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Curative Ayurvedic approach to Ulcerative colitis - A Case Report

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ABSTRACT

Westernization and today's changing life style is resulting in various health problems like Inflammatory Bowel diseases, which is a common entity encountered in surgical practise. Ulcerative colitis is the most common among them. Though it is believed to have auto immune and genetic origin, today's life style, environment, diet and stress plays an important role in aetiology. The disease is prevalent in middle aged western and northern people characterised by abdominal pain with bloody diarrhoea, weight loss, anaemia and general debility. This condition has remissions and exacerbations. One should always keep in mind that inflammatory bowel diseases can have anorectal manifestations. Diagnosis is made on the basis of symptoms, stool exam. and endoscopy. Management is symptomatic i.e. antibiotics, anti-inflammatory, anti-spasmodic, multivitamins, immune suppression and if required admission, intravenous fluids. if no response colectomy. As such there is no satisfactory treatment till date, so it remains the difficult issue. Here we need to have an alternative, safe, convenient treatment. Ayurveda has an answer for such cases.

Key words: Ulcerative colitis, Pittaja Grahani.

INTRODUCTION

Ulcerative colitis is an inflammatory bowel disease causing inflammation and ulcers in the colon. The main symptom of disease is bloody diarrhoea. Ulcerative colitis is an intermittent disease, with periods of exacerbated symptoms, and periods that are relatively symptom free. Although the symptoms of ulcerative colitis can sometimes diminish on their

own, the disease usually requires treatment to go into remission.

Ulcerative colitis is idiopathic in nature, but there are many possible factors such as genetics, environment, diet, drugs and stress. It is the result of an abnormal response by body's immune system. Normally, the cells and proteins that make up the immune system protect from infection. In people with inflammatory bowel disease, however, the immune system mistakes food, bacteria and other materials in the intestine for foreign or invading substances. When this happens, the body sends white blood cells into the lining of the intestines, where they produce chronic inflammation and ulcerations.

Ulcerative colitis affects people world over commonly middle age group. Here male dominates females.

Ulcerative colitis can be treated with a number of medications, including mainly 5-ASA drugs such as sulfasalazine. Corticosteroids can also be used due to their immunosuppressing and short-term healing

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properties, Immunosuppressive medications such as azathioprine and biological agents such as infliximab and adalimumab are given only if people cannot achieve remission with 5-ASA and corticosteroids. Biologic treatments such as the TNF inhibitors infliximab, adalimumab and golimumab are commonly used to treat patients with ulcerative colitis who are no longer responding to corticosteroids. Supportively, antibiotics, analgesics, anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic and multivitamins are given. If no response with conservative treatment, patient may have to undergo operative procedure.^{[1][2]}

Ayurvedic View

Ulcerative colitis can be correlated as '*Pittaja Grahani*'. In Ayurveda, it is known that perfect health exists when the three fundamental energies (*Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) are in balance. Out of these three, when *Pitta Dosha* gets imbalanced, vitiates intestines and causes *Pittaja Grahani*.

Pitta energy fuels all the biochemical activities, including transformation, digestion, metabolism and assimilation. *Pitta* is responsible for all the enzymatic and endocrine activity, regulation of body temperature, pigmentation, vision, intelligence, vitality, ambition, courage and understanding. The key qualities of *Pitta* are hot, quick, light, liquid, spreading, slightly oily and fleshy smelling.

Causes of *Pittaja Grahani* disease are *Mandagi* (poor appetite and poor digestion), irregular, improper and irrelevant diet habits, heavy to digest or indigestible foods, junk food, *Pitta* aggravating diets like excess of spicy, pungent, acidic, sour, alkaline nature foods, food items which produces burning sensation in the body, exposure to excess hot climate, alcohol, smoking, excess anger etc. Non-following of the healthy diet habits (*Pathya*) in certain digestive disorders, especially the conditions of post diarrhoea and irritable bowels, are also one of the causes of this disease. Vitiating of *Pitta*, when reaches extreme will causes severe inflammation, ulceration and rectal bleeding (active phase or flare-up).

Treatment is focused in healing the ulcers and restoring the normal function of colon and maintaining the overall health of the digestive system. *Shamana Chikitsa* (internal medicines) includes *Agni Deepana*, *Amapachana*, *Grahi*, *Stambhana* and *Vrana Ropaka*. *Shodhana Chikitsa* (*Panchakarma* therapy).^[3] In more severe case *Panchakarma* therapy plays a vital role as it quickly detoxifies and rejuvenates the digestive system, controls the inflammation, rectal bleeding and heals the ulcerations. Usually results are very good with Ayurvedic line of treatment. Early cases tend to respond quickly than chronic. If patient can stick to all the guidelines as advised, even complete cure can also be achieved.^[4]

Case Report

A 26 yrs old male patient attended OPD with diffuse abdominal pain, loose motions 6-8 times a day with blood, low grade fever, weakness. Patient was known case of ulcerative colitis since 6 years receiving treatment from renewed senior gastroenterologist. But he was not getting satisfactory relief. Exacerbations were more frequent since last year. The disease has made him very much disturbed.

