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Hypothyroidism - Through Ayurvedic Vision

Vd. Siddhi Dinanath Raul¹, Vd. Pravin P. Patil²

¹Post Graduate Scholar, ²Assistant Professor, Dept. of Samhita and Siddhanta, A.P.M's Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Sion, Mumbai, Maharashtra, INDIA.

ABSTRACT

Hypothyroidism is a clinical syndrome resulting from insufficient production of thyroid hormones, which is common endocrinal disorder seen all over the world. It is more prevalent among females. Hypothyroidism is one of the burning issues in current scenario and is affecting the life of many people on various levels. Since this condition is associated with many complications, on many systems, ranging from generalized tiredness to infertility, thereby compromising quality of life, it has become a need to study this disease critically. This review is made with an effort to understand the disease in Ayurvedic perspective. On reviewing the clinical presentation from all classical texts, it is found that in hypothyroidism there is abnormality of *Jatharagni* and *Dhatwagni* along with abnormality of *Kapha* and *Vata Dosh* as well as *Rasavaha*, *Raktavaha*, *Medovaha*, *Sukravaha* and *Manovaha Srotases*. *Dosha-Dushya Samoorchhana* in various *Dhatu*s results in systemic manifestation of the disease.

Key words: Hypothyroidism, Anukta Vyadhi, Jatharagni, Dhatwagni.

INTRODUCTION

The concept that lifestyle is responsible for the genesis of a disease is very old and well known in Ayurveda. Nowadays there has been drastic change in the dietary habits and lifestyle of individuals due to modernization and influence of western culture. Unhealthy eating habits, along with sedentary lifestyle, cause various diseases including metabolic disorders.

The thyroid gland is considered to be one of the most important glands in endocrine system after pituitary gland as it regulates nearly all bodily functions. Failure of thyroid hormone to meet the metabolic need of

the body results in hypothyroidism. Lack of thyroid hormone or resistance of the body tissue to thyroid hormone with respect to metabolic demand result in disorder called as hypothyroidism. Hypothyroidism is posing major health challenge in both developing as well as developed world. Most common cause is auto immune condition. Prevalence rate of the disease is 2-5% in developed world.

This review is carried out to understand hypothyroidism according to the principle of Ayurveda. The presentation of the disease is reviewed critically by searching pathogenesis and symptoms from various research databases. The symptoms of hypothyroidism are studied in terms of imbalance of *Dosha*, *Srotas*, etc. and an effort is made to obtain standard possible *Samprapti* of the disease. Thus the line of treatment involves *Deepana*, *Pachana*, *Srothoshodhana* and *Kapha Vata Shamana*.

Address for correspondence:

Vd. Siddhi Dinanath Raul

Post Graduate Scholar, Dept. of Samhita and Siddhanta, A.P.M's Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Sion, Mumbai, Maharashtra, INDIA.

E-mail: siddhiraul1994@gmail.com

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is done by literature search and critical review of the obtained facts. Literature search has been done by manually searching Ayurvedic texts or *Samhitas*.

OBSERVATION AND DISCUSSION

There are two major thyroid hormones -T3 and T4 which affects all body systems either directly or indirectly at all stages of life. Thyroid hormones also promote growth as they enhance amino acid uptake by tissues and enzymatic systems involved in protein synthesis thus promoting bone growth. Carbohydrate metabolism is also regulated by the thyroid hormone as it stimulates glucose uptake, glycogenolysis, gluconeogenesis.^[6]

