

MANAGEMENT OF FOOD-POISONING THROUGH AYURVEDA

W.S.R. TO VISUCHIKA

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20 July 2020,Revised on 10 August 2020,
Accepted on 30 August 2020

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr202010-18609

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The improper handling, preparation or storage of food, consumption of unwholesome diet and some modern dietary patterns e.g. packaged food, etc. have added a lot to food-borne diseases. Food poisoning is such a disease which can be caused by direct bacterial infection or by enterotoxins. It is an acute condition and a leading cause of morbidity, which needs an emergency management. The clinical presentation of food poisoning is similar to *Visuchika*, mentioned in *Ayurveda* as acute abdominal pain along with diarrhoea and vomiting.

KEYWORDS: *Visuchika*, gastroenteritis, tenesmus, polydipsia,

diarrhoea etc.

INTRODUCTION OF FOOD-POISONING

Food poisoning is classified under acute gastroenteritis due to ingestion of food or other eatables which are contaminated by either bacteria (e.g. *Staphylococci*, *Salmonella*, *Cholera*, *E. coli* and *Clostridium*) or nonbacterial toxins (e.g. enterotoxins, toxic foods, etc.). The enterotoxins play an important role in the pathogenesis of non bacterial food poisoning with hypersecretion of fluid and electrolytes which is the underlying cause of watery consistency of stool.

Symptoms

Symptoms usually develop within 12 hours of ingestion of contaminated food. Some common symptoms are-

1. Loose or watery stool for more than 10 times.
2. Presence of pus cells, mucus and sometimes blood.

3. Tenesmus or pain in lower abdomen during defecation.
4. Hyperpyrexia
5. Mucosal hyperemia due to mucosal invasion

Symptoms of severe cases due to excessive fluid loss and dehydration-

6. Dry tongue
7. Sunken eyeballs
8. Dry skin
9. Pulse may be feeble
10. BP may be low

Diagnosis

1. **Blood examination:-** TLC and DLC for leukocyte count.
2. **Stool examination:-** for quantity, consistency, smell, contents, blood, cells, mucus.
3. **Stool culture:-** to find out nature of bacteria.
4. **Serum electrolyte and blood urea.**

INTRODUCTION OF VISUCHIKA

Visuchika is known as an acute pricking like pain in the abdomen and other body parts caused by the vitiated *Vata* due to indigestion of food. The simultaneous expulsion of indigested food through upper and lower passage of the gastrointestinal tract as vomiting together with diarrhoea is the characteristic feature of *Visuchika*.

Aetiology

Visuchika has been enumerated under "*Amapradoshaja vikara*". "*Ama*" means undigested food. All the etiological factors of indigestion which gave rise to "*Ama*" production, are thought to be underlying causes of *Visuchika* too. These factors are as follows-

1. Excessive intake of water
2. Irregular food patterns
3. Unwholesome food
4. *Kapha*-vitiating food
5. Suppression of natural urges
6. Improper sleep
7. Mal effect of *snehana*, *vamana* or *virechana karma*
8. Incompatible place, season and climate, etc.

Pathogenesis of *visuchika*

The pathogenesis of *visuchika* starts with alteration in normal functioning of *jatharagni* which leads to improper digestion of ingested food and results in improper formation of the first *dhatu* i.e. *Rasa*. When this indigested or improperly digested “*Ama Annarasa*” undergoes fermentation or putrefaction, it becomes toxic and harmful; thus, called “*Annavisha*”, which plays an important role in the pathogenesis of several diseases.

Combination of *Annavisha* or *Amarasa* with vitiated *tridoshas* in *Amashaya* and *pakvashaya*, first leads to obstruction (*sanga*) in their normal passage and then shows symptoms of *vimarga-gamana* and *atipravritti* as vomiting and diarrhoea respectively. There is involvement of all the three *doshas* with predominance of *Vata*, which is responsible for an acute abdominal pain.

Common symptoms of *visuchika*

Fainting, diarrhoea, vomiting, polydipsia, abdominal colic, vertigo, tenesmus, excessive yawning, epigastric burning, discoloration of skin, cardiac pain and headache are common symptoms of *visuchika*.

Specific symptoms of *visuchika*

Acharya Charak has demonstrated some specific symptoms according to predominance of *doshas*-

- (a) ***Vataj visuchika***:- Abdominal colic, constipation, body ache, xerostomia, fainting, vertigo, altered digestion, rigidity in back and lower back and increased contractility or hardening of blood vessels.
- (b) ***Pittaj visuchika***:- Hyperpyrexia, diarrhoea, dysesthesia, polydipsia, intoxication, vertigo and delirium.
- (c) ***Kaphaj visuchika***:- Vomiting, anorexia, indigestion, cold fever, giddiness and heaviness.

Complications (*Updravas*) of *visuchika*

1. Insomnia
2. Restlessness
3. Tremors
4. Anuria
5. Fainting or comatose state

Ayurvedic management of *visuchika*

Ayurveda has given a perfect line of treatment for the management of *Visuchika*, which is as follows-

1. *Nidana parivarjan*
2. *Virechana*
3. *Vamana*
4. *Langhana*
5. *Ama-pachana and Agni-deepan*
6. *Agnikarma*

Classical preparations for *visuchika*

1. *Visuchikantaka Rasa*
2. *Ramabana Rasa*
3. *Visuchikahara Vati*
4. *Sanjivani Vati*
5. *Karpoorasava*
6. *Karpoordhara*, etc.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

After having a review on clinical features of *Visuchika* and acute gastroenteritis (food poisoning), it is clear that both the diseases have similarities in their aetiology, pathogenesis and clinical presentations. The specific characteristic of having acute abdominal pain along with diarrhoea and vomiting is duly described under both the diseases. The underlying cause is toxin production into gastrointestinal tract, which can be efficiently managed through Ayurvedic line of treatment.

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