

Preventive Efficacy of Seasonal Panchakarma Therapies in Lifestyle Disorders: A Comprehensive Literature Review

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Abstract: *Lifestyle disorders, including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and obesity, are on the rise globally due to poor dietary habits, sedentary lifestyles, and stress. Ayurveda, with its preventive and curative approach, offers promising solutions to manage and prevent these conditions. This paper examines the role of seasonal Panchakarma therapies—Vamana, Virechana, and Basti—administered during Vasant, Sharad, and Varsha Ritu, respectively, in preventing lifestyle disorders. These therapies, based on Ayurvedic principles, focus on detoxifying the body, restoring doshic balance, and promoting overall well-being by aligning with the seasonal changes. A review of classical Ayurvedic texts and modern research reveals the efficacy of these therapies in reducing the risk factors associated with non-communicable diseases. The paper emphasizes the potential of integrating seasonal Panchakarma therapies into contemporary health practices as a preventive measure against lifestyle disorders, offering a holistic, evidence-based approach to health promotion and disease prevention*

Keywords: Ritushodhana, Lifestyle Disorders, Preventive Healthcare, Panchakarma, Detoxification

I. INTRODUCTION

Lifestyle disorders, also referred to as non-communicable diseases (NCDs), are a result of modern living patterns and behavioral tendencies that impact health over time. These conditions are chronic, progressive, and predominantly non-transmissible. They arise from factors such as poor dietary habits, physical inactivity, chronic stress, and addictions like smoking, alcohol, and excessive use of digital media. Notably, NCDs represent the leading global cause of mortality and significantly strain healthcare systems due to their prolonged treatment courses and complex etiology.^[1]

Prevention is the cornerstone of addressing lifestyle disorders. With modifiable risk factors such as unhealthy habits and environmental exposures playing a pivotal role, interventions focusing on lifestyle modifications hold immense potential. Ayurvedic principles, rooted in preventive and promotive healthcare, offer an invaluable approach to mitigating these conditions. Seasonal Panchakarma therapies, particularly Vamana Karma in Vasant Ritu, Virechana in Sharad Ritu, and Basti in Varsha Ritu, stand out as effective measures for seasonal detoxification and Dosha balance, directly addressing the root causes of lifestyle disorders.^[2]

This study emphasizes the preventive efficacy of these therapies, providing a holistic and evidence-based framework for lifestyle disease management. By realigning lifestyle practices with nature's rhythms, these interventions demonstrate significant potential in reducing the burden of lifestyle disorders and promoting sustainable health.

METHODS

Classical Ayurvedic texts and contemporary literature alongside research studies were reviewed to analyze the seasonal applicability of Vamana, Virechana, and Basti in preventing lifestyle disorders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lifestyle disorders

They are also known as non-communicable diseases (NCDs), are a group of conditions that arise primarily due to an individual's way of living. Unlike communicable diseases, NCDs do not transmit from one person to another. These conditions are chronic in nature and are often attributed to unhealthy lifestyle practices, undesirable behaviors, chronic stress, poor dietary habits, physical inactivity, and addiction to substances like alcohol, tobacco, and even social media. While these diseases are not typically curable, they can be managed and prevented through proper nutrition and lifestyle modifications. Globally, NCDs are the leading cause of mortality, demanding prolonged treatment due to their complex etiology and multiple risk factors (WHO, 2021).^[3]

Prevalence and Impact

NCDs, including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), cancer, and chronic respiratory diseases, are strongly linked to lifestyle choices. These disorders have become a global health burden, particularly in countries undergoing rapid urbanization and globalization. In India, NCDs account for a significant proportion of mortality, as shown by recent data depicting increasing mortality rates attributed to these diseases.

Characteristics of Lifestyle Disorders

Lifestyle disorders have multifactorial causes, making it difficult to pinpoint a single risk factor. The etiology of NCDs can be broadly categorized into Uncontrollable factors: Rapid unplanned modernization, globalization of unhealthy lifestyles, and population aging.

Controllable factors: Raised blood pressure, increased blood sugar levels, elevated blood lipid levels, and central obesity.

Non-Contagious Nature Lifestyle disorders are non-communicable, meaning they do not spread through contact. Instead, they develop due to long-term unhealthy lifestyle choices and environmental influences.

