



Review Article

ENDOMETRIOSIS – AN AYURVEDIC DIAGNOSIS AND MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Motherhood is the greatest gift conferred to woman by God. Hence he created woman with different anatomical and physiological considerations when compared to man. Therefore unlike man, woman is subjected to various diseases mainly pertaining to her reproductive system. A few of these diseases may disturb her womanhood and a few may land her in life threatening conditions if not treated properly. One such disease is endometriosis. Endometriosis is a disease in which ectopic endometrial tissues are found outside the inner lining of the uterus. Patient experiences severe pain which may be gradually worsening. This ectopic endometrial tissue behaves as normal endometrial tissue and bleeds every month. This blood may become encysted and form chocolate cyst which may rupture also. At this stage surgical intervention is required or the life of the patient may be in threat. Hence a management which not only treats endometriosis but also prevents the chocolate cyst formation is highly essential. According to Ayurveda endometriosis can be compared to “*Vyana Avruta Apana Vata*” and has to be managed accordingly. Management principles include *Amachikitsa*, *Vyana Avruta Apana Vata Chikitsa*, and *Samana* therapies. Life style and diet modifications are also to be advocated as their role in the establishment of any disease cannot be ignored. Certain Ayurvedic medicines possessing the above properties and are helpful in the clinical management of endometriosis will be discussed in this full paper.

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INTRODUCTION

God created woman with the capacity of bearing and bringing the new generations into this world. Hence the health of women is a major concern since ages. Ayurveda vividly describes the lifestyle and the diet that a woman has to follow since her menarche in order to have a healthy wellbeing and good progeny. The present day modernization has changed the lifestyle and diet of this generation and thereby they are prone to many diseases. Mainly women suffer from several gynecological diseases which needs immediate medical attention in order to maintain their femininity. One such disease is endometriosis.

Presence of functioning endometrium in sites other than uterine mucosa is called endometriosis.^[1] Endometriosis is a disease of contrast.^[2] Even though endometriosis is a benign condition it behaves in a malignant fashion. It

invades the local cells and also spreads widely. The chances of this condition to change into malignancy cannot be overlooked. Endometriosis can occur at any site. The most common sites are the ovaries, the cul-de-sac including the uterosacral ligaments, peritoneum overlying the bladder, sigmoid colon, back of the uterus, intestinal coils and appendix.^[3] Stages of endometriosis according to ASRM guidelines are stage I, II, III, and IV determined based on the point scores and correspond to minimal, mild, moderate and severe endometriosis.^[4] In this disease the symptoms are not related with the extent of the lesion. They are more related to the site of the lesion and the depth of penetration. There is no relation between the degree of pain and the severity of endometriosis.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the pathology of endometriosis in Ayurveda.
2. To evolve the management principles.
3. To enlist certain Ayurvedic drugs that would be beneficial in the management of endometriosis.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ayurvedic Samhitas, modern medical text books and websites.

DISCUSSION

Nearly 10 to 15% women of reproductive age are mainly affected with endometriosis^[5]. Most of the infertile women nearly about 25 to 50% have endometriosis and 30 to 50% of women with endometriosis suffer from infertility^[6]. The most common type of endometriosis frequently encountered in our clinical practice is mainly of three forms:

- 1) Peritoneal endometriosis in which endometriotic implants are found on the surface of pelvic peritoneum and ovaries.
- 2) Endometrioma are the ovarian cysts that are lined by the endometrioid mucosa.
- 3) Rectovaginal endometriosis in which the endometrioid tissue mixed with adipose and fibromuscular tissue is found between the rectum and vagina^[7].

Risk factors

The pathology of endometriosis is not clear even to this day and is full of theories. Yet the risk factors of this disease are identified. They include low parity, delayed child bearing, familial history, genital tract obstruction, environmental toxins (Dioxins) and molecular defects of cytokines, TNF, macrophages, MMPs and the like^[8].

Clinical symptoms

The clinical symptoms include nausea or vomiting and bloating^[9], dysmenorrhea, dyspareunia, dysuria, dyschezia, lower abdominal pain, menorrhagia, irregular bleeding and chocolate cyst in later stages^[10].

Pathology

Several theories have been put forward to explain the pathogenesis of endometriosis. They include

- 1) **Retrograde Menstruation (Sampson's Theory):** This theory proposes that during menstruation the blood flows retrogradely through the fallopian tubes into the pelvic cavity^[11].
- 2) **Coelomic Metaplasia Theory:** The Coelomic metaplasia theory postulates that

endometriosis is due to the metaplasia of mesothelial lining cells of the visceral and abdominal peritoneum.^[12]

- 3) **Hormone Theory:** According to this, the ectopic endometrial tissue responds to the ovarian steroid hormones. Oestrogens facilitate endometrial proliferation and the ectopic endometrial tissue responds to it. This further enhances the chances of developing endometriosis.^[13]
- 4) **Immune Dysfunction:** The ectopic endometrium in the peritoneum leads to inflammatory changes. This facilitates the activation of macrophages and leukocytes locally^[14]. This leads to a defective immune mechanism that prevents elimination of the menstrual debris and promotes the implantation and growth of endometrial cells in the ectopic sites^[15].
- 5) **Genetics:** Genetic predisposition increases the risk of cellular damage. Genetic mutations that cause cell damage lead to the progression of endometriosis^[16].

