



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Ayurveda

AN INSIGHT INTO THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF THALAM

KEY WORDS: Thalam, Shiras, Bregma, Ayurveda

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ABSTRACT 'Thalam' is a unique method of drug delivery widely practised in traditional ayurveda system of medicine. There are no descriptions regarding the procedure and practice of thalam in brihathrayees or other ancient ayurveda classics. However, references can be traced from kerala ayurveda textbooks. In spite of having wide range of application from simple to chronic illness, this method of treatment is still little explored. The traditional practice of thalam involves the application of medicine on the shallow depression over the siras (bregma) by choosing proper medium and medicament depending upon the dosha predominance. Despite of local application, it brings about healing potential all over the body. Exploring the traditional medical system and finding out the rationale of the mechanism of these procedures are highly essential and can throw light into the development of the science

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, the traditional system of medical science, originated in the ancient vedic times of India, comprises of thousands of concepts and hypothesis. In the purview of the developing diseases in the present era, it has become a timely necessity to understand the traditional practices and its scientific significance. It is believed to be the best possible alternative to meet present day health problems with respect to the preventive and curative aspects

Choice of medicine, route and time of drug administration plays an important role in the success of any treatment. Depending upon the nature of disease, the route and time of drug delivery is adopted for better and quick absorption.

'Shiras' is considered to be an important part of the human body. Apart from being the site of vata, pitta and kapha, it also includes vital points or marmas. Siras itself is included among the trimarmas and is also explained under dasa pranayathanas. Just like 'nasa' being the important route of administration of medicines to jatrudhwa rogas (diseases of head and neck), various diseases and procedures involving shiras has great significance.

'Thalam' is one among such treatment methodology which was developed and practiced by vridha vaidyas in Kerala. The word 'thalam' means 'a shallow depression'. The procedure involves the application of medicine on the shallow depression over the head by choosing proper medium and medicament depending upon the dosha predominance. Anatomically the 'shallow depression' may be attributed to 'Bregma'; i.e., the junction of parietal and coronal sutures.

SITE OF APPLICATION OF MEDICINE

The application of suitable medicine in appropriate medium by locating the shallow depression in the centre of scalp at a distance of extended index finger and thumb from the tip of nose, which approximately corresponds to 8 inches.

PROCEDURE OF THALAM

The procedure is similar to that of siro lepa, a modification of murdhini taila (Abhyanga, seka, pichu, vasti). The first step involves the removal of hair over the region of application of medicine in a circular manner. As in any other karma in ayurveda, the mangala acharas are performed and the patient is made to sit comfortably in a couch. The application of medicine is concentrated to a circular area of nearly 4 fingers

(4 angula) with maximum thickness of one finger. The medicine is allowed to retain for a period of 1 hour after which the region is wiped off thoroughly and rubbed by a pinch of churna (medicament). Depending on the condition of the patient and severity of the disease, the treatment can be followed from few days to few weeks.

PREPARATION OF MEDICINE

The preparation of the medicine depends upon the medium of thalam which in turn depends upon the predominance of dosha.

For eg. Vata- Tila taila, goksheera, eranda taila etc.
 Pitta- Stanya, ghrta, nalikera rasa etc.
 Kapha- Eranda taila, takra, nimbi taila etc.
 Sannipatika- Navaneetha, tila taila etc.

The use of taila in ama and navaneetha in kapha predominant condition is contra indicated. However, it can be subjected to appropriate samskaras and can be used as medium of thalam.

PROBABLE MODE OF ACTION

There are 5 seemantha marmas explained in ayurveda which may be compared with the sutures of cranium. Bregma, the meeting place of coronal and saggital suture, may be considered to be the meeting point of seemantha marmas, which is the site of application of medicines in thala. Bregma, in infant skull is the anatomical landmark which represents the site of anterior fontanelle and in adult skull, the meeting point of parietal and frontal bones of skull. The ossification of skull is incomplete at birth and the fibrous membrane forming cranium before ossification is unossified at the angles of parietal bones forming 6 fontanelle of which anterior fontanelle is the largest (4 cms). Moreover, scalp is very rich in blood supply.

Absorption of medicine:

When thalam is analysed with these anatomical backgrounds and vascular supply of body having direct link with inside of cranium, the chance of medicaments getting inside may be more as compared with surrounding areas. When the medicine is applied on proper site, it gets easily transmitted and absorbed into the twak (skin), which in turn will be carried throughout the body by rasa and raktha vahinis (rasa and raktha vaha siras always traverses together in the body.

ADVANTAGES

- Though the area of application of medicine is minimum,

the clinical applicability is wider in range.

- Simple mode of application and proven efficacy in curing various diseases.
- Accelerated/ fast absorption of medicines.
- Cost and time effective treatment modality
- Patient friendly procedure.
- Minimal complications
- It is performed as one of the co procedures in combination with appropriate medium to prevent any possible complications.

CONCLUSION

The ancient wisdom in ayurveda, is still not completely explored. There are many avenues still to be explored by the experts in the field who carry the responsibility of contributing to the growth of traditional system of medicine. However, due to many barriers such as lack of literary sources, documentation and insufficiency of adequate knowledge about the principles and history of the systems of different ethnic origin, there is a lacunae in exchange of information. 'Thalam' is a very simple and practically adoptable procedure that can be used precisely considering the dosha predominance. It is stated in ayurveda that any pathological condition can be treated by knowledge of doshas and naming all diseases is not a pre requisite for treatment. The procedure is explored may throw light on various medical conditions. It will also be fruitful in bringing out essential formulas which has been so far uncared and unused.

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