Chronic Nature and Prolonged Course of Illness:

NCDs are typically chronic, requiring long-term medical management. The prolonged course of these diseases often imposes a significant healthcare and economic burden.^[4]

Functional Impairment or Disability:

Patients with NCDs frequently experience physical and functional impairments that hinder their ability to lead normal lives. Limited physical activity and dietary restrictions are common challenges faced by individuals with these disorders.

Global and Regional Perspectives

The rise of NCDs is closely associated with modernization and urbanization, leading to unhealthy dietary patterns and reduced physical activity. The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes that these diseases, while chronic, are largely preventable through interventions targeting behavioral risk factors. In the Indian context, the proportional mortality rate due to NCDs has shown a significant increase, necessitating urgent public health interventions to curb their impact.^[4]

Ritushodhna

To sustain this state of health, Ayurveda prescribes specific regimens tailored to daily life, seasons, and moral conduct. These include Dinacharya (daily regimen), Ritucharya (seasonal regimen), and Sadvrutta (ethical code of conduct). Among these, Ritu Shodhana, a seasonal purification therapy, holds a unique place in the prevention and management of diseases.^[5] Ritu Shodhana involves the elimination of accumulated morbid Doshas from the body, addressing imbalances caused by seasonal transitions. For the elimination of Kapha, Pitta and Vata vama in Vasanta ritu, Virechana in sharadritu and Basti in varsha ritu are specially indicated.

Vamana Karma In Vasanta Ritu

Vamana, one of the Panchakarma therapies in Ayurveda, is a purification procedure aimed at expelling aggravated Kapha Dosh from the body. It is a therapeutic emesis technique that not only removes toxins but also restores balance

in the body's Doshas, particularly benefiting those with Kapha or Kapha-Pitta dominance. The ultimate goal of Vamana is to cleanse the body, prevent diseases, and promote optimal health.^[6]

Indications and Benefits of Vamana

Vamana therapy is highly beneficial for individuals with Kapha and Kapha-Pitta constitution, as well as for those suffering from disorders rooted in Kapha Dosha. It is particularly effective in conditions associated with Kapha's natural site or where Kapha disorders overlap with Pitta imbalances.^[7]

Table 1: Indications for vamana

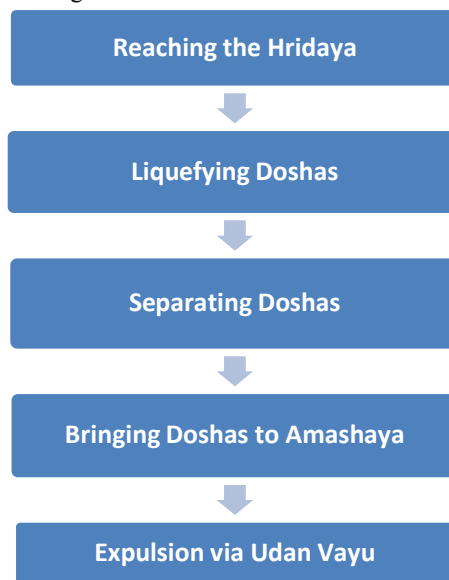
Respiratory disorders	Bronchial Asthma, Allergic Bronchitis, Rhinitis, Sinusitis, COPD, and Productive Cough.
Digestive issues	Hyperacidity, Indigestion, Anorexia, and Obesity.
Metabolic conditions	Overweight, Dyslipidemia, and Diabetes Mellitus.
Skin disorders	Acne Vulgaris, Psoriasis, Eczema, Dermatitis, Vitiligo, and Urticaria.
Hair problems	Premature Graying and Hair Fall.
Joint disorders	Inflammatory Stages.
Neurological and mental disorders	Depression, Excessive Sleep, Drowsiness, and Epilepsy.

When performed in accordance with the guidelines, Vamana Karma not only cures these conditions but also prevents complications and brings about remarkable health benefits.

Mechanism of Vamana Karma

The efficacy of Vamana lies in the unique pharmacological properties of the drugs used in the procedure. These drugs possess qualities like Ushna (hot), Teekshna (sharp), Sukshma (subtle), and Vikasi (spreading), which work synergistically to cleanse the body.^[8]

Fig. 1: Mechanism of vamana karma



The Significance of Vasantik Vamana in Prevention of Lifestyle disorders

Vasantik Vamana, or therapeutic emesis conducted in the spring season, is a specific indication of Vamana therapy. Spring, or Vasant Ritu, spans from mid-March to mid-May. During this time, the Kapha accumulated in the body during Hemant and Shishir Ritu undergoes natural aggravation (Prakopa). This leads to symptoms such as Agnimandya (weak digestive fire) and other Kapha-dominant conditions.

