

EFFECTIVENESS OF SIDDHA MEDICINE IN THE TREATMENT OF KARAPPAN (ECZEMA) – A CASE REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Siddha, a traditional healing science of India is an age old holistic medicine which emphasizes the maintenance of relaxed mind and body harmony and insists to keep pace with the laws of nature. In siddha system besides herbs, metals and mineral drugs are used as medicines. All the medicines have their own way of preparation and prescribed with specific dosage and with specific *anupaanams* and *thunai marunthu* in this system. Dermatitis and Eczema are a common problem all over the world. Their incidence is 2 – 3 % of medical problem seen in practice. In the practice of dermatology, the first step is to establish the clinical diagnosis of dermatitis and eczema. Then

decide the clinic morphological pattern, viz. Contact, Atopic, Neurodermatitis, Gravitational, Endogenous or Seborrheic. The final and most important step to make an etiological diagnosis that is establish in the role of the different causes or cause responsible for the dermatitis. Eczema is a non – contagious inflammation of the skin characterized by erythema, scaling, edema, vesiculation and oozing. The term Eczema is a Greek word. The whole word implies “Boil out”. It is characterized by superficial inflammatory edema of the epidermis associated with vesicle formation. Itching varies from mild to severe paroxysm which may even interfere with work and sleep.^[1]

In people with Eczema, the inflammatory response to irritating substances overacts, causing itching and scratching. Eczema is non – contagious and like many diseases, currently cannot

be cured. However, for most patients the condition may be managed well with treatment and avoidance of triggers.

Although Eczema may look different from person to person, it is most often characterized by dry, red, extremely itchy patches on the skin. Eczema is sometimes referred to as “the itch that rashes” since the itch, when scratched, results in the appearance of the rash². Eczema can occur on just about any part of the body; however, in infants, eczema typically occurs on forehead, cheeks, legs, forearms, scalp and neck. In children and adults Eczema typically occurs on the face, neck and the insides of the elbows, knees and ankles. In some people, Eczema may “bubble up” and ooze. In others, the condition may appear scaly, dry and red. Chronic scratching causes the skin to take on a leathery texture because the skin thickens (lichenification). Topical corticosteroids are the most widely prescribed medication for dermatological diseases including eczema as they are so efficient in treating inflammatory and epidermal proliferative diseases. Occasionally, it will be necessary for patients with extensive disease to be treated with large quantities of the more potent preparations for a short time. However, with large quantities of these potent preparations transient adrenal suppression is likely to occur, especially early in the treatment. Also, evidence of mild suppression of the HPA axis – ‘hypothalamic pituitary adrenal axis’ is reported in adults when the more potent topical steroids were used, with rapid recovery of the function when intensive treatment ceased. Untreated or partially treated eczema becomes more chronic requiring treatment for a longer period. There is possibility of increase in the cutaneous flora of micro-organisms and dermatophytes, during the treatment with a steroid preparation. The cost becomes prohibitive and quantity inadequate as corticosteroid preparations is not economical particular for poor patients of eczema where it is more common.^[3]

Siddha Concept

In Siddha system of medicine Eczema is typically known as *Karappan*. In the book which was written by Sage *Yugi muni*, there was a detailed explanation of *karappan* and also he described that it is a unique skin disorder and it is different from leprosy. The symptoms of Eczema mentioned by the *Siddhars* was *kuru*, *thimir*, *punn*, *thadippu* and also there may be scaly patches along with changes in the body’s natural skin color.^[4]

Cause

Sage *Yugi muni* written in his book that it is non – contagious and it is related to poison ivy and Psychosomatic. This disease can be initiated and aggravated by certain food items and is

known as *karappan pandangal*. They are *Solam, Kambu, Varagu, Vaalai kaai, Paagal, Kelittri meen*.^[4]

Case Presentation

A 47 years old female visited at Dr. Rajkumar's Siddha Clinic, Chromepet, Chennai – 45 with the following chief complaints seeking Siddha treatment.

