



AN AYURVEDIC HYPOTHETICAL APPROACH TO PROTECT WOMEN AGAINST REPRODUCTIVE CANCERS

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ABSTRACT

In a healthy adult woman of childbearing age the vaginal contents consist of white coagulated material comprising squamous cells, Doderlein's bacilli and coagulated secretion. Doderlein's bacilli are large gram positive organisms which are sugar fermenting. This ability to convert glycogen into lactic acid is responsible for the high acidity (pH-4.5) of the normal healthy adult vagina. As the acidity of the vagina falls and the pH rises, non-resident pathogens are able to thrive. In oestrogen deficiency conditions like vulvovaginitis in children and senile vaginitis in post-menopausal women, the vaginal epithelium is thin and ill protected against infection and vaginal pH is >7.4. During puerperium, acidity of the vagina is reduced and foreign organisms can grow. Vaginal discharge increases around ovulation, during pregnancy etc.

Bacterial vaginosis, the most widespread vaginal infection in the United States, is associated with a 35.7% increase in the incidence of cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN), an abnormality of cervical cells that may lead to cervical cancer, according to a study published in the Scandinavian journal *Acta Obstetricia et Gynecologica Scandinavica* (April 01, 1995 (Oncology Journal, Cervical Cancer, Gynecologic Cancers).

Any benign tumor like uterine fibroids may turn malignant in future. Arresting the growth of the tumor also may reduce malignancy potential in it. Endometrial carcinoma is associated with fibromyoma in women >40yrs. of age in 3% cases. Hyperoestrogenism explains the co-existence of these two conditions.

In all the above said conditions, it seems vaginal pH and oestrogen are inter-related. Hence maintaining vaginal pH by using different procedures, dietary precautions and medicines of Ayurveda, various carcinomas may be prevented. Phased clinical trials will prove cause and effect relationship.

Key words: *doderlein's bacilli, pH vagina, oestrogen, senile vaginitis, bacterial vaginosis, Ayurveda*

INTRODUCTION:

- The vaginal secretion is very small in amount, sufficient to make the surface moist¹. Normally it may be little excess in mid-menstrual or just prior to menstruation, during pregnancy and during sexual excitement.
- Doderlein's bacillus is a large gram positive rod shaped organism, which grows anaerobically on acid media.
- The vaginal secretion is acidic between 4 and 5.5 with average of 4.5 due to the presence of lactic acid and this acidity inhibits the growth of pathogenic organisms. The acidity which is oestrogen dependent falls after menopause to neutral or even alkaline. Before puberty the pH is about 7.
- This high pH before puberty and after menopause explains the tendency for the

development of mixed organism infections in these age groups.

- During the puerperium & in cases of leucorrhea, acidity of the vagina is reduced and pathogenic organisms are then able to survive.
- The abnormal and malignant cells do not contain glycogen.
- The skin of the vagina is a tough stratified squamous epithelium devoid of glands.
- It presents a smooth unbroken surface to the attack of pathogenic organisms.
- There are no crypts where organisms can comfortably multiply as in the endocervix.
- In multiparous women when the vaginal orifice is patulous as a result of lacerations during childbirth, foreign organisms may be found in the lower part of the vagina which by producing a low grade vaginitis give rise to discharge.

LEUCORRHEA

- The term leucorrhea is strictly defined as an excessive normal vaginal discharge².
- This is physiological during pregnancy, at puberty, at ovulation and in some women during the premenstrual phase of the menstrual cycle.

BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS

- Bacterial vaginosis is characterized by malodorous vaginal discharge³.
- The term vaginosis is preferred as there is no vaginal inflammation.
- This infection can cause premature rupture of membranes, preterm labor and chorio-amnionitis

Atrophic Vaginitis (Senile Vaginitis)

- Vaginitis in post menopausal women is called atrophic vaginitis⁴.
- There is atrophy of the vulvo vaginal structures due to estrogen deficiency.

- The vaginal defence is lost.
- Vaginal mucosa is thin and is more susceptible to infection and trauma.

MUCOUS POLYP

- The most common type of benign uterine polyp is mucous one⁵.
- It may arise from the body of the uterus or from the cervix.
- Malignant change is rare but may co exist with endometrial carcinoma.
- Predictors of malignancy – size more than 10mm, postmenopausal status and abnormal uterine bleeding.

FIBROMYOMA (FIBROIDS)

- The association of fibroids in women with hyperoestrogenism is evidenced by endometrial hyperplasia, dysfunctional metropathia hemorrhagica {dysfunctional uterine bleeding} and endometrial carcinoma.

