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Ayurvedic Understanding of Abnormal Uterine Bleeding In Non Gravid Women

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ABSTRACT

Abnormal uterine bleeding is one of the main gynaecological complaints encountered by the ayurvedic physicians nowadays. It may be defined as any bleeding from the genital tract which is a deviation from the normal in frequency, cycle and quantity . The conditions in which there is abnormal vaginal bleeding occurs is explained under different entities in ayurveda. Some of them are raktayoni, lohitaakshaya, asrigdara, nashtartava, artavakshaya etc. Although most of the menstrual disorders are due to vata and pitta , the way in which they vitiate(samprapti) varies. The modern science have clearly given the classification of PALM-COEIN to explain the causes of abnormal uterine bleeding in non gravid women of reproductive age group. A detailed analysis of abnormal uterine bleeding seen in nongravid women explained in ayurvedic classics will be done which will help in diagnosing with samprapti ghatakas and give clear knowledge to samprapti vighatana (cikitsa) of the disease.

Keywords- Abnormal uterine bleeding, yonivyapat, artava

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INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is a function peculiar to women .It may be defined as ‘periodic and cyclical shedding of progestational endometrium accompanied by loss of blood’. The fundamental cause of menstruation is degeneration of the corpus luteum which gets degenerates if the ovum is not fertilized. It represents the breaking down and casting off of an endometrium prepared for a pregnancy which does not materialize and so is sometimes called as the “the weeping of a disappointed uterus”¹. The menstrual flow is otherwise called menses or catamenia. The average cycle length is about 28 days with a range of 21-35 days. .The duration is most often from 3-5 days but anything between 2 and 7 days is accepted as normal. The amount of blood loss is estimated to be 80 ml with an average of 35-45 ml.

The normalcy of artava is characterized by rakta lakshanam and its main function is garbhakrit. The blood collected in the uterine arteries within a period of one month is brought downward by the action of apana vata and is expelled through yoni which is black in colour and with specific odour. It lasts for five days and should not be too less or too more. According to ayurveda the normal menstruation is that which has inter menstrual period of one month ,duration of five days, not associated with pain or burning sensation ,excreted blood is not unctuous, not scanty or excessive in amount, the colour resembles the red juice of lac, red lotus flower or rabbit’s blood. Bhavamisra had explained that the difference in colour is due to prakrti of individuals and vitiated doshas are responsible for symptoms like pain and burning sensation.² Bhavamisra further said that if the flow is excessive, it lasts for 3 days, if flow is average, it lasts for 5 days, if flow is slight & without any abnormality, then it lasts for 16 days & it may be considered normal.

Visvamisra has commented that rakta formed from rasa circulates throughout the body, reaches the garbhasaya through hair like thin artavavaha srotas which helps in purana of garbhasaya and in one month and results in the production of a beeja. The intermenstual period has been given as of one masa by all the acaryas, masa means a lunar month – candra masa ie 28 days.

Though the artava formed out of ahara rasa is soumya in character, by the pariṇama or paripaka it gets transformed into agneya in character with addition of agni mahabhuta³, So rajas or artavam is considered to be ushna tikshka and agneya

Any bleeding from the genital tract which is a deviation from the normal in frequency, cycle or quantity is called AUB.

Abnormal uterine bleeding (AUB) (a term which refers to menstrual bleeding of abnormal quantity, duration, schedule) is a common gynecologic complaint, accounting for one-third of outpatient visits to gynecologists. AUB is reported to occur in 9 to 14% women between

menarche and menopause⁴. In India, it is reported that the prevalence of AUB is around 17.9%³. Abnormal uterine bleeding occurring in women may or may not get associated with pregnancy

Modern science has classified the causes of AUB in reproductive age group of non gravid women as PALM COEIN I.e due to polyp, adenomyosis, leiomyoma, malignancy, coagulation defect, ovulatory dysfunction, endocrine causes, iatrogenic, not yet classified. This may help to diagnose the condition in terms of ayurveda.

The concept of abnormal uterine bleeding is explained in ayurveda under different entities like yoni vyapat, artava dushti, jataharini, garbha srava etc. Almost all the classical textbooks have quoted conditions in which there is abnormal bleeding per vagina. Acaryas has told that a women with proper artava will not get affected with prameha which is considered as a mahagada⁵. From this statement itself we can understand that, if left untreated the slight derangement in artava will ultimately lead to mahagadas. So the proper understanding of the pathologies of artava is essential for an ayurvedic gynecologist to avoid systemic complications in future.

Patterns of abnormal uterine bleeding⁶

Menorrhagia – cyclical bleeding at normal intervals: the bleeding is either excessive in amount or duration . Common causes are fibroid uterus, adenomyosis, pelvic endometriosis, IUCD in utero, chronic tubo ovarian mass, TB endometritis, retroverted uterus, granulosa cell tumour of the ovary.

