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AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF CERVICAL DYSTONIA: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Dystonia is a neurological disorder wherein sustained involuntary muscle contractions occur. Cervical dystonia is one variety among various types of dystonia where neck muscles are affected causing stiffness, rigidity and abnormal posture of neck. The aim of treatment is restricted to minimize the symptoms as there is no permanent cure in contemporary medicine. Ayurvedic texts in the context of Vatavyadhi explained that aggravated vata lodges at different sites in the body and causes various types of vatic disorders. For the treatment of vata vikara vama, Nasya, sthanika abhyanga and sveda are indicated as a general line of treatment. A case of 35 years old male presented with features of Cervical Dystonia who was treated with Ayurvedic treatment is discussed here.

Keywords: Cervical dystonia; spasmodic torticollis; Botulinum toxin

INTRODUCTION

Cervical dystonia is characterized by involuntary contractions in neck muscles resulting in abnormal posture and neck movements. The patient often complains of discomfort and pain in the neck region.

Etiology

Cervical dystonia may be primary or by secondary causes such as physical trauma. The disorder may be hereditary associated with DYT1 gene or caused by other factors such as birth-related or other physical trauma, infection, poisoning or reaction to pharmaceutical drugs like neuroleptics.

Diagnosis

The patient can be diagnosed based on information from the affected individual and the physical and neurological examination. There is no confirmatory test for cervical dystonia, and in most cases laboratory test reports are normal.

Case report

A 35 year old male individual native of Orissa state, working as a marketing executive reported with complaints of sudden involuntary movement of neck towards left side since one year. The episodes were initially lasting for few seconds and were lesser frequent occurring during the practice of Yoga / Worship. Now the episodes last continuously for past 3 months, occur during cycling, lifting heavy objects or when he is anxious or nervous. They are relieved during rest and sleep. There is no difficulty in breathing, swallowing.

On examination

Deviation of face to left, Observed mild dystonia of head, tremor positive / bradykinesia. There was no rigidity. Right sterno cleido mastoid and Right Sphenun capitis over reacting.

History of previous illness

Patient was on treatment for Seizures and was taking Eptoin for past 20 years.

Investigations

All the hematological and biochemical blood parameters were within normal limits. EEG report was also normal. The patient had undergone MRI in Dec 2012 and its report shows presence of mild Cerebellar atrophy features.

Treatment options in modern medicine

- Medical management to relieve the symptoms associated with cervical dystonia include anti cholinergic drugs and dopanergic drugs and Valium (diazepam).
- One of the effective treatments for cervical dystonia is regular botulinum toxin injections to the affected muscles so that botulinum neuro toxin blocks the release of the acetylcholine and relaxes the muscles.
- Selective denervation surgery is an option where affected neck muscles are de-nervated to provide relief.
- Deep brain stimulation surgery is in the beginning of trials and is not as effective as in treatment of tremors.
- Gentle physical therapy to improve range of motion and help reduce pain
- Complementary therapies like regular relaxation practices may significantly benefit discomfort and pain.

Ayurvedic intervention attempted at Advanced Centre for Ayurveda in Mental health and Neurosciences, NIMHANS, Bangalore, India is as follows

The patient was treated as the case of Vatavikara and subjected to both internal and external medications.

Internal medications

The patient was administered with following Ayurvedic medication.

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|--------------------------|-----------|
| • Tab. Vatajankusha rasa | 1 Tab BID |
| • Tab. Simhanada guggulu | 2 Tab BID |
| • Tab. Ashvagandha | 2 Tab BID |
| • Tab. Vishatinduka vati | 1 Tab BID |
| • Maharasnadi kashya | 30 ml BID |

External therapies

- Sarvanga Abhyanga with Dhanvanthari taila for 35 minutes and Bhaspa sveda for 10 minutes daily for 30 days
- Greevabasti with Dhanvanthara taila for 30 minutes daily for 30 days
- Marsha nasya with Ksheerabala 101 avarita (10 drops in each nostril) daily for 30 days
- Shirodhara with Ksheerabala taila daily for 30 minutes for 30 days

Physiotherapy

The patient was referred to DNR, NIMHANS for physiotherapy treatment (PT). The emphasis of the PT program was on the functional performance of the exercises adapted to daily life situations, muscle stretching, passive mobilization of the neck and training principles which have found to be relevant for neural rehabilitation and motor learning¹⁻¹⁵.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The frequency and duration of the dystonic episodes was decreased significantly. Patient feels more confident during social interactions unlike earlier. Stiffness and rigidity at neck decreased markedly.

Medicine Name	Pharmacological effects
Vatagajankusha rasa	Nervine tonic, anti infective and sedative. Useful in nervous disorders like Hemiplegia, paraplegia and facial paralysis
Simhanada guggulu	Useful in Inflammation of joints, Stiffness, Swelling, Difficulty in moving, Pain usually starts in hands and feet. (Wrist and hand joints), Can also affect neck, shoulders, knees, hips and ankles, Rheumtoid nodules, Fever, Loss of energy, Loss of appetite, Weakness, General fatigue
Ashvagandha	Restorative, nervine and aphrodisiac tonic
Vishatinduka vati	One of the most potent medicine for nerve disorder and excellent nerve tonic. Indicated in neurotic pains, lumbago
Maharasnadi kashya	Ant rheumatic and anti inflammatory, Useful in arthritis, sciatica and neuritis

The internal medicines given are traditionally used in the treatment of vata vikara and sandhi roga. As nose is considered as the route for administration of medicine for treating all urdhva jatru gata vikara hence brimhana nasya with ksheerabala 101 avarita taila was given. Nasya karma helps to clear the obstructions in the channels and thereby regulates flow of vata and stimulates the cranial system. It also helps to rejuvenate the senses. Nasya is indicated in imbalances of the head and neck. It is indicated in headaches, migraine, vertigo, dizziness and shoulder problems and so on. Ksheerabala taila 101 avarita is an excellent remedy in the treatment of vata vikara when administered as nasya. The patient was also subjected for sarvanga abhyanga, bhashpa sweda and Greeva basti treatment. In Greeva basti warm medicated oil is retained over the neck. It helps to cure cervical spondylosis, neck pain, paralysis, numbness of hands etc. For Abhyanga and Greeva basti Dhanvanthara tailam was used which is considered as one of the best vata shamana taila used in the treatment of chronic rheumatic and nervous disorders. The selected Ayurvedic treatment has provided considerable relief to the patient and can be adopted in the management of Cervical Dystonia.

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