

Management Of Scorpion Bite Through Ayurveda: A Case Report

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Abstract:

Agadatantra, the branch of toxicology in Ayurveda, refers to various methods of eliminating toxins from the body that arises from animate, inanimate, and artificial poisons. Scorpion stings are a serious health concern in rural areas. In Agadatantra, the symptoms of scorpion sting are explained under Vrischika visha (~scorpion venom poisoning). The main characteristics of scorpion venom poisoning are Vahnivat dahanam (~burning sensation like fire), Kshipram urdhvarohanam (~quick spreading in an upward direction), Danshe ruja tishthati (~pain remains at bite site), Sadyah ati ruk (~instant severe pain), Danshashyavata (~brownish discoloration of bite site), and Dansha toda (~pricking type of pain at bite site). This is a case report of a 34-year-old male, who had an episode of Vrischika damsha (~scorpion bite) and presented to the outpatient department with complaints of severe edema, pain and redness, and itching. The first line of management for scorpion stings is typically symptomatic including strong analgesics, which can be systemic (opiates or paracetamol) or localized (such as a cold compress). In Ayurveda classics, Hinguadi gulika is one of the formulations mentioned in Vrischikavisha prakarana, which has been referred to as the most potent Lepana (~anointment) for scorpion venom poisoning. In comparison to existing conventional treatment modalities, Hinguadi gulika lepana is a very simple and very cost-effective procedure.

Hinguadi gulika was given in combination with Kulakadi kashaya which is widely practiced in all Visha (~poison) conditions. In the present case, Hinguadi gulika and Kulakadi kashayam have shown assuring results in the management of acute scorpion envenomation.

Keywords: Hinguadi gulika, Kulakadi kashaya, Scorpion sting, Vrischika visha

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I. Introduction

Scorpion stings are major public health problems in many underdeveloped tropical and subtropical countries. Scorpions belonging to the Arachnida family are eight-legged arthropods having toxicity more than that of snakes, with a small quantity injected. They are nocturnal predators. When disturbed in their hiding places, they sting promptly and several times. India is most affected with a reported incidence of 0.6%.[1] The annual number of scorpion sting cases exceeds 1.2 million, of these, 3250 may be fatal.[2] From ancient times, poisoning has been an endemic problem in Kerala. Geographical, meteorological, and environmental factors may aid venomous animals in growing rapidly. The risk of being stung by a scorpion increases for those who work in agricultural fields, farm labor, rural areas, migrant populations, and hunters. Mesobuthus tamulus, a variety of scorpions, commonly seen in Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu has reported cases of morbidity and mortality due to this variety of scorpions. Worldwide, there are more than 800 species of scorpion.

Ayurvedic management of Scorpion bite of species, belonging to six families are toxic to humans. In the remaining, non-poisonous scorpion the sting of the genus Heterometrus causes severe pain, mild swelling, redness, and inflammation lasting hours to a few days. The species of scorpions such as Heterometrus kanarensis, Heterometrus keralensis, Heterometrus swammerdami, and Palamneus gravimanus are big in size, produce no systemic manifestation, and are seen in these regions with no reported fatality till date. These varieties of scorpions can be compared with Mandavisha vrischika (~mild poisonous scorpion bite) in Ayurveda, as the envenomation is rather mild and with no known human fatalities. Within the first hour after their sting, there is the formation of maculae or papules at the sting site causing localized pain. The lesion later becomes a purpuric plaque that will necrotize and ulcerate. The amount of venom injected determines the size of the lesion. Swelling is also seen in most cases. Lymphangitis results from the transfer of venom through the lymphatic vessels. Inflammation, edema, and redness of the skin may last for hours to a few days.[3] Even though emergency management is not needed in Manda vrischika visha, without proper management, this may lead to further complications such as ulceration.

