

Evidence based clinical practices in *Vicharchika* (Eczema) and Ayurvedic treatment modalities – Review

Review Article

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Abstract

Vicharchika in Ayurveda can be compared to Eczema. Prevalence of eczema has increased three-fold since 1960s, 10-20% of children in industrialized countries and 1-3% of adults, lower prevalence observed in agricultural economies. The main symptom of this disease is pruritus, which impacts health-related quality of life (HRQOL). The evidence based clinical practices and Research trends in *Vicharchika* have been studied elaborately through evidence based published articles. Clinical and drug research carried out in the field of Ayurveda showed encouraging results and safe and effective eczematous therapy. The etiopathological study of eczema reveals the factors of psychosomatic nature of the disease with associated epidermal barrier dysfunction; genetic determination, allergy, and impaired innate immunity play an important role in pathogenesis of eczema. Various classes of agents for additional treatment are being investigated for atopic dermatitis (AD) of eczema. The therapies include targeted topical, oral, systemic, and biologic agents. Symptomatic treatment with steroids produces serious side effects like osteoporosis, nephropathy, hyperlipidemia and fluid retention, acne, skin lesions etc. *Vicharchika* treatment in Ayurveda provides better management of eczematous with least side effects. Study of evidence based clinical practices of *Vicharchika* (eczema) will leads for better management and identification of newer strategies and line of treatment. Clinical and drug research on *Vicharchika* will provide the answer for the anti eczematous therapy.

Key Words: Eczema, Evidence based clinical practices, Research trends, *Vicharchika*.

Introduction

According to *Ayurveda*, eczema can be compared to "*Vicharchika*". The symptoms of excessive itching, boil or pustule formation, discoloration/hyper pigmentation, profuse oozing and later marked lichenification, pain, and excessive dryness have great parlance with eczema. (1). Eczema, also known as atopic dermatitis, involves inflammation of the skin. The condition is characterized by scaly or crusty patches of skin, often accompanied by redness, blistering, and itching. Atopic dermatitis (AD) affects both children and adults (2). The main symptom of this disease is pruritus, which impacts health-related quality of life (HRQOL) (3). Atopic eczema is an itchy inflammatory skin condition with associated epidermal barrier dysfunction. The prevalence of atopic eczema seems to be rising, but the factors responsible for this rise are not fully understood. The pathophysiology of

eczema involves systemic as well as cutaneous immune and epidermal dysfunction.

Eczema is a complex trait with significant genetic and environmental factors influences the morbidity of disease (4) (5). Emollients and topical steroids are the mainstay of treatment for mild to moderate eczema; moderate to severe eczema may require the oral drugs and steroidal administration. Skin disease is one of the top 15 groups of medical conditions for which prevalence and health care spending increased the most between 1987 and 2000, with approximately 1 of 3 people in the United States with a skin disease at any given time (6).

Vicharchika

Skin diseases in Ayurveda described under Kusta roga with types as Maha kusta and Ksudra kusta. *Vicharchika* falls under the category of Ksudra kusta. *Vicharchika*, According to Ayurveda is Rakta Pradoshaja Vikara having involvement of three Dosha with dominance of Kapha (7). *Vicharchika* (8) has cardinal symptoms of *Kandu* (Excessive itching), *Pidika* (Vesicle/Boil/Pustule), *Shyavata* (Discoloration), *Bahu-srava*, (Profuse oozing), *Lasikasrava*(9), *Raji* (10) (Marked lining/ Lichenification), *Ruja* (Pain), *Rukshata* (Excessive dryness). *Vicharchika* is *Kapha pradhana tridoshaja vyadhi* (11) and *Rasa (Twak)*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa* and *Kleda (Ambu)* (12) are *Dushya* of it. *Virruddha*

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Ahara, Excessive consumption of foods that are dry, stale, cold, salty, spicy, sour, fermented or fried, late night work schedules, regular late night dinners, excessive physical, mental, and sexual activities; and stress can be responsible for causing eczema(13). Acharyas have described the *Samprapti* for *Kustha* in general, is taken as follow *Vicharchika* also. According to Charak samhita due to various *Nidan sevana*, *Tridosha* gets vitiated simultaneously & produce *Shaithilya* in the *Twak*, *Mamsa*, *Rakta* and *Ambu*. Then *Tridosha* gets seated in *Shithilya dhatu* and vitiating them with *Lakshanotpatti* of *Kustha Roga*. The pathogenesis involved in the manifestation of *Kustha Roga* in general and *Vicharchika* in particular is vitiation of *Tridosha* predominantly of *Kapha Dosha*(14). On *doshic* predominance *Vicharchika* classified as 1). *Vata doshas* type: - When the vitiation of the *Vata dosha* produces the eczema. It is felt in the dryness of the skin. There is pain and serve itching of the affected region. 2). *Pitta dosha*: - *Pitta dosha's* vitiation can cause oozing from the affected part and 3). *Kapha dosha*:- When there is an imbalance of *kapha*, it is more observable on the skin. The skin became thick and is accompanied by oozing and itching.

