



MANAGEMENT OF POSTHERPETIC NEURALGIA (AGNI VISARPA UPADRAVA) THROUGH NASYA AND LEECH THERAPY AND OTHER COMPOSITE AYURVEDA TREATMENTS - A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT:

Herpes zoster also called Shingles are painful rashes or blisters on the skin due to the varicella zoster virus and is a skin-to-skin contact disease. It's important to note that Ayurveda's approach to health and disease is holistic and based on balancing the body's energies (doshas) and promoting overall well-being. In Ayurveda classics, a disease called *Visarpa* mimics Herpes zoster and *Kaksha* mimics the signs and symptoms of post-herpetic neuralgia. A 75-year-old female patient attended OPD at the Ayushakti Ayurveda, Ghatkopar branch with complaints of classic post-herpetic neuralgia symptoms on the frontal lobe of the skull almost covering half of the area to the left temples and left upper eyelids. The patient was diagnosed based on clinical findings, and the pain and burning symptom was assessed based on the VAS scale. After the treatment for 60 days with *Nasya*, *Jalaukavacharana*, and herbal remedies, a significant difference was observed in the patient's symptoms. Ayurvedic approaches in post-herpetic neuralgia can give easy and cost-effective treatment.

Keywords- Postherpetic neuralgia, Visarpa, Nasya, Jalaukavacharana, leech therapy.

INTRODUCTION

Herpes zoster is a viral infection also called Shingles that causes an outbreak of a painful rash or blister on the skin due to the varicella-zoster virus. The rash appears as a band of rashes or blisters in the area of the human body. The varicella-zoster virus through direct skin-to-skin contact with the fluid from the blisters. Herpes zoster can occur at any age but it's common in elderly people. Symptoms start typically with pain along the affected dermatomes, followed by a vesicular eruption in the next 2-3 days^[1].

Treatment includes antiviral medicines like acyclovir, famciclovir, and very first-time. Valacyclovir must be given within 72 hours of the symptom seen. In herpes zoster, early diagnosis and management within 72 hours after seeing the rash the first time is important to avoid further complications ^[2]. Pain management, healing of rash, reduction in viral speed, and avoiding complications is the main treatment. Pain provoked by trivial stimuli, intense pain, and altered sensation in herpes zoster, which may continue after the rash has healed with the same symptoms is known as postherpetic neuralgia ^[3]. After the acute herpes zoster infection attack, the virus remains resistant in the basal ganglion of the sensory cranial nerves and spinal dorsal root ganglion without any symptoms for years ^[4]. As cellular immunity to varicella zoster virus

decreases due to age or due to immunosuppression, the virus reactivates. In postherpetic neuralgia, neuropathic pain from the damaged sensory nerves is seen ^[5]. Postherpetic neuralgia can manifest different kinds of pain including burning, aching, throbbing pain, stabbing, and shooting pain, and stimulus-evoked pain like some patients experience due to cold breeze or light touch from clothing ^[6]. Ayurveda, the ancient system of traditional medicine from India, does mention various conditions related to skin disorders and infections. While specific references to the herpes virus as understood in modern medicine may not exist in traditional Ayurvedic texts, there are descriptions of similar skin conditions and recommendations for their management. It's important to note that Ayurveda's approach to health and disease is holistic and based on balancing the body's energies (doshas) and promoting overall well-being. In Ayurveda, Sushrutacharya mentioned a disease named *Kaksha* while describing *Kshudra Roga* whose symptoms are similar to postherpetic neuralgia ^[7]. The skin disease herpes zoster can be included under *Visarpa* ^[8]. This case of postherpetic neuralgia is significant to publish as the patient received *Nasya* treatment first followed by *Jalaukavacharana* which is a

conventional treatment mentioned in Ayurvedic texts.

Case report –

Patient information -A 75-year-old female patient attended OPD at the Ayushakti Ayurveda, Ghatkopar branch with complaints of severe migraine, Constant and severe pain at the left side of her head since September 2022, unable to touch or wash her face because of pain, pain as described by the patient “It is like a chili powder was put on the nerves. It is burning and needle pricking like pain. The nerve seems to burst with pain and even a small touch is making the pain worse” for the last month.

Local examination -there was a reddish discolored patch on the left side of the frontal lobe of the skull almost covering half of the area to the left temples and left upper eyelids. The localized skin was different from the nearby skin with small blisters, the patch was well-defined, without any discharge, and foul smell. On touch tenderness and local rise of temperature were present. (image-I)

Past history -The patient had a complaint of blisters on the left frontal lobe of the skull

involving the left upper eyelid with severe burning sensation and pain in August 2022. Emergency treatment with acyclovir internally and for local application was given. The patient is a known case of hypertension and type II diabetes mellitus.

Investigations - HIV, and HBsAg were negative, CBC, bleeding and clotting were within normal limits, and Hba1c was 7 %.

Medicine history - The patient was on her regular anti-hypertensive and anti-hyperglycemia medicines, gabapentin 900 mg per day and paracetamol 650 SOS.

