Cancer - An Ayurvedic Understanding

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ABSTRACT

Cancer,[1] one of the deadly challenges, drastically in 21st century, has now officially become the most dangerous killer in the world according to the World Health Organization. No one can deny the fact that cancer is related to adversary of modernization and at once pattern of irregular and stressed life dominated by unhealthy lifestyle. An integral approach is needed to manage cancer using the growing body of knowledge, gained through signific developments. Thousands of herbal and traditional compounds are being screened worldwide to validate their use as anticancer drugs. Also, the Panchakarma - the detoxification procedures mentioned in Ayurvedic literatures are proving best in cancer treatment. The science of Ayurveda is supposed to add first step on to the curative aspects of cancer that have resemblance with clinical entities of Arbuda, and Granthi - mentioned in Sushrut Samhita. Hence and attempt is made in this review to discuss about pathology and therapeutic management of various diseases similar to cancer described in Ayurveda.

Key words: Apachi, Arbuda, Cancer, Dushivish, Granthi, Mansavaha Strotas

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of modern medicine, various investigations on cancer, its causes, surgery, and medicinal treatment have been carried out and talked about a lot till now. Today also the scientists and researchers in the field of medicine are trying their best to find the root cause and complete curative treatment of cancer.

The history[2] of cancer describes the development of the field of oncology and its role in the history of medicine. The earliest known description of cancer appear in several papyri in ancient Egypt. The Edwin Smith Papyrus was written around 1600 B.C. and contains description of cancer as well as a procedure to remove breast tumours by cauterization, stating that the disease has no treatment.

Hippocrates (460 B.C. to 370 B.C.) described several kinds of cancer referring to them by the term kapkivoc (carcinos), the Greek word for crab as well as carcinoma. This comes from the appearance of the cut surface of a solid malignant tumour with the veins stretched on all sides as animal the crab has its feet, hence it derives the name.

In the 2nd century AD, the Greek physician Galen used Oncos (Greek word for swelling) to describe all tumours, reserving Hippocrates term Carcinos for malignant tumours. Galen also used the suffix - oma to indicate cancerous lesions.

If we see towards the history of treatment for cancer when M. Curie and P. Curie discovered radiation at the end of 19th Century, they stumbled upon the first effective non-surgical cancer treatment with radiation.

The Japanese medical community observed that the bone marrow of the victims of atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was completely destroyed. They concluded that the diseased bone marrow could
also be destroyed with radiation, and this led to the development of bone marrow transplant for leukaemia.

Nowadays, the treatments that are said to be effective in various types of cancer are: 1] Surgery 2] Chemotherapy, 3] Radiation Therapy, 4] Targeted Therapy, 5] Immunotherapy, 6] Stem Cells or Bone Marrow transplant and 7] Hormone Therapy. Since the recognition of cancer many effective therapies have come forward. No doubt because of these modern treatments the life of cancer patients has improved, but as we know every pathy has its own limitations and some drawbacks, these modern medicines also have some drawbacks and limitations. It is a responsibility of an Ayurvedic graduate to use our ancient Ayurvedic knowledge in cancer patients with totally Ayurvedic approach for its diagnosis and treatment, which can be helpful to overcome the drawbacks of modern therapies and the combination of modern and Ayurvedic approach may give complete cure to a cancer patient.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1. To put forward the way of Ayurvedic thinking about Cancer.
2. To try to diagnose and treat the cancer patients with purely Ayurvedic view.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Different Ayurvedic texts, research papers, articles are referred to study the concept of cancer in Ayurvedic perspective and entitled as Cancer - An Ayurvedic Understanding.

OBSERVATIONS AND RESULTS

Ayurveda describes many diseases similar to the cancer that is described today such as Granthi, Gulma, Arbuda, Visarpa (to spread), Galganda (goitre), Apachi, Adhimansa (metastatic tumour) & Dusht Vrana (non-healing wound), Nadi Vrana (sinus tract or fistula), etc. The Hetu, Sadhya-Sadhyatva, treatment and Pathya Kalpana (Do’s and Don’ts) all these are describe in detail in Ayurvedic texts. So, studying the basic concepts of Ayurveda, mainly 2 things we think about the cancer;

1] What can be done to prevent a person from getting cancer?

