



## Research Article

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### KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE OF VARMAM THERAPY AMONG SIDDHA PHYSICIANS IN TIRUNELVELI AND KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

A.Deexit Thiriveni <sup>1\*</sup>, R.Vanamamalai <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PG Scholar, Department of PG Varma Maruthuvam, Government Siddha Medical College, Palayamkottai, Tamilnadu, India

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer Grade II, Department of PG Varma Maruthuvam, Government Siddha Medical College, Palayamkottai, Tamilnadu, India

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\*Corresponding author

E-mail: dr.deexitthiriveni@gmail.com

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#### ABSTRACT

Varmam is a branch of Siddha medicine, which is widely used in South India, particularly in Tamilnadu. Varmam points are key locations in the body that stores energy and are responsible for regulating all bodily functions as well as supplying essential energy to different parts of the body. Varmam point manipulation can provide immediate relief for many ailments. Guru-Sishya (master and disciple) method is used in Varmam practice and instruction. Different schools of thought are prevailing among the siddha practitioners regarding varmam. A unique approach was used by each guru in treatment. Standardization is not done for the documentation and compilation of available various therapeutic approaches. This study is to document the treatment approaches of Varmam used by Siddha doctors in the districts of Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari. Semi-structured questionnaires were used in face-to-face interviews to collect the data. The participant took twenty minutes to complete the 30 questions on the questionnaire and provided the written consent document. This study suggests that the various guru-disciple training systems used by Siddha practitioners resulted in differing ways to treat the illnesses through the Varmam. Regarding the name and Varmam points, there are a lot of disputes among Siddha physicians. Future research on standardizing Varmam point locations will benefit from the compilation and documentation of these points used by Siddha practitioners of various guru-disciple approaches.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, documentation, cross sectional study, Varmam, Siddha.

#### INTRODUCTION

Siddha Medicine is an ancient system of medicine that was developed by the renowned experts known as Siddhars. The siddha system has equal emphasis on healthy body, peaceful mind and spiritual purity. Because of this, it differs from all other medical systems<sup>1</sup>. There are 32 aga marundhu (internal medicines) and 32 pura marundhu (external medicines) in the Siddha medical system<sup>2</sup>. Varmam is the ancient unique Siddha therapy widely used in South India, particularly in Tamilnadu<sup>3</sup>. Varmam therapy involves "Vital energy," which is the fundamental component of the cosmos and all life. The primary energy that comes from the parents is known as vaasi (energy). It has full responsibility for the foetus whole intrauterine life<sup>4</sup>. Life energy flows continuously along a specific pathway in people. This energy stores in a specific point in our body called Varmam points<sup>5</sup>. Manipulation of these Varmam points is a simple, non-invasive, and drugless method for treating pain and many ailments. This therapy takes less time and has long-lasting effects when administered consistently<sup>6</sup>. It is best to perform Varma Kalai under the supervision of the Aasan (Guru). Since it is a traditional art, expertise can only be attained through extensive practice and immense knowledge. Only few Aasan were there to teach varmam in southern part of Tamilnadu. They impart knowledge to people who meet all their requirements to become his Seedan (sishya). A Seedan should be trained for 12 years under the guidance of the guru to gain a brief knowledge about Varmam<sup>7</sup>. Varmam is the relationship between a teacher and student, or guru-sishya. Every Varmam Aasan had a different approach to treating patients. Hence, different school of thought

about varmam were prevailing among Siddha practitioners. In this modern world, scientific validation of each Varmam point is mandatory to standardize Varmam therapy. Every school of thoughts of Varmam should be considered a treasure and before it gets faded, it should be collected and compiled. So, this study is the prior step in the documentation of Varmam points used by Siddha practitioners in Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari district.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Study design:** A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among the Siddha physicians in and around Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari district, Tamilnadu, India.

**Study participants:** A total of 100 Siddha physicians who have completed the Bachelor of Siddha medicine (BSMS) was included in the study. Traditional practitioners, UG Siddha students and Siddha interns were excluded from the study.

**Sampling and duration of the study:** The samples were selected with convenient sampling. This study was completed in 4 months.

