

Anatomical Changes in Greevagraha (Cervical Spondylosis) with its Ayurvedic Management

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ABSTRACT

The meaning of Greeva is neck and Graha is stiffness. This condition is explained under Vata vyadhi. Depletion of body tissues is due to increase in vata. (For example, with ageing process, Vata increases and degeneration of body tissues start). Cervical spondylosis is a degenerative disease of cervical spine. The main pathology is found in the cervical spine; primarily in the intervertebral discs and vertebral bodies. Degenerative changes take place in cervical spine leads to pain and stiffness in neck, radiating pain into arm, headache, vertigo, giddiness, paraesthesia, numbness etc. It disturbs the daily routine and overall life of the patient. Though it is not fatal instantly but it causes more severe complication in later stage. It cripples the patient, makes him burden to others. Person can't perform the day to day work properly due to severity of pain and this way it does not cut the years of life but life of the years.

Keywords: Greeva, Vata, Asthi, Cervical.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is one of the most ancient medical sciences of the world. It conceives and describes the basis & applied aspect of life process, health, disease & its management in terms of its own principles & approaches. There is no exact clinical entity mentioned in classics like Cervical Spondylosis but it can be considered as Asthigata vata or Greeva graham because its core pathogenesis is – 1) degeneration of bone tissue and 2) vitiation of Vata.

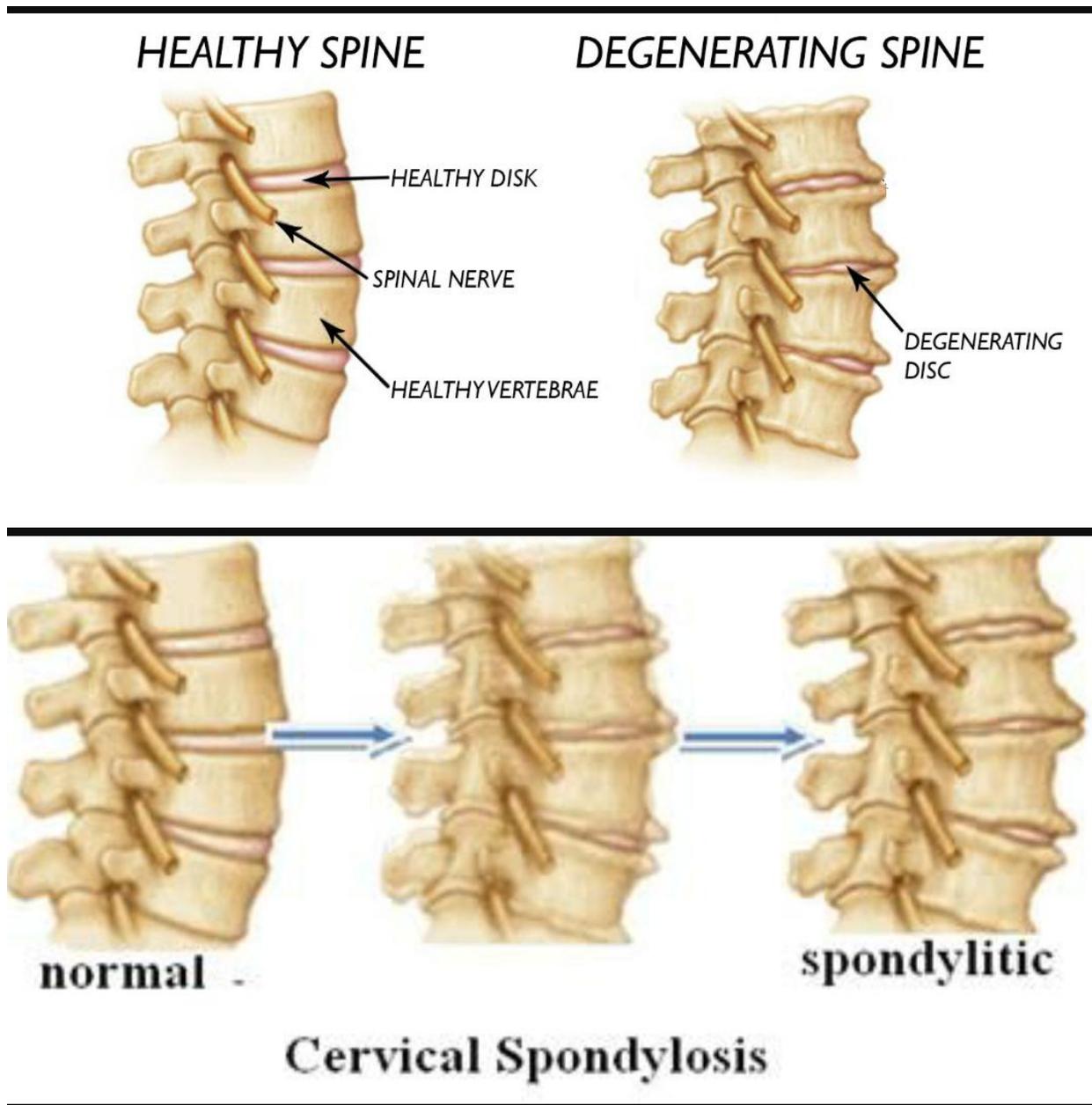
In Ayurveda, a condition called Greeva graham is explained. – its clinical feature is stiffness of the neck is explained and it exactly suits with Cervical spondylosis. Sleshaka Kapha play important role for cushioning in between bone joints. The meaning of Greeva is neck and Graha stands for stiffness. It is explained as a Vata condition. When Vata dosh Increased it leads to be depletion of body tissues. (with ageing, Vata increases and body tissues start degenerating.) Degeneration and dryness caused by Vata leads to decrease of Kapha Dosha.

