

ABSTRACT : Vicharchika, a Kshudra Kushtha though involves only epidermis, its tendency of recurrences continues to pose problems to the physician. In allopathic medicine, it can be co-related to Eczema, a disease which is resultant of delayed type hypersensitivity mediated by memory T lymphocytes in the skin and the clinical lesions may be acute (wet and edematous) or chronic (dry, thickened, and scaly), depending on the persistence of the insult. In this study, out of 46 patients registered, 33 completed the treatment. These patients were treated with : Shirishadi Decoction (30 ml) twice daily along with the local application of Snuhyadi Lepa for the duration of 60 days. Results of the study revealed that Shirishadi Decoction and Snuhyadi Lepa provides significant relief in the signs and symptoms as well as eosinophil count of the patients of eczema.

Key words : Vicharchika, Kshudra Kushtha, Shirishadi Decoction, Snuhyadi Lepa, Eczema, Delayed type hypersensitivity.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of Vicharchika, as mentioned in the Brihat - Trayi are Ati Kandu, Shyava - Pidika, Bahu - Srava (Lasikadhya)^{1,2} or Rukshata and Raji³. Almost all the scholars of Ayurveda of modern era consider Vicharchika as eczema in modern parlance. The consideration of characteristic of Vicharchika in purview of eczema may also reveal the same fact.

Ati Kandu (Excessive itching) : In eczema itching varies from mild to severe paroxysms which even may interfere with work and sleep.

Bahu-Srava (Lasikadhya) : Eczema is characterized by superficial inflammatory edema of epidermis associated with vesicle formation. In acute condition wet eczema is common.

Rukshata : Chronic lesions of eczema may be dry. Further dry and wet type of eczema also persists or it may be found in the same patients at the different stages.

Shyava Pidika : In chronic cases of eczema, integument appears thickened and is hyperpigmented.

Raji (Lichenification) : Due to scratching in chronic cases of eczema, the skin becomes thick, hyper pigmented with visible criss - cross ridges known as 'lichenification'.

In this way the above symptoms of this disease mentioned in both the systems are quite similar.

Eczema is a specific type of an antigen-specific immune response and results due to an antigen-antibody reaction. It is resultant of delayed type hypersensitivity mediated by memory T lymphocytes in the skin and the clinical lesions may be acute (wet and edematous) or chronic (dry, thickened, and scaly), depending on the persistence of the insult⁴. Therefore in this condition, anti-allergic drug seems to play an important role in its management. Considering this, a decoction named as 'Shirishadi Kvatha' was formulated which contains Ayurvedic anti allergic drugs such as Shirisha (*Albizia lebbek*)⁵, Kantakari (*Solanum xanthocarpum*)⁶ and Sariva (*Hemidesmus indicus*)⁷ and Kushthahara and Kanduhara drugs like Saptaparna (*Alstonia scholaris*)⁸, Nimba (*Melia azadirachta*)⁸, Khadira (*Acacia catechu*)⁸. All these drugs were taken in equal parts and a decoction was prepared by adding 16 times water to the coarse powder of the drugs and reduced to one fourth by heating on slow fire.

Vicharchika is manifested in Tvak (skin) and Ayurveda equally emphasizes on treating the Sthana, therefore Snuhyadi Lepa⁹ mentioned by Vagbhata was selected for local application on the skin lesions of Vicharchika (eczema) patients. Considering all these points, the present study was planned with the aim to evaluate the role of Shirishadi Decoction and Snuhyadi Lepa in the management of Vicharchika (eczema).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The 46 patients of Vicharchika (eczema) attending the OPD and IPD of IPGT&RA, Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar were registered for this study. Out of these, 13 patients were dropped out and 33

* Lecturer, Department of Kayachikitsa.

** Professor of Kayachikitsa & Dean.

patients completed the prescribed course of the treatment¹⁰.

Criteria of Diagnosis :

The diagnosis was mainly based on the clinical presentation as mentioned in the Ayurveda texts.

