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A Review on Diagnosis and Ayurvedic Management of Cervical Spondylosis

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ABSTRACT

The wear and tear of the spine related disorder is on the rise now, especially more on the cervical vertebrae, where there is an abnormal damage to the cartilage and bones of the neck. Cervical spondylosis is a common degenerative disorder of the cervical spine, increasingly prevalent due to sedentary lifestyle, prolonged screen exposure, faulty posture, and stress. *Ayurveda* correlates this condition primarily with *Manyāstambha, Greevāgraha*, and *Vāta-vyādhi*, involving derangement of *Vāta doṣa* localized in *Asthi* and *Majjā dhātu*. This review explores the diagnostic approach and Ayurvedic management of cervical spondylosis, with special emphasis on *Marma Chikitsa* as a non-invasive, holistic intervention. Integration of classical Ayurvedic principles with contemporary understanding offers a safe, effective, and sustainable approach to management.

KEYWORDS: *Cervical Spondylosis, Manyāstambha, Vāta Vyādhi, Marma Chikitsa, Ayurveda.*

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INTRODUCTION

Cervical spondylosis represents age-related degenerative changes in the cervical vertebrae, intervertebral discs, ligaments, and facet joints. Though traditionally considered a disease of aging, it is now commonly observed in younger populations due to modern lifestyle factors. As the disc dehydrate and shrink it causes protrusion and bony projections along the edges of the bone (bone spurs) of adjacent ventral bodies leading to narrowing of vertebral canal and intervertebral foramina.[1]

The overall prevalence of neck pain in the general population ranges between 0.4% and 86.8% (mean: 23.1%); point prevalence ranges from 0.4% to 41.5% (mean: 14.4%); and yearly prevalence ranges from 4.8% to 79.5% (mean: 25.8%).[2]

Ayurveda, with its profound understanding of *Vāta* dynamics, musculoskeletal degeneration, and neurological involvement, offers a comprehensive framework for diagnosis and management. Among various therapeutic modalities, *Marma Chikitsa* holds a unique position due to its ability to influence *Prāṇa*, *Doṣa*, and neurological function through specific vital points.

Modern Perspective of Cervical Spondylosis

Cervical spondylosis is characterized by:

- Neck pain and stiffness
- Restricted range of motion
- Radiating pain to shoulders and upper limbs
- Tingling, numbness, or weakness
- Cervicogenic headache and vertigo

Diagnostic tools include:

- **X – ray of cervical spine** - A lateral view shows the loss of normal lordosis, reduced disc space and growth of osteophytes. Sometimes canal stenosis can also be visualized. An oblique view shows osteophytic protrusion into the intervertebral foramina. AP view mainly helps in evaluate bony alignment and lateral osteophytes, especially involving uncovertebral joints.
- **Contrast myelogram** – shows multiple disc protrusion into thecal sac like negative shadow with total extradural obstruction.

- **CT Myelogram and MRI**- demonstrates the indentation of the thecal sac, hardening of the intervertebral discs, foraminal narrowing and facet joint arthropathy. In severe cases compression of the cord may also be visualized.
- **Discography**- typical pain is provoked on injection into the intervertebral disc and it is then relieved by local anaesthetics. Helps in the precise identification of the offending disc**.**

Differential Diagnosis

For the successful treatment, Cervical Spondylosis should be differentiated from following diseases: -

1. Cervical Rib Syndrome: Pain is felt usually in the forearm and hand. A lump may be palpable in the neck which can be confirmed by X- ray.
2. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome: Neck movements are usually painless. Pain is felt on the palmer surface of the hand in the distribution of the median nerve. Nerve condition is slowed across the wrist.
3. Supra spinatus Tendon Lesion Although the distribution of pain may resemble that of a prolapsed cervical disc, movements at the shoulder joint are abnormal.
4. Cervical Tumours: With tumours of the spinal cord, nerve root or cervical lymph nodes, the symptoms are not intermittent and the X ray picture may be abnormal. Tumors of the cervical vertebrae are seen on X-ray.
5. Cervical Spine Infection: The symptoms do not occur in attacks, there may be an abscess, and X-ray show narrowing of disc space and bone destruction.

***Ayurvedic* Correlation**

Cervical spondylosis is not described as a single disease entity in Ayurveda but can be correlated with:

Modern Condition	Ayurvedic Correlation
Cervical spondylosis	*Manyāstambha*
Neck stiffness	*Greevāgraha*
Radiating pain	*Vātaja Nānatmaja Vikāra*
Degeneration	*Asthi-Majjā Kṣaya*

VyadhiGhatak [3,4]

- *Doṣa: Vāta, Kapha* (in stiffness, heaviness)
- *Duṣya: Asthi, Majjā, Snāyu, Kandara*
- *Srotas: Asthivaha, Majjāvaha*

Key Diagnostic Parameters

- Neck pain aggravated by movement (*Vāta lakṣaṇa*)
- Stiffness and heaviness (*Kapha* association)
- Dryness, cracking sounds, reduced flexibility
- Chronicity and degenerative nature

Nāḍī Parīkṣā, sparśa, and *pravṛtti nidāna* (posture, occupational stress) are crucial for precise assessment.