1. Hyper-pigmented itchy patches in both foot, since 2 years.
2. Intense itching increases at night (nocturnal),
3. Mild scaling along with mild watery discharge,
4. Mild dryness along with fissuring (occasionally),
5. Burning sensation (on and off)

Patient was apparently normal before 2 years, when she was working as housekeeping in a well reputed hospital, she was exposed to more floor cleaning agents. She felt mild burning sensation along with mild pruritis in both sole. After a couple of week, she developed papular eruptions with intense itching especially at night. Out of scratching over the affected region she felt mild oozing. Gradually she developed hyper-pigmented patches, along with scaling, watery discharge and fissuring. Initially she was well responded to modern treatment. But she had only instant relief from the condition. Not a known case of diabetes mellitus, systemic hypertension, dyslipidemia, and thyroid dysfunction.

Clinical Examination

Table 1: Gradation of symptoms / subjective parameters of eczema.

Symptoms	Gradation	Score
Itching	No Itching	0
	Itching present rarely	1
	Itching disturbing patients attention	2
	Severe itching and disturbing patients sleep	3
Discoloration (Hyperpigmentation)	Normal skin color	0
	Brownish red discoloration	1
	Blackish red discoloration	2
	Blackish discoloration	3
Burning Sensation	Absence of burning sensation in affected part	0
	Rarely burning sensation in affected part	1
	Continues burning sensation in affected part	2
	Disturbing patient's sleep	3

Table 2: Line of treatment.

Day	Treatment
1	Purgation – <i>Agasthiyar Kuzhambu</i> – 200 mg with ginger juice
2	Rest
3	Internal Medicines 1. <i>Rakthasudhi Maathirai</i> – 2 BD, with lukewarm water 2. <i>Gandhaga Choorana Maathirai</i> - 2 BD, with lukewarm milk 3. <i>Karisalai Karpam Maathirai</i> - 2 BD, with lukewarm water External Medicines 1. <i>Pungan thailam</i> – Q.S at bed time 2. <i>Kuliyal Chooranam</i> – Q.S. for bathing All the above mentioned medicines were issued for 48 days and procured from SKM Siddha and Ayurveda Company (India) Pvt. Ltd.

Table 3: Showing changes in symptoms before and after treatment.

Symptoms	Grade before treatment	Grade after treatment
Itching	3	0
Discoloration (Hyperpigmentation)	3	1
Burning sensation	1	0

RESULTS

The patient had started improving during treatment and at the end of 48th day there was over all recovery (Figure 1, 2), with Siddha treatment she has relief in all the Subjective and Objective parameters.

**Figure 1: Before treatment.****Figure 2: After 48 days' treatment.**

DISCUSSION

Causative factors of Eczema or *Karappan* are due to altered food habit and altered lifestyle, which leads to impairment of digestion and aggravation of *Kapham thathu*.^[4] *Kapham* manifests in the skin and causes accumulation of toxins. The vitiated three *Thathus Vatham*, *Pitham*, *Kapham* along with impaired *Saaram*, *Senneer*, *Oon* and *Kozhuppu* together constitute seven essential entities which play role in pathogenesis of this skin disorder and *Kapham* is the predominant *Thathu* involved in *Karappan*.^[5,6] Recurrent hyperpigmented itchy patches along with mild oozing and fissuring were the symptoms of patient. *Kapham Thathu* is responsible for symptoms like pruritus, non-progressive / slow progression of it. Before treatment patient had hyperpigmented itchy patches along with mild oozing, fissuring and burning sensation over the sole (Figure 1). After a course of 48 days' administration of both internal and external Siddha medication, the patient was completely relieved from itching, burning sensation, fissuring and oozing. Notable changes had occurred over the hyper pigmented patches over the sole (Figure 2). Along with internal medication and external medication pathyam and apathyam (diet protocol suitable to the patient and disease) are also very important in the management of disease, according to Siddha system of medicine. hence the patient was advised to avoid bitter gourd, brinjal, tamarind, chicken, egg, sea foods, fast food and bakery items, food made up of maida and also she was instructed not to expose chemicals such as floor cleaning liquid, and bleaching powder, which was the primary factor for her condition.

CONCLUSION

In Siddha literature which was written by *Sage Yugi muni*, there was a detailed explanation of *karappan* and also he described that it is a unique skin disorder and it is different from leprosy. It has *Kapham* dominancy and also *Mukkutram* involvement can be evident from sign and symptoms. Following strict dietary protocol along with both internal and external medicines followed by proper life style changes are essential to prevent the recurrences and also to get the sustained relief after treatment. Present study finding can't be generalized, further long term follows up studies on large sample are required to substantiate the above claims.

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