Associated endometrial carcinoma

- Endometrial carcinoma is associated with fibro myoma in women over 40 years of age in 3% cases.
- Hyper oestrogenism explains the coexistence of these two conditions.

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (Pcos)

- Polycystic ovarian syndrome was originally described in 1935 by Stein and Leventhal as a syndrome manifested by amenorrhea, hirsutism and obesity associated with enlarged polycystic ovaries⁶.
- Long term sequelae of PCOS are Diabetes mellitus (insulin resistance), **endometrial cancer**, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, atherosclerosis, obstructive sleep apnea (obesity)⁷.

Prevention and Management of Cancer of Female Reproductive System Through Ayurveda There are 2 aims of Ayurveda- a) prevention & b) treatment

Table. No.1 Principles of Ayurveda and Treatment procedures

| Principles of Ayurveda | Treatment Procedures |
|---|----------------------------|
| <i>Dinacharya</i> | <i>Yoni prakshalanam</i> |
| <i>Rutucharya</i> | <i>Yoni pichu dharanam</i> |
| <i>Vegadharanam</i> | <i>Virechanam</i> |
| <i>Achara rasayanam & Rasayanam</i> | <i>Vasti</i> |
| <i>Ahaara vidhi Rutumati charya</i> | <i>Uttaravasti</i> |

a)Prevention Benefits of dinacharya⁸

- Rising early in the morning – breathing fresh air gives fresh energy
- *Abhyangam* to the whole body – protects skin, retards ageing, improves longevity etc.
- Gargling with sesame oil – protects teeth & oral cavity, prevents oral cancer
- *Vyayamam* (exercise up to half of the strength) etc. prevents diseases like diabetes, obesity and other stress –related diseases.

Benefits of rutucharya

- There are 6 seasons according to Ayurveda
- Each season has its influence on human beings
- *Vata*, *pitta* and *kapha doshas* get naturally aggravated in *varsha*, *sarat* and *vasantha rutu* respectively. It is advised to take all *rasas* (6 tastes) every day⁹.
- *Vasti* for *Vata*, *virechana* for *Pitta* and *vamana* for *Kapha* are indicated in these seasons
- Accumulated toxins are removed through panchakarma
- Following *rutucharya* along with panchakarma increases natural humoral immunity which helps to destroy cancer cells through phagocytosis

Vegadharanam

Vegas are the natural urges and are usually spontaneous.

- Although *vegas* are involuntary in nature, these can be controlled by will.
- Once or twice if they are suppressed nothing may happen but if they are habitually suppressed, a feedback mechanism may set alert in the body which may be against the homeostasis and may precipitate a series of diseases.
- For example. suppression of urine may cause pain in the body, bladder, inguinal region, formation of stones¹⁰ etc. Suppression of vomiting may cause skin diseases, eye diseases, *swasa* (dyspnoea) etc.

ACHARA RASAYANAM¹¹

Those people

- Who speak only truth
- Who are free from anger
- Who do not indulge in violence
- Who are peaceful and pleasing in their speech
- Who are pure in their deeds
- Who always respect devata, guru, go, brahman and old people
- Who are not egoistic
- Who takes *ksheera* and *ghrita* daily
- Who are spiritual
- Who follows the *dharma shastra* – all these are considered to be taking *rasayana* i.e., though these people do not take *rasayana* will have the effect of *rasayana* by following the above measures.

- These are the rejuvenating effects of good conduct

RASAYANAM¹²

Rasayanam is the medicine that nourishes all dhatus

Those people who take *rasayana* will be blessed with

- Long life
- Intellect
- Retaining power
- Health
- Youth
- Good luster
- Good complexion
- Good voice
- Strength to both *deha* and *indriyas*
- *Vaksiddhi*
- Respect
- Brilliance

Rasayana yogas : *Brahmi rasayanam, Amalaki rasayanam* etc.

AHARA VIDHI

Always avoid

- *Samashanam* – eating a mixture of wholesome and unwholesome food
- *Adhyashanam* – eating before digestion of the previous meal
- *Vishamashanam* – eating at the wrong time, in excess or in less quantity

Each of the above three is crucial enough to be able to result in serious complications or even death.

- When taken in proper quantity, it promotes longevity in its entirety without afflicting *vata, Pitta and Kapha*
- It easily passes down to the rectum
- It does not impair the power of digestion
- It gets digested without any difficulty.

Signs of proper food digestion

- There is unimpaired cardiac function
- Downward passage of the wind
- Proper manifestation of the urges for voiding flatus, urine, stool etc.