Causative factors:-

Factors, which affect the development of cervical spondylosis, include Age, Sex, Occupation, Posture, etc. are discussed here:

- 1) Age: Disease process which includes degenerative changes are already present from 40 years of age. As age advances they become more prominent, after 50 years of age all most all subjects are likely to present some spondylosis changes in their spine. Thus age plays an important role in the pathogenesis of cervical spondylosis.
- 2) Sex: Incidences of spondylosis changes are found more in male. But the difference between male and female sexes is very small. These findings are probably related to physical work particularly into women doing heavy work could be expected to show a relatively high incidences.
- 3) Occupation: Excessive movement of particular area initiate degenerative changes and ultimately leads to spondylosis.
- 4) Trauma: Trauma specially in cervical region may play an important role in causing of cervical spondylosis. Exertion, Regular travelling for long distances specially on bad roads, strainful movements etc. also cause trauma in cervical spine.
- 5) Posture: Bad posture also contain an effect on these diseases. Use of cushy pillows along with the soft bed are also considered in the aetiological factors. Incorrect positioning of the head in bed, especially while lying on the tummy with the head turned to one side develops a stiff neck in some patients.

Clinical features of Greevagraha (Cervicalspondylosis) on the human body:- Pain in the neck, Joint stiffness, Difficulty in the usual functions of the neck like rotation, flexion, extension etc, Fatigue, Headache, Radiating pain to the shoulder, forearm or arm. Muscular spasm. Tingling sensation, numbness and weakness in the arms. Difficulty in walking, lack of co-ordination.



The neck bone structure consists of bones stacked one over the other with sandwich of disc cartilage in between. Triangular – circular aperture within these cervical bones give way for the nerves from the brain to pass through. The branches of these nerve roots arising from through back and sides of these bones form plexus and form different nerves. Complex arrangement of nerves is known as cervical plexus. These nerves spread on the sides to supply to neck, face, ears, back of the head, shoulder and the full length of the arms.

During ageing process, the bones and the cushioning cartilage disc start to lose strength. This makes the soft cartilage thin and expanded, or may be herniation of disc that irritate the nerves. Degenerating discs also become so flat with brittle edge causing nerve irritation. Nerve irritation leads to the symptoms like numbness, pain etc. The because of lack of cushioning between the neck bones stiffness arises, causing a friction whenever neck is moved.

Degenerative changes in cervical spine called as cervical spondylosis. The intervertebral joints undergo inflammation that is associated with the formation of bony outgrowth(Osteophytes).the outgrowth can encroach on intervertebral foramina narrowing them so that cervical nerve may be pressed upon.