Exclusion criteria :

1. Patients of Vicharchika having secondary infections.
2. Patients suffering with Diabetes mellitus.
3. Patients of status eczematous condition.

Investigations :

- ◆ Hematological investigation for TLC, DC, Hb%, ESR.
- ◆ Routine and microscopic examination of urine and stool.
- ◆ Skin scrap test was done to exclude ring worm in suspected cases.

Drug, Dose and Duration :

The patients were treated with Shirishadi Decoction administered in 30 ml dose twice a day and simultaneously Snuhyadi Lepa was applied externally on the lesions twice a day, after cleaning the lesions with warm water. Duration of treatment was 60 days.

Method of Preparation of the Drugs :

1. *Shirishadi Decoction*: This decoction was prepared by taking equal parts of coarse powder of Shirisha (*Albizia lebbek*), Nimba (*Melia azadirachta*), Sariva (*Hemidesmus indicus*), Kantakari (*Solanum xanthocarpum*), Khadira (*Acacia catechu*) and Saptaparna (*Alstonia scholaris*). Further to this powder, 16 times water was added and reduced to one fourth by heating on slow fire.
2. *Snuhyadi Lepa* : For the preparation of Snuhyadi Lepa, thick stems of Snuhi were taken. After removing the thorns, its pulp was taken out with knife and the hollow space thus obtained was filled with coarse powder of seeds of yellow Sarshapa and pulp of Snuhi. It was kept in oven at fixed temperature (80°C) for about 4 to 5 days, till it became dry to powder. Thereafter, it was taken out from the oven, made in the form of powder and then filtered through sieve. To this powder, Sarshapa oil was added in the ratio of 1:4 and filled in cleaned bottles with tight lid. Before using, it was mixed well. It was applied on the lesions twice a day.

Assessment of the effects of Therapy :

The effect of the therapy was assessed by assigning the suitable score to the sign and symptoms of the disease. The over all effect of the treatment was assessed as follow:

Complete Remission : 100% relief in the signs and symptoms and plain skin surface with significant change of the color of the affected skin nearly to normal.

Marked Improvement : 100% relief in the signs and symptoms but slight presence of pigmentation and/or thickening of the skin was taken as marked improvement.

Moderate Improvement : More than 50% relief in the signs and symptoms with marked improvement in pigmentation and thickening of the skin.

Improvement : Less than 50% relief in the signs and symptoms with slight improvement in pigmentation and thickening of the skin.

Unchanged : No relief in the signs and symptoms.

Follow up Study :

After the completion of two months course of therapies, the patients were advised to report fortnightly for follow up study, which was carried out further for two months. During these visits, improvement or deteriorations or no change in the signs and symptoms were recorded.

RESULTS

The maximum patients i.e. 65.2% were in the age group of 21-50 years, 58.7% were male, 23.9% were housewives and 34.8% were labourer, while 78.3% were married, 76.1% were Hindu, 50% were belonging to middle class of the society and 67.4% were Vegetarian.

The effects of Shirishadi Decoction and Snuhyadi Lepa on the main symptoms such as itching, discharge, hyper-pigmentation and thickening of skin were evaluated every week of the treatment, which are depicted in Table no.1 to Table no. 4 & Figure no. 1.

The effects of the therapy on the other signs and symptoms recorded in the patients of this series have been shown in Table No. & 5 Figure 2 A & B. The effect of the therapy was also noted on the Dushti Lakshana of Dosha, Srotasa and Tvak, which have been shown in Table No.6. The therapy significantly reduced the eosinophil count as shown in Table No.7. The next Table No.8 depicts the over all effects of the therapy.

