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An Ayurvedic protocol for the management of Post Covid-19 Hairfall w.s.r Telogen Effluvium - A Single Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Hair loss can be caused by genetics, age, hormonal imbalances, other health conditions, medication and, of course, stress. Whenever any person experiences severe infection, hair fall is not an unusual after-effect. An overwhelming number of people are reporting severe hair fall post Covid infection. Covid or any viral illness/ fever forces more hair into the shedding phase due to the inflammation and stress in the body, which is called Telogen effluvium. Covid-19 being a new disease, we did not expect to find an exactly matching description in the classical ayurvedic texts. Hair fall has been described in Ayurveda by the name of *Khalitya Roga* under the heading of *Kshudra Roga* (minor disease) or *Shiroroga* (diseases of head & scalp). Routinely the management of hair fall is aimed at stopping the hair loss and promoting the new hair growth. Here in this case study, patient had already undergone the treatment for Covid-19 including the steroids. So further use of modern medicines can result in gastric irritation and drug dependency which can trigger the hair fall again. In Ayurveda, we have a wide array of natural remedies which can be used in *Khalitya*. In present case study the patient of *khalitya* was treated with *Amapachana*, *Virechana*, *Nasya Karma* and *Shaman Chikitsa*. *Nasya Karma* (Errhine Therapy) is considered as the best therapeutic intervention in *Shiro Roga* by *Acharya Charaka*. This patient has been treated and assessment was done. Follow up was done after 3 months and the relief was considerable.

Key words: COVID -19, Telogen Effluvium, Hairfall, Khalitya, Ayurveda, Nasya

INTRODUCTION

Hair loss is a common and distressing clinical complaint in the primary clinics and can arise from heterogeneous etiologies. It can affect yourself-confidence and self-image. Experts say patients should not be embarrassed or try to handle it on their own. Instead, they must

reach out to a health professional. Post-COVID hair fall is one of the most common lingering side effects of COVID-19. Most of the people who got infected with COVID-19 in the second wave are facing the issue of acute hair fall. High viral load and stress can lead to hair fall even after recovering from COVID-19. Since the body has sustained an attack and there are chemical changes in the system as the body tries to fight off the virus, it can lead to hair loss a few weeks post recovery from COVID-19. Any viral pandemic is a global health and mental health issue. The pandemic has had a harmful effect on the public mental health which can even lead to psychological crises.^[1] The World Health Organization and mental health associations have warned that the current COVID-19 pandemic will lead to a drastic increase of stress-related conditions and mental health issues globally. The key symptoms of COVID-19 are fever (*Jvara*), cough (*kāsa*) and shortness of breath (*Śvāsa*), which points to *Vātakapha*

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dominance. Association of *Pitta* related symptoms and clinical course indicate that COVID-19 is a type of *Sannipātajvara*. *Khalitya* in Ayurveda is a disease in which *Pitta* combining with *Vata* and getting into the pores of hairs (hair follicles) cause fall of hair, and then *Kapha* along with *Rakta* obstructs the pores of those hairs and makes it impossible for other hair to grow. As it does not destroy the hair follicles the potential for the re-growth is maintained for many years. A basic understanding of hair biology enables consideration of normal versus abnormal hair loss in post COVID patients. It's important to tell patients that in most cases, this is not a permanent hair disorder. It will likely get better within 4 to 6 months. That reassurance and knowledge often does help." In modern science they are advising hair supplements and peptide-based serums, high-protein diet, more vitamin D, or supplements like biotin. But the management of post COVID hair fall requires a holistic approach including psychosocial support because of all the patients will be dealing with the steroid treatment drugs, isolation protocols, economic resources to support the lockdown etc.

Diseases occurring in the *Urdhvajatru* have been very clearly highlighted in the *Ayurvedic* classics along with their management. *Nasa* (nose) has been considered as the gateway of *Shirah*.^[2] Hence *Khalitya* is best treated with *Shiro Virechana*,^[3] *Kaya Virechana*, *Shiro Abhyanga*, *Shiro Lepa* and *Shaman oushadhis*. Also, treatment for *Manas Dosha*, *Raja* and *Tama* is necessary for Post Covid Hairfall. In this case study, the patient of *Khalitya* was treated with *Ama Pachana* with *Amritottaram Kashyam*, *Kayavirechana* with *Trivrut Lehya*, *Nasya Upakrama* with *Anu Taila*, *Shiro Abhyanga* with *Bringaraja Taila*, *Shirolepa* with *Amalaki Churna* and *Shaman Chikitsa*. The following are given as *Shaman Oushadhis* - *Dhatri Loha*, *Avipathi Choorna* and *Manasamitra Vati* and *Narasimha Rasayana*. The patient had undergone various *Kriya Karmas* for 25 days and *Shamana Oushadhis* were advised for 1 month. Along with medicines, patient was advised to practice *Pranayama* for 1 month. Assessment of the treatment was done and found to be effective.