[As the main Moto of Ayurveda is[4] ‘Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam’ ……]

2] What should be line of Ayurvedic treatment for the patient suffering with cancer, by taking the detail history of patient with Ayurvedic criteria and thinking of Dosh-Dushya Sammurchana so that, Samprapti Bhanga can be achieved and this will make one’s life as happy and as pain free as possible.

It is important to think about following in order to achieve both these goals.

1) Tridosh Sanghth (hard consistency glandular swelling)
2) Aam Sankalpana (metabolic disorder)
3) Saman Vayu - Grahani concept (digestive disorders at micro level)
4) Mansavrana Strotas (muscular system)
5) Layers of skin according to Ayurveda
6) Samanya – Vishesh concepts (inculcating the similar properties)
7) Artav Veg Dharan (Postpone the Menstruation) and Uterus-breast cancer
8) Dooshi Vish (slow poisoning)
9) Ajeerna (indigestion) – PPI (proton pump inhibitors)
10) Satva (strong minded)
11) Lastly Ayurvedic treatment

Modern medical science cannot give any guidance on what kind of diet the patient should follow according to the type of cancer, since the patient is diagnosed with cancer. Allopath suggests eating eggs, high protein diet, green salad, and all kinds of fruits, vegetables to make the patient strong to give response to chemotherapy and to build immunity of the patient.
They believe that this diet gives benefits to the patient but on the contrary - The\textsuperscript{[9]} Samprapti (phenomenon of disease occurrence in the body) of cancer patient begins with Agnimandya (loss of appetite / slow metabolism), Mansavaha (muscular), Raktavaha (blood, liver and spleen), Strotodushti (imbalance of channels), such type of Guru (heavy to digest) and Abhisyandii (obstructing the channels) substances results in Aamsanchiti and the disease progresses.

**DISCUSSION**

**Concept of Cancer in Ayurvedic Perspective**

1) **Tridosh Sanghat**

Clinical examination of cancer patients, the patient appears to have an indeterminate growth in any part of the body, which is palpable like gland on the skin, or under the skin or in the abdominal cavity.

In Ayurveda, the type of growth is called Granthi or Arbuda, which is always Tridosh Sanghat.

2) **Visarpa** (To spread)

Visarpa and its types like Granthi Visarpa, Sannipatik Visarpa (Bahya and Abhyantar) these are having very resemblance with metastatic stage of the cancer.

3) **Concept of Aam** (Indigested toxic part of metabolism)

Aam\textsuperscript{[6]} (that is Apachit Annarasa) is a type of poison and being lying in the dormant state absorb in the Dhatus. When the Aamjanit Doshas are accumulated in some Strotas, their forms a Dosh Sanghat which is Drudhmla (deeply sited) and it is nothing but glands or tumours. (Granthi\textsuperscript{[9]}, Arbuda, or Gulma).

As said in Ayurveda, when the Dhatus increases, the nutrients of all Dhatus are reduced and only the Meda increases, similarly when there is Aamyukt Dosh Sanghat in any states, all the nutrients nourish this tumour and we weaken the strength of all Dhatus and the disease / cancer becomes Mahamool (deeply sited).

4) **Saman Vayu & Graham**\textsuperscript{[8]}

In digestion (Sthul Pachan), there is a place of Saman Vayu, near Pachakagni (समानोशक्ति समीपस्थे ... |) the role of Samanvayu each to breakdown the food to excrete excremental and absorb the essence.

\textbf{अन्नं गृह्णाति पन्ति विवेचतत इमुख्ति च |}

Similar function is going on at the cellular level of the body (Sukshma Pachan). When there is a disturbance in this function of Saman Vayu add cellular level, the Mala-Mutra Kleda Start accumulating at the cellular level of specific Strotas Dushti that results in abnormal growth of sales (वायुविप्लवततः) and the last picture is gland or tumour.

5) **Concept of Strotas Dushti (Manasavaha Strotas)**\textsuperscript{[9]}

If there is any gland tumour or swelling in the body then it is permissible to think about Manasavaha Strotas Dushti. Because according to Ayurveda the origin of this disease is an “Manasavaha Strotas Dushti”.

