Rajonivruti (Menopause) - Ayurvedic point of view
Himangi V. Baldaniya
Associate Professor, Department of Prasuti Tantra and Stri Roga, Govt. Akhandanand Ayurveda College, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India.

ABSTRACT

Men and women reach old age with different prospects for older age. Aging is a real challenge for women. Life span of every individual is divided into three Avastha (stages) as Bala, Madhya and Vriddha in our classics. Kapha, Pitta and Vata Dosha dominate Bala, Madhya and Vriddhavastha respectively. This phase of life is more vulnerable for women, as along with aging, she suffers from inevitable scars of menopause. With increasing life expectancy, women spend one third of her lifetime under postmenopausal period. Menopause is a natural process in which menstruation definitively ceases, signalling the end of a woman’s reproductive life and it’s a natural process, not an illness, but a variety of disturbing symptoms can appear during this transition. Menopause usually occurs around the average age of 45. In women, reproductive period is controlled by Pitta Dosha. In Vriddhavastha, where Rajonivruti is a major event, Vata is the leading Dosha. In modern context, estrogen governs the reproductive period and its deficiency manifests as menopause. Hence, change in level of hormones marks puberty and menopause, where as in Ayurvedic classics change in status of Dosha and Dhatu marks onset of Raja and Rajonivruti. Rajonivruti is a marker of aging in women.

Key words: Rajonivruti, Dosha, Dhatu, Aging, Menopause.

INTRODUCTION

Life span of every individual is divided into three stages as Bala, Madhya and Vriddha in our classics. For women, her madhyavastha has again sub divided in Vrudhi, Youvan, Sampurnata, Hani.[1] These sub divisions indicate the puberty, beginning and end of reproductive period. Also, during lifetime, all the physiological and psychological changes are attributed to status of Dhatu and Doshas in the body.

Kapha, Pitta and Vata Dosha dominate Bala, Madhya and Vriddhavastha respectively. Ojas, Bala, Veerya, Indriya and Dhatu Paripurnata are important factors for sustaining vitality. Acharya Sushruta mention that these factors attain Sampurnata till 40 years of age and after that till 70 years of life span of a person, there is quality and quantity wise gradual decline in all these factors.[2]

Dominant Dosha of particular stage of life governs all the functions of body, also these dominating Dosha are responsible for maximum number of diseases occurring in Bala, Madhym and Vriddhavastha. For eg. In Balyavastha, Kaphaja Vyadhi, in Madhyamawastha - Pittaja Vikara and in Jarawastha - Vata Vyadhi will be prevailing in majority.[3]

Rajah - which can be taken as menstruation in present context, is considered as Updhatu of Rasa Dhatu in classics.[4]

The onset or Rajah is directly related with the status of Dhatu and all the Acharyas give average age of menarche as 12 years. By this age certain physiological changes at the level of Dosha and Dhatu takes place and culminate in the manifestations of menstruation. Dhatu Paripurnata manifests as Raja Darshana in women and marks the beginning of reproductive life.
During this period of her life, women attain complete maturity and certain physical characteristics of womanhood are attained.

Table 1: Division of life span of women with status of Dosha and Dhatu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childhood</td>
<td>Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upto 16 yrs</td>
<td>Bala - 10yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumari - 10-12yrs</td>
<td>Kumari - 10-12yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajomati - 12-16yrs</td>
<td>Rajomati - 12-16yrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle Age</th>
<th>Middle Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vriddhi - 16yrs</td>
<td>Yuvati - 16-40yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuva - 20-30 Or 34yrs</td>
<td>Proudhra - 40-50yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhatu maturity - 30 -40 or 60 yrs</td>
<td>Vruddha - 50 yrs onward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of decline (shaypal) only Sushrut a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old age</th>
<th>Old age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vruddha 55yrs up</td>
<td>V+++,P &amp; K+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the reproductive phase of her life is governed by Pitta Dosha along with Kapha in the beginning and Vata Dosha in latter stage; any imbalance in this governing Dosha will lead to abnormalities. This can be explained in terms of menstrual irregularities, failure to conceive and early menopause.

Rajonivrutti (Menopause)

Menopause is defined as the cessation of ovarian function, resulting in permanent amenorrhea. The diagnosis of menopause is retrospective following a period of amenorrhea for 12 months or 6 months.

In clinical practice, the term menopause indicates the period of time during which spontaneous menstruation normally ceases. It is characterized endocrinologically by evidence of decreasing ovarian activity, biologically by decreasing fertility and clinically by alterations in menstrual cycles and by a variety of symptoms.

