

AYURVED FOR CANCER

Ayurved is the medical science developed in India more than 5000 years ago. Earliest available textbook, Sushrut Samhita, dates back to 700 B.C. Even in these early texts, references are given about still earlier texts, which are no longer available. As the tradition goes, Dhanwantari, The God of Medicine, is the originator of Ayurved, which is considered as the Fifth Veda. Ayurved is the science of health rather than science of disease. It stresses the preventive maintenance for good health, although it also suggests ways to overcome a disease. Ayurved is based on some fundamental concepts viz. Dosha, Agni, Dhatu, Mala and Ojas.

Hindu scriptures, *The Vedas*, state that the universe was created out of five elements called *pancha-maha-bhoota*. These elements are *Akash* (space), *Vayu* (air), *Tej* (fire), *Apa* (water) and *Prithvi* (earth). Before the creation, these elements were in a subtle invisible form. At the time of creation, first the Word (cosmic vibration) manifested. Other elements became sequentially manifest by process of *panchikaran* (inter-mixtures) of the invisible elements. The description about the creation of the universe is given in *Vedas* and other Hindu scriptures. Human body, which is miniature image of the universe, is also made out of the same five elements.

Dosha:

Combinations of panch-mahabhoota elements in a certain way produce what Ayurved calls as *Tridosha*, three constituents of the body. These three are *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. When these three are in a proper balance, a person remains in good health. A disturbed dosha, when out of balance due to improper diet, habits and emotions, leads to ill health. The concept of dosha, although difficult to explain, is very important in understanding Ayurved. There is no synonym in English for dosha.

Kapha reflects qualities of earth and water and is responsible for stability of the body. It is the chief material constituent of the body. Kapha, whose constitution ranges from dense, unctous shleshak kapha to liquid state of tarpaka kapha, provides the basic building blocks for

formation of new cells. It is the building material of the body. Kapha provides adhesive and cohesive forces to keep the body tissues together and in good condition. It is an anabolic factor. Technically, anabolic part of metabolism is responsible for building up the tissues, while the opposite catabolic part (catabolism) is responsible for cellular death and recycling of organic constituents. When Kapha is excessively disturbed, diseases like allergies, colds, coughs etc.

Pitta, which reflects the element Tejas- fire, is responsible for all the chemical activities of cells, heat in the body and bio-chemical activities. Pitta is responsible for intellect and for recycling of worn out cells. It is catabolic factor. Fever, heat, burning, ulcerations, infections are some of the manifestations of excessive pitta.

Vata, which reflects qualities of air and space, is responsible for all the movements and mobility of the body. Even movements of thoughts and emotions are controlled by vata. Vata also carries out all the commands for cell division and cell growth as well as for their recycling. Responsible for the functions of various organ systems, vata regulates the entire mind/ body apparatus. When Vata is disturbed, diseases affecting movements, such as arthritis, paralysis, loss of balance etc occur.

Above is a very simplistic explanation about only few common conditions arising out of dosha disturbances. In practice, dosha disturbance is a very complex subject leading to almost all the disease conditions. It is interesting to note that each of the dosha reflects the qualities of the parent elements from which it is made.

Agni:

Agni literally means fire and it represents Tejas Mahabhoota. In body, agni is responsible for digestion, assimilation and all the cellular biochemical activities. Agnis are thirteen in number, which work at three levels. Jatharagni is the primary- first level Agni, which digests food in stomach and intestines at a gross level. Good appetite expresses normal jathar- agni. Disturbed Agni could cause either too much or too poor appetite or appetite for wrong unhealthy foods. If food is not digested at this primary level due to disturbed Agni, a toxin termed Aama is formed. Undigested aama can disturb the doshas causing various diseases. Besides the main jatharagni, there are five mahabhootagni, each associated with each mahabhoota and seven dhatu-agni, one each with the seven dhatus. Mahabhootagni work at intermediate level and help convert food to more subtle nutrients for five sense organs

associated with individual mahabhoota. Senses associated with panch mahabhoota respectively are: sound, touch, vision, taste and smell. Ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose perceive these five senses, respectively. Finally, seven dhatu-agni help in metabolism of the nutrients at the cellular level.

