



Review Article

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AYURVEDIC APPROACHES TO POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME (PCOS): A REVIEW

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Received on: 01/04/16 Revised on: 11/05/16 Accepted on: 07/06/16

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DOI: 10.7897/2277-4343.074123

ABSTRACT

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a common endocrinopathy found in the females of reproductive age group characterized by atypical menstrual cycle pattern, hormonal disarrays and polycystic ovaries. It may be difficult to diagnose due to Heterogeneous presentation and varying features with age. In PCOS, severe hormonal derangements give rise to the clinical manifestations i.e. amenorrhea or oligomenorrhea, hirsutism, obesity, Acanthosis nigricans & infertility. Sedentary life-style, lack of exercise, excessive stress and anxiety accompanied with junk food worsens the prognosis. According to Ayurveda, the disorder involves Vata and Kapha doshas, Meda-Mamsa-Rakta dhatus. Therefore Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome can also be described with same involvement of Dosha and Dhātu. Chikitsa siddhanta aims Agni Deepana and Aampachana, hence clearing away the Srotorodha (obstacles) of Aartava-vaha srotas (Channels carrying menstrual blood) and others. Srotoshodhana leads to Apana-Vatanulomana resulting in regularization of menstrual cycle, imbalanced hormones and metabolism. Reduction in Kapha is helpful in relieving obesity along with the associated symptoms of hyperandrogenism. Moreover, regular exercise and balanced diet catalyzes the action of drugs. Hence PCOS can be managed with Ayurvedic formulations along with Life-style modifications and restricted diet.

Keywords: Polycystic Ovary Syndrome, Hormonal Imbalance, Obesity, Management, Life Style-Modification

INTRODUCTION

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) was originally described in 1935 by Stein and Leventhal as a syndrome manifested by amenorrhea, hirsutism and obesity associated with enlarged polycystic ovaries¹. It is the most common endocrinopathy in female with reproductive age group with a prevalence of 9.13% in Indian population². PCOS is a condition characterized by hyperandrogenism and chronic oligo-anovulation³. Hirsutism may be clinically evident in 25% of the cases⁴. PCOS is associated with metabolic derangements including insulin resistance, dyslipidemia, systemic inflammation and endothelial dysfunction⁵. In modern science management of PCOS is chiefly based upon the management of obesity⁶.

In Ayurveda, PCOS is not described as a separate heading, but can be portrayed under the headings of various yonivyapadas (genital pathologies) and aartavadushti (menstrual pathologies). PCOD can be correlated with Pushpaghni Jataharini⁷, aartava-kshaya⁸ (hypomenorrhea), nashtartava⁹, arajaska¹⁰, ksheenaartava¹¹ (oligomenorrhea) and granthibhuta aartava¹² (clotted menses).

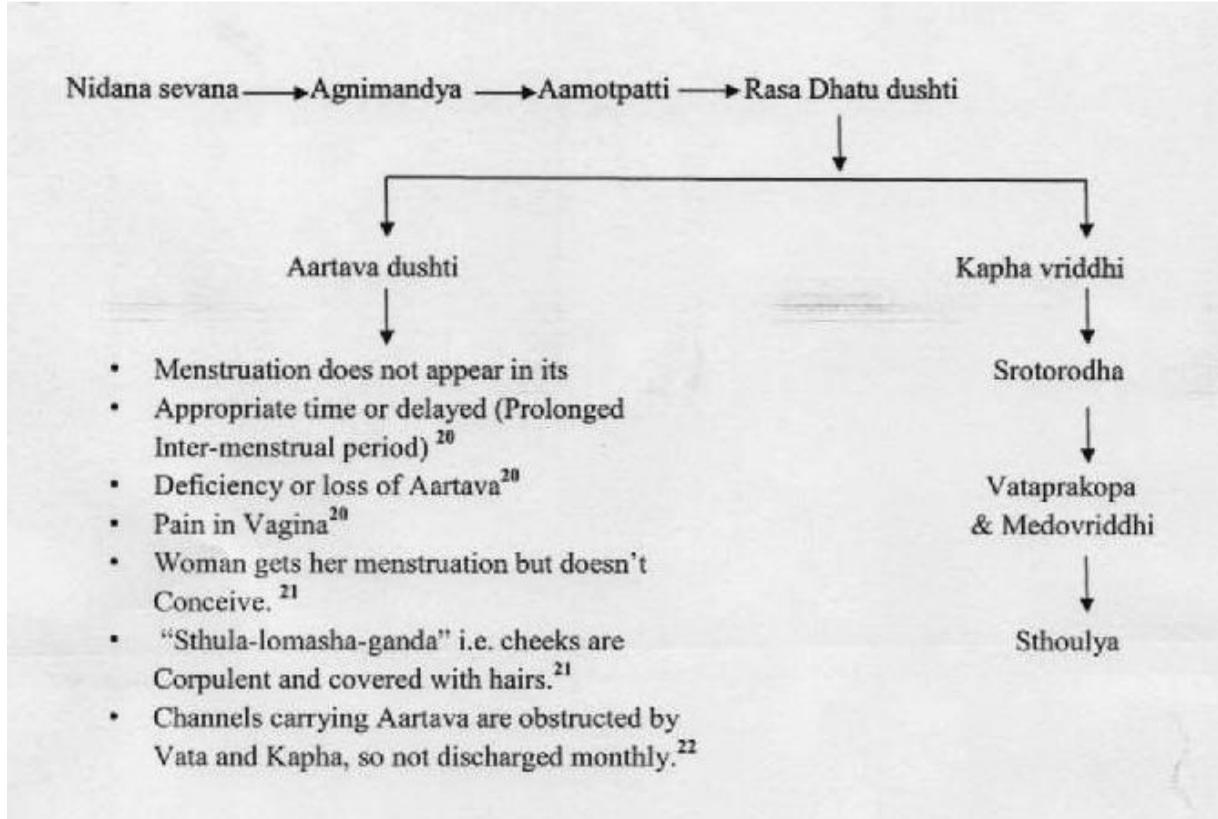
Modern management of PCOS is primarily targeted to correct the biochemical abnormalities¹³. Weight reduction in obese patients is the first line of treatment¹⁴. Conservative management mainly involves frequent use of hormonal pills, which results in numerous adverse effects. Therefore Ayurvedic formulations from various Ayurvedic texts can be a better option for the definitive cure of PCOS.

