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PARTICULARISM OF ORAL HYGIENE

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is the ancient system of health-care and longevity. It involves a holistic view of man, his health and illness. Ayurvedic treatment is aimed at patient as an organic whole and treatment consists of salubrious use of drugs, diets and certain practices. Even though dentistry was not a specialized branch of Ayurveda, it is included in shalakyta tantra. Prevention is probably the most important. This includes awaking the community on how to maintain a good oral health through Ayurveda dinacharya. The present conceptual study is focused on the possible role of Ayurveda in the management of oral diseases. For the purpose of this study, details were taken from authentic Ayurveda texts, journals and authentic websites. In Ayurveda classics many things have mentioned for prevention of dental diseases. Scientific validations of the Ayurveda dental health practices could justify their incorporation into modern dental care. Publicity of these techniques using appropriate media would benefit the general population by giving more confidence in the ancient practices, thus preventing oral diseases.

KEYWORDS: Ayurveda, Shalakyta Tantra, dinacharya,

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a holistic system of medicine which evolved in India some 3000-5000 years ago, a system of traditional medicine native to the Indian subcontinent, now practiced in other parts of the world as a form of complementary medicine. Even though dentistry was not a specialized branch of Ayurveda, it was included in shalakyta tantra. Oral diseases continue to be a major health problem world-wide. Dental caries and periodontal diseases are among the most important global oral health problems, although other conditions like oral and pharyngeal cancers and oral tissue lesions are also of significant concern. Oral health is integral to general well-being and relates to the quality-of-life that extends beyond the functions of the craniofacial complex. The link between oral diseases and the activities of microbial species that form part of the micro biota of the oral cavity is well-established. The global need for alternative prevention and treatment options and products for oral diseases that are safe, effective and economical comes from the rise in disease incidence (particularly in developing countries), increased resistance by pathogenic bacteria to currently used antibiotics and chemotherapeutics, opportunistic infections in immune-compromised individuals and financial considerations in developing countries. The standard Western medicine has had only limited success in the prevention of periodontal disease and in the treatment of a variety of oral diseases. Considering the importance of various traditional or complementary alternative medical systems, the present scientific evidence based review of literature is focused on the possible role of Ayurveda in the management of various oral pathologies.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the purpose of this study, details were taken from authentic Ayurveda texts like Brihatrayee, Laghutrayee etc, journals and authentic websites.

RESULTS

According to the shalakyta tantra, 65 varieties of oral diseases can arise in seven anatomic locations; eight on the lips, 15 on the alveolar margin, eight in connection with the teeth, five on the tongue, nine on the palate, 17 in the oropharynx and three in a generalized form.

For the treatment of these diseases Ayurveda advocates procedures such as oral cleansing, extractions, excisions, flap surgeries etc. Along with the treatment of oro-facial diseases, Ayurveda recommends some daily use therapeutic procedures for the prevention of and maintenance of oral health. These include dant dhavani (brushing), jihva lekhana (tongue scrapping) and gandoosha & kavalagraha (gargling) or oil pulling and tissue regeneration therapies. Some of the scientifically proven beneficial effects of these procedures are described below.