Acharya Sushruta emphasizes the importance of Kapha elimination during this period. He likens the process to cutting the root of a tree: once the root is removed, the tree, including its branches and fruits, is destroyed. Similarly, by expelling aggravated Kapha Dosha through Vamana, the disorders caused by Kapha are eradicated.

Vasantik Vamana is especially effective for individuals with Kapha or Kapha-Pitta dominance and for those suffering from Kapha-related disorders. By performing this therapy during its naturally indicated season, patients experience profound health benefits and long-lasting disease prevention.^[9]

Virechana in Sharad Ritu

Sharadiya Virechana, a seasonal detoxification therapy emphasized in Ayurveda, plays a pivotal role in preventing lifestyle disorders by addressing Pitta Dosha vitiation that peaks during Sharad Ritu (autumn). This process not only cleanses the body of accumulated toxins but also restores Agni (digestive fire) and maintains doshic balance, thus mitigating the root causes of several lifestyle-related diseases.^[10]

During Varsha Ritu (monsoon), excessive moisture, cold winds, and weakened digestive fire lead to Sanchaya (accumulation) of Pitta Dosha, creating conditions like indigestion and Vidagda Annarasa (improperly digested food). As Sharad Ritu begins, intense sunlight dries up the moisture, and the body's sudden exposure to heat aggravates Pitta, causing Prakopa (aggravation).

This aggravated Pitta can manifest in conditions involving Rakta Dushti (vitiation of blood), such as Daha (burning sensations), Jwara (Fever) and Kushta (Skin disorders).

Mechanism of Virechana in Sharad Ritu

- Virechana, a Pitta-specific purificatory therapy, effectively removes accumulated Pitta toxins. Its mechanism involves^[11]:

Mobilization of Body Fluids:

- Cellular fluids drain into the interstitial and vascular compartments, ultimately reaching the gastrointestinal tract for expulsion.

Biochemical Alteration:

- Purgation eliminates biochemical waste products like bilirubin, cholesterol, and other toxins through bile and intestinal secretions.

Action on Gastrointestinal Tract:

- Increased Secretion: Drugs stimulate the mucous membrane, enhancing secretion.
- Reduced Absorption: Prevents nutrient absorption, facilitating detoxification.
- Enhanced Motility: Promotes efficient elimination of waste.

Dominance of Jala and Prithvi Mahabhuta:

- Virechana drugs, rich in these elements, exhibit a natural downward movement, aiding purgation.

Impact of Virechana on Lifestyle Disorders

Lifestyle disorders are often linked to poor diet, sedentary habits, and metabolic dysfunction. These include conditions like^[12]:

- Diabetes Mellitus (Madhumeha): Virechana improves insulin sensitivity and reduces insulin resistance by mobilizing fat stored in the liver, adipose tissue, and other organs.
- Obesity (Sthoulya): Helps manage weight by enhancing fat metabolism and eliminating excess cholesterol.
- Hypertension and Heart Disease: Supports vascular health by purifying the blood and reducing systemic inflammation.
- Skin Disorders: Clears Pitta-related toxins, alleviating conditions like psoriasis and eczema.
- Metabolic Syndrome: Addresses core components such as glucose intolerance, central obesity, and dyslipidemia.

Preventive Potential of SharadiyaVirechana

SharadiyaVirechana stands as a cornerstone therapy in Ayurveda for its ability to counteract the effects of modern lifestyle habits. By detoxifying the body and correcting doshic imbalances, it provides a preventive shield against lifestyle disorders. The World Health Organization has flagged India as a hotspot for lifestyle diseases like diabetes, obesity, and hypertension, making such Ayurvedic interventions highly relevant. For individuals susceptible to or already experiencing early signs of lifestyle disorders, SharadiyaVirechana offers a safe, effective, and holistic approach to rejuvenation and disease prevention.^[13]

Basti in Varsha Ritu

Vata governs the conjunction and disjunction of bodily entities such as feces, urine, and bile with their respective receptacles. In cases of severe Vata aggravation, Basti therapy is considered unparalleled. The rectal route, central to Basti therapy, provides distinct advantages, including partial avoidance of first-pass metabolism. Studies suggest that rectal administration can sometimes surpass intravenous routes in efficiency. As a form of Shodhana (purification), Basti is lauded for its preventive, curative, and promotive benefits. Vagbhata emphasizes the importance of effective excretion, as improper evacuation can lead to diseases like Prameha, Arsha, Grahani, and Medoroga. By targeting the Pakwashaya (colon), the primary site of Vata, Basti addresses the root cause of most diseases. The therapy ensures optimal absorption in a healthy rectum, highlighting the significance of proper excretion.^[14]