**Data collection:** Data collection was carried out by semi structured questionnaire consists of socio demographic details (Age, sex, gender, education) and Varmam practice – Duration, techniques, frequency of treatment and other details of Varmam practices. Data was collected by face-to-face manner with Siddha graduates through a semi-structured questionnaire in Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts. Each and every participant was clearly informed about the study prior to the survey. The study

proceeded after getting consent from the participants. The participants were instructed about the study in their own local language. The study was carried out as per International Conference of Harmonization - Good Clinical Practices Guidelines.<sup>8</sup>

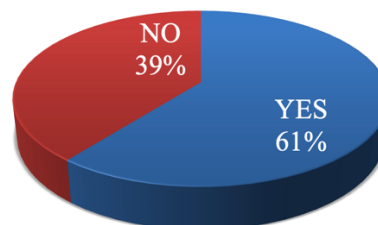
**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

A total of 100 Siddha physicians in Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari were interviewed for 4 months in this cross-sectional study. Basic details of varmam practitioners are shown in Table 1. Among 100 Siddha physicians, 42 participants were between the age group of 23-30 years, 29 participants were between the age group of 31-40 years, 15 participants were between the age group of 41-50 years and 14 participants were above the age group of 51 years. 58% of participants were female Siddha physicians and 42% were male Siddha physicians. Most of the studies revealed that the male physicians are commonly practicing the varmam than the female physicians<sup>9</sup>. But in this study female physicians are more in number. 30 participants with 2 to 10 years of varmam experience while 16 participants with the experience of 11 to 20 years. The person can attain mastery in it only after a long practice and by the correct guidance<sup>10</sup>. The Varmam science is explained in the "Fundamentals of Varma Medicine," which consists of about 160 classical texts in Tamil language. This Varmam science is practiced and taught rigorously with the master and disciple manner<sup>11</sup>. Hence, among 100 participants, 34 participants learnt varmam from the Varma Aasan only.

The term "Varmam ilakku murai" refers to the treatment of afflicted varmam points, which involves both external and internal medication administration as well as finger manipulation.<sup>12</sup> Many of the Varma Aasan kept their treatment methodologies as a secret. Few of the Varma Aasan only explained all the details of practicing methods. Among 100 participants, 66 were Varmam practicing participants. Among 66 participants, 40 participants were prescribing Varmam internal medicines. Among 40 participants, 20 participants specified the names of medicines they used. Among 20 participants, 5 participants were preparing the varmam internal medicines on their own and other participants purchased these medicines through GMP certified pharmaceuticals and from some traditional practitioners. A total of 61% of Varmam practicing participants prescribing Varmam internal medicines with Varmam therapy, 39% of Varmam practicing participants are not prescribing Varmam internal medicines with Varmam therapy mentioned in Figure 1. Mostly used varmam internal medicines are kaya thirumeni thailam, kayarajanga thailam kayasarvanga thailam, varma kudineer and varma kanji shown in Table 2.

Figure 2 showed that the 42 participants were advising Varmam therapy for paediatric cases. Cerebral palsy (30%), autism (27%)

and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (13%) are most effectively treated with both varmam therapy and internal medicines (Figure 3). Varmam therapy shows improvement in the quality of life of Sirakambavatham (Cerebral palsy) and manthasanni (autism) affected children<sup>13,14</sup>. Adangal, thadaval and pulligal are the manipulating methods in varmam therapy. But most of the people followed the mixed (54%) method during manipulation shown in Figure 4. Combined therapy of Siddha oral medications along with varmam therapy are the excellent treatment method and provide immediate relief from many chronic diseases. Table 3 showed the varmam points for many diseases. Among 66 participants, 62 participants were using varmam therapy for cervical spondylosis, 58 participants for lumbar spondylosis, 54 participants for periarthritis, 51 participants for migraine, 48 participants for sinusitis, 44 participants for hemiplegia, and 28 participants for gynecological and 6 participants for epilepsy with internal medications (Figure 5). Figure 6 showed the kaakattavarmam (41%) and valai mudindha varmam (31%) are predominantly done for cervical spondylosis by many practitioners<sup>15,16</sup>. Figure 7 showed the Nangana poottu (50%) and pancha mudichu (34%) are mostly done for lumbar spondylosis<sup>17</sup>. The varmam points manipulated to treat the periarthritis showed in Figure 8 are puja varmam (40%), sippi varmam (33%) and sippi keezh varmam (27%) by more practitioners<sup>18,19</sup>. Migraine can be treated by the thilartha varmam (44%), kothandaadangal (29%) and poigai varmam (27%) showed in Figure 9. Varmam therapy is one of the special treatments that is found to be effective in neurological and musculoskeletal disorders<sup>20</sup>. In this study, the 22 participants said that they treated emergency conditions using Varmam therapy shown in figure 10. Emergency conditions such as syncope (32%) and epilepsy (27%) can be treated by varmam therapy. Siddha has a holistic approach that comprehensively promotes mind-body healing. The major goals are not only the treatment but also the prevention of severity and rejuvenation<sup>21</sup>.