CASE REPORT

A female patient of age 18 years approached *Shalakyā Tantra* OPD of SJHIM Hospital, Bengaluru complaining of hair fall, anorexia, constipation and loss of sleep. Patient was accompanied by her mother and history was given by the patient herself. Six months back, she tested positive for COVID-19 and became negative in 2 weeks. She was admitted in an allopathic hospital for 2 weeks as she was having breathing difficulty. Since 2 months, she noticed an abrupt loss of hair than normal and as per her words, hair was coming out in handful. As per her mother, patient had very thick and long hair since childhood and still has an apparently normal head of hair to a casual observer. Hair is falling from the entire scalp with no apparent cause such as dandruff. Hair loss is noticed more after hair wash, combing and shampooing of hair. She had 3-week history of constipation and loss of sleep. She did not seek any medical help but tried some home remedies for hair loss. She didn't get any relief. Patient had difficulty in paying attention to her studies as she was unable to get proper sleep at night. Due to all these complaints, she is getting anxious frequently since 1 week. Hence, she approached our OPD.

Past History

Patient had similar hair loss episode due to dandruff 2 years back, but she had taken some home remedies and it came under control. There was no history of any over/under production of thyroid gland. There was no history of any crash diets without protein and using any hair products such as straightening agents, curling shampoos etc. Patient's sister also tested positive for COVID-19 at the same time. She is also having same complaints of hair loss.

Personal History

Diet	Vegetarian, Takes food at improper time, intake of more spicy and salty food
Habits	Sleeping late at night, Disturbed sleep

Examination

The physical examination is grossly normal, as it is difficult for the casual observer to appreciate the loss of hair volume. Careful examination of the scalp

showed an increased percentage of short anagen hairs growing close to the scalp.

Local examination

Thinning of Hairs present
Loss of Hair especially In Occiput Region
No Dandruff or Folliculitis
No Scarring
Hair Pull Test: Positive

Note - A hair pull test is used for monitoring acute cases of telogen effluvium and if more than 10% of hairs in a pulled bundle are removed, the results are considered positive.

Lab Investigations

HB - 12.8gms/dl
TLC - 9700 cells/cu.mm
ESR - 10mm/hr
Thyroid Function Test - Normal
Serum Calcium - 9.7mg/dl

Assessment Criteria

The improvement was assessed on the basis of relief in the signs and symptoms of the disease. Scoring pattern for subjective criteria is recorded in the table given below.

Criteria	Symptoms	Score
Hairfall	Nil	0
	Mild	1
	Moderate	2
	Severe	3
	Very Severe	4
Anorexia	Nil	0

	Mild	1
	Moderate	2
	Severe	3
	Very severe	4
Constipation	Nil	0
	Mild	1
	Moderate	2
	Severe	3
	Very severe	4
Loss of Sleep	Never	0
	Rare	1
	Sometimes	2
	Often	3
	Always	4

Treatment Protocol

Chikitsa	Upakrama	Yogas	Kala	Ava dhi	Matra
Amapachana	-	Amrutottaram Kashaya	Pragbhuktam	3 Days	15ml Bd
Sodhana Chikitsa	Virechana	Trivrut Lehya	Pratah Kala	1 Day	15 gms
	Shirovirechana	Anu Taila	Pratah Kala	7 Days	6 Drops
Bahya Chikitsa	Shirodhara	Bringaraja Taila	Pratah Kala	7 Days	45 Mins
	Shirolepa	Amlaki Churna	Pratah Kala	7 Days	45 Mins
Shamana Chikitsa	-	Dhatri Loha	Adhobhuktam	21 Days	1 Bd
		Avipathikara Churna	Nisha Kala	21 Days	5 gms

		<i>Manasa mitra Vati</i>	<i>Nisha Kala</i>	21 Days	1 Tab
<i>Rasayana Chikitsa</i>	-	<i>Narasimha Rasayana</i>	<i>Adhobuktam</i>	21 Days	1 table spoon BD
<i>Yoga Therapy</i>	<i>Pranayama</i>	<i>Anuloma-Viloma</i>	<i>Pratah Kala</i>	21 Days	10 mins

Do's & Don'ts

Do's	Stay hydrated	Patient is advised to take min 8 glasses of water a day as mild dehydration can be act as a trigger for hair fall
	Proper sleep	Disturbed sleep is a trigger for hair fall, so patient is advised to follow a proper sleep schedule
	Sticking to fresh food	Patient is advised to take nutritious diet.
	De-stress	Counseling, biomedical feedback, exercise etc. can bring calm to hair fall prone patient
Don'ts	Caffeinated beverages	Patient had the habit of taking more tea and coffee. Hence advised not to take any of the caffeinated drinks
	Chemical treatments	Chemicals present in chemical-based products often are absorbed by the skin, damaging from within too.
	Avoid long and high heat exposure	Temperature more than 175 degree Celsius is considered hazardous for the hair. In fact, exposure to this kind of heat for just five minutes is enough to cause physical damage.