Seasonal Characteristics and Dosha Management in Varsha Ritu

Varsha Ritu (rainy season) is characterized by overcast skies, frequent rainfall without thunderstorms, and replenished water bodies. During this season:

- **Rasa:** Amla (sour) predominates.
- **Mahabhutas:** Prithvi (earth) and Agni (fire) dominate.
- **Vata Dosha** undergoes vitiation.
- **Pitta Dosha** accumulates (*sanchaya*).
- **Agni** (digestive fire) becomes impaired.

To address these imbalances, **medicated Basti** serves as an effective therapy to expel vitiated Doshas and restore balance.^[15]

Basti in the Prevention of Lifestyle Disorders

The accumulation of mala (waste products) within the body, when not evacuated properly, is considered a root cause of various diseases. Acharya Vagbhata has emphasized that improper excretion of mala can lead to lifestyle disorders such as Prameha (diabetes), Arsha (piles), Grahani (digestive disorders), and Medoroga (obesity). Basti therapy plays a pivotal role in addressing this concern by ensuring the effective elimination of mala and optimizing systemic health.

The Mechanism of Basti Therapy

Bastidravya (medicated enema) is administered via the rectal route, which directly targets Pakwashaya (large intestine), the primary site of Vata Dosha. Since Vata is the driving force behind all physiological functions and the root cause of most disorders, its pacification through Basti leads to holistic health benefits. Notably, the other two Doshas, Pitta and Kapha, cannot function independently without Vata.^[16]

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Enhanced Absorption and Distribution

The rectum, considered the Moola (root) of the body, is richly supplied with blood and lymph. This vascularity allows the Bastidravaya to cross the rectal mucosa efficiently, facilitating the absorption of unionized and lipid-soluble substances. This absorption follows the principles of diffusion, where molecules move from a region of higher concentration (rectal lumen) to a region of lower concentration (adjacent tissues). Key factors influencing this process include the physical status of the Bastidravaya, its ingredients, solubility, pH, and the vascularity of the rectum.^[17]

The constituents of Basti can reach up to the small intestine, where further absorption occurs, ensuring systemic effects. This action is particularly beneficial in conditions requiring micronutrient supplementation, as Basti therapy nourishes the intestinal layers, enhancing their absorptive capacity.

Systemic Effects of Basti

Basti's effects are not confined to the gastrointestinal tract. It influences the Enteric Nervous System (ENS), which is often referred to as the "second brain" due to its independent reflex activities and interaction with the Central Nervous System (CNS). Basti stimulates the ENS receptors, regulating motor activity, secretion, absorption, and blood flow. Additionally, the ENS produces several neurotransmitters, such as dopamine and serotonin, which have systemic benefits, including tissue repair and immune modulation.^[18]

Benefits in Lifestyle Disorders

- **Metabolic Disorders:** By normalizing Apana Vayu, Basti improves Vatanulomana (regulated flow of Vata), which enhances digestive and metabolic processes. Proper excretion of mala prevents metabolic imbalances such as diabetes (Prameha) and obesity (Medoroga).
- **Musculoskeletal Health:** Basti affects Asthivaha and MajjavahaSrotas, nourishing bone tissues and improving calcium levels, essential for preventing conditions like osteoporosis.
- **Immune Modulation:** Basti therapy regulates pro-inflammatory cytokines, immunoglobulins, and T-cell functions, strengthening immunity.
- **Reproductive Health:** It enhances the functioning of the bladder, uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries, addressing reproductive health concerns.^[19]

II. CONCLUSION

Seasonal Panchakarma therapies—Vamana, Virechana, and Basti—offer a robust, holistic framework for preventing lifestyle disorders by addressing their root causes through Dosha balance and detoxification. These therapies align the body's physiological functions with seasonal transitions, mitigating risk factors associated with lifestyle diseases like diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and metabolic disorders. The findings underscore the relevance of Ayurvedic principles in modern preventive healthcare, providing sustainable, non-invasive strategies to curb the growing burden of non-communicable diseases globally.

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