Vicharchika- treatment modalities

The Charak Samhita offers detailed treatment for each *Dosha* although none specifically for *Vicharchika*. In cases of *Vata* predominant *Kushtha*, ghee is prescribed. For *Pitta* predominant *Kushtha virechana* (purgation) followed by *Rakta mokshna* (bloodletting), and for *Kapha* predominant *Kushtha*, *Vamana* (therapeutic vomiting) is utilized (15). *Rakta mokshna* with *Jalauka* show a dramatic improvement of the symptoms of *Vicharchika* (16). Susruta has emphasised the *rakta mokshana* on basis of *dosha* predominant. *Jalookavacarana* type of *rakta mokshana* treatment is clearly indicated in *pitta pradana kshudra kusta* and is useful in *vicharchika*. (17), According to Charak *Virechan* can be done by the use of *Trivrut*, *Danti* root, *Triphala*. Use of *Avipattikara choorna*, *Trphala choorna*, *Pancha sakara choorna* and *Gandharva hastadi quatham* are useful as *virecana*. *Rasayana* –drugs like *Amalaki*, *Guduchi*, *Bhringaraja*, *Ghritha Bhrishtha Haridra*, *Brahmi*, *Mandukaparni*, *Triphala*, *Khadira*, *Vidanga*, *Tuvaraka*, *Bhallataka*, *Bakuchi* acts as an effective immuno modulator, changes the colour of skin and anti pruritic. *Rasayana* therapy prevents the recurrence of *Vicharchika* episodes (18).

Shaman chikitsa

Argwadhadikwath, *kandughana maha kasaya*, *Patolakaturohinyadi kashya*, *Guduchiyadi Kwath*, *Panchnimba churn*, *Lodra sevyadi choorna*, *Ekvinshatiguglu*, *Bilwadi Agada*, *Punarnavaasava*, *Kalyanaka Ghritha* formulations are used as oral

administration. *Arogyavardini vati*, *Ayaskriti*, *Gandhaka rasayanam*, *Udaybhaskar ras*, *Rasmanikaya*, *Amritankur loha*, are useful *rasaoushidis* in *vicharchika* treatment. External application of *Vishtailam*, *Durvadhtailam*, *Marichadi tail*, *Vicharchkari tail*, *Nalpamaradi tail*, *Eladi taila*, *Adgajadi lepa*, *Pakvasasharp lepa*, *Pakkvagrihdhumadi lepa* are topical applications acts as *emolufiints* and also remove the toxins locally as well as systematically. The lipids present in the oil will build up the skin barrier and building up the moisture barriers. *Triphala kashaya seka* acts as *kanduhara*, *varnya* and *emolificent*. *Suddha Ghritha*, *Pancha tikta guggulu ghritham*, *sukumara ghtiam* are useful *sneha pana yogas* in *vicharchika*. *Chakrapanidatta* in *Chakradattha* quoted the drugs in *vicharchika* treatment as *Ekvinshatiguglu*, *Panchnimba churna*, *Adgajadilepa*, *Pakvasasharplepa*, *Pakkvagrihdhumadi lepa*(19). *Bhishjaya ratnawali* mentions the drugs in *vicharchika* treatment as *Aragwadhadi kwatha*, *Udaybhaskara rasa*, *Rasmanikaya rasa*, *Amritankur loha*, *Marichadi tail* and *Vicharchkari tail* (20). “*Satvaavajaya Chikitsa*” in Ayurveda texts highlight the close association between body and mind, helps in the management of eczematous episodes. Psychological counselling and psyconeurotropic drugs have a pivotal role in eczema.

Aims and objectives

The study of elaborative clinical practices and research trends that occur on both wet and dry *Vicharchika* on single drugs, formulations and therapies like *Samana* therapy, *Sodhana* therapy and both *Samana-Sodhana* therapy; *Samana* with *rakamokshana-jalookavacarana*; *Samana* with *abhyanga*; *sneha pana* alone; *snehapana* with *virecan* and *samana* with *lepana* will provide evidence based clinical practices and better management in the treatment of *Vicharchika* and anti eczematous therapy.

