Case Report

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AYURVEDA MANAGEMENT OF SHWITRA: A CASE REPORT

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ABSTRACT

In Ayurveda, all skin disorders are categorized under the term Kushta Roga (~skin disease), with Shwitra (~vitiligo) being one such condition. Shwitra (~vitiligo) is characterized by whitish patches on the skin and is linked to the imbalance of the seven bodily constituents: Vata, Pitta, Kapha, Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, and Meda. The fourth layer of the skin, known as Tamra, which measures one-eighth of Vreehi and is a seat of Shwitra (~vitiligo), which can be correlated with vitiligo. Vitiligo is a hypopigmentation disorder affecting approximately 1% of the global population. In this case report a 38-year-old female patient diagnosed with vitiligo, who presented with white patches on her back, arms, and groin. She underwent Ayurvedic treatment for 8 months, and her condition were assessed using the Vitiligo Area Severity Index (VASI) both before and after the intervention. While the results of this case study are promising, further structured clinical studies are necessary to provide evidence supporting the use of Ayurvedic approaches in managing Shwitra (~vitiligo).

Keywords Kushtha Roga, Shwitra, Twacha, Vitiligo, VASI

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda classifies all skin diseases as Kushta. Shwitra (~vitiligo) is mentioned in Kushta roga (~skin disease) chikitsa, in ayurvedic literature.[1] So, Shwitra (~vitiligo) is a condition that causes white patches on the body. The skin is the primary site of Bhrajaka pitta and vata. Skin problems may result from an imbalance in both.[2] It's also known as Kilasa(~whitish discolored lesions), Daruna (~reddish discolored lesions), Aruna (~coppery color lesion), and Shweta Kushta (~whitish discolored lesion). Bhrajaka pitta, located in the epidermis, is responsible for Chhaya and Prabha of Twacha (skin).[3] According to Acharya Vagbhata, it is caused by three Doshas: Vata, Pitta and Kapha. Dhatus distinguishes three sorts of Shwitra based on where it is found and the color and texture of the skin. There are three different types of Shwitra, Vataj Shwitra, which is dry and red in Rakta Dhatu; Pittaj Shwitra, which is coppery in color and has burning and hair-lossing sensations in Mansa Dhatu; and Kaphaja Shwitra, which is white in color and itchy in Medo Dhatu.[4] According to Ayurveda, the Nidana (~etiological factors) are Asatya vachana (~untruthfulness), Kritaghna bhava (~ungratefulness), Ninda suranam (~disrespect for the god), Guru gharshanam (~disrespecting the preceptors), Papa kriya (~immoral deeds), Purvajanma krita (~sins from past lives) and Virodhi anna (~eating conflicting foods) etc.[5] Shwitra can be correlated with vitiligo due to its clinical manifestation. Vitiligo is an acquired disease that affects around 1% of global population.[6] Several hypotheses exist about the vitiligo. Primary causes include autoimmune, genetic, psychological, endocrine, chemicals and unfavourable pharmaceutical combinations. Focal melanocyte loss causes patches of hypopigmentation. It is thought to be caused by autoimmune destruction of melanocyte by cells. Vitiligo is often symmetrical and generalised, affecting the hands, wrists, feet, knees, neck and skin around bodily orifices.[7]

Patient Information

A 38 years old female individual presented in the Kayachikitsa OPD with complaints of white discoloration over her back, arm and groin region since one year. The complaint started with a small white lesion at the back of the scapular region, and then multiple lesions increased gradually with increase in size. Subject initially neglected these symptoms and did not take any medicines. As patches started spreading gradually, hence, she consulted at Ayurvedic and Unani Tibbia College and Hospital for the treatment.

Past history

- No history of above skin complaints before 1 year.
- No history of trauma/injury.
- No history of HTN/DM/Thyroid dysfunction/other systemic disorder.

Family history: Nothing significant; all other family members are reportedly in good health.

Personal history

- Occupation - Housewife
- Marital status - Married
- Religion - Muslim
- Diet - Mixed, predominantly non-veg (chicken and fish) weekly thrice.
- Appetite - Decreased
- Bowel - Constipated
- Micturition - 3 to 4 times/day
- Sleep - Disturbed, 6 to 7 hours with day sleep of 1 to 2 hours.
- Allergies to any medications/food - No
- Addictions - No

Dashvidha Pariksha: Her prakriti (physical constitution) was Vata-Pittaja, twaksara (having good quality skin), madhayama

samhanana (medium body built), sama pramana (proportionate body structures), madhyam satva (medium psyche) with vishmagni (disturbed agni), avara vyayama shakti (weak physical capacity) and of madhyam vaya (adult). She presented vikrati in rasa, rakta, mamasa, meda with daurblaya (weakness).

