DYSMENORRHOEA (KASHTARTAVA) - A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Women health is having primary importance for the wellbeing of the family and society. Any physical & psychological disturbance due to today’s stressful life affects their reproductive life. Menstruation is one of the physiological process seen in the reproductive life of women. Today’s life of women is so complex, competitive, ambitious and fast. Such lifestyle results into mithya aahara, vihara, over exertion which leads into various vyadhi allied to menstruation. Dysmenorrhoea is a medical condition of painful menstruation which affects women day to day activities. In many countries, primary dysmenorrhoea is the leading cause of recurrent short term school & work absenteeism in young girls and women. It is also leading to reduced physical activity, loss of concentration and poor social relationship ultimately disturbing the life of girls and women. In Ayurveda classics kashtartava is not described as a separate entity but described as a symptom of various yonivyapadas. Generally analgesics, NSAIDs, antispasmodic, anti-inflammatory drugs are used to treat dysmenorrhoea. Oral contraceptives also help to reduce the severity of the symptoms. Ayurveda advised dincharya, diet modulations, yoga which includes asanas, pranayama on a regular basis to reduce the symptoms of dysmenorrhoea. Similarly aushadhi siddha anuvasana basti, uttarbasti, utkarika dharan etc. must be given. Also Ayurvedic formulations should be used.

KEYWORDS: Menstruation, Dysmenorrhoea, Kashtartava, Ayurveda.
INTRODUCTION

Health is the actual way of attaining longevity in all species including human beings. Women health is especially important because she has the capacity to bare the fetus in the womb and deliver it in a healthy state and thus contribute to overall health of the society. Today stress is a factor which affects women and thus plays a major role in maintaining mental and physical health. Menstruation is the natural physiological process in the reproductive life of women. Dysmenorrhoea means painful menstruation of sufficient magnitude so as to incapacitate day to day activities.[1] It has two types i.e. primary and secondary dysmenorrhoea.[2] Primary dysmenorrhoea is widely prevalent, more than 70% of teenagers and 30-50% of menstruating women suffer from varying degree of discomfort.[3] Population survey suggest a wide variation in prevalence rate of dysmenorrhoea from studies around the world including India reporting a range between 28% and 71.7% and most of them (37%) suffered regularly from dysmenorrhoea severity.[4]

Ayurvedic view: According to Ayurvedic classics the blood is accumulated in the uterus and then discharged as “aartava”.5 Kashtartava means kashten pravartanam. Kashta means painful, difficult, troublesome whereas kashten means with great difficulty.[6] Means pravartan of aartava with great difficulty. In Ayurvedic classics kashtarva is described as a symptoms of various yoniyaapadas specially udavarta7, vataja8, sannipatika9, antarmukhi10, vipluta11 etc. According to Ayurveda, pain is due to aggrevation of vata dosha12 and aggrevation of vata dosha is due to three main factors. These are obstruction in the passage i.e. margavrodha, loss of body tissue i.e. dhatukshaya13 and vat prakopak aahara - vihara. According to Maharshi Charaka in udavartini yoniyaapada, apana vayu is aggravated, moves in reverse direction and fills the entire yoni. The apana vayu pushes the raja i.e. blood in upward direction and causes pain, discomfort in menstruation. The woman feels comfortable after discharging the menstrual blood.[14,15] This symptom is appear to be nearer to primary dysmenorrhoea.

Modern view: Menstruation is the visible manifestation of cyclic physiologic uterine bleeding due to shedding of endometrium16 i.e. in every month there is discharge of blood, mucus and epithelial cells from uterus. Even though menstruation is the physiological process many women experiences various types of menstrual problems among which dysmenorrhoea is the commonest one. The word dysmenorrhoea has a Greek origin i.e. Dis-men-o-re-ah. Dis means difficult, painful, bad; men means to flow so dysmenorrhoea means painful or difficult menses.[17]
Dysmenorrhoea means painful, cramping pain accompanying menstruation. There are two types of dysmenorrhoea primary and secondary. Primary dysmenorrhoea refers to one that is not associated with any identifiable pelvic pathology. It affects more than 50% of post pubescent women in the age group of 18 to 25 years. Primary dysmenorrhoea is related to myometrial contraction induced by prostaglandins. The pain begins few hours before or just with the onset of menstruation. The severity of pain is spasmodic and confined to lower abdomen and may radiate to back and medial aspect of thighs. Systemic discomforts like nausea, vomiting, fatigue, diarrhoea, headache may be associated. It may be accompanied by vasomotor changes causing pallor, cold sweat and occasional fainting. Secondary dysmenorrhoea is normally considered to be menstruation associated pain occurring in the presence of pelvic pathology i.e. fibroids, adenomyosis, PID, endometriosis. The patients are usually in thirties more often parous. The pain is dull, situated in the back and in the front without any radiation. It usually appears 3-5 days prior to the period and relieves with the start of bleeding. The onset and duration of pain depends on the pathology producing the pain. There is no systemic discomfort like primary dysmenorrhoea. The patient may have got some discomfort even in between periods. There are symptoms of associated pelvic pathology.