**Why only ‘Manasavaha Strotas’?**

A thorough study of causes, symptoms, and origin of Manasavaha Strotas can the reveal a lot about disease like cancer.

a) **Manasahavaha Strotas - Mool Sthan**

मांसवहानां च स्थितां स्नायुमूलं त्वक् च... | (च. वि.5)\textsuperscript{[9]}

मांसवहाने द्रेत् तयोमूलं स्नायुस्वायं रक्तवहाय थमन्यः | (सू.शा. 9)\textsuperscript{[10]}

b) **Manasavaha Strotas Dushti Hetu (Causes)**

अमिषिष्यदति भोज्यानि स्थूलातन श् शुभेणि च |

मांसवहानि उपये त्वक्त्वां च स्वप्तां दिवां || (च.वि.5)

c) **Manasavaha Strotas Dushti Lakshanam (Symptoms)**\textsuperscript{[11]}

अधिमांसं अर्बुदं कीलं गलशालूकृतं शुण्डिके |

पूर्तिमसाली गणं गणंमालं उपजितिकणा || (च. सू. 28)

As said earlier, Mool Sthana of Manasavaha Strotas, is Tvacha (skin), which is occupied all over the body, all pervasive and all sense organs are located in it (इदिय अधिष्ठाति...|)
In cancer, it is necessary to think deeply about the Mool Sthana of Mahavaha Strotas i.e., Tvacha.

In Ayurveda, seven layers of skin and the diseases that occur in each layer are specifically described. These layers are;[12]


The disease like cancer i.e. Granthi, Apachi, Arbuda are said to occur in ‘Rohini’ layer of the skin and Visarpa kushta at ‘Vedini’ layer.

The thickness of Rohini is Vrihi Praman and that of Vedini is ‘Vrihe Pancham Bhag Praman’. So, there are two reasons why Manasavaha Strotas should be considered in treating cancer,

1) The origin of Manasavaha Strotas is Tvacha, which is whole body pervasive.
2) ‘Lepana’ (coating) is an important function of the Mansa Dhatu. The whole human body is coated with Mansa Dhatu.

And all the diseases - Granthi, Arbuda, Apachi, Visarpa are said to occur in such body wide part i.e., Mansadhatus.

6) The Concept of Samanya[15] – Vishesh (Inculcate the similar properties)

According to this concept, it would not be an exaggeration to say that all food substances, currently available in the market are carcinogenic.

Examples;
1. Seeds that give a lot of yield in a short period of time produce food grains, fruits from them.
2. Injections of hormones into the vegetables like cauliflower, cabbage, etc. and broiler chicken and eggs, give us these products in huge size which is artificially done’ beyond their natural capacity.

Actually, the metabolism and their own Dhatvagni in all these artificially produced food substances, is already damaged. Consuming food with such qualities may increase the speed of abnormal cell growth in the human body as well.

The person whose metabolism (Dhatvagni) is basically good or a person who exercises regularly or take balanced diet (Laghu Aahar), their Mansadhatus is properly metabolised and they do not suffer with cancer like disease.

But most of the people consume broiler chicken, eggs. In almost 95% of the ceremonies, the food is like paneer, chicken, etc. which is of Guru (heavy to digest) or Abhisyandi Gunas (channel obstructing properties), and vegetables contain cauliflower which is full of chemicals & hormones. These substances are consumed insistently.

The paneer is obtained from the milk of Jersey Cow and that also has properties of producing cells in abnormally huge quantity.

Consuming this type of perverted fast growing food, because of this Gun Samanya, the human body also acquires this quality of abnormally fast growing cells.

Apart from this, lack of exercise, daytime sleep, living in AC, all these reasons causes Agnimandya and specifically in Mansa Dhatu, it causes Aama Sanchiti, Swed Vaha Strotas are blocked and ultimately the Mool Sthana (Origin) of the Mansavaha Strotas i.e., Tvacha Dushti occurs, it can lead to Granthi, Arbuda, etc.

