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Successful Ayurvedic Management of Refractory Atopic Dermatitis (Vicharchika): A Case Report

Dr. Shivani Jasud[1], Dr. Vrushali Ujede[2], Dr. Minal Pajai[3]
[1]PG Scholar, Department of Swasthavritta,
[2]Associate Professor, Department of Swasthavritta,
[3]HOD and Professor, Department of Swasthavritta,
R. A. Podar Medical College(Ayu), Mumbai

Abstract: ***Background:*** *Atopic Dermatitis is a relapsing inflammatory skin disorder characterized by intense pruritus, xerosis, and eczematous lesions. Conventional therapies often provide symptomatic relief but may not prevent recurrence.*
Case Presentation: *A 52-year-old female patient presented with chronic itching, dryness, and erythematous lesions over both legs for 2 months. The patient had previously received conventional treatment with temporary symptomatic relief; however, the symptoms recurred and progressively worsened.*
Intervention: *The patient was managed with Jalaukavacharana, internal Ayurvedic medications, Panchavalkala Lepa and dietary modifications for three weeks.*
Outcome: *Significant clinical improvement was observed, with complete resolution of itching, burning sensation, oozing, edema, and other assessed symptoms, along with improved sleep quality.*
Conclusion: *This case suggests that a comprehensive Ayurvedic treatment approach may provide symptomatic relief in patients with Vicharchika (atopic dermatitis). Further clinical studies are needed to validate these findings.*

Keywords: Atopic dermatitis; Vicharchika; Jalaukavacharana; Ayurveda; Case report

I. INTRODUCTION

The term eczema comes from a Greek word meaning ‘to boil,’ and it is often used interchangeably with dermatitis. Dermatitis may be either acute or chronic. In the acute stage, it is mainly marked by epidermal oedema (spongiosis) and intraepidermal vesicle formation, which can produce multilocular blisters. In chronic cases, epidermal thickening (acanthosis) becomes more prominent[1].

Atopic dermatitis is a common chronic inflammatory skin disease affecting people worldwide. It occurs in both developed and developing countries and is reported more frequently in females. The condition is more prevalent in urban than rural populations, while environmental factors such as climate and air pollution may contribute to disease flares and severity[2].

Atopic dermatitis typically presents with oedema, oozing, crusting, excoriation, dryness, and lichenification, with intense pruritus as its most prominent symptom. Repeated scratching worsens the skin lesions and sustains the itch–scratch cycle. The condition can also disturb sleep, cause emotional distress, and negatively affect the patient's quality of life [3]. In Ayurveda, atopic dermatitis can be correlated with Vicharchika, a type of Kshudra Kushtha, due to the similarity in their clinical features. Vicharchika is characterized by Kandu (itching), Pidika (eruptions), Srava (oozing), Vaivarnya (discoloration), and Rukshata (dryness),[4,5] which closely resemble the manifestations of atopic dermatitis. Ayurvedic management focuses on balancing the vitiated Doshas, especially Kapha and Pitta, along with Rakta Shodhana to address the underlying disease process. The present case report describes the successful Ayurvedic management of a patient with atopic dermatitis.

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II. CASE PRESENTATION

A 52-year-old female patient presented to the outpatient department with complaints of scaly skin lesions over both lower limbs (from the knee to the ankle), associated with intense pruritus, burning sensation, and occasional serous oozing for the past two months. The symptoms were accompanied by disturbed sleep due to severe itching. The patient had previously undergone conventional treatment and experienced temporary symptomatic relief. However, the symptoms recurred after a short interval and gradually became more severe, following which she presented for Ayurvedic management.

Habits – Regular consumption of milk and milk products, bakery products, oily foods, and spicy foods.

Past history - There was no history of diabetes mellitus, hypertension, known allergies, previous surgeries, or other significant systemic illnesses.

III. AYURVEDIC ASSESSMENT

After thorough clinical examination, the disease was diagnosed as Vicharchika with Kapha-Pitta predominance and associated vitiation of Rakta Dhatu.

Samprapti Ghataka

- Dosha: Kapha-Pitta
- Dushya: Twak, Rakta, Mamsa, Lasika
- Agni: Mandagni
- Srotas: Rasavaha and Raktavaha Srotas
- Srotodushti: Sanga and Vimargagamana
- Rogamarga: Bahya
- Adhisthana: Twak

Skin examination was done by following assessment criteria :

Kandu (pruritus)

- 0 – No itching
- 1 – Mild/occasional itching
- 2 – Moderate frequent itching
- 3 – Severe frequent itching
- 4 – Very severe itching, which disturbs sleep and other routine activities.

Daha (burning)

- 0 – No burning sensation
- 1 – Mild type of burning sensation
- 2 – Moderate burning sensation
- 3 – Burning present continuously (severe) and even disturbing sleep.

Vaivarnya (discoloration)

- 0 – Nearly normal skin colour
- 1 – Brownish-red discoloration
- 2 – Blackish-red discoloration
- 3 – Blackish discoloration.

Srava (oozing)

- 0 – No discharge
- 1 – Occasional discharge after itching

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- 2 – Occasional oozing without itching
- 3 – Excessive oozing making clothes wet.