**Treatment as per modern medicine**

Treatment includes counselling, psychotherapy to modify patient’s perception of her problem and alter behavioural attitude, medical measures and surgical interventions.

**I) Medical Measures**

- **Analgesics** - like paracetamol 500mg t.i.d. or piroxicam 20 mg b.i.d.
- **Antispasmodic** - like hyoscine (Buscopan) compound t.i.d. or drotaverin (drotin) t.i.d.
- **NSAID’s** - like mefenamic acid 250-500mg q.i.d or Indomethacin 25 mg three to six times daily
- **Glycerine trinitrate (nitroglycerine), nitric oxide by relaxing smooth muscle relieves pain**
- **Progestogen containing IUCD**
- **Oral contraceptive drugs administered cyclically suppress ovulation and are useful in relieving dysmenorrhoea.**
- **Pelvic endometriosis may be treated with increasing doses of danazol or oral contraceptives or GnRH antagonists.**
- **Vitamin E 200 mg b.i.d. starting 2 days before and 3 days during period claims to reduce dysmenorrhoea.**
II] Surgical Measures

• Diagnostic hysteroscopy followed by dilatation and curettage.
  Excision of polyp or uterine septum.
• Diagnostic laparoscopy followed by lysis of pelvic adhesions, myomectomy, draining of chocolate cyst, cautery or laser vaporization of island of endometriosis, excision of adnexal masses, laser assisted uterosacral nerve ablation for spasmodic dysmenorrhoea.
• Laparotomy followed by excision of chocolate cyst, eradication of endometriosis, excision of localized adenomyoma
• Hysterectomy in the elderly women
• Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation

Treatment as per Ayurvedic classics

• Nidan parivarjana
  • As described by Aacharya Charaka gynaecological disorders does not occur without vitiation of vata. So first increased vata dosha should be normalized so vatashamaka treatment must be done.
  • Vatghna snehana (oleation), swedana (sudation), basti (enema) should be used.
  • Abhyanga (body massage), pichu dharana with ushna and snigdha dravya siddha taila.
  • Oleation with trivritta sneha (ghrita, oil), sudation,
    - use of meat soup of gramya (wild), anupa and audaka (aquatic) animals.
    - basti of milk medicated with dashmula and it’s oral use.
    - anuvasan basti (uncting enema) and uttarbasti (vaginal instillation) with trivritta sneha should be done.
  • Poultice made with pestled barley, wheat, kinva, kustha, shatpushpa, srayahwa, priyangu, bala and akhukarni should be applied locally.

I] Ayurvedic preparations

• According to Rastantrasara and Siddhaprayog sangraha
  - Vanga bhasma
  - Brihat Yograj Guggulu
  - Kasisadi vati
  - Vanga bhasma
  - Bol parpati
  - Raja pravartak kwatha and churna
  - Devdarvyarishata

• According to Bhaishajyaratnavali
  - Raja pravartini vati
  - Kumarika vati
- Vijayadi vati
- Hingvadi taila

II] Life style changes: At present time, the families are undergoing rapid changes due to the increases pace of urbanization and modernization. In IT sectors and basically in all working fields, the women goes through job stress, working load, inappropriate dietary habits, sleeping time etc. In today’s sedentary life women have to play multiple role which causes adverse effects on women’s mental and physical health including menstrual disorders, insomnia, loss of appetite etc. Therefore to tackle these challenges regarding to menstrual disorder Ayurvedic classics described “rajaswala paricharya”. The rajaswala paricharya helps women adapt well to the physiological changes taking place in the body during the menstruation and thus prevent occurrence of diseases.