TABLE NO. 1 : WEEK WISE IMPROVEMENT ON ITCHING (n=33) :

Weeks of the treatment	Mean Score		In Comparison to Initial				
	B. T.	A.T.	%	S.D. (±)	S.E. (±)	t	p
1 st Week	2.5	1.6	34.3	0.7	0.12	7.31	<0.001
2 nd Week	2.5	1.2	51.8	0.8	0.13	9.60	<0.001
3 rd Week	2.5	0.8	66.9	0.7	0.13	13.4	<0.001
4 th Week	2.5	0.6	73.1	0.8	0.12	13.2	<0.001
5 th Week	2.5	0.5	79.2	0.8	0.14	14.1	<0.001
6 th Week	2.5	0.3	87.8	0.7	0.14	18.5	<0.001
7 th Week	2.5	0.15	93.9	0.6	0.12	20.8	<0.001
8 th Week	2.5	0.15	93.9	0.6	0.10	20.8	<0.001

TABLE NO. 2 : WEEK WISE IMPROVEMENT ON DISCHARGE (n=33) :

Weeks of the treatment	Mean Score		In Comparison to Initial				
	B. T.	A.T.	%	S.D. (±)	S.E. (±)	t	p
1 st Week	0.7	0.4	50.0	0.5	0.8	4.3	<0.001
2 nd Week	0.7	0.2	66.7	0.6	0.1	4.9	<0.001
3 rd Week	0.7	0.09	87.5	0.7	0.12	5.2	<0.001
4 th Week	0.7	0.09	87.5	0.7	0.12	5.2	<0.001
5 th Week	0.7	0.03	95.8	0.7	0.12	5.5	<0.001
6 th Week	0.7	0.03	95.8	0.7	0.12	5.5	<0.001
7 th Week	0.7	0.03	95.8	0.7	0.12	5.5	<0.001
8 th Week	0.7	0.03	95.8	0.7	0.12	5.5	<0.001

TABLE NO. 3 : WEEK WISE IMPROVEMENT ON HYPER PIGMENTATION (n=33) :

Weeks of the treatment	Mean Score		In Comparison to Initial				
	B. T.	A.T.	%	S.D. (±)	S.E. (±)	t	p
1 st Week	1.4	1.2	14.3	0.4	0.1	2.9	<0.001
2 nd Week	1.4	1.1	24.8	0.5	0.1	4.3	<0.001
3 rd Week	1.4	0.9	40.0	0.6	0.1	5.9	<0.001
4 th Week	1.4	0.7	52.4	0.6	0.1	7.8	<0.001
5 th Week	1.4	0.6	60.7	0.5	0.1	9.3	<0.001
6 th Week	1.4	0.4	71.0	0.6	0.1	10.1	<0.001
7 th Week	1.4	0.4	75.2	0.6	0.1	10.3	<0.001
8 th Week	1.4	0.3	79.3	0.5	0.21	13.0	<0.001

TABLE NO. 4 : WEEK WISE IMPROVEMENT ON THICKENING OF SKIN (n=33) :

Weeks of the treatment	Mean Score		In Comparison to Initial				
	B. T.	A.T.	%	S.D. (±)	S.E. (±)	t	p
1 st Week	1.1	1.0	34.3	0.7	0.12	7.31	<0.001
2 nd Week	1.1	1.0	51.8	0.8	0.13	9.60	<0.001
3 rd Week	1.1	0.8	66.9	0.7	0.13	13.4	<0.001
4 th Week	1.1	0.6	73.1	0.8	0.12	13.2	<0.001
5 th Week	1.1	0.5	79.2	0.8	0.14	14.1	<0.001
6 th Week	1.1	0.5	87.8	0.7	0.14	18.5	<0.001
7 th Week	1.1	0.3	93.9	0.6	0.12	20.8	<0.001
8 th Week	1.1	0.3	93.9	0.6	0.10	20.8	<0.001

FIGURE 1 : WEEK WISE IMPROVEMENT IN THE SYMPTOMS OF VICHARCHIKA (ECZEMA) :