II. Patient Information

A 34-year-old male student, without any premorbid illness presented to the outpatient department at 11 am with a history of pain and swelling on the left foot below the lateral malleolus [Figure 1]. An interrogation with the patient revealed the history of a scorpion sting two days back while walking through the house. After six hours, he developed swelling at the sting site associated with mild itching. He followed local home remedies and applied turmeric externally but got no relief. **CLINICAL FINDINGS** On initial evaluation, he was conscious and his Glasgow Coma Scale was 15. The heart rate was 90/min. Blood pressure was 140/80 mm Hg, body temperature was 37.2°C, SpO₂ was 99% on room air, and respiratory rate was 24/min. The neutrophil, lymphocyte, and monocyte ratios were normal, and the eosinophil rate was slightly increased at 6% in complete blood count. Immunoglobulin-E level was 110 g/L (0–100). Other blood profiles, coagulation parameters, and biochemical values were in normal ranges. On physical examination, two puncture wounds were visible near the left foot below the lateral malleolus with extensive swelling and erythema. Upon palpation, the area was warm, firm, and tender, with nonpitting edema.

III. Diagnostic Assessment

The diagnosis was based on the clinical history given by the patient along with the local examination of the patient, which revealed the signs and symptoms of scorpion poisoning as mentioned in Sushruta Samhita. As mentioned in the classics, Vedana (~pain), Daha (~burning sensation), and Damsha sophā (~swelling over the bitten area) are the Lakshanas of Manda vrischika visha.[4]

IV. Therapeutic Intervention

The patient was administered with 90 mL of Kulakadi kashaya (~decoction) and Hinguadi gulika lepana (~anointment) twice daily for five days. The patient was advised to include Pathya aahara (~wholesome diet) such as Shashtika rice (~brown rice), Ksheera (~milk), Ghrita (~ghee), Saindhava (~rock salt), Dadima (*Punica granatum* Linn.), and Avidahi anna (~food that causes burning sensation) in his diet, once a time in a day. He was also advised to avoid a diet predominant with Amla (~sour), Lavana (~salt), Viruddha (~incompatible food), and Karma (~activities) that aggravates Vata.

V. Follow-Up And Outcome

Within five days, the patient had a noticeable improvement in the symptoms such as swelling and itching. He was instructed to take the internal medicine for further seven days to eliminate poison completely from the body while external medication was stopped.

VI. Discussion:

Vrischika damsha is characterized by extreme cutting and excruciating pain. Acharyas have mentioned Vrischika thulya vedana (~pain similar to scorpion bite) in many contexts such as Amavata (~rheumatism)[5] and Pachyamana lakshana of Sopha (~edema)[6] to explain the severity of pain which is the most cardinal feature of Vrischika damsa. The poison of the scorpion is penetrating, causing a burning sensation in the beginning, spreading upwards quickly, then getting stabilized at the site of the bite.[7] The area of the sting is presented with a single sting mark usually characterized by erythema, mild edema, and itching. Tingling sensation on the lips and tongue, sweating, dryness of mouth, the local rise of temperature, nausea, and giddiness are the associated symptoms. Clinically, it is seen that Vrana (~ulcer) is the most common Upadrava (~complication) of Vrischika visha. While analyzing the signs, Teevra ruja (~excruciating pain) is the first manifested symptom. Scorpion bite is Vata predominant in nature, and hence, there will be much severe pain due to the Rooksha (~dryness), Sookshma (~minuteness/ penetrating), and Chala (~mobility) nature of Vata. Due to Vyavayi (~substances with quick spread even without digestion), Vikasi (~property of substance resulting in quick spread and action), and Ashu (~fast acting) guna of Vrischika visha, symptoms will be manifested very quickly. Considering the signs and symptoms, Vrischika damsa is Vatadhika at the time of the bite. This stage is the Paitika stage, and at the end, there will be Kaphaja symptoms such as Kandu (~itching). Hinguadi gulika contains Hingu (*Ferula asafetida* Bioss), Haritala (yellow orpiment), and Matulunga rasa (*Citrus medica* L.).[8,9] This Gulika is explained as Paramoushadha (~best medicine) for Vrischika visha and used as Lepana for five days. The ingredients of this Yoga have a major role in relieving the severe pain of Vrischika visha. Visha haratwa property is present in Hingu as well as Haritala. Hingu possesses Shoolahara (~analgesic) property which reduces the Teevra ruja. Sthambana (~check any flow through or out of the body) property of Hingu prevents the spread of Visha to deeper Dhatus (~major structural components of the body).[10] Anti-nociceptive effect of Hingu has been proved due to the presence of ferulic acid and its anti-inflammatory action helps in reducing the associated inflammatory signs such as redness and burning sensation and edema.[11] Acharya Charaka quoted Hingu as the best among Chedaniya (~detachment of vitiated Dosha) as well as Deepaniya drugs.[12] Deepana pachanadi gunas are helpful in enhancing the potency of Bhrajaka