Diagnosis^[17]

- 1) Classical clinical symptoms as secondary dysmenorrhoea, dyspareunia and infertility
- 2) Speculum examination may reveal bluish powder burn lesions on cervix or the posterior fornix of vagina
- 3) Moderate elevation of serum CA 125 in patients with severe endometriosis
- 4) Increased level of Monocyte Chemotactic Protein in the peritoneal fluid
- 5) MRI Scan
- 6) Laparoscopy
- 7) Biopsy

Complications^[18]

- 1) Rupture of the chocolate cyst
- 2) Infection of the chocolate cyst
- 3) Intestinal or ureteral obstruction
- 4) Malignancy

Ayurvedic View of Endometriosis

Ayurveda is a medical science which gives much importance to the *Nidana, Doshas, Dushyas* and *Udbhavastana* for the successful management of any disease clinically. Hence Ayurveda *Acharyas* clearly states that even if a physician is unable to name a disease yet he can manage it successfully by considering all of the above factors. The symptoms of endometriosis can be correlated to many of the *Yoni Vyapads* described in our classics. All the symptoms of endometriosis cannot be brought under any single *Yoni Vyapad*. Hence an accurate

diagnosis is the essential need of the hour. This helps to evolve the management principles and treat the disease efficiently and thereby prevent the complications.

Role of Ama

According to Ayurveda, the food that is not digested properly due to vitiated *Agni* is called *Ama* and it is responsible for all the diseases^[19]. The *Ama* thus formed vitiates the *Rasa dhatu*. As *Artava* is the *Upadhatu* of *Rasa dhatu*, the *Artava* also gets vitiated. This leads to *Artava Vikaras* as *kastartava* and *Asrigdara*. Hence management of *Ama* is the first principle in the management of endometriosis.

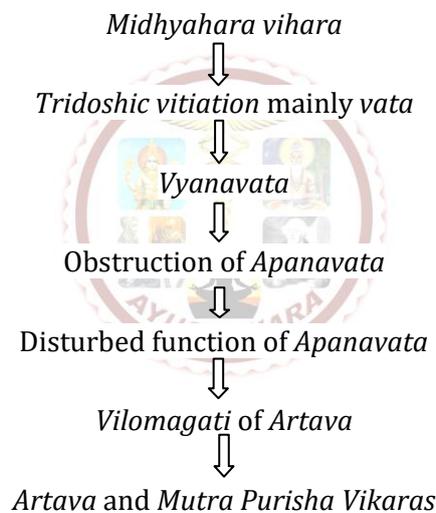
Dioxins - Ama

Dioxins are a group of highly toxic chemical compounds that are harmful to health. They are persistent organic compounds and are the major environmental pollutants. High-fat foods such as milk products, eggs, meat, and some fish are the major sources of these dioxins. Excess consumption of these foods leads to liver problems and elevated

blood lipids (fats). Laboratory animal studies have shown various effects, including cancer and reproductive problems^[20]. Hence dioxins can be compared to *Ama* according to Ayurveda.

Samprapti

Mithya ahara and *Vihara* vitiates the *Tridoshas* mainly the *Vata dosha* in endometriosis. Among the *Pancha vidha vatas*, the *Vyana vata* gets more vitiated. This vitiated *Vyana vata* reaches the *Sthana* of *Apana vata* and causes *Sanga* to *Apana vata*. This results in the disturbed function of *Apana vata*. The main function of *Apana vata* includes *Artava*, *Mutra*, *Pureesha*, *Sukra* and *Garbha Nishkramana*^[21]. Hence *Artava*, *Mutra* and *Pureesha Vikaras* are encountered in endometriosis. *Vyana vata* is responsible for the movement in the body^[22]. *Vyana vata* after reaching the *Sthana* of *Apana vata* obstructs the normal movement of *Apana vata* and directs it in the opposite direction. Hence there is retrograde flow of *Artava*.



Vikaras as *Udavarta*, *Kastartava*, *Arti*, *Asrigdara*, *Gulma*, *Maithuna Ashishnuta*, *Vandhya*, *Mutrakricchra*, *Parikartika* can arise due to the disturbed function of *Apana vata*. As it is a *Pakwasaya Gata Sthana Vyadhi Adhmana* can also be encountered.

Ayurveda Diagnosis

Depending on the above pathology and symptoms endometriosis in Ayurveda can be diagnosed as “*Vyana Avruta Apana Vata*”.

