Case Report

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ASTOUNDING POSITIVE BENEFITS IN *SHWITRA* (VITILIGO) TREATED FOR NECROZOOSPERMIA (*SHUKRA DOSHA*): A CASE REPORT

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ABSTRACT

In the present era, there is a heightened awareness about the safety of drugs rather than the efficacy, which is largely due to the side effects as well as their consequences. This case study highlights the benefits of Ayurvedic medicine, which has yielded positive results by reducing hypo-pigmented patches of vitiligo, though the treatment was intended to treat Necrozoospermia. Vitiligo is an autoimmune cutaneous disorder of pigmentation which is correlated with *Shwitra* in Ayurveda. Main line of treatment for *Shwitra* in Ayurveda is *Snehana* (medicated fats) *Shodhana* (Purificatory therapies) followed by anointing body and exposure to sunlight. However, in this present case astounding effects were seen when the patient was treated only with internal medication for Necrozoospermia without considering *Shwitra*. Fifty-six years old man approached with chief complaint of secondary infertility and was diagnosed as Necrozoospermia (*Shukra Dosha*). There were hypo-pigmented patches of Vitiligo on his forehead. The patient was given *Koshtha shuddhi* (purgation) with *Eranda Taila* (medicated castor oil) to treat *shukra dosha* followed by medicines like *Arogyavardhini Vati*, *Chandraprabha Vati*, *Shilapravanga* and *Phala Ghrita* (medicated ghee). At the end of 3½ month of treatment, marked improvement in sperm count and increase in the sperm motility was observed, along with that vitiligo patches on the forehead were reduced remarkably without any external application. The present case study shows the effective management of vitiligo with Ayurvedic formulations without use of external applications highlighting the basic *Dhatu Siddhanta* (theory of tissue formation) of Ayurveda.

Keywords: Ayurveda, *Dhatu Siddhanta*, Necrozoospermia, *Shwitra*, Vitiligo.

INTRODUCTION

Vitiligo is hardly a disease of medical condition but more than that, it is considered as social stigma due to cosmetological reasons which causes serious psychological problem in daily life. It is an acquired pigmentary disorder of the skin and mucous membrane which manifests as white macules and patches due to selective loss of melanocytes. Etiological hypotheses of vitiligo include genetic, immunological, neurohormonal, cytotoxic, biochemical, oxidative stress.¹ The exact cause of the vitiligo is still debatable.² The prevalence of the disease is from 0.09 to 8% in India³ and critical analysis revealed that some reports are based on prevalence of vitiligo in general population⁴ and some on the patients of dermatology clinics.⁵ It may appear at any age and affects both the sex. As per the observation it tends to occur or reoccur in spring or summer.⁶ In Ayurveda *Shwitra* is a skin disease described under *Kushtha roga* (skin disorders). *Shwitra* or *Shweta-Kushtha* can be co-related with skin disease "vitiligo" in biomedicine. The word *Shwitra* is derived from Sanskrit word '*Shweta*', which means white patch (Hypopigmentation) caused due to derangement in *Vata* (energy of movement) and *Bhrajaka pitta* (normal pigmentation of skin). It is caused due to vitiation of *tridoshas* and *rasa* (plasma), *rakta* (blood), *mamsa* (muscle) and *meda dhatu* (fat)⁷ Ayurveda has great potential to treat such autoimmune diseases considering treatment principles described in classical texts. General line of treatment of *kushta roga* (skin disorders), can also be advocated in *Shwitra* i.e. *rakta mokshana* (bloodletting), *virechana* (purgation) and *vamana* (emesis)⁸ In modern science, main stream treatment is PUVA (Psoralen +

Ultraviolet A exposure) therapy along with that moderate-to-high strength topical corticosteroids and calcineurin inhibitors, systemic corticosteroids which have many side-effects like skin cancer, photo ageing, nausea, ultraviolet light burning.⁹

Case report

A 56-year-old male patient attended the OPD of Central Ayurveda Research Institute (CARI), Bangalore with the complaint of no issues for 7 years of married life and was diagnosed with male infertility. Treatment was initiated for infertility. In the same patient, the white patches on the forehead, periocular and perioral region, neck was also observed. Patient conveyed that the lesions were small discrete initially, later increased in size and then spread over almost all parts of the face gradually. There were no associated complaints neither related to lesions like burning sensation and no history of environmental and occupational origin nor related to contact with any harmful dietary substance or sun burn. Informed consent was obtained prior to the participation in the study.