Cancer of Female Reproductive organs & Breast Cancer due to Artav Vah Strotas Dushti

Nowadays hormonal pills are widely used to postpone menstrual cycle. In Ayurvedic Samhitas, Veg Dharan is contraindicated. There is description of 13 Vegas, which should not be suppressed. There is no description of Artav Vega Dharan in any Ayurvedic text because there was no any artificial way to suppress or postpone the menstrual flow.

Unfortunately, in modern world, there are so many medicines which are being regularly used blindly to postpone MC, which directly hamper the function of Apaan Vayu in female body. It results in Artavjanya Udavarta. As Aartav is Upadhatu of Rakta, there occurs direct Raktadhatu Dushti. Also, there is connection
between Aarrtav Vaha Strotas (Female reproductive system) & Stnya Vaha Strotas (breast and lactative channels), so Aartav Udavarta (Opposite direction of Apaanvayu) also badly affects the Stnya Vaha Strotas. All this phenomenon may result into cancer of uterus, ovaries or breast.

There is a description about uterine tumour in Gulma Chikitsa in Ayurveda as ‘Raktaj Gulma’ Uterine tumour). It says that the main cause of uterine tumour is suppressing the menstrual flow.

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Raktadhatu, all these drugs and this (undigested food) in the specific bacteria grow in the body i.e., due to antibiotics but the root cause of bacterial infection the causative organisms are killed allopathic treatment of anti-

If there is fever in the body due to bacterial or even cancer. Because all these allopathic drugs have properties of Visha i.e., Sukshma, Vyvayi, & Vikasi.

Examples:

If there is fever in the body due to bacterial or even non-bacterial causative factor there is a gunshot allopathic treatment of anti-pyrets and antibiotics. In bacterial infection the causative organisms are killed due to antibiotics but the root cause due to which the bacteria grow in the body i.e., Kleda (toxins) or Aam (undigested food) in the specific Strotas (Channel or system) is not treated with these drugs and this Aam or Kled gets accumulated in the specific Strotas due to recurrent infection and treatment of antibiotics. There is no Smaprapti Bhang, and the phenomenon of Strotosang and Aamyukt Tridosh Sanghat takes place. This Tridosh Sanghat becomes Dridh Mool i.e., Granthi or Arbud. It may take so many years to finally result in cancer. Likewise, almost every patient of vomiting, nausea, heartburn, pain in abdomen, flatulence, loss of appetite is treated with antacids, PPI, ulcer healing drugs, anti-spasmodic or antibiotic. Actually, all these symptoms are due to various types of Ajeernas, stated in Ayurveda, which is due to disturbed Pachakagni.

And this disturbed or imbalanced Pachakagni is never treated with these allopathic drugs and the phenomenon goes on occurring in the human body for years and years.

Langhana, Deepana, Anulomanam is never told to patient in allopathy practice. Therefore, Apachit Doshas go on accumulating in the Koshta and then travel to Shakhas and finally result in Praghadh Moolyukt Granthi and Arbuda etc.

There is an article on internet Increasing cases of stomach cancer due to excessive use of proton pump inhibitors

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9264794

Which supports the above statement.

Concept of Satva

There is a concept of Guru Vyadhit and Laghu Vyadhit in Ayurveda. It says that the patient having Pravarsatva can get cured also from highly critical condition or from incurable diseases.

Currently available treatment for cancer i.e., chemotherapy and radiation also have lot of side effects on the human body. The strength to bear this treatment is higher in the patients with Pravarsatva and those patients are majority examples of getting cancer-free.

Ayurvedic treatment of Cancer

To treat the cancer patient, we have to think about following.

1. Mansavaha Strotas and Tvacha (Muscular system and Skin)
Ayurvedic text in the treatment of Tridosh Sanghataj diseases.

As the treatment of Mansavaha Strotas Dushhti is Shatra-Kshar-Agnikarma, these procedures have to be followed whenever necessary.

Cancer is a worldwide problem which can destroy a patient’s lifetime earnings and not even guarantee life. In such a situation, treatment with a thorough consideration of the basic principles of Ayurveda can definitely be helpful for the patients to fight against cancer.

REFERENCES


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