Symptoms of Vyana avruta apana vata^[23]

Vami, *Adhmana*, *Udavarta*, *Gulma*, *Aarti*, *Parikartika*. When *Vata* is the predominant *Dosha adhmana*, *Udavarta*, *Arti* are the predominant features. Here the patient complaints more of pain i.e. either dysmenorrhea, dyspareunia, dysuria, lowback ache or abdominal pain along with retrograde flow of menstrual fluid. If *Vyana avruta apana vata* is associated with *Pitta* patient experiences *Gulma (Artava)*, and *Asrugdhara*. Here *Gulma* refers to *Artava Gulma* as it is the accumulation of regular *Artava*^[24]. In this condition patient may have menorrhagia and chocolate cyst. As chocolate cyst is due to the collection of the menstrual debris it is considered as *Artava Gulma*. *Vyana avruta apana vata* if associated with *Kapha* leads to adhesions.

Comparison

Endometriosis	Vyana avrita Apana vata
Nausea / vomiting	Vami
Bloating	Adhmana
Retrograde movement of the menstrual blood	Udavarta
Chocolate cyst	Gulma
Pain	Arti
Dyschezia	Parikartika

Here *Arti* includes dysmenorrhoea, dysperunia and dysuria.

Management Principles

1. *Amahara chikitsa*
2. *Vyanavruta apanavata chikitsa*
3. *Lakshana chikitsa*

Amahara chikitsa

Ama is one of the most important causative factors in the establishment of this disease. Hence drugs possessing *Deepana*, *Pachana* properties along with a positive effect on the female reproductive system yields good clinical results. Hence drugs like *Jeeraka* and *Krishna Jeeraka*^[25] which possess *Deepana*, *Pachana* and *Garbhasaya Visuddhakara* properties are much helpful as *Amahara* drugs in the management of endometriosis.

Vyanavruta Apanavata chikitsa

"lingam vyanaavruta apane tam
snigdhairanulomayet"^[26]

Snigdha anulomana is the treatment advocated for *Vyana Avruta Apana Vata* in our classics. *Pippali* with *Snigdha*, *Deepana*, *Anulomana* properties is highly beneficial in this condition.^[27]

Patients of endometriosis normally seek medical attention when they suffer with any of the following symptoms. Dyspareunia, dysmenorhea, dysuria, low back ache, menorrhagia or infertility. Chocolate cyst may be revealed on scan. Along with *Vyana Avruta Apana Vata Chikitsa* a few other medications will be helpful in the quick relief of the symptoms.

Dyspareunia

The clinical indication of *Sukumara Ghritam*^[28] is multi beneficial. It is *Murtakrichra hara*, *Katisulahara*, *Gulmahara* and it is best in *yonisula*. Hence *Sukumara ghrita* not only checks dyspareunia but also checks the other symptoms of *Vyana avruta apana vata*.

Dysmenorhea

Pippalyadi Quath^[29] is one of the best drugs mentioned in ayurvedic classics for *Udavarta*.

Hence its clinical application not only checks the retrograde flow of the menstrual fluid but also relieves the patient from menstrual pain. Moreover its *Gulmahara* property checks the formation of the chocolate cyst.

Dysuria

Vaiswanara choornam^[30] is yielding very good clinical results in dysuria associated with endometriosis. Its *Vata anulomana* property helps in correcting the retrograde flow of the menstrual fluid. It is also clearly indicated in *Vasti gata rogas* thereby supporting its clinical efficacy in dysuria.

Menorrhagia

Menorrhagia is one of the most irritating symptoms experienced by the patients. Therefore a quick management is seek by the patient. *Asoka ghrita*^[31] is one of the best drugs of choice in endometriosis associated with menorrhagia as it also relieves dyspareunia, dysmenorrhea and low back ache.

Infertility

This is a major clinical feature which depresses the patient to an extreme extent. Ayurveda gives us enormous drugs which prove their efficacy in the management of infertility. In infertility associated with endometriosis *Panchajeeraka Guda* is proving to be highly beneficial. *Panchajeeraka Guda*^[32] is indicated in all gynaecological diseases that are described in Ayurveda. Endometriosis constitutes many gynaecological symptoms including infertility. As it checks all the gynecological abnormalities it is like a boon to the patients of infertility.

Chocolate Cyst

This is compared to *Rakta gulma*. Hence *Rakta gulma* along with the management of *Vyana avruta apana vata* can prevent the rupture of the cyst. *Kankayana gutika*^[33] is proving to be beneficial to some extent in this condition. If adhesions are formed then patient can be referred for surgery.

Previous researches have proved the efficacy of *Sodhana* and *Samana* therapy in the management of chronic pelvic pain in endometriosis^[34] and infertility as a consequence of endometriosis.^[35]

CONCLUSION

Endometriosis is one of the challenging clinical entities to the practitioners of Ayurveda. The complicated clinical scenario demands accurate diagnosis and management to prevent surgical intervention. Hence endometriosis is diagnosed as *Vyana avruta apana vata* and the treatment principles when applied clinically yield very good clinical results to the patient satisfaction. Ayurveda blesses the feminine world with numerous drugs which helps to maintain their health in a natural way. Hence Ayurveda plays a major role in treating endometriosis and thereby prevent the complications.

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