Polymenorrhoea – cyclical bleeding where the cycle is reduced to arbitrary limit of less than 21 days and remains constant at that frequency, seen predominantly preceding menopause, following delivery and abortion .

Metrorrhagia – irregular acyclical bleeding from the uterus. Common causes are DUB, submucous fibroids, uterine polyp , carcinoma cervix, and endometrial carcinoma. FIGO has recommended to abandon this term metrorrhagia and instead they put forward the term intermenstrual bleeding (occurs between clearly defined cyclic and predictable menses. Such bleeding may occur at random times or may manifest in a predictable fashion at the same day in each cycle).

Oligomenorrhoea – menstrual bleeding occurring more than 35 days apart and which remains constant at that frequency. Common causes are age related, weight related, stress and exercise related, endocrine disorders, androgen producing tumors', TB endometritis and certain drugs.

Hypomenorrhea – menstrual bleeding is unduly scanty and less for less than 2 days. The causes may be local, endocrine, or systemic.

AUB in nongravid women explained in ayurvedic classics

(a) Abnormal uterine bleeding in the form of polymenorrhoea, oligomenorrhoea or hypomenorrhoea**Artavakshaya**

It is explained by acarya Susruta while explaining the vridhi and kshaya of dosha, dhathus, upadhathus and malas⁷. It is manifested either as absence of menstruation, less amount, without regular interval associated with yoni vedana. As artava is the upadhathu of rasa and it is formed from the ahara rasa in one month, there may be derangement in the dhathu parinama. Here we have to understand the role of the concerned dhathus i.e., the rasa dhathu. In bhavaprakasha it is said a woman having artavakshaya will be desirous of having katu, amla, lavana, vidahi and guru aharas. In the kshaya lakshanas of rakta also amla sisira preeti is mentioned. So when we do the cikitsa or artavakshaya we have to consider the rasa dhathu, because preenana is its main function. From rasa the raktha will be forming. The pitta involved here is the pacaka pitta which is responsible for the pacana of anna. First involved agni is the jataragni.

Nashtartava

Avruta dosha is responsible for the nashtartava⁸. As it is said that there is nashana of artava, we have to understand that there was artava once and it was lost due to the avarana of dosha. Dalhana said that the avruta dosha is kapha to vata, and excluded pitta as a cause for avarana. So first of all we have to give due consideration to the avruta dosha in the treatment of nashtartava. As it is the vata vitiated by the avarana of kapha, sroto sodhana is the first line of management in this condition, followed by use of agneya dravyas like matsya, kulatha, tila, masha, sura, etc.

Arajaska

It was quoted by Caraka acarya in pittaja type of yoni vyapath⁹. The pitta situated in the yoni garbhashaya gets vitiated and in turn it vitiates rakta. The clinical features exhibited by the lady is karshya and vaivarnya. Cakrapani stated that it is a condition manifesting with anartava. The treatment mentioned is pittahara chikitsa, uttarabasthi with blood of certain animals and pana of jivaniya gana kashaya. The treatment is mainly for rakta and bala vardhaka.

Lohitakshaya

Lohitakshaya was explained by Vagbhata¹⁰. In lohitakshaya vata and pitta is responsible for the ksheena of lohita. Madhava nidana and Yoga Ratnakara mentioned that this condition will be associated with daha. The pitta prakopa lakshanas are seen in this case.

The clinical features of arajaska and lohitakshaya is the same. Arajaska is explained by caraka and lohitakshaya by vagbhata. The difference is in the involvement of main dosha.

Pitta is the main dosha involved in arajaska whereas in lohitaakshaya it is the vata and pitta. As yonivyapat should not occur without the involvement of vata dosha it is understood that vata is also there in arajaska. Hence in lohitaakshaya the treatment aims at normalizing the pitta in the body whereas in the case of arajaska the pitta which is situated in the yoni only is vitiated and stanika chikitsa can do a better work in this. Kashmarya kutaja sidha ghrita uttarabasthi is indicated in both lohitaakshaya and arajaska.

Vataja artava dushti¹¹

According to Vagbhata the amount of menstrual blood is less in vataja artava dushti. The menstrual blood is frothy with altered colour and consistency. The interval of periods is also increased. Snigdha, usna, amla, and lavana oushadhas should be used. Bilwa vidari sidha asthapana basthi, madhura bhadradaru sidha anuvasana basthi, ksheera kuleera sidha uttara basthi can be given. Yavakshara prativapa sarpi can be advised internally

Ksheena artava dushti

Pitta and vata vitiation is responsible for the manifestation of ksheena artava dushti¹². Here the artava will be less in amount. Raktakari kriya is the treatment. Deepana, pachana and rasayana karma is needed. Swayoni vardhana treatment is indicated. Treatment of artavakshaya can also be prescribed.