World Health Organisation suggested following definitions.[6]

Menopause - The menopause should be defined as the permanent cessation of menstruation resulting from the loss of ovarian follicular activity.

Perimenopause - The perimenopause should be used to include the period immediately prior to the menopause with endocrinological, biological and clinical features approaching menopause and at least the first year after the menopause. It is indicated by a change in the pattern of menstruation with increased or reduced menstrual intervals or both. This usually lasts for 3 -5 years or can be relatively sudden.

Postmenopause - The postmenopause should be defined as dating from the menopause, although it cannot be determined until after a period of 12 months of spontaneous amenorrhea has been observed.

Other definitions includes,

Climacteric - Derived from greek word. Means a step of a stair. Climacteric is the physiological period during which there is regression in ovarian function which may start two to three years before menopause.

Menopausal transition - The years prior to menopause that encompass the change from normal ovulatory cycles to cessation of menses. The term climacteric and menopause are used interchangeably in practice.

In women, reproductive period is controlled by Pitta Dosha. In modern context, estrogen governs the reproductive period and its deficiency manifests as menopause. Hence, change in level of hormones marks puberty and menopause, where as in our classics change in status of Dosa and Dhatu marks onset of Raja and Rajonivritti. Rajonivritti is a marker of aging in women. In Ayurveda classics, it is mentioned under normal physiology.
Etymology

The term ‘Rajonivritti’ is derived from Rajah + Nivritti meaning cessation of Artava Pravritti. Rajah is taken as Artava i.e. menstrual blood. Artava along with Stanya is mentioned as Upadhatu of Rasa Dhatu.

Rajonivritti Kala

The age of onset of menstruation and its cessation is mentioned uniformly by all Acharyas. 50 years is mentioned as the age when there is Kshaya of Artava due to Kshaya of all Dhatus in Jara Awastha. This age of Rajonivritti is classified between Praudhayawastha and Vriddhayawastha in the division of life span of women,[7] Arundutta while commenting on Ashtanga Hridaya opined that there might be variation in the age of onset and cessation of Artava. The reason behind this variation can be Ahara, Vihara and environment.

According to Morden Medical science, the mean age of menarche has been falling, and it has been proposed that the age of menopause has increased (by 5 years) over the last 100 years, but there is no strong evidence to support this. Some reports from Aristotle, Hippocrates and Roman authors indicate that 2000 years ago, women entered the menopause in their early 40s.[8]

The average age of menopause is usually around 50 years, with limits between 45 and 55.[9]

Nidana of Rajonivritti

Rajonivritti is not mentioned as disease in Ayurveda; hence Nidana Panchaka of Rajonivritti is not available in ayurvedic classics. Yet it can be considered under Swabhava Bala Pravritti Vyadhi. Acharya Sushruta has mentioned a group of naturally occurring diseases under the heading of Swabhavabala Pravritta includes Kshudha (Hunger); Pipasa (Thirst), Nidra (Sleep), Jara (Aging) and Mrityu (Death)[10] which occurs during Jarawastha. Other factors related with this are Kala, Vayu, Karma, Dhatushaya and Abhigata. Kala is a factor responsible for Kshaya and Vriddhi,[11] as well as it is a cause of Bala, Taruna and Vridhdhawastha. As mentioned earlier, Jarawastha is a span of life, which is dominant of Vata Dosha. Vata Dosha is responsible for Kshaya of all Dhatus. This generalized Dhatus Kshaya causes Kshaya of all Updhatus, hence leading to Artava Kshaya i.e. Rajonivritti. Karma and Abhigata (Injury) spacially Artavva has Srotorodha[12] can lead to Akalaja Rajonivritti. Certain dietary factors and life styles causing vitiation of Vata Dosha can lead to Akala Jara and in turn Akalaja Rajonivritti.

Types Of Rajonivritti

1. Kalaja
2. Akalaja

Rajonivritti, which occurs as per Svabhava and Kala, is timely, at probable age of 50, is Kalaja Rajonivritti. Cause of Akalaja Rajonivritti is as stated above.

Probabale Samprapti of Rajonivritti

Rajonivritti occurs at Sandhi Kala of Praudhayawastha and Jarawastha, where Vata starts overpowering Pitta Dosha and leads to Kshaya of all Dhatus. Gradual decline of all Dhatus occurring in Jarawastha is a natural process. Svabhava, Jara, Vayu and Karma act as Nidana as previously mentioned for pathogenesis of Rajonivritti. Vata Dosha is the major factor contributing in Kshaya of all Dhatus. Vata Dosha manifests all the symptoms by its Ruksha, Khara, Chala etc. properties. During Praudhayawastha, Pitta Dosha is also provoked along with Vata, hence symptoms of Pitta Vridddhi are also present along with Vata.

