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ABSTRACT

Father of ancient surgery, Acharya Sushruta has mentioned various methods of Raktamokshana (blood –letting) in his treatise Sushrut Samhita. Siravedha is one of the method of Raktamokshana. Importance of Siravedha is glorified by stating it as Ardhachikitsa in Shalyatantra. Siravedha is nothing but venepuncture. Difference is that Siravedha is employed as single therapeutic procedure in order to treat a diseased condition whereas venepuncture may be diagnostic or a part of therapeutic procedure rather than being an independent treatment procedure. In eighth chapter of Sharira Sthana of Sushrut Samhita, the detailed description of Siravedha is given which includes appropriate time, method as well as indication and contra-indications of Siravedha. Siravedha is helpful in providing relief in symptoms like pain, stiffness in Gridhrasi (sciatica) and Vatrakta (gout). The procedure is believed to be helpful in curing disorders like varicose veins, skin disorders etc. The present study focuses on literary review of Siravedha with a brief explanation on probable mode of action of procedure under consideration.

Keywords: siravedha, venepuncture, blood-letting, varicose vein, skin diseases.

INTRODUCTION: The art of healing is one of the oldest intellectual properties of human beings originated out of constraint, need of self protection and the urge to help. Ayurveda advocates, “Let the noxious blood be let out” it will cure the disease or otherwise it will make a clear pathway towards further treatment modalities. Raktamokshana is one of five Panchakarma procedures or the 5 basic techniques of detoxification. It is made of two words – Rakta i.e blood and Mokshana i.e to leave and combining both these words makes the word Raktamokshana which means ‘to let out blood’. It is the only Shodhana procedure where the vitiated doshas are taken out from the Shakhas by creating an artificial route, in which carefully controlled removal of considerable amount of blood. Raktamokshana( blood –letting) can be broadly classified into two types:

- Ashastra ( performed with the measures other than sharp instruments)
- Jalauka
- Alabu
- Srungi
- Sashastra (performed with sharp instrument)
- Prachana
- Siravedha

Siravedha is one type of Shastrakrut Raktamokshana.

INDICATIONS:

- Five types of Vidradhi ( abscess) except Sannipatay Vidradhi
- Kushtha (skin diseases)
- Ekdeshaj Shotha ( edema at a single site)
- Shleepada (filariasis)
- Poisoning
- Arbuda (tumour)
- Granthi (swelling)
- Updansha (gonorrhoea)
• Stanaroga (diseases of breast)
• Gridhrasi (sciatica)
• Vatrakta (gout).

CONTRA –INDICATIONS:\n• Sarvangsopha (anasarca)
• Ksheena (lean and thin, malnourished)
• Pandu (Anaemia)
• Arsha (hemorrhoids)
• Udara (ascites)
• Garbhini (pregnant woman)

APPROPRIATE TIME:\n• Varsha rutu ( rainy season)
  When sky is clear that is without clouds and rain.
• Grishma rutu (summer season)
  When the environment is cool that is in the morning hours.
• Hemanta rutu (winter season)
  Madhyahana (afternoon time)

Amount:\n1 Prastha = 13.5 Pala

PROCEDURE:
• Pre-procedure preparation:
  The patient on which siravedha is to be performed, should be fed with liquid food or Yavagu.
  Snehana (oleation therapy) and Swedana (fomentation therapy) should be performed.
• Vaidhya should gather all the instruments and emergency medicine which may be needed during or after the procedure.
• The patient is made to seat in comfortable position facing the east direction.
• The site of punctured should be cleaned properly means there should not be any dust or dirt at the site.
• The cloth should be tied 1 finger breadth above the site to be punctured.
• Nowadays tourniquet is used instead of cloth.
• The vein which is to be punctured should be made prominent.
• Procedure:
  Vein is punctured with needle not so slow not so fast in one stroke and blood is allowed to flow.
  When vein is punctured, first vitiated blood flows which is slightly dark in colour.
• Post-procedure:
  An eye is kept on the amount of blood.
  If Siravedha is done in an appropriate manner the flow of blood stops spontaneously after sometime.
  When it is 1 Prashta then the blood flow is stopped by applying pressure bandage.
• Patient is made to rest for few minutes.

SAMYAK LAKSHANA:\n(symptoms of adequate blood flow):
• Laghava (feeling of lightness in body)
• Vedanashanti (relief in pain)
• Vyadhivegaparikshaya (relief in concerned disease)
• Manaprasada (feeling of wellness in mind)

ATIPRAVRUTA LAKSHANA:\n(symptoms of excessive blood flow):
• Aandhya (blindness)
• Timira (blackouts in front of eyes)
• Akshepaka (seizures)
• Pakshaghata (paralysis)
• Trushna (thirst)
• Daha (burning sensation)
• Marana (death)

This is observed practically also that many times post – trauma the main cause of death is excessive blood loss.

BENEFITS:
• Procedure is cost-effective and safe.
• It can be performed on OPD basis and there is no need of hospitalisation.
• It is helpful to eliminate Doshas from Shakhas and in this therapy there is no need to bring the Doshas in Kostha.

PRECAUTIONS: The procedure should be carried out under strict aseptic precautions otherwise it may lead to complications like infection, sepsis etc.

DISCUSSION: Siravedha can be compared with venepuncture but it differs in few aspects, the main being that Siravedha is therapeutic procedure whereas venepuncture may be diagnostic or a part of therapeutic procedure rather than being independent therapeutic procedure. With few modifications the procedure remains same as it was in ancient times. Siravedha is considered to be Ardhachikitsa in Shalyatantra that is most of the surgical disorders can cured by Siravedha. This quote from Sushruta Samhita signifies the importance of Siravedha.

Probable mechanism of action
In sciatica and gout:
Pain known as Ruja is supposed to be due to vitiation of Vata Dosha. This is further classified as
• Dhatukshayajanya samprapti
• Avrodhjanya samprapti (obstructive pathology)
Siravedha acts in Avrodhjanya samprapti(obstructive pathology). Siravedha relieves this obstruction, causes Vatanuloman and hence providing relief in symptoms like pain and stiffness. From modern point of view, stimulation to large sensory fibers from peripheral tactile receptors depresses the transmission of pain signals either from the same area of the body or even from many segments. This results in local lateral inhibition leading to pain relief in sciatica and gout.

In varicose vein: In disease like varicose vein, chronic non healing wounds wherein the hampered blood circulation is causative factor, Siravedha leads to regularisation of blood flow and hence providing relief.

In skin disorders: Blood-letting leads to detoxification of blood that is why it is classified under Shodhana procedure. Therefore procedure is employed in treating skin diseases where purification of blood is one of the part of treatment.

In hypertension and polycythemia vera: The action of Siravedha is not only on or near the site of puncture but on whole body that is why it is also employed in systemic diseases like hypertension and polycythemia vera. In these conditions blood-letting leads to reduction in blood volume and thus relieving the condition.

CONCLUSION: Siravedha is capable of providing relief in many chronic lifestyle disorders and hence should be practice on more and more number of patients with the aim of standardising it as one of the treatment modalities.

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