**Figure 1: Varmam internal medicines prescribed by the varmam practicing participants**

**Table 1: Basic details of participants**

Basic details of participants	Variables	Percentage
Age	23 – 30 years	42
	31 – 40 years	29
	41 – 50 years	15
	Above 51 years	14
Gender	Male	42
	Female	58
Experience in Varmam therapy	1 year	8
	2 – 10 years	30
	11 – 20 years	16
	Above 21 years	12
Learning of Varmam therapy	Siddha college	21
	Hereditary	5
	Aasan	34

	Certified course	6
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Table 2: List of Varmam internal medicines prescribed by the Varmam practicing participants

Form of medicines	Name of the Varmam medicines	Use report (UR)
Thylam	KayarajangaThylam	5
	MahaKayarajangaThylam	1
	KayathirumeniThylam	5
	MurivuThylam	1
	KayasavangaThylam	4
	VarmamThylam	1
	IynthennaiThylam	1
	EzhuthanipoondaThylam	1
	ChitramuttiThylam	1
	MathipurathiThylam	1
	Vasavuennai	1
Kudineer	VarmamKudineer	6
	KurunthotiKudineer	2
	ChukkuKudineer	2
	ValiyangadiKudineer	2
	PaavuKudineer	1
	DasamoolaKudineer	1
	MilaguverKudineer	1
Nei	VarmamNei	1
	KukkudaNei	1
Legium	VarmamVasathiLegium	2
Kanji	Varmam Kanji	4
	Annapaal Kanji	1
	Chukku Kanji	2
Others	Kozhivattu	1

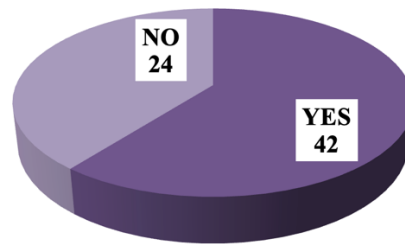


Figure 2: Varmam therapy advised for Paediatric cases by Varmam participants

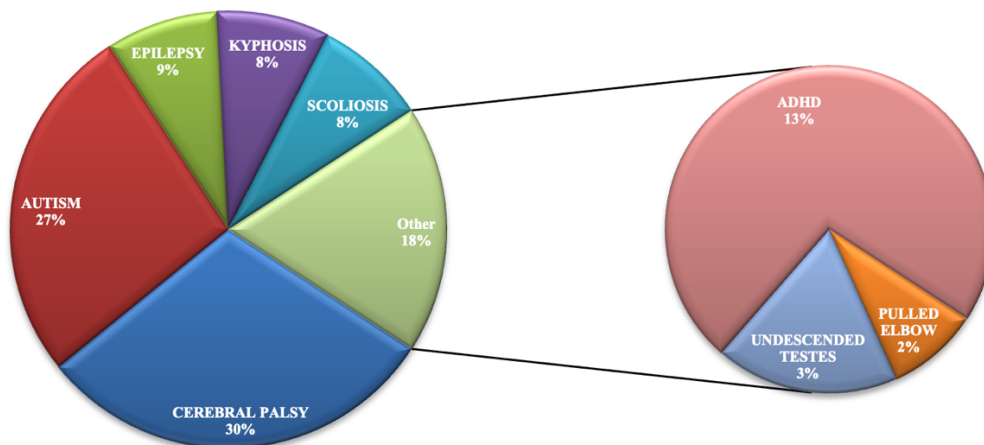


Figure 3: Conditions in Paediatrics treated with varmam therapy by the participants said yes