Materials and methods

In-view of the above, clinical studies conducted on Ayurvedic single and compound formulations have been studied and reviewed for their effectiveness.

Observations

The following observations are identified by reviewing the clinical trials.

1. *Nimbadi yoga* on wet eczema and *Abhaya yoga* shows better results(21).
2. *Kustagna* activity has been evaluated in *vicharchika* by *Sanjita Das*, *P. K. Sarkar*, *A. Sengupta*(22)
3. In another study of with *Panchatikta Ghritha Gugglu* tablets along with local application of *lepa* containing *Gairika* mixed with *Karanja Tailam* in patients of dry and wet eczema (*Vicharchika*)”, formulation shows effective management. (23).

4. Formulations made with the plant *Lygodium flexuosum* as local application in the cases of *Vicharchika* (eczema) with the paste of leaves and oil prepared with roots shown better effect. (24).
5. *Virecana* and *Jalukavacaran* was carried out randomly followed by *Gandhaka Rasayana* has provided significant relief in the symptoms of *Vicharchika* (25).
6. In the study of “Effect of *Shirishadi* decoction and *Snuhyadi lepa* on the patients of *Vicharchika* (eczema)” by Mandip Kaur, HM Chandola the results of the study revealed that *Shirishadi* Decoction and *Snuhyadi lepa* provide significant relief in the signs and symptoms. (26).
7. Addition of *Rasayana* drugs like *Guduchi*, *Bhringaraja* with *vicharchika* treatment provided complete remission and checked the recurrence of the disease in the patients of *Vicharchika* (27).
8. Study was carried out to assess & compare clinical efficacy of *Triphaladi Ghanvati*, *Avalgujadi lepa* & *Triphaladi Ghrita* to evaluate role of *sneha* in the management of *Vicharchika* from *Charaka Samhita* (*Chikitsa sthana* 7/101). Therapies show highly significant results (28).
9. Efficacy of *Gaumutra bhavita Chakramarda*(34), *Panchatikta ghrita guggulu* and *lepa of gairka* (29), *Laghumanjsthadi kvatha* and *Siktadi lepa* (30), Leech therapy and *Maha bhallataka yoga* in combined form was found most effective in the treatment of eczema (31). *Phalamajja* of *aragvadha* is suggestive of significant immune modulatory activity (32). *Virecana* with 70 gm of *Manibhadraguda* proved to be beneficial in *tridosa* and even can appreciate *rasayana* and *vajikarana* effects (33). *Ekavishatika Guggulu*, *Kaishora Guggulu* as internal medicine and *Ekavinshatika Taila* for external application show better results (34).
10. *Mulaka beejadi lepa* as external application and *Pruthu nimba panchaka churna vati* was very effective in the management of *Vicharchika*. (35).
11. Evaluated the effect of *Jalaukavacharan* and *Nimbatail* application in *Vicharchika* with special reference to *pittapradhan kshudra kustha* described in *Sushruta Samhita* and the therapy was effective (36).

Discussion

Latest clinical trends and evidence based clinical practices of *Vicharchika* had been studied. Research in Ayurveda gives the evidence based medicine. Ayurvedic formulations, therapeutic procedures, *rasayana chikitsa* psychological counseling with *satvaapjaya chikitsa* validates the *Vicharchika* treatment and provides significant relief in symptoms and improves the quality of life. *Kanduhara kashaya* (37) acts as anti inflammatory, anti allergic,

