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Review article

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CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF GRIDHRASI (SCIATICA SYNDROME)

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ABSTRACT

One of the most common diseases that affect the hip and the lower limbs is Sciatica. In sciatica there is pain in the distribution of sciatic nerve which begins from buttock and radiates downwards to the posterior aspect of thigh, calf and to the outer boarder of foot. There is often history of trauma, continuous lifting of heavy objects, prolonged working in forward bending position etc but in many of the cases the actual causative factor remains unknown. Improper sitting posture, over stress, jerking movement during travelling & sports may worsen the condition which causing significant threat to working population. The ancient knowledge of this disease is analyzed here and an attempt has been made to understand the ancient knowledge of Ayurveda in respect of etiology, clinical feature, prognosis and management in current practice. "Sciatica Syndrome" is a condition described in modern medicine is resembles with Gridhrasi which results from irritation of the greater sciatic nerve by displaced tissue, commonly a prolapsed intra vertebral disc, and other changes may be osteophytes, secondary fibrosis, tumor, or due to injury. The disease Gridhrasi is a Vataja Nanatmaja Vyadhi described by almost all the ancient Ayurvedic Scholars. The cardinal signs and symptoms of Gridhrasi are Ruka (pain), Toda (pricking sensation), Stambha (stiffness) and Muhuspandana (twitching) in the Sphika, Kati, Pristha, Uru, Janu, Jangha and Pada in order and Sakthikshepa Nigraha i.e. restricted lifting of the leg. This disease is successfully managed by Ayurvedic Medicine and Panchakarma therapy.

KEY WORDS: Sciatica, Gridhrasi, Vataja Nanatmaja Vyadhi, Panchakarma.

INTRODUCTION

Acute low back pain is fifth most common reason for all visits to the physicians. People between 30-50 years of age are most likely to get sciatica syndrome¹. Now a day's most common disorder which affects the movement of leg particularly in middle age is low back ache out of which 40% are radiating pain which come under sciatica syndrome, which effect daily routine work².

Patients with sciatica usually have a more persistent and severe type of pain than patients with low back pain, have a less favorable outcome, consume more health resources, and have more prolonged disability and absence from work.^{8, 9, 10}

Sciatica is known by a range of terms in the literature, such as lumbo-sacral radicular syndrome, radiculopathy, nerve root pain, and nerve root entrapment or irritation. Controversy exists in clinical and research circles about the use of sciatica as a term.^{7, 8} Although definitions of sciatica used in epidemiological surveys vary, sciatic pain is generally defined as pain radiating to the leg, normally below the knee and into the foot and toes. As with low back pain, sciatica is a symptom rather than a specific diagnosis, but lumbar disc herniation and lumbar canal or foraminal stenosis are typical pathologies that may cause sciatic pain. Sciatica which results from irritation of the greater sciatic nerve by displaced tissue, commonly a prolapsed intra vertebral disc, other changes may be

osteophytes, secondary fibrosis, tumor, or due to injury. Due to privilege of first life, there is advancement in professional and social life; hence, it becomes a significant threat to working population. Improper sitting posture, jerking movement during travelling and sports may worsen the disease condition 3, 4, 5.

In Ayurveda this disease is describes as Gridhrasi which is one of the vata disorders, which come under the eighty vata rogas. The word “Gridhrasi” itself suggests the gait of the patient which is similar to Gridhra (vulture) due to pain^{12, 13, 14}. Gridhrasi is explained among 80 Vatanatmaja vikaras¹⁵ and it has been explained in the Brihatrayis.

In contemporary science, both conservative treatment and surgical treatment are followed. The conservatives like analgesics, NSAID`S are present line of treatments which provides only temporary relief and its persistent use requires caution due to habit forming and harmful side-effects and surgical treatments that are available help to calm down the sciatica discomfort and pain are not providing cure of the disease satisfactorily⁴.

If it is not treated in time, it may lead to serious complications like alteration in bowel and bladder function, loss of sensation in lower limbs etc.⁵ so in this condition easy and effective treatment is required.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVE

To understand the ancient knowledge of the disease Gridhrasi in respect of etiology, clinical feature, prognosis and management in current practice.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

SOURCE OF DATA:

Literary source:

Classical text books of Ayurveda

Text books of contemporary science

Text books of Yoga

Published articles from periodicals, journals and other magazines

Authenticated websites

INDIAN (ETIOLOGY) 14- 21

Dietetic factor: Excessive use of Ruksha, Guru, Sheeta diet, fasting, constipative diet, improper & irregular diet habit

Behavioral factor: Excessive physical exertion, improper sitting/ gesture, excessive walking/ running/ swimming/ exercise/ sexual intercourse, weight lifting, excessive travelling/ bike riding, suppression of natural urges

Exogenous (Aguntuja): Abhighata (Trauma)

Other cause: Ama, Dhatukshaya

CLINICAL FEATURES 14- 21

Ruk – Dull aching pain, and radiating type started from hip joint, later on affect waist, back, thigh, knee, calf and feet.

Toda – Pricking pain felt along the distribution of sciatic nerve.

Sthambha – Stiffness or felling of tightness and rigidity in the legs, and so patient developed restricted movement of legs.

Spandana – Sensation of pulsation or throbbing

Sakti Kshepana Nigrahnat – Patient unable to do leg extension, because extension increases the pain.

Deha pra vakrata – The patient of Gridhrasi walk by keeping his/ her legs in flex posture, thus the whole body is tilted on affected side giving a special gait, i.e. limping gait.