Dhatu:

From the food we eat tissues are made. These tissues are named as *Dhatu* in Ayurved. Dhatu are seven in number and made up sequentially, each one from the preceding one. These seven dhatu are Rasa, Rakta, Mansa, Meda Asthi, Majja and Shukra. There are no exact anatomical equivalent terms for these seven dhatu. Grossly, rasa represents the digested fluid from which rakta (blood) is formed. Rasa also stands for lymph, a fluid circulating around all the cells. From blood, mansa (flesh) and from flesh meda (fat tissue) is formed. Further, from meda; asthi (bones), from asthi; majja (bone marrow) and from majja; shukra (fluid of vitality responsible for cellular rejuvenation and also for human reproduction) is formed. When all the dhatu are in pure healthy condition, body stays in good health. If disturbances in dosha persist over a long period of time, dhatu get contaminated with persistent dosha disturbances. Dhatu are also called as dooshya, since these are liable to get contaminated.

Mala:

Mala are waste products like stools, urine, sweat, menstrual discharge in women etc. Due to proper digestion and all the other processes related to metabolism, proper quantities of mala are formed. These need to be discharged from the body. This is a detoxification process.

Ojus:

Ojus is the subtle principle that reflects vitality, intelligence and strength. Ojus cannot be shown in any material form, although it expresses in all the life activities.

Ayurvedic Concept of Cancer:

According to ayurved, there is no specific single disease termed as cancer. Cancer is a group of chronic disorders related to long term uncorrected disturbance affecting various dhatu and dosha. Cancer could manifest as a predominantly local disease in the form of an arbuda or granthi, the Sanskrit terms for tumor. Cancer can manifest even as a non-healing ulcer, dushta vrana. Cancer could have additional symptoms of a systemic disease such as loss of weight, weakness, chronic fever and other disturbances. Ayurvedic diagnosis of cancer may differ in

different patients diagnosed to have same histological type of cancer confirmed by modern medical techniques. Assessment of dosha, dhatu and Agni are important for establishing ayurvedic diagnosis. Ayurved recommends the treatment according to the patient's constitution and as per the specific disturbances in dosha and dhatu found on ayurvedic assessment of the patient.

Ayurvedic Diagnosis:

Ayurvedic methods of diagnosis are 1. Trividha Pariksha: Inspection, Palpation and Questioning about the disease history. 2. Ashtavidha (eight fold examination) of which examination of tongue and nadi (pulse) is important. 3. Indriya Pariksha: examination of individual organs, 4. Srotasa Pariksha: Examination of various systems and channels, and finally 5. Nidan Panchak: five fold final deliberations to decide the exact cause, progress, prognosis and treatment of disease.

In earlier times, modern tests like blood test, X-rays, scan etc were not known. However, modern day Ayurvedic physician takes all the help from these tests for diagnosis and treatment of a patient.

Ayurvedic Treatment:

For disease prevention, Ayurved outlines appropriate Ahara (foods), Vihara (life style) and Vichara (thought process). These recommendations vary from person to person and from season to season. Detailed recommendations are given in ayurvedic texts on this subject. The emphasis is on prevention of the disease. However, if a disease starts, ayurvedic treatment is based on following methods:

These treatment methods are:

1. SHODHAN, Panch Karma: Detoxification and purifications of various tissues and organs. Panch-Karma are five-fold methods employed for Shodhan. These are preceded by Poorva-Karma Snehana and Swedan (i.e. medicated oil massage and steam baths). One or more of the 5 Pancha-Karmas then follow in a daily session, which goes on for 1 or 2 weeks.
2. SHAMAN: Pacification and re-balancing of your defective dosha, usually with some herbal and mineral remedies.

3. RASAAYAN: Rejuvenation of body tissues for maintenance of youth and increasing immunity.

Ayurvedic medicines are prepared from natural substances like herbs, minerals, metals and animal products. There are elaborate guidelines to prepare various products, which are usually made from multiple constituents.

Modern medical scientists often wonder about the “ Active Principle” in ayurvedic products. We cannot apply the same yardsticks to ayurvedic products as applied to modern pharmaceutical products, which are mostly manufactured as synthetic molecules in a laboratory. Each herb might have a variety of active molecules working synergistically on various levels. We have to believe in Nature’s intelligence in producing a medicinal herb, which might have many “active principles” mutually enhancing beneficial effects while keeping away toxic effects of individual alkaloids, polypeptides, polysaccharides or whatever name pharmaceutical industry discovers for such “ Active Principles”! It is neither possible nor advisable to subject each herb to a series of chemical analytical tests, which would decrease the holistic effect of any natural product. Besides being ecologically dangerous, such practices would skyrocket the cost of herbal medicines making them unaffordable to a common man. Most of these herbal products, being used over many centuries, have been found to be safe and effective. The benefits of such herbal products could always be reconfirmed by well-designed limited clinical trials on actual patients. Unlike modern pharmaceuticals, these natural products have a wide safety margin. The real test of the pudding is in eating. New medicines based on personal experiences of leading Ayurvedic consultants are also being added from time to time.