immuno modulator, anti pruritic, acts as skin barrier, reduce the lichenification, decreases Ig E production. *Rasa oushadies* like *arogya vardani vati* corrects the liver functions and detoxify the allergens, and helps in *agnideepana* and proper *rasa dhatu* formation. *Katuki* helps for elimination of *dusta pitta* and corrects *rakta* (38). *Bilwadi agada* and its ingredients have shown antimicrobial, immunomodulatory and anti inflammatory activity (39). *Punarnavaasava* has proved for anti inflammatory activity (40) and its ingredient like *Guduchi* etc. shown to have immunomodulatory, anti oxidant and erythropoietic activity(41) and those of *Patolakaturohinyadi kashya* takes care of *rakthadhatu* because of *dravyas* such as *patola*, *katurohini*, and *guduchi* which have *tikta rasa* and they are *raktashodhak*(blood purifactory) and *kusthahara*. *Pippali* helps in bio availability of other drugs in formulation (42). *Kalyanaka Ghrita* (43) acts as *varnya* and *kusthaghna* helps in relieving *shyaavavarnatha* (blackish discoloration) and anti pruritic. The lipids present in the *ghrita* improve the skin barrier and locking the moisture. The study on *Ayaskriti* shows antioxidant properties (44). *Eladi taila* being *vata kaphahara*, *varnya*, *kandughna* and *vishaghna* plays important role in *vata kapha pradhana* (45). *Kandughanamaha kasaya* (46) having the properties of *kaphahara*, *pitta shamana*, *rakta shodhana*, *kushthghna*, *rakta prasadana*, *lekhana* and *shothahara* actions is an ideal combination in relieving *Vicharchika* which is *kapha* and *pitta pradana* disease (47). *Patolakaturohinyadi kashaya* acts as *raktashodhak* and *kusthahara*(48)(49). *Gandhak Rasayana* is an effective anti eczematous drug having the properties of *agnideepak*, *pachak*, *kaphaghna*, *kledaghna*, *raktaprasadak*, *krimighna*, *kushthaghna*, alters the *tvak vaivarnya* and acts as antibacterial(50) Application of *Nalpamaradi tail* acts as *kustagna*, *sodhagna* and *daha syamaka*. Latex induced group of drugs present in this formulation which are *kashaya rasa pradhana*, *pitta* and *kaphahara* and tannins present in this oil inhibit bacterial growth (51) (52). Acharya *Sushruta* says *Rakta mokshana* the most effective therapy in half of the body ailments. *Rakta mokshna* performed with *Jalauka* (leeches) shows the improvement of the symptoms of *Vicharchika* (53). *Nimbadi yoga- acts as anti inflammatory* (54)(55), *anti bacterial*, *anti fungal* (56) (57)(58)(59) *ropana guna and anti eczematous* (60) (61), in *Vicharchika*. Clinical studies with the dried neem leaf extract indicated its effectiveness to cure eczema Lotion derived from neem leaf, a paste prepared with neem and turmeric was found to be effective in the treatment of eczema. The paste was found to cure eczema. *Amalki* posses anti inflammatory (62), immune modulator (63), anti oxidant (64) and free radical scavenger properties and it improves skin elasticity (65). *Aragvadha* (*Cassia fistula*) is having significant effect in ameliorating the skin diseases due to *pitta*

origin and is safe drug of choice of purgation therapy (66). The efficacy of the *Cassia fistula* in skin diseases may be attributed to the presence of anthraquinone derivatives specially chrysopherol. The laxative effect of sun-dried fruit pulp of *C. fistula* may be due to presence of anthraquinone constituent with predominant action on intestinal NO formation with cholinergic, opioids and PGs playing accessory role. (67, 68) *Panchatikta Ghrita Gugglu - Guggulu* and *tikta pradana* drugs acts as anti pruritic, anti eczematousa and these drugs decrease the lichenification. *Guduchi* mainly having the *Berberin* and *tinospurin* mainly acts as immune potentiating and anti oxidative properties and act as *Rasayana* properties (69)(70). *Bhringaraja* posses immune modulator properties (71). *Gairika* : External application of *Gairika* is having *kanduhara* action and therapeutically useful in skin disorders (72). *L. flexuosum*, Research on lygodinolde has gained a special attention in recent times as several of them have shown promising activities like antifertility, wound healing, eczema and hepatoprotective, it is the rich source of alkaloids, flavonoids, saponins and cumarin (73). The main constitute of the plant is lygodinolide which is mainly used in wound healing (74). *Kaisora guggulu* has anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant, anti-microbial property which helps in treating wounds (75). *Siktadi lepa* is *vata shamaka*, reduces the *rukshata*, *ruja* and makes *mrudutwa* of the *twacha* (76). *Manibhadra guda* is a *nitya mridu virecana yoga* having *trivrut* as main ingredient and pacifies *pitta*. Thus, Ayurvedic management provides significant relief and improves the quality of life of eczema patient.

Conclusion

Better management of eczema will be possible by the knowing the etiological factors, physiology of skin function and defective skin barrier and pathology of eczema and genetic factors involved. Genetic counselling for susceptible persons before marriage also prevents the prevalence of the disease and burden of financial. In dermatology there is no specific medicaments for sure cure of eczema but symptomatic treatments like steroids are used, but they produce serious side effects like nephrotoxicity, osteoporosis, skin cancer etc. Research trends on *Vicharchika* provide an evidence of management of *Vicharchika* as compare to the anti eczematous regimes of the allopathic treatment. *Ayurveda* highlights the management of *Vicharchika* (eczema) with safe effective therapeutic regimen with least side effects and adverse reactions.

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