These actions may be compared to functions of *Rasavaha Srotas* as it supplies nutrition and energy to all body tissues.^[3] They help in fat metabolism by mobilizing lipids from adipose stores and accelerate oxidation of lipids to produce energy. Lipid metabolism can be compared to functions of *Medovaha Srotas*. Thyroid hormones also increase basal metabolic rate (BMR) in all tissues except brain, spleen and gonads. This results in increased heat production, increased oxygen consumption. This increased metabolic rate also results in increased utilization of energy substrates causing weight loss. These actions can be compared to the functions of *Agni* in the body. The adrenergic receptors in the blood vessels are also increased by the action of thyroid hormone leading to regulation of blood pressure. Thyroid hormone plays a vital role in tissue growth particularly in skeletal, nervous system and reproductive system Cardiovascular action of thyroid hormones are to increase cardiac output, heart rate and contractility. They affect the respiratory system indirectly through increased BMR causing increased demand for oxygen and increased excretion of carbon dioxide. These physiological actions if looked from an Ayurvedic perspective are the action of *Pitta* and *Vata Dosh*a in their normalcy. The *Srotases* affected by thyroid hormone are mainly *Rasavaha Srotas*, *Mamsavaha Srotas*, *Medovaha Srotas*, *Asthivaha srotas*, *Sukravaha Srotas*.^[4]

Etiology/ Nidana

Hypothyroidism is classified into,

1. Primary hypothyroidism - It is due to inadequate function of the thyroid gland itself. Most common

causes of Primary hypothyroidism are iodine deficiency, autoimmune thyroid disease, Congenital, drugs and iatrogenic causes.

2. Secondary Hypothyroidism - it is due to not getting enough stimulation by thyroid stimulating hormones.

Pathogenesis / Samprapti

Primary Hypothyroidism results from two mechanisms:

1. Deficiency of Thyroid Hormones - caused by destruction of thyroid follicles, as in Hashimoto's thyroiditis (Autoimmune disorder).^[6]
2. Resistance of peripheral tissues to thyroid hormones.

In Ayurveda, we can consider these two pathologies in the following way:

1. Dhatukshaya Janya (Beejadosh Janita)

Due to *Apathya Nidan Sevana* and also *Bijadosha*, there is *Tridosha Dushti* leading to *Jatharagni Mandya*, which causes *Dhatwagnimandya*, leading to *Uttarottara Dhatu Vikriti*, ultimately causing *Oja Vikriti*. This *Vikrita Ojas* (in this case it is often caused by the presence of *Pitta Dosh*a) affects the *Vyadhi Kshamatva* of the body, attacking the thyroid gland and the autoimmune condition develops. Thus, it is a *Kaphapitta Samsarga* condition.^[1]

2. Avarana Janya

Thyroid hormone functions are similar to the functions of *Agni* (*Jatharagni*, *Dhatwagni* and *Bhootagni*) in our body causing transformations /tissue metabolism at various levels and thus maintaining the BMR. *Agnimandya* at any level due to *Kaphakara Nidana* results in increased *Dhatugata Mala Sanchaya*, resulting in *Srotorodha* causing compromised *Dhatu Saras* leading to both physical and mental features in hypothyroidism. *Vata* acts as a *Yogavahi* in aggravating the *Kapha Dushti*. Thus, it is a *Vata-Kapha Samsarga* condition.^[1]

Samprapti Ghatakas

- *Dosh*a - *Vata-Kapha*
- *Dushya* - *Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda, Asthi, Shukra*

- Agni - Jatharagnimandya, Dhatwagnimandya
- Srotodushti - Sanga, Vimargagamana
- Rogamarga - Bahya, Abhyantara, Madhyama

Clinical Presentation/ Roopa

As discussed above, Hypothyroidism results in slowing down of the metabolic process. It usually results in a number of clinical signs and symptoms. The severity of the signs and symptoms depends on the degree of thyroid dysfunction and the time course of development of the disease. The symptoms of hypothyroid are very nonspecific. So, the common presentation of hypothyroidism along with Ayurvedic prospective are tabulated below,

Signs and symptoms of hypothyroidism

Signs and symptoms	Dosha involved	Srotas involved
Fatigue, loss of energy	Vata	Rasavaha
Muscle pain, joint pain, weakness in the extremities	Vata	Asthivaha, Mansavaha
Dry skin	Vata	Rasavaha
Hair loss, coarse, brittle, straw-like hair, axillary hair, pubic hair	Vata	Asthivaha
Dull facial expression, depression, emotional liability, mental impairment, forgetfulness, impaired memory, inability to concentrate	Vata	Manovaha
Fullness in throat, hoariness	Kapha	Pranvaha