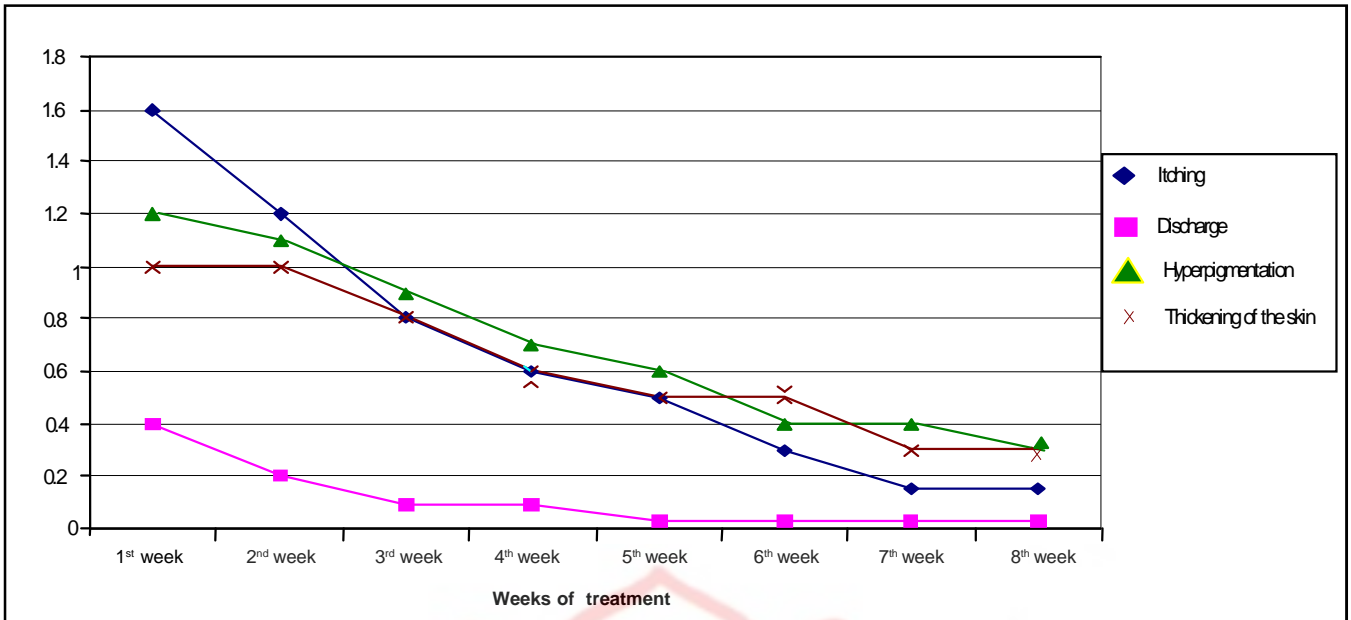
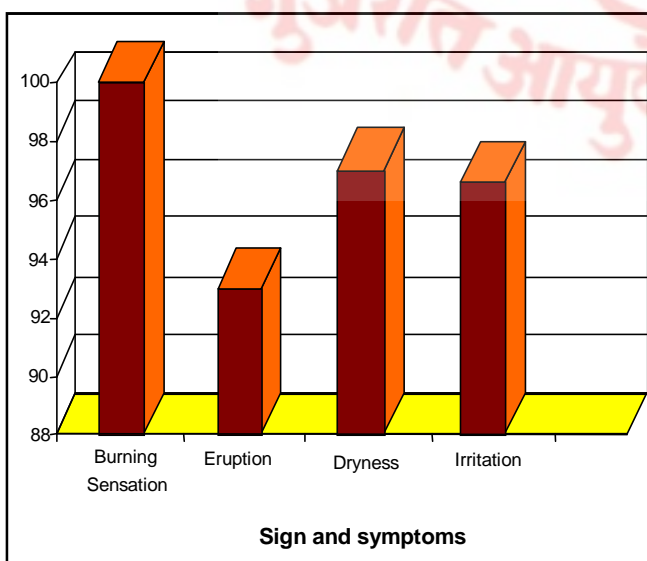


