

## AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF AGE RELATED COGNITIVE DECLINE OR DEMENTIA

Singh Karan<sup>1</sup>, Mishra Pramod kumar<sup>2</sup>, Soni Anamika<sup>3</sup>, Sharma Brahmanand<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>MD Scholar, <sup>2</sup>M. D (Ayu.), Ph.D Asso. prof. & HOD, <sup>3</sup>M.D (Ayu.), Assist. prof,

<sup>4</sup>MD (Ayu.), Ph.D Assist. prof,

PG Dept. of Kayachikitsa University college of Ayurveda, Dr. S R Rajasthan Ayurveda University Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India

Email: [kssjt86@gmail.com](mailto:kssjt86@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

A person is said to be healthy when not only his Humours (*Doshas*), Tissue (*Dhatu*), Wastes (*Malas*) and Biofire (*Agni*) are in equilibrium but his Mind (*Manas*) is also healthy. In modern view deterioration of brain function due to diseases like as Alzheimer's disease, Delirium, Parkinsonism are the leading cause of Dementia unless effective preventive strategies are identified, that is expected to significantly increase in debility as the disease progresses The diagnosis of Dementia remains a mainly clinical diagnosis that requires careful history taking, a physical examination and cognitive testing to document a decline in cognitive and functional abilities Neuroimaging can help differentiate between various cause of memory loss and different type of dementia. Treatment for Dementia involves not only pharmacologic therapy but also careful assessment of safety, behavior concern and education for the patient's, family Ayurveda therapy as *Rasayana* drugs, *Panchkarma* (*Yapna vasti, Shirodhara*). Ayurveda wonderfully describes about the Daily and Seasonal regimens and good conducts that should be followed by people to lead a Healthy life and prevention of condition like Dementia. Dementia or *vismriti* or loss of retention and memory is a kind of partial human death where there is a gradual loss of memory and cognition, and then even the loss of coordination of the senses and of various physiological functions. It occurs as a result of alterations or destructions in the brain cells due to diverse ailments of the brain.

**Keyword:** *Mana, Rasayana, ManoVishaya, Dementia, Satvavajaya*

### INTRODUCTION

The ancient Indian medical system, *Ayurveda*, included geriatrics as 1 of 8 medical divisions. Well-documented evidence ex-

ists for treating aging and age-related disorders of *ManasVikara* including dementia. Geriatrics was termed *Rasayanatantra*. Cognitive

function was well recognized and Sanskrit terms existed such as *Buddhi* for intelligence and *Chittanasa* (*Chitta* means mind, *nasa* means loss of) for dementia. A normal human life span was considered to be 100 years. It could be prolonged to 116-120 years through the use of preventive treatments, if they were started during late youth or middle age. Treatments included *Sadvritt*, *AacharRasayan*, *Panchakarma* (*Yapna Vasti*, *Shorodhara*) herbal preparations, diet, exercise, and attention to general mode of life and social behavior. Several herbal formulations are described, including details of their composition and preparation. The mode of action of antiaging drugs was believed to occur at 3 levels.

### Definition

Dementia is a syndrome – usually of a chronic or progressive nature – in which there is deterioration in cognitive function (i.e. the ability to process thought) beyond what might be expected from normal ageing. It affects memory, thinking, orientation, comprehension, calculation, learning capacity, language, and judgement. Consciousness is not affected. The impairment in cognitive function is commonly accompanied, and occasionally preceded, by deterioration in emotional control, social behaviour, or motivation. <sup>[1]</sup> Dementia is caused by a variety of diseases and injuries that primarily or secondarily affect the brain, such as Alzheimer's disease or stroke. Dementia is one of the major causes of disability and dependency among older people worldwide. It is overwhelming not only for the people who have it, but also for their caregivers and families. There is often a lack of awareness and understanding of dementia, resulting in stigmatization and barriers to diagnosis and care.

The impact of dementia on caregivers, family and societies can be physical, psychological, social and economic. <sup>[2]</sup>

**Signs and symptoms:** - Dementia affects each person in a different way, depending upon the impact of the disease and the person's personality before becoming ill. The signs and symptoms linked to dementia can be understood in three stages.

**Early stage:** the early stage of dementia is often overlooked, because the onset is gradual. Common symptoms include:

- Forgetfulness
- losing track of the time
- becoming lost in familiar places.

**Middle stage:** as dementia progresses to the middle stage, the signs and symptoms become clearer and more restricting. These include:

- Becoming forgetful of recent events and people's names
- Becoming lost at home
- Having increasing difficulty with communication
- Needing help with personal care
- Experiencing behavior changes, including wandering and repeated questioning.

**Late stage:** the late stage of dementia is one of near total dependence and inactivity. Memory disturbances are serious and the physical signs and symptoms become more obvious. Symptoms include:

- Becoming unaware of the time and place
- Having difficulty recognizing relatives and friends

- Having an increasing need for assisted self-care
- Having difficulty walking
- Experiencing behavior changes that may escalate and include aggression.