Ayurvedic Research at Wagholi:

Since early 1980s, I was studying complementary medicine with a view to reduce radiation reactions and to improve quality of life of my patients. My mother Dr. Laxmibai Kulkarni was a well-known ayurvedic practitioner in Pune in 1930s and 40s. Securing a gold medal, she ranked first in her final examination for the Ayurvedic medical degree. In my childhood, I naturally got exposed to various herbs and ayurvedic preparations. Sometimes I used to accompany her when she visited patients. My father, Mr. Nanasaheb Kulkarni, had a shop in

Pune to sell medicinal herbs and chemicals. Since my early childhood, I had decided to become a doctor. During my allopathic medical training, I almost forgot about ayurved. Later on after many years into my practice as radiation oncologist in Mumbai, Vaidya Bhave rekindled my latent interest as mentioned in the preface of this book.

In early 1980s, I came into contact with Sardeshmukh Maharaj and his family. Maharaj was a saintly figure, whose mission was to promote ancient Indian sciences and arts. It was very inspiring and interesting to spend time with Maharaj, who was always eager to instruct us about Ayurved. Previous seven generations in Sardeshmukh family were well known for practicing Ayurved in Maharashtra. Sardeshmukh Maharaj, who himself excelled in Nadi-Pariksha (Ayurvedic pulse analysis), passed on this rare skill to his children, especially to the oldest son Dr. Sadanand Sardeshmukh. Maharaj established the Bharatiya Sanskriti Darshan Trust in early 1960s to promote the Indian Sciences and Arts. A spacious 60 acres of land was acquired at Wagholi, 15 miles east of Pune in foothills of Maharashtra, for the work of this institution.

I often met with Maharaj and Dr. Sardeshmukh to discuss about utility of ayurved in cancer. I referred some of my cancer patients to Dr. Sardeshmukh for complementary ayurvedic treatment, which seem to help a significantly for symptomatic relief and improving general condition. In 1986, Maharaj directed us to develop a Cancer Project with Ayurvedic line of treatment. Further trials on individual patients were conducted over the next few years. Finally in April 1994, the Cancer Research Project was launched at Ayurvedic Hospital and Research Center at Wagholi and soon extended to Mumbai and Solapur with help of Dr Shirish Kumthekar, a cancer surgeon.

Sardeshmukh Maharaj left this world in 1996. His vision is now unfolding and the mission expanding. With ceaseless efforts of Sardeshmukh family and help from dedicated staff and friends, various projects are blooming as envisaged by Sardeshmukh Maharaj. Besides the Ayurvedic Hospital and Research Center, magnificent Panch-karma Cottages, an Ayurvedic Medical College and an Ayurvedic Pharmacy are providing many unique services in this holy location. Standing at distance, Maharaj Sardeshmukh's Samadhi Shrine provides constant blessings and inspiration to the visitors. Recently, a beautiful Matha (monastery) building has been added to promote Spiritual Practices, Yoga and Indian Classical Music.

The Cancer Research Project:

Started in 1994, this project has enrolled about 1200 cancer patients between 1994 and 2001. Cancer patients with biopsy confirmed diagnosis of cancer are accepted to join this project. Patients are initially given the detailed idea about the project with possible scope and possible limitations of Ayurvedic treatment for cancer. A patient is required to sign written consent showing his acceptance to join the project. A patient can withdraw from the project anytime for any reason. A dedicated team of ayurvedic and allopathic doctors working in this project record detailed history and all the reports of the patient. Patient with any type of cancer is accepted in the project as long as he can attend regular follow-ups. History and progress reports are recorded in ayurvedic as well as allopathic format. Patients are then divided in four groups as follows:

Group A: Freshly diagnosed cancer patients who wish to try only Ayurvedic treatment initially.

Group B: Patients who have already tried major surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy as first treatment of the cancer, but treatment failed.

Group C: The patients, currently undergoing chemotherapy and / or radiotherapy, who wish to take complementary ayurvedic treatment.