Rukshata (dryness)

- 0 – No line on scrubbing with nail dryness
- 1 – Faint line on scrubbing by nails
- 2 – Lining and even words can be written by nail
- 3 – Excessive Rukshata leading to Kandu
- 4 – Rukshata leading to crack formation.

Ruja (pain)

- 0 – No pain
- 1 – Mild pain
- 2 – Moderate pain
- 3 – Severe pain.

Shotha (edema)

- 0 – No edema
- 1 – Present in <25% of the area
- 2 – Present in 25%–50% of the area
- 3 – Present in 50%–75% of the area
- 4 – Present in >75% of the area.

On examination

Sr. no.	Symptoms	Grade (Before Treatment)	Grade (After Treatment)
1	*Kandu* (pruritus)	4	0
2	*Daha* (burning)	2	0
3	*Vaivarnya* (discoloration)	1	0
4	*Srava* (oozing)	1	0
5	*Rukshata* (dryness)	1	0
6	*Ruja* (pain)	1	0
7	*Shotha* (edema)	2	0

Therapeutic interventions –

Following a comprehensive clinical evaluation, the patient was initiated on a three-week Ayurvedic treatment regimen along with dietary and lifestyle modifications.

1. Local Procedure

Jalaukavacharana - Performed during the initial visit for Rakta Dushti management and local inflammatory control.

2. External Therapy

Panchavalkala Lepa – Applied locally over the affected area once daily and left in place for 30–45 minutes.

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3. Internal medications

Sr.no.	Drugs	Dose
1	*Tiktaka ghrita*	5 ml BD
2	*Kaishora Guggulu*	500mg BD
3	*Amrutadi Kashaya*	40ml BD
4	*Aragwadhaphala Majja Phanta*	40ml HS

4. Advice Pathya (Diet)

Avoid milk and milk products.
Avoid pickles and sour foods.
Avoid fermented foods, bakery products, and sprouts.
Consume light and easily digestible food.

IV. RESULTS

Following three weeks of Ayurvedic treatment, the patient showed considerable clinical improvement. Symptoms including itching, burning sensation, edema, pain, dryness, discoloration, and discharge resolved completely. Improvement in nocturnal pruritus resulted in better sleep quality. No adverse drug reactions or complications were observed during the treatment period.

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the similarity of clinical features, atopic dermatitis can be correlated with Vicharchika in Ayurveda. The disease is predominantly associated with the vitiation of Kapha and Pitta Doshas along with Rakta Dhatu Dushti, resulting in symptoms such as itching, oozing, discoloration, and chronic skin lesions. Jalaukavacharana is a localized bloodletting procedure recommended for disorders predominantly involving Pitta and Rakta. It helps alleviate local inflammation by removing vitiated blood and provides effective relief from symptoms such as itching and burning sensation[6,7].

The therapeutic effect of Tiktaka Ghrita may be attributed to its Kapha-Pitta–pacifying and Kushthaghna properties and is traditionally indicated for relieving symptoms such as daha, kandu, and shotha. According to Ayurvedic principles, Tiktaka Ghrita exerts a Kushthaghna effect through Rakta Prasadana and pacification of Kapha and Pitta Doshas, thereby helping alleviate inflammatory skin lesions. These properties may contribute to its therapeutic role in the management of Vicharchika[8].

Kaishora Guggulu is indicated in Kushtha and disorders associated with Rakta Dushti. The formulation possesses Kushthaghna, Shothahara, and Rakta Shodhaka properties, which may help alleviate inflammation and improve skin lesions. Its Rasayana action supports the nourishment of Rasa Dhatu and the subsequent Dhatus, thereby promoting tissue repair and restoring normal skin health[9].

Amrutadi Kashaya contains Amruta (Guduchi), Vasa, Patola, Musta, Saptaparna, Khadira, Vetasa, Nimba, and Haridra. Most of these ingredients are predominantly Tikta and Kashaya (astringent) in taste, which are traditionally indicated in the management of Kushtha. The formulation exhibits Kushthaghna and Dosha-shamaka properties, particularly for Kapha and Pitta, and supports Rakta Prasadana[10].

Aragwadhaphala Majja Phanta is used as a mild purgative (Mridu Virechana). According to Ayurvedic principles, Aragwadhaphala Majja Phanta facilitates gentle purgation, which may aid in the elimination of vitiated Pitta and Kapha Doshas. As Pitta plays an important role in the pathogenesis of Vicharchika, its elimination may help restore Dosha balance and reduce symptoms such as burning sensation, inflammation, and itching[11].

Panchavalkala Lepa possesses Kashaya Rasa–predominant properties along with anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and wound-healing activities. These properties may reduce local inflammation, oozing, and itching while promoting healing of the affected skin [12].

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VI. CONCLUSION

In the present case, the patient experienced marked improvement following a comprehensive Ayurvedic treatment approach that included Jalaukavacharana, internal medications, Panchavalkala Lepa, and dietary modifications. Although the findings are limited to a single patient, they suggest that Ayurveda may have a complementary role in the management of refractory atopic dermatitis. Further clinical studies are needed to confirm these observations.

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