Clinical findings: Integumentary system (Table 1)

Table 1: Morphology and clinical findings in dermatological examination

Site of lesions	Back, arm and groin
Lesion	Epidermal
Distribution	Generalised and symmetrical
Character of lesion	Macules
Number of lesions	Multiple lesions
Color	White
Arrangement	Segmental, diffused
Itching	Absent
Severity	Severe
Superficial sensation on lesion	Normal lesion
Inflammation	Absent
Swelling	Absent
Discharge	Absent

Samprapti ghatak

Dosha - Tridosha
Dushya - Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda
Agni - Jathargnimandhya, Dhatwagnimandhya.
Srotas - Rasavaha, Raktavaha, Mamsavaha and Medovaha
Srotodusti Prakara - Sanga
Rogamarga - Bahya
Udbhava Sthana - Amashaya
Vyakta Sthana - Twacha
Roga swabhava - Chirakari
Sadhyasadhyata - Yapya

Diagnostic Assessment

Subjective criteria - Patient was observed for improvement in hypopigmented patches
Objective criteria - Improvement calculated on the basis of VASI score.

Timeline: The detailed timeline of the present case is mentioned in Table 2.

Table 2: Timeline of the Ayurveda treatment

Date and Day	Medication	Dose Frequency and Indication	Duration	Observations and Results
Day 1 - 1st visit (20/07/2023) Before treatment	Aarogyavardhini Vati	1Tab Thrice Daily, with water after food	30 days	Hypopigmented lesion over back, arm and groin region. VASI Score - 22.95
	Navayas lauha	1Tab Twice Daily, with water after food		
	Kaishor guggulu	2Tab Thrice Daily, with water after food		
	Khadirarisht	20ml Twice Daily, with equal amount of water after food		
Day 31 - 2nd visit (20/08/2024)	Same treatment was followed	Same	30 days	Same as above
Day 61 - 3rd visit (21/09/2024)	Same treatment was followed	Same	30 days	Same as above
Day 91 - 4th visit (20/10/2024)	Shashilekha vati	1Tab Thrice Daily, with water after food	30 days	Same as above
	Navayas lauha	1Tab Twice Daily, with water after food		
	Kaishor guggulu	2Tab Thrice Daily, with water after food		
	Khadirarisht	20ml Twice Daily, with equal amount of water after food		
Day 121 to day 239 5th visit to 8th visit	Same treatment was followed	Same	120 Days	Mild improvement was observed in the lesions.
Day 240 to till now - 9th visit (16/03/2024)	Shashilekha vati	1Tab Thrice Daily, with water after food	15 days	Dark pigmentation over prior whitish patches observed. VASI Score - 6.75
	Navayas Lauha	1Tab Twice Daily, with water after food		
	Khadirarisht	20ml Twice Daily, with equal amount of water after food		

Diet and lifestyle modification: The patient was advised to consume sprouted black grams three times a week, drink water from a copper bottle, avoid an incompatible diet (like milk with fruits, sour fruits, fish or nonveg; packed food, consumption of hot and cold items alternatively etc.) and work on reducing stressful conditions.

Therapeutic Intervention: After obtaining written informed consent from the patient, she was provided with Ayurvedic medication for 240 days with a regular interval of 30 days. [Table 2] The follow-up was done after 15 days of the completion of the treatment.

RESULTS

VASI Score before and after treatment (Table 3)
Improvement in skin lesions as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

$$VASI = \Sigma\{\text{Hand units}\} \times \{\text{Residual Depigmentation}\}$$

Table 3: Result of VASI Score in Various body parts

Body parts	Before treatment	After treatment
Face and neck	0	0
Trunk (front)	0	0
Trunk (back)	18×0.9	18×0.25
Upper extremity	6×0.75	6×0.25
Lower extremity	3×0.75	3×0.25
Total	22.95	6.75