Group D: The patients, whose cancers have been controlled due to allopathic treatment for more than 6 months, wishing to take complementary ayurvedic treatment in addition.

Initially, a detailed medical examination is performed on each patient to decide the extent of cancer. Ayurvedic pulse diagnosis, nadi pariksha forms an important part of the examination. Ayurvedic line of treatment is decided for each patient, who is reviewed once a month or more frequently if needed. Patients who need panch-karma treatments are instructed accordingly. All the patients receive oral medicines for daily consumption. The medicines are periodically changed as per the progress of the case. Every year, all the case records are subjected to statistical analysis, after which yearly reports are published about the observations and results. Common ayurvedic medicines used in this project are as follows:

Churna: (Herbal powders, either single or mixtures): Ashwagandha, Shatavari, Gokshura, Ananta, Vasa, Yashtimadhu, Kankole, Haridra, Lodhra, Arjuna, Pushkarmul, Raktarohitaka, Sharapunkha, Triphala, Sitopaladi, Talisadi, Hingvashtak churna.

Vati/ Guti- (Tablets): Arogyavardhini, Chandraprabha, Laxmivilas, Shankhavati, Pravalpishti, Praval Panchamrut, Kamadudha, Asthiposhak, Triphalvati

Avaleha (Syrup): Vasavaleha, Dadimavaleha, Bilvavaleha.

Guggul Kalpa (Tablets): Guggul, Lakshadi guggul, Gokshuradi guggul, Kanchanar guggul, Triphala guggul, and Mahayogaraj guggul.

Asava-Arishta (Liquids, Decoctions): Kumari asav, Varunadi kwath,

Siddha Ghrut: (Medicated ghee-clarified butter): Yashtimadhu ghrut, Dadimadi ghrut, Padmakadi ghrut

Siddha Taila- (Medicated oils): Anu taila, Yashtimadhu taila, Irimedadi taila, Nimba taila, Durvadi taila, Chandan-bala-lakshadi taila, Karanja taila, Bahubija taila,

Kalpa (Powders): Shatavari kalpa, Badam pak, Anant kalpa

Suvarna Kalpa (Tablets/Powders): Raupya suvarna sootashkhar, Suvarna sootashkhar, Suvarna malini vasant, Brihat vata chintamani

Patient is instructed about specific diet regimes (Pathya) to avoid dosha-disturbing foods in each particular case. No guarantee is given for any cure. Mental stress, an important factor in cancer, is assessed and ways to reduce this stress are discussed. In acute cases, follow up is done at weekly interval. Thereafter, patients are called once a month. X-rays, blood tests and scans are repeated frequently to confirm the progress of the case. This treatment is continued for about three years. Thereafter, maintenance treatment with Rasayana (rejuvenation) anti-ageing medicines is prescribed on long-term basis as per the needs of each case.

Observations:

Ayurvedic line of supportive treatment is highly beneficial for improving general condition, for pain relief and for reducing side reactions of chemotherapy and radiotherapy. More than

80% of the patients in this trial had very advanced stage cancer, which were not controlled by prior allopathic treatments. Ayurvedic treatment, although not found curative on its' own, was helpful to give good symptomatic relief in a great majority of cases. Chemotherapy / radiotherapy reactions in patients of C group were reduced by 40% to 60%. Conventional treatments as surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy should be used as the primary treatment for removing or reducing cancer tumor and Ayurvedic treatment should be used as a supplement to improve quality of life and to give better symptomatic relief.

For more information of this center at Wagholi, please log on www.ayurved-wagholi.org

Conclusion:

I have described one of the cancer projects with which I am associated. We have found that Ayurved is a very important line of complementary treatment for cancer. This natural science analyses the individual's prakriti (constitution) and dosha disturbances, which are at the root of any disease process. Ayurved emphasizes on disease prevention through restoration of healthy life styles and food habits. It balances the internal environments in the body enabling it to resist disease process. It has important methods for body purification, detoxification, restoration of disturbed dosha and for cellular rejuvenation. Using mostly natural time tested products, ayurvedic treatments are safe, effective and affordable. Ayurvedic treatments are directed not so much against the cancer tumor but for strengthening the immune system.

There are many more ayurvedic practitioners and ayurvedic research centers actively involved in cancer research. The views from various centers would certainly add more to the understanding of ayurvedic treatment in cancer. You should consult an experienced ayurvedic practitioner before undertaking any supplementary ayurvedic treatment for your cancer problem.