Treatment Modern medical science provides various types of medical and surgical therapy but none of the therapy is satisfactory in cervical spondylosis. All the treatments are just for symptomatic relief. Due to more untowards effect of pain relieving drugs e.g. NSAID, Steroids and surgical procedure, alternative medical systems like Ayurveda are now coming into focus to find out better remedy for this condition.

Moreover, such degenerative type of condition with clinical manifestation can also be considered under the broad umbrella of Vata Vyadhi. Thus classical aspects of Asthigata Vata can be implemented in the disease Cervical Spondylosis. Though there are few other disorders mentioned in classics which are having some resemblance with cervical spondylosis e.g. Vishwachee, Manya graham, Manya stambha, Griva stambha, Shiro graham, greeva hundanum etc. Heritage of Ayurveda provides so many treatment modalities for different kind of disorders. Being a degenerative Vata disorder Cervical spondylosis (Asthigata vata) demands a pioneer treatment of Vata i.e. Basti, Charaka aptly highlighted the glorified designation of Basti- Basti Vataharanam Shreshtha.

1. Greeva basti (Retaining the medicaments in the nape of the neck) In this procedure, a compound is created around the back of the neck with black gram paste. Medicated oil (Ksheerabala oil, Bala Ashwagandhadi oil etc) is heated and is retained within the compound for a few minutes time.
2. Swedana Karma is very important treatment modality in Panchkarma. Swedana is the procedure which cures pain, stiffness, heaviness, numbness, restricted movements and coldness of the body. Patrapinda Sweda is a very practicle approach of Swedana procedure. Patrapinda Sweda is being practiced widely by majority of Panchkarma physicians owing to its easy procedure and excellent, fast action. As Cervical spondylosis (Asthigata Vata) is a Vata predominant disorders, Nirgundi Patrapinda Sweda was selected as a modality of treatment. Nirgundi has Vedanasthapana, Shothahara, Deepana, Pachana and Rasayana properties which are helpful for this condition.
3. Charaka, the legendary healer has indicated basti prepared with substance like milk, ghee and processed in tikta rasa dravya especially for asthigatavata. Taking this in account it was thought that Panchtikta kshira basti would be more useful in disintegration of samprapti(pathogenesis) of Asthigata vata and panchtikta kshira basti in the form of kala basti was selected.
4. Degeneration of asthi, which is the most important event in the Samprapti of asthigata vata, denotes craving for Brihana therapy especially of asthi. Asthishrinkhala is a herb having tissue specific anabolic effect for bony tissue and guggulu is also a well known Vedana sthapan and sothhara drug of Ayurveda hence.
5. Some medicines having good effect on the cervical spondylitis are Rasnairandadi kashaya, Sahacharadi kashaya, Yogaraja guggulu, Mahayogaraja guggulu , Trayodashanaga guggulu. Oils for external application: Sahacharadi taila, Mahamasha taila, Bala taila, Vishagarbha taila and Mahanarayana taila etc can be locally applied.
6. Cervical collars: They help by restricting the movement of neck. Lesser neck movements help to reduce the pain and heal the ligaments faster. This may also lead to increase the space between each neck bone, thereby, reducing the extent of disc prolapse (herniation). Lesser the disc herniation, lesser the irritation the displaced disc causes to the nerve, lesser the pain and discomfort.

DISCUSSION

The main symptom of Greeva graham is stiffness of the neck which exactly suits with Cervical spondylosis. With ageing, the bones and the cushioning cartilage disc start to lose strength. This makes the soft cartilage to thin, expand, slip (called herniation of disc), touch and irritate the nerves. The degenerating discs also become flat with brittle edge causing nerve irritation. Nerve irritation leads to symptoms like pain, numbness etc. The stiffness arises because of lack of cushioning between the neck bones, causing a friction whenever neck is moved. In the modern system symptomatic treatment is given for Greeva graham. In ayurveda Greeva basti, Nirgundi Patrapinda Sweda and drug treatment along with the support of Cervical collars are prescribed for this disease.

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