Ayurveda Aspect -

Dosha Dushti - Pitta and Vata predominately

Dhatu Dushti - Rakta and Majja Dhatu

Strotas - Rakta and Majja Vaha Strotas

Sthan - Urdhwajatrugata

Diagnostic assessment -

The patient was diagnosed on the basis of clinical findings, and the pain and burning symptom was assessed on the basis of the VAS scale

Therapeutic intervention - The following herbal remedies provided by Ayushakti Ayurveda Pvt Ltd were prescribed:

Table 1- Therapeutic herbal remedies used.

| S.No. | Name of the medicine | Dose | Before/After food | Anupana |
|-------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------|
| 1 | Tablet Shirshoolhar | 2 tablets twice daily | After food | Warm water |

| | | | | |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| 3 | Tablet Virechana | 2 tablets once daily | After food at night only | Warm water |
| 4 | Tablet Dvyro | 2 tablets twice daily | After food | Warm water |

Diet -As per the Ayushakti diet protocol, patients were advised to avoid non-veg, sour, fermented, spicy, oily, and gluten food.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION –

In the first 15 days of the treatment, a 50% improvement in pain, Could touch and wash the whole face without severe pain, and was found on the VAS scale of pain that the patch was red but had no blisters. At the end of the 30 days, the pain was almost 60 % reduced, with only a few episodes of pain, the pain was not constant and having episodes of pain, and the patch was dark in color without blisters,

stopped all the allopathic medicines gradually after tapering the dose. At 45 days of treatment started with leech therapy and the VAS scale was only 2 with an 80% improvement in symptoms of pain, and burning sensation VAS scale score was 1 showing marked improvement, and the patch started getting normal skin. After 60 days the pain was 90% better, the burning sensation was 100% better, she was able to touch or wash her face, and the patch was completely gone (image-II).

Table -2 - Days-wise changes in the symptoms on the VAS scale.

| Symptoms | Treatment given | Pain | Burning sensation | Paraesthesia | Blisters |
|----------|-----------------|------|-------------------|--------------|----------|
| 0 Days | Nasya | 10 | Severe | Severe | Severe |
| 15 Days | Nasya | 5 | Moderate | Severe | Moderate |
| 30 days | Nasya | 4 | Moderate | Moderate | Moderate |
| 45 days | Jalaukavacharan | 2 | Mild | Mild | Mild |
| 60 days | Jalaukavacharan | 1 | No | Mild | No |

Postherpetic neuralgia is a chronic pain condition that can occur after a herpes zoster infection. While there is no definitive cure for this, Ayurvedic management can help alleviate symptoms and improve overall well-being. It's

important to note that Ayurvedic treatments. Ayurvedic approaches that might be considered for managing postherpetic neuralgia.

After the emergency treatment with allopathic medicines, the inflammatory healing process was completed before the patient visited Ayushakti, Ayurvedic treatment plan was given considering *Pitta* and *Vata* predominately *Dushti* (vitiating), *Rakta* and *Majja Dhatu Dushti* (blood and nerve tissue) vitiating), and *Sthan* (Position) *Urdhwajatrugata* (above the collar bone). As the disease was in the *Kaphadhikya* part of the body and *Jala (kled)* was involved in the form of active blisters, *Nasya* treatment was selected as a prime line of treatment along with *Samana* treatment [9]. Herpes zoster has similar signs and symptoms to *Pittaj Visarp* [10] and *Kaksha* [11]. *Nasya* is an Ayurvedic therapy that involves administering herbal oils, medicated ghee, or powders through the nasal passages. It is commonly used to treat various conditions affecting the head, neck, and respiratory system and promote overall well-being [12]. *Medhya ghee* has *Brahmi* and *Shankhpushpi*, *Nasya* has the capacity to increase the blood flow to the inflammatory area by increasing local temperature, reduce inflammation by eliminating the *Tikshna Guna* (sharpness) of *Pitta*, and ultimately relieve the pain, also it keep the skin soft [13]. Bloodletting or *Jalaukavacharan* is the therapeutic removal of blood from the patient, especially done when the vitiating blood is situated in the skin like

herpes zoster and its complication. *Jalauka* (leech) has an action through exosomes by sucking blood and lymphatic material and this brings the reduction in viral load, anti-inflammatory role, and ultimately reduction in symptoms of neuralgia [14]. Tablet *Dvyro* is known for its antiviral, anti-inflammatory, and immunomodulator [15]. In any skin disease *virechana* (medicated purgation) is advised hence tablet *virechana* was used [16]. Tablet *Virechana* contains a laxative in nature and it's the best medicine for *Pitta*-vitiating diseases [17]. *Shirshoolhar* tablets have a combination that is useful in headaches especially when it is due to *Pitta* and *Rakta* related, its anti-inflammatory, neuroprotective, and analgesic [18].



Image-1- Before and during 1st sitting of *Nasya*



Image-II- During *Jalaukavacharan*

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CONCLUSION-

This case report shows that Nasya treatment with Medhya ghee is one of the best options for postherpetic neuralgia when it is *Urdhwajatrugata* (above the collar bone) followed by conventional *Raktamokshana* with *Jalauka*. The proper use of herbal remedies and provide significant relief to the patient if they are used by understanding the Samprapti of the disease. Ayurvedic approaches in post-herpetic neuralgia can give easy and cost-effective treatment. Still, adaptive clinical trials with larger sample sizes are required to manage the disease and its further complications.

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