### Common forms –

There are many different forms, or causes, of dementia. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia and may contribute to 60–70% of cases. Other major forms include vascular dementia, dementia with Lewy bodies (abnormal aggregates of protein that develop inside nerve cells), and a group of diseases that contribute to frontotemporal dementia (degeneration of the frontal lobe of the brain). The boundaries between different forms of dementia are indistinct and mixed forms often co-exist.

### Treatment and care

There is no treatment currently available in modern medicine to cure dementia or to alter its progressive course but in *Ayurveda* therapy as *Rasayana* drugs, *Panchkarma* (*Yapna vasti, Shirodhara*), *Ayurveda* describes about the Daily and Seasonal regimens and good conducts that should be followed by people to lead a Healthy life and prevention of condition like Dementia.<sup>[4]</sup> Numerous new treatments are being investigated in various stages of clinical trials in modern medicine. Much can be, however, offered to support and improve the lives of people with dementia and their caregivers and families. The principal goals for dementia care are:

- Early diagnosis
- Optimizing physical health, cognition, activity and well-being

- Identifying and treating accompanying physical illness
- Detecting and treating behavioral and psychological symptoms
- Providing information and long-term support to caregivers.
- *Rasayan* therapy, *Panchkarma* ( *YapnaVasti, Shirodhara*)

**Ayurvedic aspect:** - *Charaka* has mentioned about *Smrti* as remembrances of things directly perceived, heard or experienced earlier. The memory goes astray due to the person being overcome by *rajas* and *tamas*. This state is explained as *Smrti-Bhramsha*. He has mainly explained about *Smrtinasha* in *Unmada* and *Apasmara*.

The drug's use in our classics are as follows-

- ***Brahmi*** - *Bacopa monniera* is bitter in taste; has been used in the *Ayurvedic* system of medicine for centuries. *Brahmi* which occurs naturally in India and has a long history of use in the *Ayurvedic* medicine tradition in the treatment of a number of disorders, particularly those involving anxiety, intellect and poor memory. Traditionally, it was used as a brain tonic to enhance memory development, learning, and concentration.
- ***Shankapuspi*** - ***Convolvulus pluricaulis***: - *Shankhapushpi* is used as a brain tonic. It is one of the best and prominent natural medicines that help in improving memory. The whole plant of *shankhapushpi* is used in medical treatment. Its consumption also prevents memory loss.
- ***Mandookaparni*** - ***Centella asiatica*** *Rasa* is *Tikta*, *Vipaka* is *laghu*, *Virya*-*Shita*, *Karma*- *Rasayanam*, *medhyam*,

*mutra virecana, Prabhava- Rasayanam, medhyam.*

- **Jatamansi- (*Nardostachys jatamansi*)-** *Jatamansi* is a natural brain nervine tonic and a memory enhancer, which has calming, peacefulness and relaxation features. it is prescribed against stress, spasm, epilepsy, convulsion and hysteria.<sup>[6]</sup>
- **Risk factors and prevention:** - Research identifying modifiable risk factors of dementia is scarce. Prevention focuses on targets suggested by available evidence, which include countering risk factors for vascular disease, such as diabetes, midlife hypertension, midlife obesity, smoking and physical inactivity.

**WHO response:** -WHO recognizes dementia as a public health priority. The WHO report *Dementia: a public health priority*, published in 2012, aims to provide information and raise awareness about dementia. It also aims to strengthen public and private efforts to improve care and support for people with dementia and for their caregivers. Dementia is one of the priority conditions in the WHO Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP), which aims to scale up care for mental, neurological and substance use disorders. WHO is organizing the First Ministerial Conference on Global Action Against Dementia in March 2015, supported by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the UK Department of Health. The main objectives of the conference are to increase awareness of the public health challenge posed by de-

mentia, provide a better understanding of governments' primary role and responsibility in responding to the challenge of dementia, and emphasize the need for coordinated global and national action.<sup>[3]</sup>

## DISCUSSION

Currently, there are no cures for the common dementias caused by progressive neurodegeneration, including AD, frontotemporal disorders, and Lewy body dementia. However, some forms of dementia are treatable. A better understanding of dementia disorders, as well as their diagnosis and treatment, will make it possible for affected individuals and their caretakers to live their lives more fully and meet daily challenges. *Ayurveda* therapy as *Rasayana* drugs, *Panchkarma* (*Yapnavasti, Shirodhara*), *Ayurveda* wonderfully describes about the Daily and Seasonal regimens<sup>[5]</sup> and good conducts that should be followed by people to lead a Healthy life and prevention of condition like Dementia design therapeutic approaches to dementias, and create tools and resources to help speed the development of treatments that can be used in practice. Treatment for Dementia involves not only pharmacologic therapy but also careful assessment of safety, behavior concern and education for the patient's family. These regimens may eventually lead to ways to slow disease progression or even cure and prevent the dementias.

## CONCLUSION

There is no treatment currently available in modern medicine to cure dementia or to alter its progressive course but in *Ayurveda* therapy as *Rasayana* drugs, *Panchkarma* (*Yapna vasti, Shirodhara*),

Ayurveda wonderfully describes about the Daily and Seasonal regimens and good conducts that should be followed by people to lead a Healthy life and prevention of condition like Dementia

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