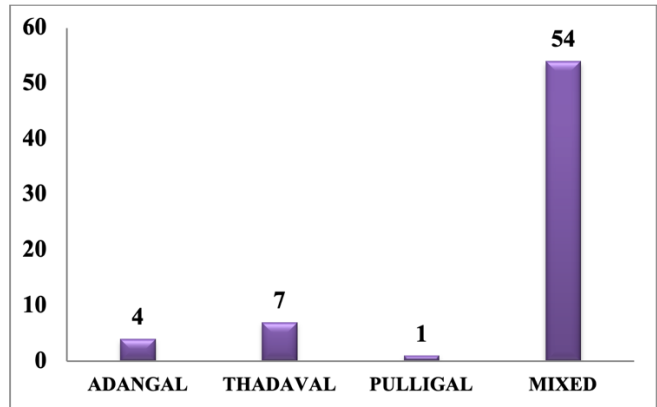


Figure 4: Varmam techniques used by Varmam practicing participants

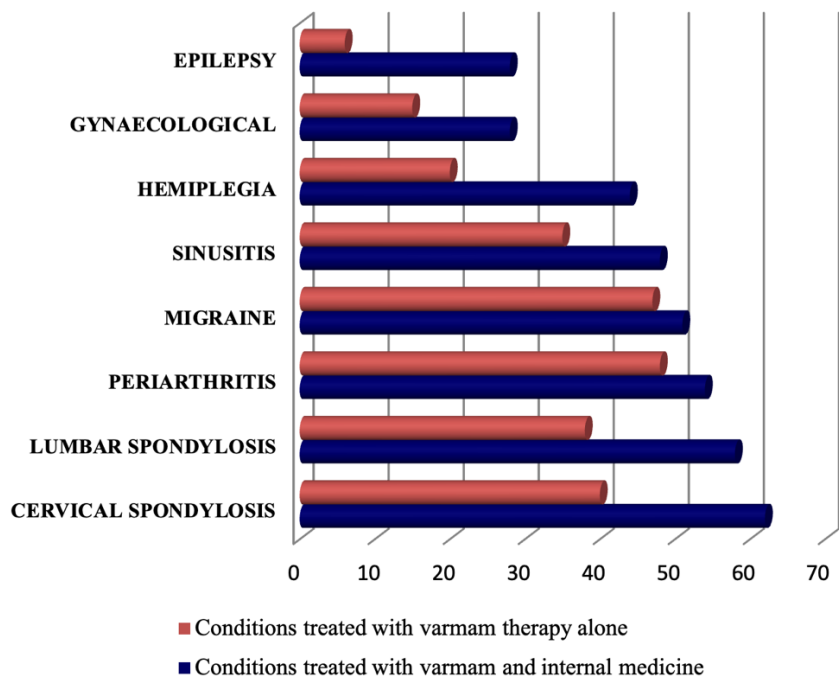


Figure 5: Conditions treated using Varmam therapy with internal medicine and Varmam therapy alone