The patient was relatively all right before 6 yrs, then gradually he developed above symptoms. Past history, drug history, allergic history was not significant. There was family history of hypertension and diabetes mellitus. He was more non vegetarian, meals timings were irregular, no addiction was found. There were sleep disturbances.

General exam revealed; general condition poor, pale, thin and cachexic, malnourished, conscious, oriented, cooperative, but sometimes irritating, exhausted, mild dehydration, tongue dry and coated, pulse 88/min, low volume, blood pressure 100/70 mm of hg, pallor, no cyanosis / clubbing / ictrus / skin lesion / lymphadenopathy.

Systemic examination was normal. Per abdomen, there was mild tenderness in left lower side.

The patient was admitted in male surgical ward for further management. Intra venous line was started, IV fluids, Parental antibiotic, analgesic, antispasmodic,

corticosteroids were administered. By the end of fourth day, patient became stable and comfortable. All symptoms were gradually reduced. On fifth day, he was shifted on oral diet and drugs.

Now our aim was to minimize symptoms and remissions, to avoid complications and complete cure without recurrence. So we continued his present treatment and decided to start Ayurvedic management in the form of diet (*Ahara*), drugs (*Chikitsa - Shamana and Shodhana*), exercise (*Vihara*) and change in life style.

Recommended diet was planned according to digestive power (*Agni*). It was at regular interval and frequent (piece meal), purely vegetarian, non irritant, non spicy. All food that can cause hyper acidity was avoided. Milk with ghrta (ghee) was particularly given to the patient.

Pathya (to be taken)

The following specific foods are generally recommended in Ayurveda for patients of ulcerative colitis. However, not all patients will tolerate all of these food items. Physician can provide a more individualized nutritional plan. Old basmati rice (>3 months), barley, mung dal, urad dal, saffron, coriander, cumin, fennel, navy beans, kidney beans, green lentils, cow's milk and butter, goat's milk and butter, almonds, water chestnut, pomegranate, banana, mango, limes, and kiwi fruit.^{[3][4]}

Apathya (to be avoided)

All leftovers, spicy foods, white sugar, wheat, pasta, red grapes, vinegar, mustard, salty and acidic foods should be avoided.

As ulcerative colitis can be correlated with *Aantrashotha (Pittaja Grahani)*, drugs suppressing *Pitta (Pitta Shamaka)* were prescribed,- *Panchamrut Parpati, Amapachak Vati, Kamdudha Rasa, Sutshekhar Rasa*, each 1 BD after each meals, *Dadimavaleha* 10 ml BD with equal amount of water, *Bramhi Vati* 2 tabs at bed time with warm milk to tranquilize. Medicated enema (*Maatra Basti*) of *Yashtimadhu Siddha Ghrta* was given to reduce inflammation of bowel.^{[5][6]}

Activities (Vihara)

Specific Asanas (*Yoga*), *Pranayama*, meditation, deep relaxation techniques, hobbies like melodious music, playing favorite games, short trips and tours.

The dietary regime, Ayurvedic management, allopathy drugs, general measures (*Pathya and Apathya*) was continued for 6 months. Gradually allopathy medicines withdrawn. The patient was reviewed after 1 year having no symptom, no exacerbation, no complication. He was asked to continue the same management for 1 yr.

DISCUSSION

Now a day, many health problems are due to environmental factors, improper diet, changing life pattern and stress. Physical diseases have strong connection with mind. Its big challenge to overcome the problem before medical science. Fortunately Ayurveda has the answer which is a natural system of healing and health maintenance. According to Ayurveda healthy digestion plays an integral part in establishing good health and well-being. When the digestive system fails to function optimally, there will be toxins formation (*Ama*) and the body becomes diseased. Therefore, it is necessary to establish good digestion (*Agni*).

As Inflammatory bowel diseases are associated with digestive system, it is necessary to maintain balance of digestion power (homeostasis of *Agni*). One can easily achieve it by Ayurved principles without adverse effect and recurrences. We have treated more than 25 patients of ulcerative colitis by this result oriented way.

CONCLUSION

By above study and the same experiences in other patients having the same problem, we can conclude that today's changing life pattern, pollution, improper dietary habits, addiction, type A behaviour are responsible factors for developing many health problems. If we make possible change, avoid and remove the causative factors, then surely we can prevent and manage many disorders, thus

maintaining balance of the body with ourselves and with environment. This can be achieved by Ayurveda, off course with the help of modern medical science also.

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