Physical examination

Hypo-pigmented grouped patches were observed on the face and neck region (predominantly in periocular and perioral region, with symmetrical distribution measuring about 5.5 inch* 2.5 inch, with occasionally mild itching on exposure to sunlight. No Inflammation and discharge were seen.

Diagnostic criteria

Vitiligo is almost always diagnosed clinically upon physical examination. Hence, the patient was diagnosed based on the clinical features.

Treatment

As the primary concern of the patient was infertility and Necrozoospermia was confirmed by the investigations, as per Ayurvedic perspective, it was co-related with *shukra dosha* and based on clinical findings treatment protocol of *Vatika shukra dosha*, (Vata dominant) was followed. He was treated for a period of 3 ½ months and results was successful, along with that astounding result was seen in hypo-pigmented patches (vitiligo) over forehead, perioral, periorbital region and neck with the same treatment protocol that was followed for Infertility.

Plan of treatment

Shodhana (purification) - As the patient did not exhibit any *Ama lakshanas*, *Purva Karma* like *Langhana* (fasting) *Deepana* (appetizer), *Pachana* (digestive) were skipped and 50 ml of *Eranda Taila* (medicated castor oil) was administered for the purpose of *Koshtha Shuddhi* (purgation) in the morning along with warm water. 6 *Vegas* (bouts of stool) were reported by the patient after administration of *Eranda tail*. After that he was advised to take light semi solid diet and avoid exertion for 3 days. *Shamana* (palliative treatment) therapy was started after *Shodhana* (bio purification) of the patient. *Shamana* medicine are listed below-

1. *Phala ghrita* 15 ml with milk in the empty stomach once daily
2. *Chandraprabha vati* – 500 mg, twice daily after food with water
3. *Shilaprabanga vati* – (250 mg), twice daily after food with milk
4. *Arogyavardhini vati* – (500 mg), twice daily after food with water.

Chandraprabha vati and *Arogyavardhini vati* were procured from Indian Medicines Pharmaceutical Corporation limited (IMPCL) Uttarakhand and dispensed through OPD. *Phala ghrita* (*Arya Vaidya Shala, Kottakal*) and *Shilaprabanga* (*Sri Dhootapeswar Ltd*) were prescribed from outside. All the above medicines were prescribed for 3 and ½ months. No adverse drug reaction was reported during the treatment which was confirmed during follow up visits.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Vitiligo is a common, disfiguring autoimmune disease that negatively affects patients' self-esteem and quality of life.¹⁰ There are two main goals of any vitiligo treatment; first is to stop or arrest the further de-pigmentation and second is to induce repigmentation.¹¹ Conventional treatment of vitiligo includes Photo chemotherapy which aims to either increase the sensitivity of the skin, or increase the sensitivity of melanocytes, by activating melanocytes or melanosomes and inducing IL-1 synthesis Phototherapy, Vitamin D3 Analogues, Topical and Systemic Corticosteroids, Topical Immunomodulators (TIM), Excimer Laser, Surgical Therapy, dermabrasion etc.¹² It might be pertinent to look into potentials of alternative systems of medicine like Ayurveda and aim at an integrated approach for the treatment of vitiligo.

In the present case, the treatment was intended to cure Necrozoospermia. At the end of 3½ month, an interesting observation was made. Along with the marked improvement in sperm count and increase in the sperm motility, the hypo-pigmented patches of vitiligo on the periocular and perioral region had reduced remarkably without any external application. *Phala ghrita* was administered early in the morning in empty stomach as *Shamana Snehana* (palliative mode of oleation) as it is indicated in *shukra dosha*. *Chandraprabha vati*, *Shilaprabanga vati* tab. – (250 mg) and *Arogyavardhini vati* were also administered. Though the medicines were targeted towards *shukra dosha*, it was astounding to stumble on an unexpected outcome. It was observed that the vitiligo patches were reduced without any external application and without the use of disease specific drugs like *Bakuchi* (*Psoralea corylifolia*).