Distribution of conditions and their commonly used Varmam points

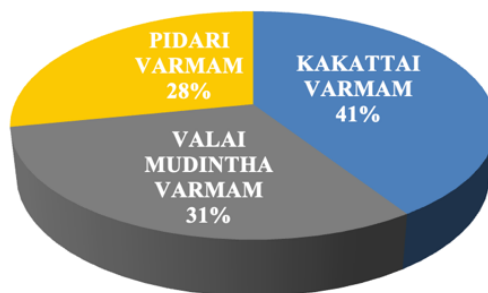


Figure 6: Varmam points for cervical spondylosis

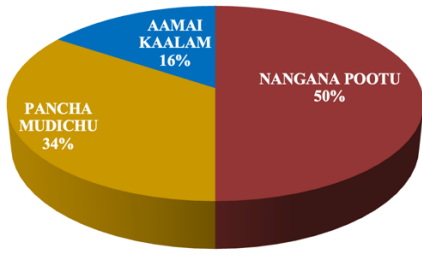


Figure 7: Varma points for lumbar spondylosis

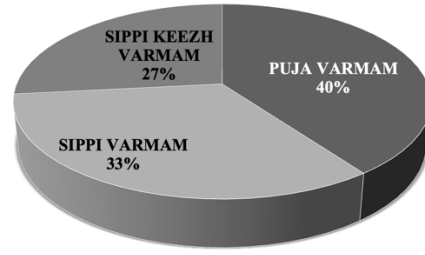


Figure 8: Varma points for periarthritis

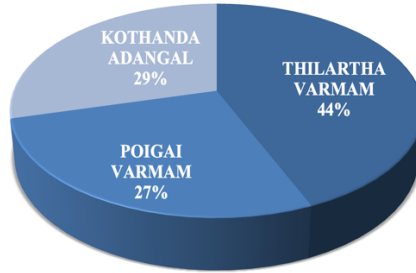


Figure 9: Varma points for migraine

Table 3: List of the Varmam points for the following conditions

Conditions	Varmam Points
Cervical Spondylosis	Theedha Varmam
	Sudothari Varmam
Lumbar Spondylosis	Pathipasupasa Mudichu
	Idampuri
	Valampuri
	Patchnini Varmam
	Amarthadangal
	Poovadangal
Migraine	Manipooraga adangal
	Seeni Kalam
	Annan Kaalam
	Idakalai, Pingalai Pinnal
Osteoarthritis	Gandhi Varmam
	Arumuga Adangal
	Thavalai Varmam
	Naaithalai Varmam
Paraplegia, Quadriplegia	Idamoorthy Varmam
	Thatadangal
Facial Palsy	Sanni Varmam
Hemiplegia	Kanpugaichal
	Ettu Varmam
Menorrhagia	Kothanda Adangal
	Sakthi kooradangal
	Kudukkai Varmam
PCOS	Ayutkaala Pinnal
Eyesight Problem	Kaanthari Naadi
Insomnia	Kothanda Adangal
Gastric Pain	Anna Kaalam

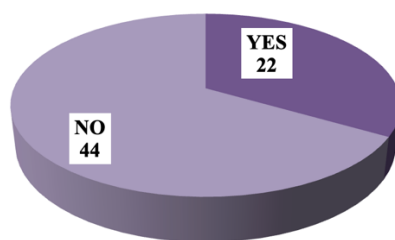


Figure 10: Emergency conditions treated with Varmam therapy

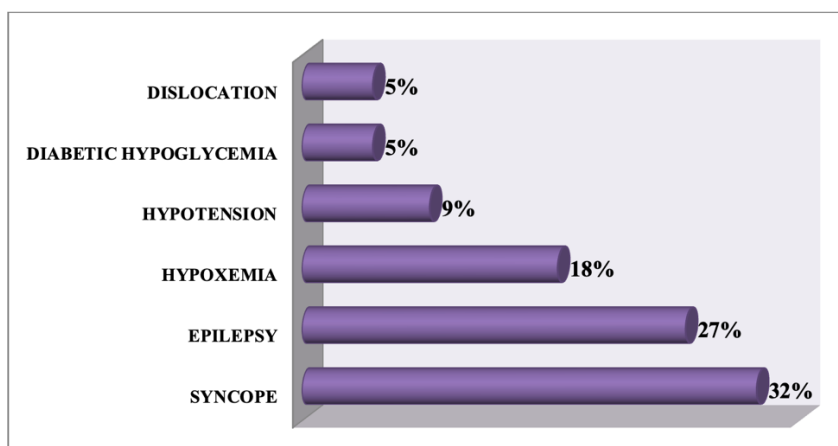


Figure 11: Emergency conditions treated by Varmam therapy

## CONCLUSION

This study clearly shows the different approaches of Varmam therapy manipulation by Siddha practitioners. Each Siddha physician practices Varmam differently according to their Varmam Aasan. Every Varmam point is considered a treasure and the efficacy of each Varmam point should be scientifically validated and documented. The documentation of these approaches will serve as a resource of locations that can provide beneficial pain alleviation for people with many ailments. This will be the preliminary level study and will open the gate for further research leading to standardizing all these points. In future, experimental studies in larger samples are needed. This will help us to create a user guide for the new learners.

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