RESULTS

Before treatment and after completion of 2 months of treatment, clinical assessments were made from the interrogation and grading was done as per the scoring pattern. There was a drastic change in the symptoms as:

Symptoms	Before treatment	After Virechana	After Nasya	After Shirodhara	After Shirolepa	After Shamana	Follow Up
Hair fall	4	4	3	3	2	2	1
Anorexia	3	3	3	2	2	1	0
Constipation	4	3	3	2	1	0	0
Loss Of Sleep	4	4	3	3	2	1	0
Panic Attacks	4	4	3	2	1	1	1

DISCUSSION

Covid 19 pandemic really judge patience of mankind. Ayurveda explained about epidemic diseases, its causes, pathophysiology, and treatment. Ayurveda explains it under 'Marak' or *Janpadodhwamsa* disease. Concept of immunity is important in this aspect.

Telogen effluvium is a form of temporary hair loss that usually happens after stress, a shock, or a traumatic event. It usually occurs on the top of the scalp. It is a form of hair loss characterized by hair thinning or an increase in hair shedding. It occurs in women and is usually triggered by a disturbance to the hair cycle. The hair cycle typically has three phases: Anagen or growth phase, Catagen or transitional phase and Telogen or resting phase. Telogen effluvium is associated with the telogen phase. Normally, 5 to 10 percent of a person's hair is in the telogen phase at any one time.^[4] With telogen effluvium, the anagen phase slows down, meaning that fewer hairs enter the next two stages. With this condition, around 30 percent of hair follicles move into the telogen phase, which means that hair shedding occurs.^[5]

Here patient was suffering from hairfall, anorexia, constipation, loss of sleep and panic attacks. After the

infection of covid 19, most patients will be having deranged *Agni* and decreased *Vyadhikshamatva*. As far as this patient is concerned, she has been admitted in hospital and was given steroid therapy. So, there will be *Ama*, *Vishama Agni*, decreased *Vyadhikshamtva*. Here *Doshas* have taken *Stanasmshraya* in the *Shiras* and causing the hairfall.

The treatment protocol was started with *Ama Pachana* with *Amritottaram Kashaya* which is having *Sunthi*, *Guduchi* and *Haritaki* as ingredients. It will act on the *Jataragni* and digest all the toxins accumulated in the body. As it contains *Guduchi*, this *Kashaya* can act as an immune booster as well as it shows antimicrobial action. Coming to *Shodhana*, *Virechana* has been done with *Trivrut Lehya*. *Virechana* is targeted to create a biochemical alteration as it modulates the fluid compartments of the body. Patient got 12 vegas and there were no complications. *Shiro Lepa* and *Shiro Dhara* were done with *Bringaraja Taila* and *Amalaki Churna* respectively for 7 days. The ingredients of *Bringaraja Taila* are having *Madhura*, *Katu*, *Tikta*, and *Kashaya* rasa; *Guru*, *Laghu*, *Snigdha*, *Ruksha* and *Tikshna Guna*, whereas *Katu*, *Madhura Vipaka*, *Tridoshashamaka* and *Kapha-Pittashamaka* property. The drugs are also having the other properties like *Keshya*, *Rasayana* and *Keshavardhana*. The *Laghu* and *Snigdha* properties would act on the vitiation of the *Kapha* and *Vatadosha* respectively whereas *Sheeta Virya* and *Madhura Vipaka* would act on *Pitta Dosh*. *Ushnavirya* would act on the vitiation of *Kapha* and *Tikta Rasa*, *Sheetavirya* and *Madhura Vipaka* would act on *Pitta Dosh*. The *Ushna Virya* and *Snigdhatva* would aid in liquefying the dried *Kapha* in the pores of the scalp locally clearing up the obstruction. *Amalaki Churna* has cooling effect that manages *Pitta*, gives nutritional support to hair and helps in hair growth.

Amalaki and *Loha* are main ingredients in *Dhatri*. It is mentioned in *Bhaishajya Ratnavali*. All the ingredients of *Yoga* are *Tridosahara* and *Kapha Vatashamaka*. Hence it can act on *Khalitya* which is a *Kapha Vata Doshitha Roga*. *Avipathikara Churna* was administered for the purpose of *Koshtha Shuddhi* (bowel clearance). *Manasamitra Vati* induces sleep and it calms down the

stress and anxiety. *Pranayama* can be effectively incorporated as an adjuvant therapy in hairfall patients.

CONCLUSION

Testing negative after a Covid-19 infection is a huge battle won against the deadly virus but is often accompanied by a strange set of troubles. Due to the virus's massive strain on both physical and mental well-being, many people experience a set of post-Covid complications that hinder complete recovery for a long time. The second wave of the pandemic saw a staggering rise in the number of patients complaining of hair loss post Covid-19. This case study shows the successful management of a case of post covid Hairfall (*Khalitya*). While there is tremendous scope for further research but still it proves that with proper diagnosis and proper treatment protocol Ayurveda can be extremely beneficial in the management of hairfall (*Khalitya*). By addition of *Panchakarma* therapy along with internal medicines relief can be obtained on large scale. The recovery in the present case was promising and worth documenting.

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