which indicates scanty menstrual flow associated with pain, variable
duration where vitiation of Vayu and Kapha are predominant.

Artava kshaya is due to avarana by doshas like Kapha or Vata or Kapha-vata. So it can considered that PCOS (Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome) mainly carries the features of Artavakashya, kaphadusti & medodusti.

PCOS is a condition where a hormonal imbalance affects follicular growth during the ovarian cycle causing the affected follicles to remain in the ovary. The retained follicle changes into a cyst and with each ovarian cycle a new cyst is formed leading to multiple ovarian cysts. Lifestyle modifications are considered first line treatment for PCOS. Acharyas have given importance to Dincharya, ritucharya & ritumaticharya, following these properly, it is easy to cure Artava kshaya.

CAUSES –

Now a day due to present lifestyle change there is a change in ahara & viharas which inturn cause lifestyle diseases, like obesity, depression, chronic backache, diabetes and hypertension. 68% Indian working women suffer, 53 per cent of them skip meals and go for junk food due to work pressure and deadlines and stress etc. have also been contributory factors. The sedentary lifestyle, lack of exercise, excessive intake of food, changing quality of foods, day sleep etc leads to kapha prakopa and mental states like sadness, stress, excessive thoughts etc leads to vata prakopa. Eating before the digestion of previous foods also leads to vataprakopa. This vitiated doshas leads to vitiation of agni which further vitiates dhatus, malas and srotas. Mainly vitiation of rasa, rakta, mamsa, medho, asthi and sukra dhatus artava upadhatu, rasavaha, raktavaha and artavavaha srotas takes place.

Artava is an Upadhatu, formed from Rasa within a month after proper metabolization of Rakta dhatu by its Dhatwagni and Bhutagni. The decrease or kshaya of Rakta dhatu causes Artava kshaya.

Approximately 50-60% of women with PCOS are obese. Unknowingly we are creating environment for PCOS. The high intake of carbohydrates, especially refined carbohydrates & high fatty diet will quickly turn to sugar & causes elevated levels of insulin.

PCOS patients have high insulin resistance.

Table 1: ARTAVA KSHAYA NIDANAS ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT ACHARYAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vagbhata</th>
<th>Susruta</th>
<th>Caraka</th>
<th>Kashyapa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The vrudhdi &amp; kshaya of uttardhatu depends upon vrudhdi &amp; kshaya of purvadhatu.</td>
<td>The rasa dhatu kshaya as one of the causative factors for dhatu kshaya as artava is upadhatu of rasa dhatu.</td>
<td>The samanya nidana of kshaya causes Artava kshaya.</td>
<td>Use of nasya during menstruation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

In Artavakshaya, Kapha predominance manifests as increased weight, sub fertility, hirsutium, diabetic tendencies and coldness. Pitta predominance manifests as hair loss, acne, painful menses, clots and heart problems. Vata predominance manifests with painful menses, scanty or less menstrual blood and severe menstrual irregularity.
There is marked decrease in female sex hormones which may lead to develop certain male characteristics like; excess hairs on the face & chest, decrease in breast size, deeper voice & thinning of hair.

Other symptoms include: acne, weight gain, anxiety or depression & infertility. Bilateral ovaries can be palpated on internal examination.

There is no direct reference in Ayurveda for polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). The clinical features of the PCOS can be compared with clinical features as seen in Artavakshaya.

**SAMPRAPTI:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sedentary lifestyle &amp; Kaphaprakopakara Aahar Vihar</th>
<th>Artava Kshaya (PCOS)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agnidusti</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rasadhatavagni dusti</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medhodhatwagni dusti</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upadhatu Artavadushti</td>
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</tbody>
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**SAMPRAPTI GHATAKA’S**

- **Dosha-** Vata – Apana vata, Saman vata  
- **Pitta-** Pachaka pitta  
- **Kapha-** Kledaka kapha  
- Dushya- Rasa, Rakta  
- Upadhatu- Artava  
- Agni – Jataragni, Dhatavagni  
- Srotas-Rasavaha, Raktavaha  
- Srotodusti- Sanga  
- Udbhavastana – Amasaya  
- Adhisthana- Garbhsaya  
- Sancharasthana- Sarva shareera  
- Vyakta sthana – Yoni, Garbhasaya.