Kasyapa has described apathyacarana during menstruation, use of atyushna paana and anna, and administration of teekshna sodhana to women with mrdu koshta as the nidanas for artava dushti. These dushita artava is incapable of producing praja. So in the treatment of artava dushti, mrdu sodhana therapies is needed for the complete elimination of doshas. For this uttarabasthi is indicated as the best treatment.

(b) Abnormal uterine bleeding in the form of menorrhagia or metrorrhagia

Asruja

Due to the unwholesome use of food articles capable of increasing the pitta, the pitta vitiates rakta and it leads to excessive bleeding per vagina¹³. As a result the woman remains in an apraja avastha i.e., when this woman conceives, the garbha doesn't retain due to the rakta dushti which has already existed and leads to the expulsion of garbha. Due to excessive bleeding per vaginum it is otherwise called raktayoni according to Cakrapani. Kashmarya kutaja sidha ghrita uttarabasthi is indicated here, as kutaja can control bleeding and kashmari is specially indicated in garabhsayagata vata dushti. The treatment principle of raktayoni, garbha srava and raktapitta cikitsa can be adopted.

Raktayoni

According to Vagbhata the excessive bleeding per vaginam is called raktayoni¹⁴. Rakta sthapana oushadhas should be used here. Here we can adopt the rakta sthambhana upayas like sandhana, skandhana, pacana and dahana chikitsa.

Lohitakshara yonivyapat¹⁵

This yoni vyapath was explained by Susruta acarya. The condition is characterized by continuous or excessive bleeding or trickling of blood associated with other features of pitta- osha, cosha, daha, jwara etc. Here the pitta in the body is vitiated .That is why we can see general pittaja symptoms in the body along with kshara (oozing or trickling) of lohita. Dalhana has quoted that other acaryas told the same in the name as lohitakshaya.

Kunapagandhi artava dushti

The menstrual blood loss is excessive here. The character of artava is like that of fresh blood. Rakta is vitiated and leads to excessive bleeding per vagina during menstruation. Foul smell is the characteristic feature¹⁶. Chandana kashaya for pana and triphala kashaya for prakshalana is indicated.

Asrgdara

Acarya Caraka has enumerated asrgdara amongst the diseases of vitiated rakta and pittavarta apana vayu and also as an upadrava of yoni vyapath. The cala guna of vayu and sara and drava guna of rakta plays an important role in forming the basic samprapti of asrgdara. These are the essential factors for the profuse bleeding.

The entire process of the development of vyadhi can be summarized in the following words. Because of various nidana sevana, vayu gets vitiated and leads to pramana vrddhi of rakta and it reaches the garbhasaya gata siras, there it increases the amount of raja immediately. This increase in raja is due to the rasa bhava vimanata .Thus the vitiated apana vata brings the vitiated rakta to the garbhasayagata sira and results in manifestation of asrgdara as excessive dheerana of raja.

The most important lakshana of asrgdara is the excessive discharge of menstrual blood¹⁷. According to Dalhana excess amount of bleeding during menstruation for prolonged duration and scanty flow in intermenstrual period for short duration are the symptoms of asrgdara¹⁸. In all types of asrgdara angamarda and savedana is present. Dosha pacana, agni deepana, rakta samgrahana cikitsa is adopted here.

DISCUSSION

Abnormal uterine bleeding is explained in ayurveda in a scattered manner. The abnormal bleeding pattern like oligomenorrhoea, polymenorrhoea, metrorrhagia, menorrhagia, are explained due to various causes in ayurveda. Eventhough the cause in most of the conditions is the vitiation of pitta and vata, the tara tama bhava of doshas in each of these disorders

varies. Yoni garbhasaya gata pitta is vitiated in most cases. That is why in a normal healthy women of reproductive age group, acaryas have generally advised the use of pittala ahara like taila, masha and pittala vihara¹⁹. Yoni rogas never get manifested without the involvement of vata as garbhasaya is situated in the vata sthana. Ultimately the treatment of any of the menstrual abnormalities should aim at normalising vata and pitta doshas

Abnormal uterine bleeding due to various causes can be seen in ayurvedic classics. In reduced uterine bleeding the involvement of vata with pitta plays an important role in forming the samprapti. Whereas along with vata and pitta an increase in the quantity of rakta(rakta pramana) also is equally important in increased uterine bleeding.