- Dant dhavani (brushing): Ayurveda recommends chewing sticks in the morning as well as after every meal to prevent diseases. Ayurveda insists on the use of herbal brushes, approximately nine inches long and the thickness of one's little finger. These herb sticks should be kashaya (astringent), katu (pungent) or tikta (bitter) in taste. The method of use is to crush one end, chew it and eat it slowly. The neem (margosa or *Azadirachta indica*) is a famous herbal chewing stick. Fresh stems of liquorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), black catechu or the cutch tree (*Acacia Catechu Linn.*), Arjuna tree (*Terminalia arjuna*), fever nut (*Caesalipinia bouduc*) and milkweed plant (*Calotropis procera*) can also be used for brushing. Chewing on these stems is believed to cause attrition and leveling of biting surfaces, facilitate salivary secretion and possibly, help in plaque control while some stems have an anti-bacterial action. Present-day research has shown that all the chewing sticks described in ancient Ayurveda texts (Circa 200 BC) have medicinal and anti-cariogenic properties.
- Jivha lekhana (tongue scrapping): According to Ayurveda, the tongue is connected to many vital organs throughout the body: the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, spleen, stomach, small intestine, colon, and so on. In Ayurveda, looking at the tongue is one of several methods for assessing the health of these organs, and scraping the tongue with a tongue cleaner is said to directly impact each of them. Because the tongue is soft and spongy, a firm and inflexible object like a tongue cleaner cleans it far more effectively than a supple entity like a toothbrush. A tongue scraper simply does a superior job of loosening and clearing any accumulations from the folds and grooves of the tongue so that they can be completely eliminated from the mouth. It is ideal to use gold, silver, copper, stainless steel for the scrapping of the tongue. Tongue scrapping stimulates the reflex points of the tongue. Removes bad odor (halitosis). Improves the sense of taste, stimulate the secretion of digestive enzymes. Removes millions of bacteria growth (approximately 500 varieties) Clinical evidence also shows that use of tongue scrapers on a regular basis, has a significant Improvement on eliminating anaerobic bacteria and decreases bad odor.
- Gandusha and kavala graha are two primary oral cleansing techniques; specialized therapy to treat as well as to prevent oral diseases. Gandusha involves filling the mouth completely with fluid so that gargling is impossible. In gandush, the oral cavity is filled completely with liquid medicine, held for about 3-5 minutes, and

then released. In kavala graha, a comfortable amount of fluid is retained with the mouth closed for about 3 minutes, and then gargled. It is a simple rejuvenating treatment, which, when done routinely, enhances the senses, maintains clarity, brings about a feeling of freshness, and invigorates the mind. These oral cleansing techniques can also benefit bad breath, dry face, dull senses, exhaustion, anorexia, loss of taste, impaired vision, sore throat, and all kapha related imbalances. Kavala or gandusha are claimed to cure about 30 systemic diseases ranging from headache, migraine to diabetes and asthma. Oil pulling has been used extensively as a traditional Indian folk remedy for many years to prevent decay, oral malodor, bleeding gums, dryness of throat, cracked lips and for strengthening teeth, gums and the jaw. Oil pulling therapy can be done using oils like sunflower oil or sesame oil. Oil pulling therapy is very effective against plaque induced gingivitis both in the clinical and microbiological assessment. Brushing is contra indicated in the cases of mouth ulcer, fever, indigestion, those who have tendency to vomit, asthma, cough, thirst. Oil pulling can be used to clean the oral cavity in all these cases. Oil pulling is a powerful detoxifying Ayurvedic technique that has recently become very popular as a Complimentary Alternative Medicine remedy for many different health ailments. Using this method, surgery or medication could be prevented for a number of chronic illnesses. The oil therapy is preventative as well as curative. The exciting aspect of this healing method is its simplicity. Ayurveda advises oil gargling to purify the entire system; as it holds that each section of the tongue is connected to different organ such as to the kidneys, lungs, liver, heart, small intestines, stomach, colon, and spine, similarly to reflexology.

- Tissue regeneration therapies: In Avurveda, the well-known herb, Amalaki (*Phyllanthus emblica*) is considered a general rebuildler of oral health. Amalaki works well as a mouth rinse as a decoction. One to two grams per day can be taken for the long-term benefit to the teeth and gums. Amalaki supports the healing and development of connective tissue when taken internally. The healing effect of these tonics takes longer to become apparent since they must saturate the whole body in order to work on the gums. The results, however, are more lasting. Regular use of Bilberry and hawthorn berry fruits stabilize collagen and strengthens the gum tissue. Liquorice root promotes anti-cavity action, reduces plaque and has an anti-bacterial effect. Herbs such as yellow dock root, alfalfa leaf, cinnamon bark and turmeric root are taken internally to strengthen astidhatu, for example, the skeleton and the joints, have proven to be good for long term health of teeth.
- Diet (ahara): Oral health is related to diet in many ways, for example, nutritional influences on craniofacial development, oral cancer and oral infectious diseases. Dental diseases impact considerably on self-esteem and quality of life and are expensive to treat. The objective of this paper is to review the evidence for an association between nutrition, diet and dental diseases and to present dietary recommendations for their prevention. Nutrition affects the teeth during development and malnutrition may exacerbate periodontal and oral infectious diseases. However, the most significant effect of nutrition on teeth is the local action of diet in the mouth on the development of dental caries and enamel erosion. Dental erosion is increasing and is associated with dietary acids, a major source of which is soft drinks. According to Ayurveda dietary factors (aharaja nidana) which causing dental and periodontal diseases, has been described. They are partaking of matsya (fish), mahisha mamsa (meat of buffalo), Masha (black

gram), dadhi (curd), ksheera (milk), eksurasa (sugarcane juice) and phanitam (preparation from sugarcane).

