AYURVEDIC APPROACHES TO POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME (PCOS): A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a common endocrinopathy found in the females of reproductive age group characterized by atypical menstrual cycle pattern, hormonal disarrays and polycystic ovaries. It may be difficult to diagnose due to heterogeneous presentation and varying features with age. In PCOS, severe hormonal derangements give rise to the clinical manifestations i.e. amenorrhea or oligomenorrhea, hirsutism, obesity, Acanthosis nigricans & infertility. Sedentary life-style, lack of exercise, excessive stress and anxiety accompanied with junk food worsens the prognosis. According to Ayurveda, the disorder involves Vata and Kapha doshas, Meda-Mamsa-Rakta dhatu. Therefore Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome can also be described with same involvement of Doshas and Dhatu. Chikitsa siddhant aims Agni Deepana and Aampachana, hence clearing away the Srotorodha (obstacles) of Aartava-vaha srotas (Channels carrying menstrual blood) and others. Srotoshodhana leads to Apana- Vataulomana resulting in regularization of menstrual cycle, imbalanced hormones and metabolism. Reduction in Kapha is helpful in relieving obesity along with the associated symptoms of hyperandrogenism. Moreover, regular exercise and balanced diet catalyzes the action of drugs. Hence PCOS can be managed with Ayurvedic formulations along with Life-style modifications and restricted diet.

Keywords: Polycystic Ovary Syndrome, Hormonal Imbalance, Obesity, Management, Life Style-Modification

INTRODUCTION

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) was originally described in 1935 by Stein and Leventhal as a syndrome manifested by amenorrhea, hirsutism and obesity associated with enlarged polycystic ovaries. It is the most common endocrinopathy in female with reproductive age group with a prevalence of 9.13% in Indian population. PCOS is a condition characterized by hyperandrogenism and chronic oligo-amenorrhea. Hirsutism may be clinically evident in 25% of the cases. PCOS is associated with metabolic derangements including insulin resistance, dyslipidemia, systemic inflammation and endothelial dysfunction. In modern science management of PCOS is chiefly based upon the management of obesity.

In Ayurveda, PCOS is not described as a separate heading, but can be portrayed under the headings of various yonivyapadas (genital pathologies) and aartavadushti (menstrual pathologies). PCOD can be correlated with Pushpagni Jataharini 1, aartavaksaya 2 (hypomenorrhea), nashtartava 3, arajaska 4, ksheenaartava 5 (oligomenorrhea) and granthibhuta aartava 6 (clotted menses).

Modern management of PCOS is primarily targeted to correct the biochemical abnormalities 7,8. Weight reduction in obese patients is the first line of treatment 9,10. Conservative management mainly involves frequent use of hormonal pills, which results in numerous adverse effects. Therefore Ayurvedic formulations from various Ayurvedic texts can be a better option for the definitive cure of PCOS.

Etiology

In the context of yonivyapadas, there are four basic causative factors i.e. unwholesome lifestyle, menstrual disarrays (dushti of antahpushpa i.e. ova and bahipushpa i.e. menstrual blood), genetic disorders and some divine factors, responsible for the manifestation of the syndrome.

It is a disorder involving vata and kapha doshas along with Meda Dhatu dushti 11,12. On the basis of Ayurvedic interpretation PCOS can be enumerated as Rasapradoshaja 13 and Santarpanottha vyadhi 14.
Probable Samprapti and Rupa (pathogenesis & symptoms)

Treatment of PCOS as per Ayurveda

1) “Nidana Parivarjana”23 (avoid the causative factors) is said to be the very first step towards the management of PCOS. As Agnimandya, Medovriddhi, Apana Vayu and Kapha dushti plays the major role in the pathogenesis of the syndrome, so taking above fact into the consideration, Pathya Ahara-Vihara (dietary regimen & exercise) is to be used.

2) For Agnimandya and Aampachana, use of Trikatu Churna24, Chitrakadi Gutika25, Shadushana Churna26, Haritaki Churna27, Hingwashtaka Churna28 is to be done in order to palliate the Srotovarodha and to facilitate the Apana-Vatanulomana.

3) For Medovriddhi, use of Takrarishta, Madhu like lekhanadravyas (scraping agents) along with Yava, yavaka, kulattha etc. as aahara (diet) is mentioned by Acharya Charaka in chikitsa of Atistula29 (obese). Moreover, lifestyle-modification as well as regular exercise is also emphasized30.

4) To remove the Sanga (obstruction) of Aartava-vaah srotas, Uttar-Basti31, 32 (douche) is given with Dhanvantari Taila33

5) Vamana Karma (emesis) - as it alleviates the Srotovarodha by eliminating vitiated Kapha. As Kapha is soumya in prakriti, decrease in Kapha consequently increases Aartava of Aagneya nature34.

6) Shatpushpa and Shatavari Churna35 (Asparagus racemosus Willd.36) are to be used in females with deficiency or loss of Aartava, women getting their menstruation but not conceiving.

7) Kanchanara Guggulu37, Sukumara Ghrita38 for reducing the size of formed ovarian cysts.

8) Pathadi Kwath mentioned by Acharya Sushruta in Vatakaphaja Aartava dushti39 given orally along with the matrabasti of Shatpushpa taila40 after the cessation of menstrual cycle for seven days is found efficient due to its properties of Aampachana, agnideepana, Vata-Kaphashamana.

9) Narayana taila41

10) Rasona Kalpa42

11) Pushpadhavana Rasa43

12) Regular practice of Yoga i.e. Uttanapadasana, Sarvangasana, Halasana, Mayoorasana, Surya-namaskara, Vakrasana and Sheersasana in amenorrhea44 and, while Sarvangasana, Sheersasana, Halasana, Bhatstrika and Ujjayi pranayama in female sterility35, are indicated

13) Kumaryasava is indicated in Nashta pushpa46

DISCUSSION

According to Ayurveda, the disorder is caused by vitiated Vata and Kapha and Rasa-Meda-Mamsa-Rakta dhatus dushti. The main objective of the chikitsa is-

- To flame the Jathragni and dhatvagni with the use of Deepana-pachana dravyas to correct the Agnimandya.

- To remove the Sanga of Aartava-vaha srotas and Srotoshodhana through various Samshodhana karmas to balance the imbalanced doshas i.e. reduction of Kapha and Anulomana of Apana Vata; to nourish the dushta dhatus and to regulate the irregular menstrual cycle.

- To reduce the weight through Lekhana dravyas, Pathya aahara-vihara and regular exercise to regulate the hormonal imbalance.

- To reduce the size of already formed ovarian cysts through Kanchanara Guggula & Sukumara Ghrita as Kanchanara is very useful in treating extra growths or tumors47.

- To enhance the chances of conception with the use of Shatpushpa and Shatavari Churna. As Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus Willd.36) is known for its phytoestrogenic properties.48
CONCLUSION

In treating PCOS, one should aim for Samprapti Vighatana (breakdown of pathogenesis) as per the awasthabheda (stage of disease) and Dosh- Dushya Sammurchana. Encouraging results can be obtained with Shastrakuta formulations, Panchakarma, Pathya aahara and regular exercise due to its holistic approach towards Samprapti-Vighatana.

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