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Concept of Pre-conception care and Its relevance in Present Scenario

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ABSTRACT

Parenthood is perhaps the most important responsibility that one can undertake in his/ her life, yet many young couples become parents without much preparation. Ayurveda, the ancient science gives importance to *swasthya rakshana* and *vikara prashamana* by exploring various procedures like *dinacharya*, *ritucharya*, *sadvrutta* for maintaining the physical and mental health and preventing the disease. *Acharyas* were still ahead in the field of *prasuti tantra*. Wide range of references regarding preconceptional care, *garbhini paricharya*, *masanumasika pathya*, contraindications for *garbhini*, guidelines for the management of *prasuta stree* are available in *brihatrayi* and *laghutrayi*. This paper tries to incorporate the relevance of preconceptional care in our society.

Keyword: ideal progeny, preconception care, healthy society

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INTRODUCTION

Pre conceptional care can be defined as the care given to a couple planning a pregnancy, well before the time of actual conception, which is a golden opportunity for them to give their best to their future child. Modern obstetrics forwarded the pre-conceptional concept as an extension of antenatal care to provide optimal health to mother and baby. According to modern science the early embryonic period (4-8th week) is considered as the critical period of development, because this is the most susceptible time for causing birth defects¹. Presently when a pregnant lady approaches for antenatal care, it is too late in terms of pre-conceptional care, as organogenesis would have been completed by that time. Thus it is too late to prevent any congenital and genetic problems. Ayurvedic preconception care takes advantage of our body's natural ability to cleanse and renew. The pre-requisites for a healthy pregnancy mentioned in Ayurveda are *rithu*, *kshetra*, *ambu* and *beeja* known as the *garbhā sambhava samagri*². The ayurvedic pre- conceptional care comprises of treatment methods associated with diet restriction, sexual abstinence and religious rituals to ensure *beja sudhi* (to improve quality of sperm and ovum), *kshetra sudhi* (refers to the status of uterus and endometrium) and *manosudhi* (the psychological aspects of the couple)³. Thus the aim is to bring *veerya vantham suta*⁴.i.e., only a healthy seed can give rise to a healthy embryo leading a healthy child, thus to a healthy adult and finally a healthy society. Creation of a healthy child is the need of parents, nation, as well as nature. Ayurveda described the methodology to produce a healthy child.

Preconceptional care: Preconception care is the provision of biomedical, behavioral and social health interventions to women and couples before conception occurs. It aims at improving their health status, and reducing behaviours and individual and environmental factors that contribute to poor maternal and child health outcomes⁵. Its ultimate aim is to improve maternal and child health, in both the short and long term⁶. Pre-conceptional care includes medical screening, genetic counselling, basal health checkup which are essential for the couple that are determined as being at risk.

Screening should be recommended for ideal progeny. In ayurvedic point of view, it is necessary to study the individual as a whole *desha*, *bala*, *kala*, *anala*, *prakriti*, *vaya*, *satva*, *saatmya* etc and thus by assessing all these we can advise the suitable diets and regimens for the couple. The healthy people make healthy off springs. Thus healthier ova and sperm form the building blocks of the child's structure.

Rules and regulations for *shreyasi praja*⁷ have been clearly detailed in our classics. In the Vedic literature, *Shodasha Samskaras* have been mentioned. Out of these, 16 *samskaras*, *Vivaha* and *Garbhadhana* are the two *samskaras* which are concerned with the preconception

care. Age for conception; Time of conception, *Purva samyoga vidhi* were the certain procedures to be followed. Both *bahya* and *antha shodhana*⁸ has to be carried out prior entering in to sexual intercourse. *Panchakarma* detoxifies the body & prepare the uterus for a healthy conception by maintain the *dosha*, *dhatu* and *mala* as well as also promotes resistance to outside pathogens (*vyadhi kshamatva*). After *shodhana* one month *brahmacharya*, maintain *sadvrutta*, *devata brahmana puja*, Avoid *krodha*, *shoka*, *irsha*, *bhaya*, *trasa*, *saoumya mano anukula katha sravana*-indicating that engaging in mind relaxing activities. The *manasika shudhi* is lacking in the society of busy life presently, which shows it as one of the factor in the rapid rise of infertility among the couples.

Preconception care begins with the selection of the right partners. It was clearly mentioned in Ayurveda that for marriage and conception, the partners should be of same community and should not be of same clan (*atulya gotriya*)⁹. The reason for this might be to reduce the risk of hereditary diseases and to avoid congenital anomalies. According to *Charak* and *Sushruta* the appropriate age of conception is 25 years for a male and 16 years for a female¹⁰. The reproductive systems are fully formed and mature during this specific age group in both the individuals. So *vivah sanskar* is done at a stage where both the partners attain the optimum physiologic functioning of the organs. Hence are capable for procreation. Both the partners are full of valor and vigor, the born child also possesses these qualities. Now days in the carrier-oriented society, the age of menstruation is reduced and age of marriage is increased.

Tila taila & *Masha* should be taken along with balanced diet by female partner¹¹. *Tila taila* has *vataghna* & *kapha-pitta prakopa* action due to its *rasa* & *virya*¹². But by the *sanskara* with drugs it acts as *tridosha shamaka*. It has the property of *garbhashaya vishodana*¹³. It has better action on *rajorodha*, *kashtartava* etc due to its *vātahara* property especially on *apanavata* which is responsible for normal functioning of the reproductive organs. It helps in regularizing the menstruation & hence promotes ovulation. It is also a best *balya* & *vrushya* due to its *snigdha guna*. *Masha* is *balya*, *vrushya*, allevates *vata* & promotes vigor¹⁴.

Calcium and magnesium play an important role in regulating estrogen level. The presence of folic acid in it helps in preventing of neural tube defects. It acts as potent anti-oxidant so helps to reduce the oxidative stress and it also contains protein & fibres. All these qualities help to promote the qualities of *artava*.

For the male partner is advised for the consumption of *ghrita* and medicated *ksheera* with *madhura* group of drugs¹⁵. The *ghrita* has the property of imparting strength & improves tonicity. It nourishes the body. With all these qualities make the sperm healthy & vigor¹⁶. Milk -gives strength, nourishes the body & promotes *jatharagni* which in turns increase

dhatwagni resulting in formation of all *dhatu*s, including *shrukra dhatu* which is the main source of sperm. It increases the quality & quantity of sperm instantly¹⁷.

Normalcy of psychology or happiness of mind of the couple is one of the most important factors for conception. Stress, anger, despair etc can disturb the phenomenon leading to diminution of sexual vigour¹⁸. Modern lifestyles leading to increase in the stress which is major cause for infertility. Along with the lifestyle, habits like alcohol consumption & the environmental toxicity affecting the sperm count, quality, motility, it also depletes the zinc level in body, whereas in females it affects the ovulation & menstruation leading to the hypothalamic pituitary ovarian dysfunction¹⁹.

Care should be taken from the very beginning, right from neonatal-care to care during menstrual phase to a healthy pregnancy, thereby leading to healthy mother and healthy child who aids in creating a diseases free society and therefore help in the development of the nation.

CONCLUSION

Proper implementation of Pre-conceptional care ensures normal healthy delivery and *sutputra janana*. Pregnancies should not be unplanned. It should always be properly planned for getting a good progeny there by helps in building a healthy society. Thus the pre conceptional care can be implemented as in the promotion of community health care and provides global solution in several life style related problems.

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