Samprapti Ghataka

Dosha: Vatapitta.

Dushya : Sapta Dhatu Including Udhatu Artava.

Agni: Jathargni Vishamta / Dhatvagni Vishamata.

Srotas : Rasavaha, Raktavaha, Artavavaha.

Lakshana of Rajonivritti

Doshaja Lakshana

Because of increased Ruksha, Laghu, Khara etc. Guna of Vata Dosha, it manifests certain symptoms of Vata Vridddhi along with Kopha Kshaya Lakshanas, because of its decreased Guru, Snigdha and Drava Guna. Pitta is also increased by vitiated Vata in early stage of Rajonivritti. Few of this Doshaja Lakshanas as...
observed in a women undergoing Rajonivritti and beyond Rajonivritti are as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vata Lakshana</th>
<th>Pittaja Lakshana</th>
<th>Kaphaja Lakshana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balakshaya</td>
<td>Daha</td>
<td>Hrid dravatva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandhivedana</td>
<td>Trisha</td>
<td>Twak rukshata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katishula</td>
<td>Mutradaha</td>
<td>Bhrama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhmana</td>
<td>Ushnaanubhuti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atopa</td>
<td>Swedahikyata</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vibandha</td>
<td>Glani</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anidra</td>
<td>Yonivedana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirah shula</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasta pada supti</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hrida spandana adhikya</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dhatukshayaja Lakshana

Decline in quality and quantity of all Dhatu is a major event of aging and is mentioned by all acharyas. Individual Dhatu Kshaya Lakshana are as follows.[13]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rasayana</th>
<th>Rakta Kshaya</th>
<th>Mamsa Kshaya</th>
<th>Meda Kshaya</th>
<th>Asthi Kshaya</th>
<th>Majja Kshaya</th>
<th>Shukra Kshaya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shabd Asahatva</td>
<td>Twak Rukshata</td>
<td>Sphikaganda di Shushkata</td>
<td>Anga Rukshata</td>
<td>Asthi Toda</td>
<td>Asthi Saushirya</td>
<td>Yoni Veda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hrid Dravatva</td>
<td>Sira Shaitthilya</td>
<td>Toda</td>
<td>Shrama</td>
<td>Danta Naka Kesha Rukshata /Shat</td>
<td>Asthi Toda</td>
<td>Shrama</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sadhyasadhya of Rajonivritti

As Rajonivritti is categorized under Svabhavika Vyadhi, according to Acharya Caraka, ‘Svabhavo Nishpratikriyaha’ i.e. by nature they are incurable. But the disease manifests again if the treatment is discontinued. Thus the Svabhavika diseases are Yapya in nature. Chakrapani while commenting on the word ‘Nishpratikriya’ says that these diseases cannot be managed with any treatment other than Rasayana.[14]

Chikitsa of Rajonivritti Janya Lakshana (Menopausal Syndrome)

Rajonivritti is classified under Swabhadhavika Vyadhi occurring at the end of Praudhawastha and beginning of Jarawastha. Chakrapani while commenting on the word ‘Nishpratikriya’ says that these diseases cannot be managed with any treatment other than Rasayana.[14]
Delivering Jara through Rasayana therapy is the only management making this Kastasadhya disease Yapya.

CONCLUSION

Human body is made up of dynamic energy systems that are affected by our diets, relationships, heredity and culture and the interplay of all these factors and activities. Our culture fears all natural processes: birthing, aging, healing, living, dying and since last few decades – menopause.

The age between 40-49 years in women can be termed as “midlife metamorphosis”, when there are acute physical and psychological changes. This is the age when her body begins to prepare for facing the scars of aging and menopause.

Ayurveda has been branched out by our seers into eight clinical specialties, to take care of health needs of society. Through these branches, it helps all human beings to travel through the different phases of life healthily and happily. Rasayana is the specialized branch of Ayurveda, which deals with the problems of aging not only to improve the healthy life but also to improve longevity. Rasayana is chiefly concerned with improving health status and is being practiced extensively and effectively since ages. The main aim of Rasayana is Dhatu Samya; i.e. replenishment of all Dhatus and to delay the aging process. To achieve this aim, Rasayana therapy should be implemented in Poorvavastha and Madhyamavahastha of life span.

Ayurveda has proved to be effective in managing and preventing chronic ailments occurring in climacteric.

REFERENCES


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