Besides abnormal increase and decrease in bleeding pattern, we also get references about abnormalities in appearance, colour, consistency etc. Derrangement in artava is seen as an associated symptom in some yoni vyapaths. In vataja, pittaja and kaphaja yoni vyapath, cakrapani states that the menstrual characteristics are that of vataja, pittaja and kaphaja asrigdara. Ruksha phenasra is mentioned as an associated symptom in mahayoni. In jataharinis like vikuta variation in kala, varna and pramana is seen .In karnini and yoniarsha local growth at yoni leads to the nasha of artava. In pushpaghni the absence of pushpa is seen. Atisravana of raja is seen in pittavruta apana vata. The concept of avarana is considered as a pathological process towards the development of the vyadhi, but not the vyadhi itself.

After analyzing the various entities we can find that the causes of abnormal uterine bleeding may be pitta vrudhi, rakta vrudhi, avrutha dosha, rakta kshaya, pitta kshaya, or vata vrudhi. So the treatment plan in each of these disorders is different. Hence the chikitsa of abnormal uterine bleeding explained under different entities in streeroga prakarana differs on the basis of its specific samprapti.

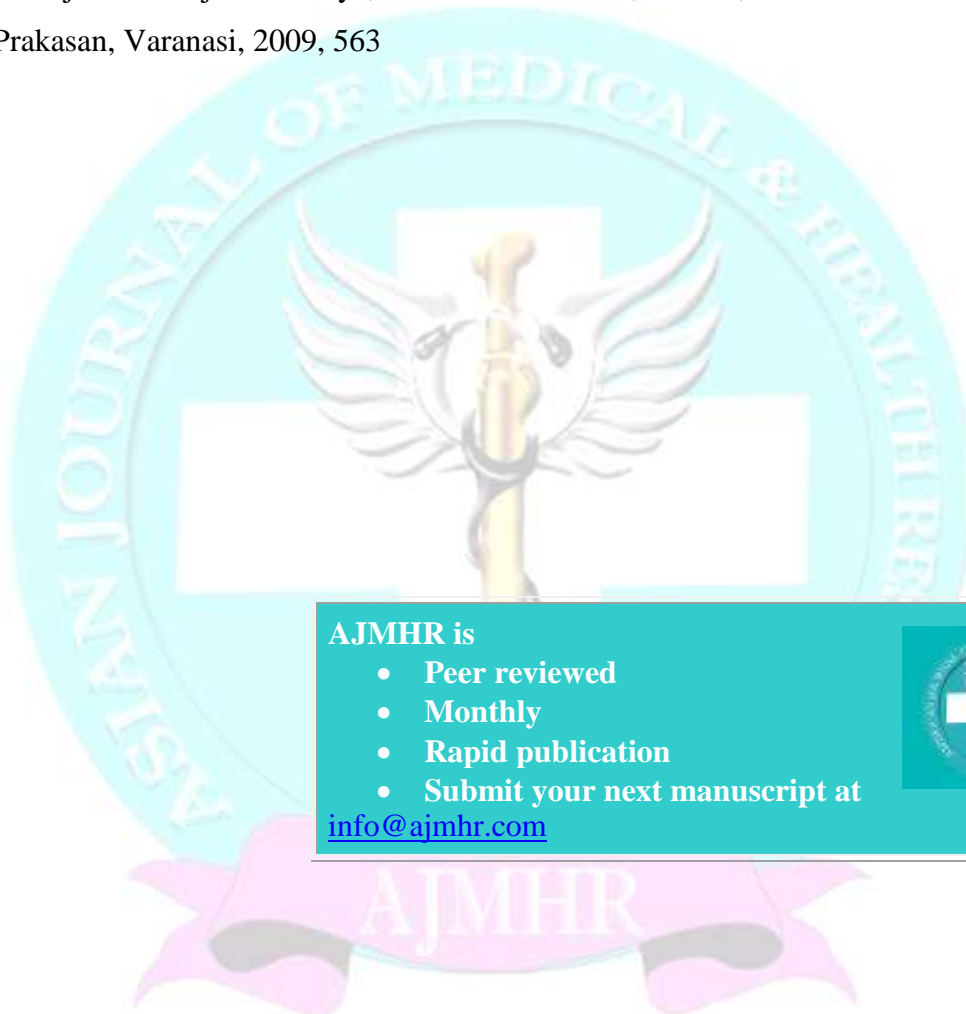
Gulma, arsa, pradara, vata rogas and inability for garbha grahana are explained as the upadravas of yonivyapat by Caraka²⁰. In the treatment of artava dushti mrdu sodhana cikitsa is given prime importance to uproot the disease and thus preventing from systemic complications. Hence in a case of abnormal uterine bleeding, the proper understanding of doshic involvement is needed to do the samprapti vighatana and thus maintaining the general health of a women.

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