Do’s
- Exercise regularly
- Ensure sound sleep for at least 6 -8 hours
- Maintain proper hygiene

Don’ts
- Avoid hot, spicy and salty food.
- Avoid fast running, excessive talking and laughing to avoid exertion and vitiation of vata dosha and to restore energy of rajaswala during menstruation.
- Avoid sleeping during day time to prevent vitiation of kapha and pitta.
- Avoid coitus during menstrual period as it causes abnormalities in the child impregnated during this period.
- Avoid smoking and alcohol
- Reduce caffeine intake

According to Aacharya Sushruta, if the women fails to follow the rajaswala paricharya, there are chances of development of congenital anamolies in the child like blindness, abnormality of vision, deafness, baldness, Insanity, nails deformity, menstrual abnormalities etc.¹³²

III] Diet: Eat healthy, fresh and warm food.
- Eat meal made of ghee, shali rice, milk, barley etc.¹³³
- Eat more leafy vegetables that includes fibres.\textsuperscript{[34]}
- Take fresh fruit like plums, grapes apples, pomegranates etc.
- As research studies shows that ginger is effective in reducing the severity of menstrual cramps - Regularly use ginger in food preparation.\textsuperscript{[35]}
- Take supplements like calcium, magnesium, vitamin E, B6, B12.
- Avoid high fat and sugar.

Research studies shows that \textit{rajaswala paricharya} helps women to respond healthily to the drastic physical and psychic changes during the menstrual cycle. It is also helpful in relieving most of the associated symptoms of menstrual cycle.\textsuperscript{[36]}

**IV] Yoga:** There is growing association between psychosocial stress and menses associated health problems suggesting that stress may affect menstrual function. Yoga balances both the mind and body. The research study suggests that \textit{yoga} helps to control the stress and pain of dysmenorrhoea. According to research studies \textit{yoga} has been to be an effective method which reduces pain in dysmenorrhoea. Various types of \textit{asanas} to reduce pain in dysmenorrhoea are as follows\textsuperscript{[37] \[38\] \[39\]}

\textit{Ushtrasana}
- It is also called as camel pose. It is a very deep backward bend performed in a kneeling position. A deeper stretch can be achieved by separating the knees slightly wider at the outside.
- This \textit{asana} stretches the front of the body, ankles, thighs, abdomen, and chest. It stimulates the abdominal organs, increases the blood flow to the uterus helping to heal it faster.
- It also relieves back ache and to relax the body.

\textit{Dhanurasana}
- It is also called as bow pose. The woman should lie in prone position and grasp the feet to lift the leg and chest to form a bow. Remain in this position for some time and then return to previous position.
- The \textit{asana} stretches the entire front of the body and give extra stretch to ankles, thighs, abdomen, chest, throat and the muscles of the buttocks.
- It stimulates the organs of the abdomen. This stimulation helps ease cramps and regulate the flow of blood to and from the uterus thus relieving the pain.
**Matsyasana**
- It is also called as fish pose. The woman lies on her back and lifts the heart by rising up on the elbows and drawing the shoulders back. the neck is lengthened and the crown of the head pointed towards the wall.
- It stretches out the muscles of the back, neck, chest and legs giving instant relief from muscle aches and pain associated with menstruation.

**Vajrasana**
- It is sitting asana in yoga. It is a kneeling position sitting on the heels.
- The woman sits on the heels with the calves beneath the thighs. There is four finger gap between the kneecaps and the first toe of both the feet touch each other and sit erect.
- This asana alters the flow of blood and nervous impulses in pelvic region and strengthens pelvic muscles, alleviating menstrual disorders.

**CONCLUSION**
Menstrual bleeding accompanied with pain is called as dysmenorrhoea i.e. rajkricchata. Dysmenorrhoea is a condition in which there is discharge of blood from yoni with difficulty. Menstrual bleeding is the function of apana vayu. Apana and vyan vayu may be vitiated due to mithya aahara, vihara, vega dharana, margavrodha or dhatykshaya which leads to vata vruddhi, apana vayu aggrevated and moves in reverse direction leading into pratilomagati of rajas and results into kashtartava. Vitiation and vilom gati of apana vayu is the main factor for kashtartava. So there is imbalance of the dosha and this imbalance of dosha can be corrected by proper diet i.e. vatshamaka aahara, herbal preparations, yoga and with the use of panchkarma chikitsa and also by modern science.

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