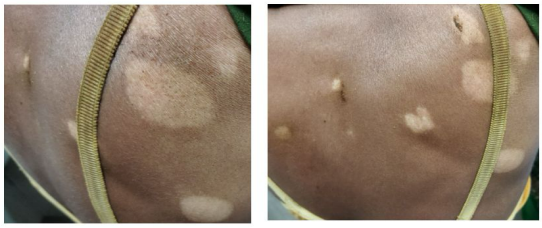

Figure 1: Before Treatment

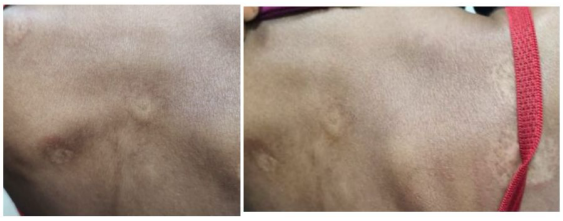

Figure 2: After Treatment

DISCUSSION

Vitiligo, or Shwitra, can be effectively managed through Ayurveda by focusing on balancing the doshas, purifying the blood, and rejuvenating the skin to encourage pigmentation. Early intervention often leads to more favorable outcomes. Rakta dushti hara and kushthagna effects, as well as srotoshodhaka and varnprasadan properties, are highly effective in the treatment of shwitra (~vitiligo).

The ingredients of Arogyavardhini Vati are Shuddha Parada (herbal purified mercury), Shuddha Gandhak (herbal purified sulphur), Loha Bhasma (ash prepared from iron), Abhraka Bhasma (purified and processed mica), Tamra Bhasma (ash prepared from copper), Triphala (Haritaki, Vibhitaki, Amalaki), Shilajatu (mineral pitch), Guggulu (gum resin), Chitrak Moola, Katuki, Juice extract of Neemba leaf. It promotes balance and maintains the liver functions as well as healthy digestive system. It does the Shoshana of different excess Snigdha Dravyas present in body. It also does the Pachana of Drava and Kleda and does the Rakta Vardhana. It has several potential uses for skin health. It is Raktashodhaka, Twachya which ultimately improves skin health.[6]

Navayas Lauha[8,9] contains ingredients with Deepan and Pachana properties, making it particularly effective for skin diseases. Its use promotes liver function and acts as a blood purifier, aiding in the cleansing of blood and tissues, which is advantageous for skin health. Additionally, it supports overall skin vitality by supplying essential nutrients. Iron plays a key role in both oxidative stress and photo induced skin damage, which is found very useful in this case.[10]

Kaishor Guggulu is recognized for its properties as a Kushtaghna (beneficial for skin diseases) and Vataraktha nashaka (reducing vata-related disorders).[11,12] It is commonly used for its anti-allergic, antimicrobial, and blood-cleansing effects. This formulation is particularly effective for joint disorders, including gouty arthritis, and various skin conditions. Additionally, it acts as an anti-aging agent, promotes skin health, and serves as a natural blood purifier. It can also support overall health for conditions such as diabetes and skin disorders.[13]

Khadirarishta is primarily composed of Khadira extract (Acacia Catechu), known for its properties in immune modulation, blood purification, astringency, anti-allergy, and antibacterial effects.[14,15] This Ayurvedic polyherbal formulation is rich in potent antioxidants that combat free radicals and eliminate toxins from the body, making it beneficial for treating various skin diseases. Its Shothahara (anti-inflammatory), Krimighana (antimicrobial), and Shodhana (purifying) qualities help cleanse the blood and alleviate multiple skin conditions. Research indicates that it can effectively treat vitiligo without adversely affecting other bodily systems or organs. Khadirarishta is considered one of the most effective formulations for addressing skin issues, particularly in relation to Kushtha roga.[16]

Shashilekha Vati is a well-known formulation detailed in the Yogaratnakara for managing Shwitra (vitiligo).[17] This formulation comprises ingredients such as Shuddha Parada (processed mercury), Shuddha Gandhaka (processed sulfur), Shuddha Tamra (processed copper), and Bakuchi decoction, among others. Bakuchi is mentioned in the classical texts for pigmentation. It stimulates melanocytes for the production of melanin.[18] Parada serves as a catalyst, while Gandhaka is highly regarded for treating skin disorders. Its sharp, penetrating properties and hot potency enable Gandhaka to swiftly enter the body's channels, effectively clearing any obstructions.

CONCLUSION

The patient with vitiligo underwent treatment with shaman chikitsa (palliative treatment), an Ayurvedic approach, which includes dietary and lifestyle modifications, along with psychological counseling. Further structured clinical studies are necessary to provide evidence supporting the use of Ayurvedic approaches in managing Shwitra.

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