RUTUMATICHARYA¹³

- Women during menstruation are said to follow certain measures so that the progeny is born with excellent qualities
- Menstruation is a natural cleaning or purifying process of the body which causes pure blood circulation by letting the accumulated blood out of the body
- *Nasyam, abhyangam* or any other *panchakarma* procedures are contraindicated during this period as they cause menstrual disorders ex: *nasyam* causes *yoni sosha* according to Kashyapa

Table No.2. Contraindications during menstruation and effects on child¹⁴

| Contraindications during menstruation | Effects on child |
|--|-------------------------|
| <i>Diwaswapnam</i> (Day sleep) | Over sleepy |
| <i>Anjanam</i> | Blindness |
| <i>Ashru</i> (weeping) | Abnormal vision |
| <i>Abhyangam</i> | <i>Kushtham</i> |

b) Treatment

1. *Yoni prakshalanam* – a procedure where medicated *kashayas* are used in various gynec diseases. For ex:

- *Triphala kashayam* as *poova karma* for *uttara vasti*

- In diseases like *sweta pradaram*, different *yoni vyapats*, cervical erosion etc.
- *Panchavalkala kashayam* in *pitta* predominant *yoni rogas*
- Certain *krimihara dravyas* like *nimba* are added if necessary

- *Kashaya rasa* in *kashayas* may be maintaining the pH of vagina.

- Hence many diseases where vaginal discharges are present are being cured by doing *yoni prakshalanam*

Table.no.3. Name of the *kashayam* and indications

| Name of the <i>kashayam</i> | Indications |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <i>Maharasnadi</i> | <i>Yoni rogas</i> |
| <i>Nyagrodhadi</i> | <i>Yoni rogas</i> , blood stained <i>yoni srava</i> |
| <i>Udumbara & udumbaradi</i> | Blood stained <i>yoni srava</i> |

YONI PICHU DHARANAM

This is the procedure where medicated cotton swab in the form of either *tailam* (oil) or *ghritha* (ghee) is introduced into the vagina for various gynec disorders for ex:

- *Guduchyadi taila*¹⁵ *pichu dharanam* in *vatiki yoni vyapat* (endometriosis?)
- *Dhatakyadi tailam*¹⁶ in *acharana* (vaginal itching due to infection?) and *upapluta* (monilial vulvo-vaginitis?) *yoni vyapats*
- It is found that after using *Guduchyadi taila yoni pichu* along with other *pancha karma* procedures like *matravasti*, *kashaya vasti* and *uttara vasti* for 3 consecutive cycles, patients with severe dysmenorrhea had good reduction in their pain in endometriosis

VASTI

- *Vasti* is considered to be nectar for all *Vata rogas*
- Female Reproductive system is *Apana vata sthana*
- Hence *Vasti* is the best treatment for the disorders of *apanavata*
- *Poorva karma* like *snehanam* and *swedanam* bring *doshas* to their original sites and *vasti* will remove these accumulated *doshas* through rectum
- *Uttaravasti* is a special procedure which is done by using special *tailas* for both purificatory as well as therapeutic purposes like removing the blocks etc.

Treatment for Complications

1. Excessive bleeding

- *Darvadi kwatham*
- *Kushmanda khanda* in emaciation

2. White discharge

- *Saribadyasavam* with cold water twice after meals
- *Pravala bhasma* -2 rattis with milk & honey

3. Watery discharge

- *Vasantha kusumakara rasa* with ghee, honey & sugar or with *amalaki swarasam* & honey
- *Yoni prakshalanam* with *triphala kashayam*

4. Purulent discharge

- *Pancha tikta guggulu ghritam* with warm milk
- *Brihat guduchyadi taila yoni pichudharanam*

5. Anemia

- *Navayasa lauham* with juice of *kokilaksha* leaves

6. Loss of appetite

- *Dhatryarishtam*

CONCLUSION:As per the research, in developed countries like US (1985), cancer of the breast, ovary and uterus accounts for 51% of all cancers among females where cancer of the breast tops the list; whereas in developing countries like India, genital malignancies top the list. Incidence of carcinoma cervix among major genital malig-

nancies per 100,000 women is 30 to 40. There is a great need for awareness about these cancers in women. Use of scented undergarments, detergents for vaginal wash etc may also cause vaginal irritation and further infection. Basic knowledge of maintaining personal hygiene, awareness of various cancers, family history of cancers – knowledge of all these will prepare women for early consultation, investigation and prevention of cancers. Early treatment has better results and may extend the life whereas the delay may shorten the life span. The objective of this article is to create awareness in the women in preventing reproductive cancers.

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