Arogyavardhini vati has been mentioned in *Rasa Ratna Samucchaya* in the context of *Kushtha* (skin disorder) in *Bhaishyaja ratnavali* in the context of *Yakrit vikara* (liver disorder). It is also mentioned that *Arogyavardhini vati* as *Sarvarogaprashamani* (wide range of disorders)¹³ It contains drugs like *Abhakra Bhasma* (ash of mica), *Shilajatu* (Asphaltum), *Eranda* (*Ricinus communis* Linn.) and *Katuki* (*Picrorhiza kurroa* Royle ex Benth).

Chandraprabha vati a herbomineral compound preparation which has been reported to have immense free radical scavenging activity¹⁴ and was prescribed for its pharmac therapeutic action on *shukra dosha*. However, it has also imparted its positive effect on the skin.¹⁵

The medicated ghee (*Phala ghrita*) was given early morning in empty stomach as *Shamana Snehana* (palliative mode of oleation for *shukra Dosha*)¹⁶ *Phala ghrita* has ingredients like *Manjishtha* (*Rubia cordifolia*), *Kushtha* (*Saussurea lappa*), *Haridra* (*Curcuma longa*) *Daru haridra* (*Berberis aristata*), *Madhuka* (*Yashti*) *Glycyrrhiza glabra* etc. Hence, it has imparted profound benefit on skin.¹⁷

Shilaprabanga is well-known proprietary herbomineral aphrodisiac medicine which was used in this context. It might have contributed by its ingredients like *Shilajathu*¹⁸ which is useful for the treatment of skin and eye disorders due to its photo protective action.¹⁹

A probable convincing explanation for this phenomenon is available from the Ayurvedic principle. i.e. The basic theory of *Ayurveda Dhatu Siddhanta* (Theory of tissues formation and differentiation) is based on the state of equilibrium of *Tridosha*, *Saptadhatu* and *Trimala*. The productive nutrients (*Ahara Rasa*) go through each level of *dhatu* (bodily tissues) for nourishment. Thus, *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja* and *Shukra Dhatu* forms and nourishes further *Dhatu*s. For example, *Rasadhatvagni* plays an important role in the formation of *Rakta Dhatu* from *Rasa Dhatu* which further nourishes the *Mamsa Dhatu* by the influence of *Raktadhatvagni*.

Rasa dhatu may have all types of cell differentiate lineage responsible for the development of all *Saptadhatu*, may be known as pluripotent. Recent studies suggest that the spermatogonial stem cells can be reprogrammed to become ES-like cells to acquire pluripotency. Wholesome *shukra dhatu* may be considered as pluripotent, because it is responsible for the transmission of genetic information from an individual to the next generation. Thus, each *dhatu* carry the potency to regenerate further *dhatu*, because each *Avayava* (organ) is formed by composition of many *dhatu*s (tissues).

After multiplying into enough size, a portion remains constant and unchanged which proliferate and renew. Another portion of cells differentiate into functional cells. This is the similar pattern explained in Ayurveda for *Saptadhatu*. *Sukshma bhaga* (micro-nutrients) nourishing *uttarottara dhatu* (preceding tissues) and process is only for forward direction. Understanding *Saptadhatu* (seven tissue) in terms of stem cells substantiates effect of *Rasayana*. This type of effect is possible only if the drugs are having effect on totipotent/pluripotent stem cells. Into the *Saptadhatu* theory is very advanced stem cell theory and the

whole *Rasayana* (rejuvenative) treatments are established after understanding efficacy of various drugs on stem cells²⁰.

The *Rasayanas* which intended towards *shukra dosha*, in the process of sequential development healed the lesions of Vitiligo. *Rasayana* drugs works on multiple areas and helps in achievement of *vyadhikshamatwa* through its *Deepana* (appetizer), *Pachana* (digestive), *Medhya* (promoting intellect), and nonspecific immune booster properties²¹.

Before Treatment

After Treatment

Figure 1: Change in hypopigmentation before and after the treatment period

CONCLUSION

Finding of the present case report shows the effective management of vitiligo with Ayurvedic formulations, without any external applications highlighting the basic *Dhatu Siddhanta* (Theory of tissue formation) of Ayurveda. This study gives us an insight about the importance of correcting the *dosha*, *dhatu* and *agni* in Vitiligo supporting the basic *Siddhanta* (theory) of Ayurveda.

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