As per Modern Medical Science Symptoms of Sciatica is 2 - 4

1. Pain in the back increases by spinal movement
2. Pain in the buttock and thigh.
3. Pain radiating up to the legs and feet.

INVESTIGATIONS 2 - 4

X- Ray/CT scan/MRI Lumbo-sacral area

Electromyogram (EMG)/ Doppler study

Blood – CBC, Sugar, Serum Calcium.

CSF analysis

PROGNOSIS

According to Charaka, Gridhrasi occurs in strong person and of recent origin is easily curable. On other hand, if it is associated with muscle wasting & stiffness along with restricted movement is difficult to cure (Kastasadhya) or incurable (Asadhya)^{18, 19}.

In most cases of Sciatica spontaneous recovery occurs, in mild cases pain usually remains for 2 to 3 weeks and patient recover in a month, but may feel pain for some times. However, in severe cases patient use to suffer for months to years. Surgery gives good result in 90% cases, relapse may found in 10% cases 2 - 4.

MANAGEMENT

The Ayurvedic therapeutic approach in Gridhrasi, as it is a Vatavyadhi is avoidance of all Vataprakopa hetus including Vataprakopak ahar and Vihar. Charak Samhita mentions recommendation of Upakrama like Snehan, Swedan and Vastikarma against Vataviyadhi. It has also mentioned Dravyas having Amla, Lavan, Snigdha, Ushna properties to treat Vataviyadhi. In Sushrutasamhita, Snehabhyanga, Upanahswed, Mardan and

Raktamokshana is mentioned in Vatavyadhichikitsa. Sushruta has mentioned Siravyedh specifically for Gridhrasi treatment. Vagabhatta has also mentioned Siravyedh for treating Gridhrasi. Additionally several oral medicinal preparation have also been mentioned in the treatment of Gridhrasi in Ayurvedic texts is described below 16 - 21.

Since Gridhrasi is vatavyadhi and vatahara treatment like Abhyanga is beneficial^{12 - 16}. and the Yogasanas may stretch, stimulate nerves and tone up the back muscles in turn increase the blood supply. Asanas may also release pressure and compression on sciatic nerve²². Thus yoga may help to relieve pain and discomforts of sciatica²². Yoga and Abhyanga offers natural and effective remedies.

Conservative measures (Saman Chikitsa)¹⁴

Avoidance of causative factor

Rest – Complete bed rest is advised for 2 – 3 weeks.

Patient is asked to lie on side with the knee flexed.

Hot compression, hard bed, thin pillow is advised to use,

Avoid weight lifting and forward bending.

Physiotherapy, Yogasana is helpful.

Immobilization & traction

Medicines 14 - 21 –

a) Kwath/ Kasaya/ Asava-Arista Preparations -

Maha Rasnadi Kasaya

Balarista

Aswagandharista

Dasamularista

b) Guggulu Preparation –

Traydasanga Guggulu

Mahayogaraj Guggulu

Rasnadi Guggulu

Kaishore Guggulu

c) Rasa Oushadhi –

Ekanagvir Rasa

Vatagajankusha Rasa

Mahavata Vidhamsa Rasa

Brihat Vata Chintamani Rasa

d) Vati Preparation –

Sanjivani vati

Visatinduk Vati

Sodhan Chikitsa

Snehana: Both Bahya and Abhyanta Snehana are useful this disease. Following oils are very useful Abhangya –

Nirgundi Taila

Maha Narayan/ Narayan Taila

Kottamchukadi Taila

Saindhabadi Taila

Bala Taila

Swedana:

Nadi Swedana with Dasamula & Eranda Kwath
Nirgundi Patra Pinda Sweda

Kati Vasti with various Taila mentioned above

Mridu Virechan for 3 – 7 days (once daily - bed time):

Eranda Taila with Triphala Kwath or Milk

Panchasakar Churna

Vasti Karma:

Vasti Chikitsa is considered as the best treatment for Vata Vyadhi. Following Vasti are effective in Gridhrasi –

Matra Vasti

Siddha Vasti

Anuvasn Vasti

Other treatment procedure 16 - 21

According to Charaka –

Sirabhedan between Gulfa and Kandara Madhya

Agni Karma between Gulfa and Kandara Madhya

According to Sushruta –

Sirabhedan in Janu Sandhi after Janu Sankocha

According to Vagabhatta –

Sirabhedan 4 anguli above and below Janu Sandhi

Agni Karma

D. Following Yogasana/ exercise is useful –
Bhujangasana, Dhanurasana, Leg rising exercise²².

Non-conservative management 3, 4

About 70% of cases respond satisfactorily to conservative treatment, if not respond and the pain continued and neurological problems persist, surgical intervention is required.

CONCLUSION

The disease Gridhrasi is a Vataja Nanatmaja Vyadhi described by almost all the ancient Ayurvedic Scholars is nothing but Sciatica Syndrome in Modern Medical science. This disease results from irritation of the greater sciatic nerve commonly due to prolapsed intra vertebral disc, other changes may be osteophytes, secondary fibrosis, tumor, or due to injury. Improper sitting posture, jerking movement during travelling and sports may worsen the disease condition; hence, it becomes a significant threat to working population. As Gridhrasi is a vatavyadhi and so vatahara Medicine & Panchakarma (Abhyanga, Nadi Sweda, and Kati Vasti) is beneficial. Yoga Asanas helps in relieving pressure and compression on sciatic nerve. Thus this disease can be successfully managed by Ayurvedic medicines along with Panchakarma therapy and Yoga.

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