Etiology

In the context of yonivyapadas, there are four basic causative factors i.e. unwholesome lifestyle, menstrual disarrays (dushti of antahpushpa i.e. ova and bahipushpa i.e. menstrual blood), genetic disorders and some divine factors¹⁵, responsible for the manifestation of the syndrome.

It is a disorder involving vata and kapha¹⁶ doshas along with Meda Dhātu dushti¹⁷. On the basis of Ayurvedic interpretation PCOS can be enumerated as Rasapradoshaja¹⁸ and Santarpanotha vyadhi¹⁹.

Probable Samprapti and Rupa (pathogenesis & symptoms)



Treatment of PCOS as per Ayurveda

- 1) "Nidana Parivarjana"²³ (avoid the causative factors) is said to be the very first step towards the management of PCOS. As Agnimandya, Medovriddhi, Apana Vayu and Kapha dushti plays the major role in the pathogenesis of the syndrome, so taking above fact into the consideration, Pathya Ahara-Vihara (dietary regimen & exercise) is to be used.
- 2) For Agnimandya and Aampachana, use of Trikatu Churna²⁴, Chitrakadi Gutika²⁵, Shadushana Churna²⁶, Haritaki Churna²⁷, Hingwashtaka Churna²⁸ is to be done in order to palliate the Srotovarodha and to facilitate the Apana-Vatanulomana.
- 3) For Medovriddhi, use of Takrarishtha, Madhu like lekhanadravyas (scrapping agents) along with Yava, yavaka, kulattha etc. as aahara (diet) is mentioned by Acharya Charaka in chikitsa of Atistula²⁹ (obese). Moreover, lifestyle-modification as well as regular exercise is also emphasized³⁰.
- 4) To remove the Sanga (obstruction) of Aartavavah Srotas, Uttar-Basti^{31,32} (douche) is given with Dhanvantari Taila³³
- 5) Vamana Karma (emesis) - as it alleviates the Srotovarodha by eliminating vitiated Kapha. As Kapha is soumya in prakriti, decrease in Kapha consequently increases Aartava of Aagneya nature³⁴.
- 6) Shatpushpa and Shatavari Churna³⁵ (*Asparagus recemosus* Willd³⁶) are to be used in females with deficiency or loss of Aartava, women getting their menstruation but not conceiving.
- 7) Kanchanara Guggulu³⁷, Sukumara Ghrita³⁸ for reducing the size of formed ovarian cysts.
- 8) Pathadi Kwath mentioned by Acharya Sushruta in Vatakaphaja Aartava dushti³⁹ given orally along with the matrabasti of Shatpushpa taila⁴⁰ after the cessation of menstrual cycle for seven days is found efficient due to its properties of Aampachana, agnideepana, Vatanulomana, Srotoshodhana and Vata-Kaphashamana.
- 9) Narayana taila⁴¹

10) Rasana Kalpa⁴²

11) Pushpadhanva Rasa⁴³

12) Regular practice of Yoga i.e. Uttanapadasana, Sarvangasana, Halasana, Mayoosana, Surya-namaskara, Vakrasana and Sheersasana in amenorrhea⁴⁴ and, while Sarvangasana, Sheersasana, Halasana, Bhastrika and Ujjayi pranayama in female sterility⁴⁵, are indicated

13) Kumaryasava is indicated in Nashta pushpa⁴⁶

DISCUSSION

According to Ayurveda, the disorder is caused by vitiated Vata and Kapha doshas and Rasa-Meda-Mamsa-Rakta dhatus dushti. The main objective of the chikitsa is-

- To flame the Jathragni and dhatvagni with the use of Deepana- pachana dravyas to correct the Agnimandya.
- To remove the Sanga of Aartava-vaha srotas and Srotoshodhana through various Samshodhana karmas to balance the imbalanced doshas i.e. reduction of Kapha and Anulomana of Apana Vata; to nourish the dushta dhatus and to regulate the irregular menstrual cycle.
- To reduce the weight through Lekhana dravyas, Pathya aahara- vihara and regular exercise to regulate the hormonal imbalance
- To reduce the size of already formed ovarian cysts through Kanchanara Gugglu & Sukumara Ghrita as Kanchanara is very useful in treating extra growths or tumors⁴⁷.
- To enhance the chances of conception with the use of Shatpushpa and Shatavari Churna. As Shatavari (*Asparagus recemosus* Willd.³⁶) is known for its phytoestrogenic properties.⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

In treating PCOS, one should aim for Samprapti Vighatana (breakdown of pathogenesis) as per the awasthabheda (stage of disease) and Dosh- Dushya Sammurchhana. Encouraging results can be obtained with Shastrokta formulations, Panchakarma, Pathya aahara and regular exercise due to its holistic approach towards-Samprapti-Vighatana.

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Cite this article as:

Rajpoot Purnima, Pradhan Pradeep, Singh Balendra, Das Nalini. Ayurvedic approaches to polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS): A review. Int. J. Res. Ayurveda Pharm. Jul - Aug 2016;7(4):4-7
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7897/2277-4343.074123>

Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

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