TABLE NO. 5 : EFFECT OF EIGHT WEEKS TREATMENT WITH SHIRISHADI DECOCTION AND SNUHYADI LEPA ON THE OTHER SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF 33 PATIENTS OF VICHARCHIKA (ECZEMA) :

Symptom	Score		% of improvement	S.D. (±)	S.E. (±)	t	p
	B.T.	A.T.					
Burning sensation	1.3	0.0	100	0.82	0.14	9.4	<0.001
Eruptions	1.7	0.1	93	0.6	0.11	14.4	<0.001
Dryness	1.0	0.03	97	0.8	0.12	6.6	<0.001
Irritation	0.9	0.03	96.6	0.8	0.14	6.1	<0.001
Disturbed sleep	0.6	0.0	100	0.7	0.12	5.3	<0.001
Cracking	0.3	0.09	66.7	0.5	0.09	2.2	<0.001
Bleeding	0.5	0.03	93.7	0.8	0.14	3.14	<0.001
General debility	1.09	0.9	19.3	0.40	0.07	2.9	<0.001
Constipation	0.8	0.7	14.1	0.3	0.06	2.1	<0.001

FIGURE 2 : EFFECT OF SHIRISHADI DECOCTION AND SNUHYADI LEPA ON OTHER SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF VICHARCHIKA (ECZEMA) :

2 A :



2 B :

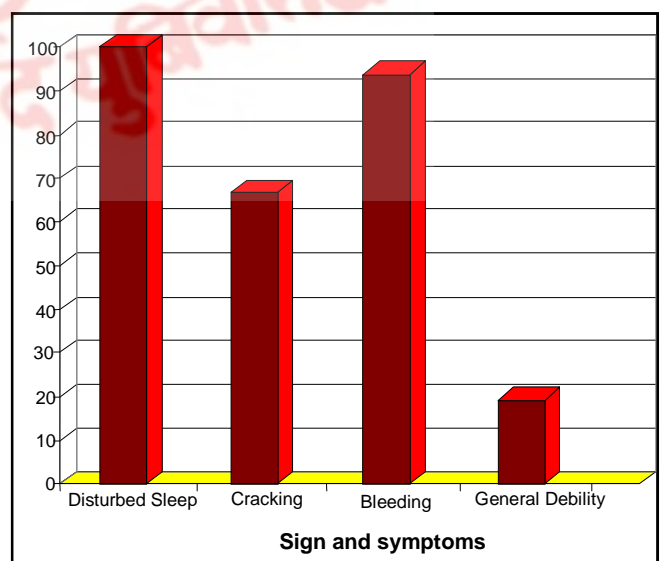


TABLE NO. 6 : EFFECT OF COMPLETE TREATMENT ON THE DOSHA AND SROTASA DUSHTI (n=33) :

Dosha/Srotasa Dushti	Symptom Score		% age of improvement	S.D. (±)	S.E. (±)	t	p
	B.T.	A.T.					
Vata	2.6	0.6	76.9	1.4	0.2	8.4	<0.001
Pitta	0.8	0.03	96.2	0.8	0.1	6.1	<0.001
Kaphaja	2.7	0.6	77.7	1.06	0.2	11.2	<0.001
Rasa Vaha	3.6	2.6	28.1	1.13	0.19	5.2	<0.001
Rakta Vaha	1.9	0.4	77.1	0.66	0.10	12.5	<0.001
Mamsa Vaha	2.7	0.7	74.4	1.2	0.2	10.1	<0.001
Sveda Vaha	1.7	0.5	71.7	0.7	0.12	9.9	<0.001
Tvak	2.6	1.06	59	1.0	0.2	8.8	<0.001

TABLE NO. 7 : EFFECT OF COMPLETE TREATMENT ON HEMATOLOGICAL VALUES (n=33) :