DISCUSSION

- Sushruta Samhita, the surgical compendium of Ayurveda, defines health as the equilibrium of the three biological humors (doshas), the seven body tissues (dhatus), proper digestion and a state of pleasure or happiness of the soul, senses and the mind. A balance among the three doshas is necessary for health. Together, the three doshas govern all metabolic activities. When their actions in our mind-body constitution are balanced, we experience psychological and physical wellness. One subtype of kapha dosha, bodhaka kapha, is a primary player in the mouth. Bodhaka kapha initiates the first stages of digestion for simple carbohydrates (via enzymes in the mouth), regulates oral bacteria, lubricates oral tissues in order to prevent friction between them, supports speech and the vocal chords, maintains an optimal oral temperature, helps to receive the knowledge of taste, supports immune function, specifically via the tonsils. A healthy mouth is one in which bodhaka kapha thrives, ensuring that all of its functions can serve our overall health. Conversely, when bodhaka kapha is disordered or imbalanced, it can impact not only our oral health, but also all kapha systems throughout the body. Interestingly, several key kapha sites namely the pancreas, heart, brain, and joints are directly correlated with diseases that western medicine has linked to oral health, including diabetes (the pancreas), cardiovascular disease (the heart), Alzheimer's disease (the brain), and osteoporosis (related to the joints because shleshaka kapha in the joints is said to nourish the bone tissue). Ultimately, when we care for our mouths properly, we support all of these deeper organs and tissues, but there is also great potential to negatively impact them, if we neglect our oral health.
- In truth, robust oral health has incredibly far-reaching benefits. They are-
- Enhanced sense of taste: Ayurveda places a great deal of emphasis on the sense of taste, describing six unique tastes, each of which is essential to a balanced diet. When a food is ingested and its taste is perceived in the mouth, there is an important cascade of communication that occurs between the mouth and the rest of the digestive tract, preparing the stomach and the intestines for the food that is about to be received. This supports optimal digestion, which Ayurveda views as a cornerstone of perfect health. It should also be noted that the sense of taste which proper oral health helps to preserve is crucial not only to physical health; it is also related to overall sense of satisfaction in life.
- Bolstered digestive strength; There is no question that digestion begins in the mouth. Almost immediately upon ingesting food or drink, enzymes in the mouth itself begin to break down simple carbohydrates and sugars. Simultaneously, the action of chewing manually breaks our foods down into more manageable morsels for the stomach, setting us up for optimal digestion. If these oral functions are impaired in any way, overall digestive strength is bound to suffer. Issues with the teeth and gums can quickly compromise ability to chew properly, and other oral imbalances can impact the more subtle chemical interactions that are crucial to these first stages of digestion. By contrast, a healthy mouth promotes optimal intelligence and coordination throughout the oral cavity and beyond.
- Improved organ and tissue health; at the most fundamental level, all of tissues depend on agni (the digestive fire) for nutrition. Agni is responsible for

transforming the foods that we ingest into biologically useful substances, which are then made available to cells and tissues throughout the body. As the entry point for the entire digestive tract, the health of the mouth directly impacts the gut, and the strength of agni. Good oral health fosters strength in the digestive tract and supports agni, which in turn affects every cell and tissue throughout the body. And because the tongue shares a direct energetic connection with many of our most vital internal organs, proper oral hygiene actually impacts these deeper tissues far more directly than we might otherwise imagine. Cleansing the tongue is both stimulating and detoxifying for all of the internal organs that are represented on the surface of the tongue.

CONCLUSION

In this paper an attempt has been made to review various procedures mentioned in dinacharya that can be used as an adjunct for the maintenance of oral health and also for prevention. Scientific validations of the Ayurveda dental health practices could justify their incorporation into modern dental care. Publicity of these techniques using appropriate media would benefit the general population by giving more confidence in the ancient practices, thus preventing oral diseases.

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