pitta which in turn enhances the easy percutaneous absorption of the drug thus facilitating drug action. Haritala is described as Sthavara visha (~plant poison) the subgroup of Dhatuvisha (earthen- origin poison).[13] As per our classics, Sthavara visha can counter the poisonous effect of Jangama visha (~animal poison),[14] thus having a significant role in the management of Vrischika visha. The Vyavayi (~fast pervading), Teekshna (~sharpness), Laghu, and Ashukaritwa property of Haritala helps in getting the immediate result.

Haritala enhances the Shoolaharatwa guna of Hingu by its Yogavahitwa guna (~carrier of properties), while Sookshma (~minuteness) guna enhances the penetrating power of the Lepana so that it can spread the whole body. Rakta prasadana (~enhancing blood quality) property of Matulunga possibly checks the poison fraction present in the blood.[15] All the drugs in this formulation are Ushna veerya (~hot potency) and the medium of Lepana is also Ushna. Ushna veerya (~hot potency) helps in relieving the Teevra rujatwa quickly. Kulakadi kashaya is explained in Visarpa prakarana (~erysipelas) in Sahasra yoga and is indicated in Jwara (~fever), Chardi (~vomiting), Visha (~poisoning), Daha (~burning sensation), Bhranti (~delirium), Trishna (~thirst), and Ruja (~pain).[16] It is a combination of nine drugs, namely Patola (*Trichosanthes dioica* Roxb.), Vasa (*Adathoda vasica* [L.] Nees), Brihati (*Solanum indicum* L.), Nimba (*Azadirachta indica* A. Juss.), Katuki (*Picrorhiza kurroa* Royle ex. Benth.), Bibhitaki [*Terminalia bellerica* (Gaertn.) Roxb.], Amalaki (*Embellica officinalis* Gaertn.), Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula* Retz.), and Chandana (*Santalum album* L.). Guggulu [*Commiphora wightii* (Arn.) Bhandari] is used as the Prakshepa churna. The Yoga is mainly Tikta, Kashaya rasa (~bitter and astringent in taste), Katu vipaka (~pungent biotransformed rasa), and Sheeta veerya (~cold potency). Tikta rasa is having Vishaghna (~antitoxic) property. The Yoga is having Jwarahara (~pacifying fever) Visha hara and Daha trishna hara (~pacifying burning sensation and thirst) properties. Since the Vrischika damsha is having Vata pitta guna, the Kashaya is suitable. The drug Chandana possess Rakta prasadana property. Drugs in the Triphala possess Rasayana (~rejuvenation) and Vishahara property[17] which aids in the rejuvenation of the impaired tissue and gives strength to that particular site through its antioxidant property.

VII. Conclusion

Hinguadi gulika showed promising results in relieving the cardinal signs and symptoms of Vrischika damsa, especially pain, burning sensation, and itching. It can be used as an emergency medicine in relieving pain, whereas the internal medicine Kulakdi kashaya helps in relieving the poisonous effect of Vrischika visha. The combination has shown immediate action in relieving the signs and symptoms of Vrischika visha. These formulations are easily available and thus can be used in all such manifestations associated with Visha dansha.

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