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Multi-disciplinary approach in sciatica pain management; a review

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Abstract:

Lifestyle had changed at a fast pace along with digitalization. Post covid scenario had changed the work life culture of masses. This had resulted in number of musculoskeletal disorders. Sciatica is one such neuro muscular disorder caused due to sciatic nerve compression. Pain is radiating along the course of nerve from lower back to the affected leg till the heel. Here a multi-disciplinary approach is been studied for the effective pain management of sciatica. Use of Viddha and Agni karmalocally, Snehana – Swedana along with Kati Basti, use of Matra Basti and internal medication including Shallaki, Trayodashanga Guggulu and Abha Guggulu. Along with this some Yoga therapy can also be advised which is discussed in brief.

Keywords: Sciatica, Snehana – Swedana, Viddha Karma, Agni karma, Shallaki, Trayodashanga Guggulu.

Introduction:

Sedentary lifestyle and faulty food habits have a huge impact on ones health. Lack of physical exercise and intake of undernourished processed food results in various disorders. Shift duties, travelling on two wheeler and continuous sitting in front of screen are some of the job profiles which are deteriorating the physical as well as mental wellbeing. Although this has impact on all systems of body, the musculoskeletal system is largely affected. This results in pain related to nerves, joints, muscles, ligaments and any underlying pathology. In present context the pain related to Sciatic nerve is taken in consideration.

Sciatica – pain in course of Sciatic nerve caused due to pinching of nerve due to various factors. This may include, disc herniation, spine bone overgrowth, bone spur, tumor pathology or

diabetic neuropathy affecting the nerves.

Signs and symptoms –

Pain radiating to the course of the nerve from lower back to the affected leg or bilaterally towards the heel from back side.

Weakness in the affected leg along numbness.

Tingling sensations in the affected part.

Difficulty in normal walking causing altered gait.

Holistic approach towards Sciatica –

In Ayurveda we can correlate this with *Grudhrasi*. In this there is limping gait caused due to *Vata Prakopa* and affecting both or single limb. Here the approach to balance the vitiation of *Vata Dosha* and also relieving the resulting pain is seen through.

In present context, various treatment modalities which has holistic approach to the respective disorder as allopath only has symptomatic treatment of pain killing are been reviewed. This treatment modalities are easy to practice and fetch quick relief from underlying disorder. This are as follows,

Agnikarma– This is a para surgical procedure mentioned in Ayurveda classics. In this therapy the use of heat or Agni is done and is transferred to the affected area with the appropriate medium. In this procedure, the *Shalaka* – wick used for *Agnikarma* can be of *Mruttika*, Iron, Gold, *Pancha Dhatu* etc. In direct procedure, the *Shalaka* is heated red hot and then heat is given to affected area – in present context the tenderest part of lower back. This procedure is repeated quickly for several times to relief pain immediately. In other procedure of indirect heat application, the gold or other metal *Shalaka* is kept in touch with tender part of body and at its other end heat is given through candle or burner flame. This procedure of *Agnikarma* helps to ease the vitiation of *Vata Dosha*. Also it acts on *Margavrodh* Pathology hence is useful in present context.

Viddha Karma – this is also a surgical procedure mentioned by *Acharya* in classics. In this procedure the site is punctured (dry needling) with suitable needle in order to evacuate accumulated *Vata Dosha*. It gives instant relief as it pacifies *Vata Dosha* and also removes any *Margavrodha* if any. It also stimulates muscles and ligaments resulting in pain reduction.

Raktamokshana – it is the procedure of bloodletting. It is carried out by various methods. For local vitiation of *Dosha*, the use of *Jalauka* – leech is done. The pain in Sciatica is nerve related, it may be due to Vitiated *Vata* along with *Rakta Dushti*. Also *Margavrodh* of both this factors may aggravate the pain, hence the use of *Jalauka* locally for bloodletting is done.

Snehana Swedana- this is the oilation therapy. In this *Vatahara Sneh* like *Sahachar Taila*, *Dhanwantaram Taila* etc. are applied from lower back towards both the limbs till soles. Light massage is done along the tender area and *Swedana* – fomentation with *Nadi Sweda* is done. This

helps to pacify the *Vata Dosha* and also removes the *Sthambha* in muscles locally. This combined procedure helps the body channels to open up and facilitate the evacuation of vitiated *Dossha* and *Ama* if any. This gives relief in underlying pain and thus the symptoms are eased.

Basti – this is medicated enema. For the purpose of pain relief the underlying cause is the deciding factor for the type of *Basti* procedure to be adopted.

- a) *Tiktaksheer Basti* – in this type of *basti*, *Ksheer* – milk is processed with *Tikta Dravya*. Then *Sneha Dravya* and *Madhu* is added in it. Thus prepared *Basti* is administered. This is mainly indicated in bone – *Asthi Dhatu* deformity and related pain. Depending upon the severity of the disorder the number of *Basti* to be given can be planned.
- b) *Madhu Tailik Basti* – in this type the *Siddha Taila* along with *Madhu* and *Siandhava* is administered as *Basti*. This is indicated when the pathology is due to over traveling resulting in *Vata* vitiation.
- c) *Matra Basti* – small quantity, usually 60 to 90ml of *Siddha Taila* or *planeTial Taila* is administered as *Basti*. This helps to pacify *Vata Dosha* and results in relieving pain.
- d) *Kati Basti* – is the local *Basti* procedure to ease local anatomical misalignment and also pacify *Vata Dosha* vitiation. This is a soothing procedure which relaxes muscles and ligaments which are stiff in sciatica pain pathology.

Internal medication –

This has wide drug library to make the choice according to the underlying pathology. The broadly used medications are enlisted below which proves to be beneficial in relieving pain and ease the symptoms of disease.

***Vatahara* single drugs –**

*Rasna, Ashwagandha, Shilajatu, Nirgundi, Kuchala, Guduchi, Bala, Eranda, Sunthi, Shallaki*etc.

***Rasa Aushadhi* –**

Mahavatvidhvans Ras, Vatagajankush Ras, Ekangaveer Ras, Bruhatvaatchintamani Ras, Rasrajras etc.

***Guggulu* –**

Trayodashanga Guggulu, Mahayograj Guggulu, Yograj Guggulu, Simhanad Guggulu, Lakshadi Guggulu, Abha Guggulu, Panchamrut loha Guggulu, Rasnadi Guggulu etc.

Liquids-

Maharsnadi Kwath, Dashmool Kwath, Gokshooradi Kwath, Ashwagandharishta, Dashmoolarishta, Balarishta etc.

***Yoga therapy* –**

Stretches related to the lower back and sciatic nerve course can be practiced for ease of pain

and facilitate swift movements. *Setubandhasana, Tadasana, Ardha Matsendrasana, Hastapadasana, Pavana muktasana, Bhujangasana* etc. can be practiced.

Inference:

All the procedures discussed in present context of pain in sciatica are intended to fetch quick results and ease the patient. In view of Ayurveda, Sciatica is primarily a *Vata* disorder and its pathology is also related to *Vata Sthana* – lower back, spine and nerve tissue. The described procedures like *Agnikarma, Viddha Karma, Raktamokshana, Snehana swedana* and *Basti* are all *Vata Dosha* pacifying and also it helps in rectifying underlying causative pathology for the same. Making use of this procedures along with appropriate internal medication can deliver prompt outcome in Sciatica.

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