Decreased perspiration	Vata	Medovaha
Paresthesia, nerve entrapment syndromes	Vata	Rasa, Meda, Majja Vaha Srotas
Menstrual disturbance, impaired fertility	Vata	Artavaha, Sukravaha
Constipation	Vata	Purishvaha
Jaundice, pallor	Pitta	Raktavaha, Rasavaha
Lethargy, sleepiness	Kapha	Rasavaha
Weight gain	Kapha	Rasavaha
Decreased appetite	Kapha	Anavaha, Rasavaha
Coarse facial features, periorbital puffiness, macroglossia	Kapha	Rasavaha
Goiter	Kapha	Rasavaha, Mansavaha, Medhovaha
Bradycardia, decreased systolic blood pressure and decreased diastolic blood pressure	Vata	Rasavaha, Raktavaha
Hyporeflexia, ataxia	Vata	Rasavaha, Raktavaha, Manovaha

Anukta Vyadhi

Acharyas had vision of forthcoming new diseases; hence they explained the concept of understanding the new diseases i.e. Anukta Vyaadhi. Anukta

Vyaadhis are the diseases which are neither elaborated or nor described in lexicons of Ayurveda. Such concepts are used to describe, understand, adopt and extend new things, such as identification of new *Hetu*, *Linga* and *Aushadha* based on existing principles of Ayurveda.^[5] To understand and appreciate the concept of *Anukta Vyadhi*, it is essential to consider basic concepts of *Ayurveda* viz, *Dosha Dhatu Mala Vijnana*, *Agni*, *Srotas*, *Ojus* and *Manas*. Understanding the *Rasapanchaka* of *Ahaara Dravyas*, is also helpful to know its effects on above factors which are responsible for the manifestation of disease.

Though *Anukta Vyadhis* are not interpreted by their names, the cluster of signs and symptoms and the underlying pathology can be understood by the basic principles stated above which not only helpful in understanding the pathogenesis but also gives a direction to think in terms of treatment for the same.

Due to innumerable diseases, the one who cannot label a disorder with some name should not feel ashamed because all disorders have no established footing by name. As disease cannot occur without involvement of *Doshas*, hence even if the disease is not specifically mentioned, the intelligent clinician should treat the disease as manifested by the signs and symptoms of vitiated *Doshas*. Hypothyroidism is one among them, which is a new disease also included in lifestyle disorders, which didn't possess any Ayurvedic name and not found directly in Ayurvedic texts. Hence the signs and symptoms of this disease is to be understood first based on the contemporary science. By observing *Doshas*, *Srotas* involved, *Samprapti Ghatakas* and treat thereby.

CONCLUSION

The disease hypothyroidism has not described in classical Ayurvedic texts. So it's an *Anukta Vyadhi*. Based on its clinical presentation, *Samprapti* (pathogenesis) can be understood as follows,

Nidana - *Santarpanottha*, *Dosha* – *Kapha Vata*, *Dushya* - *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Shukra*, *Samuthana* - *Amasaya*, *Adhithana* - *Sarva Sareera*,

Srotodushti - *Sanga*, *Vimargagamana*, *Rogamarga* - *Bahya*, *Abhyantara*, *Madhyama*, *Agnimandya*, *Ama Rasa-Rakta*.

We have come to an understanding that Hypothyroidism is primarily under activity of *Agni*. Due to various *Hetus*, there is diminished *Agni* at *Dhatu* level. There is *Sanga* in various *Srotas*. Hence, the related *Dhatu* functions are also impaired. Consequently, the *Dhatu*saras are compromised leading to both physical and mental symptoms. Hence, Hypothyroidism is mainly a *Vata-Kapha Samsarga* condition in which *Vata* acts as a *Yogavahi* in aggravating *Kapha Dushti* and the various systemic manifestations of the disease are due to *Dosha-Dushya Samoorchana* at various *Dhatu*s. During the treatment of hypothyroidism all these pathogenetic factors have to be targeted with special attention to strength of body, mind, and *Dosha*.

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