The meaning of alpa is kshudra pramana. This may be considered as reduced menstrual flow. In Artava kshaya both pramana & avadh are altered from the normal i.e. 3-5 days with 4 an-jali pramana (35ml according to modern), Yoni vedana is due to vitiation of apana vata. It is due to vitiation of apana vata resulting from inadequate abhipoorana of garbhashaya because of depleted artava.
PATHOPHYSIOLOGY:

INVESTIGATIONS:
- History including family history
- Physical examination
- FBS, Total Cholesterol.
- Pelvic ultrasound scans for the ovarian features of polycystic ovaries.

Treatment –
*Nidanaparivarjanam* is the first line of treatment in all types of diseases as per *Ayurveda*. Elimination of the cause is essential in treating and preventing diseases especially *PCOS*. Acharyas have mentioned *samshodhana* & *samshamana* treatment.

*Lifestyle modifications* are considered first line treatment for *PCOS*. By following proper *dincharya* it is easy to cure *PCOS*.

*Pathyas* according to *Acharyas* are fish, kulatha, tila, masa, gomutra, jiggery, buttermilk & curd & *pittavardhaka ahaar*. Acharyas have advised to include *lahsuna*, *jeeraka*, *tila* & *hingu* in diet. *Lahsuna* is considered as *amrita* in *stree rogas*. *Ayurveda* advises to choose low Glycemic Index (G.I) foods – such as cauliflower, tomatoes, onions, peaches, apples, and grapefruit for those suffering from PCOD. These food items help in lowering the rise in blood sugar levels. The diet plan should be made as per individual requirements and degree of insulin resistance. Eating at regular intervals is advised strongly. Restriction of junk food is
another major aspect. Medication along with yoga and diet, works wonders in women with PCOD. Relaxation plays a key role in Polycystic Ovarian Disease. Pranayama’s (breathing exercises) are powerful to help calm the mind. Yoga can also help in weight loss, relieves stress and improves blood circulation to the ovary, thus naturally curing PCOD.

Practicing the same on a regular basis makes the journey called womanhood, a wonderful experience. The management of this disease should be started as soon as diagnosed because the women with PCOS are at increased risk of developing a number of chronic conditions & non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus.

**DISCUSSION**

Artava kshaya is one of the important diseases pertaining to artava. It is characterised by delayed, scanty menstruation associated with pain along reproductive tract. It can be correlated to PCOS. In this age of modernization and urbanization, menstrual disorders have become common due to faulty food habits, lifestyle, stress etc… In modern medicine PCOS is treated by hormonal therapy. Ayurvedic literature advocates Shodhana, Agneya dravya upayoga & by following proper dincharya & ritumatcharya.

**CONCLUSION**

PCOS is a frustrating experience for women. Obesity has long been associated with menstrual irregularity, particularly in women with upper body obesity. The sedentary lifestyle, lack of exercise, poor diet and stress etc. are contributory factors towards obesity. Obesity leads to hormonal imbalance which further causes Artavakshaya or Artava vrddhi depending upon the stage. There is currently no ideal medical cure for women with PCOS that fully reverses the underlying hormonal disturbances and that treats all clinical features. The oral contraceptive pill, used in allopathy does improve hyperandrogenism, and insulin sensitizers reduce insulin resistance in PCOS, but the side effects of this hormonal therapy lead to many complications. And certain surgical procedures such as ovarian drilling, assisted Reproductive technologies are too costly, which most of the women find unaffordable. The importance of Ayurvedic management of PCOS lies in the cost effective way of its treatment and the total lack of side effects. Reduction of weight in obese women and correction of lifestyle is prime requirement for treating PCOS.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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