Principles of *Ayurvedic* Management

The management aims at:

- *Vāta śamana*
- *Bṛṃhaṇa* (nourishment)
- *Snehana* and *Svedana*
- Restoration of cervical mobility
- Neuro-muscular balance

Therapeutic Interventions

1. *Śamana Chikitsā* (Conservative Management)
   - *Yogarāja Guggulu*
   - *Mahāvatavidhvaṃsana Rasa*
   - *Trayodaśāṅga Guggulu*
   - *Daśamūla Kwātha*
   - *Aśvagandhā and Bala* formulations
2. *Pañcakarma* Therapies [5]
   - *Greevā Basti*: Nourishes cervical vertebrae and discs
   - *Nāḍī Sveda / Patra Piṇḍa Sveda*: Reduces stiffness
   - Nasya: Especially *Anu Taila or Kṣīrabala Taila*
   - *Basti*: Gold standard for *Vāta* disorders

***Marma Chikitsa* in Cervical Spondylosis**

Marma Chikitsa is a specialized technique involving gentle stimulation of vital anatomical points to regulate *Prāṇa vāyu* and promote healing.

Relevant *Marma* Points-[6]

SN	*Marma*	Stimulation time	Sitting of Marma Chikitsa
1.	*Ansa*	0.8 sec	Two times a day
2.	*Ansaphalak*	0.8 sec	Two times a day
3.	*Krakatika*	0.8 sec	Two times a day
4.	*Vidhura*	0.8 sec	Two times a day
5.	*Kakshadhara*	0.8 sec	Two times a day

Mechanism of Action

- Balances *Vāta doṣa*
- Improves local circulation
- Reduces nerve compression symptoms
- Restores neuromuscular coordination

***Pathya-Apathya* (Lifestyle & Diet)**

As in *Ayurveda* the first line of treatment is *Nidana parivarjanama* so the first aim should be lifestyle modification which can be achieved through change in dietary habits, *Yoga* and Regular exercises.

Ahara

- *Vatahara, Madhura, Amla, Lavana & Snigdha* diet should be given [7].
- *Shunthi* is described under *Vatanashaka Gana*, so it must be included in our daily diet [8].
- *Ghritapana* is advised to alleviate *vata* [9].

PATHYA AHARA:

- *Sneha* & Other- *Sarpi, Vasa, Taila, Majja, Ghrita, Dugdha, Dadhi, Kurchika.*
- *Harita, Shakha, Shimbi & Phala Varga – Raktashali, Patola, Vartaka, Dadima, Kulatha, Masha, Godhuma, Parushaka, Badara, Lashuna & Draksha.*
- *Mamsa Varga – Chataka, Kukkuta, Tittira, Shilindhra, Nakra, Gargars, Khudisha, Bileshaya.*
- *Rasa Pradhana- Madhura, Amla, Lavana*
- *Manasika – Sukha*
- ***Vihara** – Snehana, Swedana, Snehapana, Snana, Abhyanga, Mardana, Basti, Avagaha, Samvahana, Agni Karma, Upanaha, Tailadroni, Shirobasti, Nasya, Santarpana, Brimhana.*

APATHYA AHARA:

- *Harita, Shakha, Shimbi, Phala Varga- Chanaka, Kalaya, Shyamaka, Kuravinda, Mudga, Rajamasha, Guda, Jambuka, Kramuka, Mrinala, Nishpava, Taalaphala, Shimbi, Shaka, Udumbara.*
- *Mamsa Varga- All Jangala Mamsa Varga.*
- *Rasa Pradhana- Kashaya, Katu, Tikta.*
- *Manasika- Chinta, Prajagara.*
- ***Vihara**- Vyavaya, Ativyayama, Basti, Ashva Yana, Chakramana, Vegadharana, Chhardi, Shrama.*

Discussion

Cervical spondylosis, though degenerative in nature, can be effectively managed through Ayurveda by addressing the root cause—*Vāta* imbalance. *Marma Chikitsa* enhances therapeutic outcomes by acting at the neurological level, offering pain relief, improved mobility, and quality of life without adverse effects. Marma *Chikitsa* immediately relaxes the neck muscles and releases the spasm.[10] When combined with *Pañcakarma* and internal medications, it provides a holistic and sustainable solution.

Conclusion

Ayurvedic management of cervical spondylosis, enriched with *Marma Chikitsa*, offers a multidimensional approach addressing structural, neurological, and energetic aspects of the disease. Early diagnosis, individualized treatment, and lifestyle modification are key to preventing progression and achieving long-term relief. Integrative application of classical wisdom and modern understanding can redefine non-surgical management of cervical spondylosis.

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