Hematological	Value		% age of decrease	S.D. (±)	S.E. (±)	t	p
	B.T.	A.T.					
TLC/cu mm	8515.5	7953.1	6.6	616.3	154.1	2.1	<0.05
Neutrophils (%)	63.6	63.1	0.8	3.4	0.9	0.35	>0.05
Lymphocytes (%)	31.6	31.3	0.95	2.6	1.3	0.09	>0.09
Eosinophil (%)	6.4	3.0	53.5	2.4	0.6	4.4	<0.001
ESR (mm 1 st Hr. Wintrobe)	15.0	14.0	6.6	8.2	2.4	0.3	>0.05

TABLE NO. 8 : OVERALL EFFECT OF THERAPY :

Effect	Number of patients	Percentage
Complete Remission	06	18.2
Marked improvement	14	42.4
Moderate improvement	12	36.4
Improvement	01	03.0
Unchanged	00	00.0

In this study complete remission was found in 18.2% patients, marked improvement in 42.4% patients, moderate improvement in 36.4% patients and improvement in 3% patients (Table-8).

DISCUSSION

In classics, many Kushthahara single and compound preparations have been mentioned, but none of them has been specifically mentioned for oral use for Vicharchika. Hence it is very difficult to pin point that which drug or preparation is useful specifically in Vicharchika. Therefore depending upon its symptoms and Samprapti a compound preparation named as 'Shirishadi Decoction' was formulated. It comprises potent herbs like Shirisha (Vishahara, Kanduhara & Kushthahara), Saptaparna (Udarda Prashamana & Kushthahara), Nimba (Kushthahara & Kanduhara), Khadira (Kushthahara & Kanduhara), Sariva (Kushthahara & Kanduhara) and Kantakari (Kushthahara, Vatahara & Kanduhara).

The manifestation of eczema occurs in skin, wherein the sensitivity of the local cells is disturbed. Further Ayurveda emphasizes on managing the Sthana (place of the lesion), therefore Snuhyadi Lepa mentioned by Ashtanga Hridaya was selected for the local

application on the lesions. Snuhi is a well known Kshara and it may eliminate the sensitized skin cell as well as may help in relieving the thickened skin and Pidika.

The therapy with Shirishadi Decoction and Snuhyadi Lepa provided significant relief in the symptoms of itching (93.9%), burning sensation (100%), eruptions (93%), hyper pigmentation (79.3%) and thickening of the skin (72.5%).

In this series some patients were with the wet eczema while the others were having dry eczema. The therapy provided significant relief to the both types of eczema as it relieved discharge by 95.8% and dryness by 97% in respective patients.

Consideration of week wise improvement in the main signs and symptoms showed that the therapy started providing relief from the very first week of the treatment which become maximum at the seventh week in case of itching (Table-1), fifth week in case of discharge (Table-2), 8th week in case of hyper-pigmentation (Table-3) and 7th week in case of thickening of the skin (Table-4).

It also provided significant relief in irritation (96.6%), disturbed sleep (100%), cracking (66.7%),

(7.3%). This therapy also provided significant improvement in Dushti of Vata (76.9%), Pitta (96.2%), Kapha (77.7%), Tvak (59%), as well as Dushti Lakshana of Raktavaha (77.1%), Mamsavaha (74.4%) and Svedavaha (71.7%) Srotasa. It also significantly reduced the eosinophil count by 40.5%. The therapy provided complete remission to 18.2% patients, marked improvement to 42.4% patients, moderate improvement to 36.4% patients and improvement to 3% patients (Table -8).

After completion of treatment, 20 patients reported regularly for follow up study for two months. Out of these 16 patients reported either recurrence in their pacified disease or exacerbation in their symptoms, if they were not completely cured.

CONCLUSION

The therapy with Shirishadi Decoction and Snuhyadi Lepa provides significant relief in the signs and symptoms as well as eosinophil count of the patients of h a rchika (eczema). The therapy provides complete remission to 18.2% patients, marked improvement to 42.4% patients, moderate improvement to 36.4% patients and improvement to 3% patients.

The follow up study of two months shows that the recurrence rate of the relieved signs and symptom was 80%, which may be considered as quite high. Therefore it is suggested that some other therapy such as Rasayana may be added to reduce the recurrence rate.

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