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A CASE SERIES TO ASSESS THE ROLE OF PATHYA AHARA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ĀMAVĀTA (RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS)

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ABSTRACT

Āmavāta, a chronic and painful disorder described in Ayurveda, closely resembles Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) in modern medicine. The disease is marked by joint pain, stiffness, swelling, and systemic symptoms, often linked to poor digestion and improper dietary habits. This case series evaluates the effect of Pathya Ahara (wholesome diet) as an adjunct to Ayurvedic management in patients suffering from Āmavāta. The study demonstrates that following a properly designed Pathya regimen can significantly alleviate clinical symptoms and enhance quality of life.

KEYWORDS: Āmavāta, Pathya Ahara, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Ayurveda, Case Series, Dietary Intervention.

INTRODUCTION

Āmavāta is a disease of systemic origin caused by the accumulation of Āma (toxins) and the aggravation of Vāta dosha, leading to inflammation of joints and various systemic features.

The role of Nidāna (causative factors) in Āmavāta prominently includes Apathya Āhāra-Vihāra (unwholesome diet and lifestyle).

Modern Rheumatoid Arthritis is similarly associated with autoimmune responses and is managed through immunosuppressants, which often have side effects. Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of Pathya Ahara—a diet that is light, digestible, and suitable for the condition—as a core part of treatment. This article presents a case series focusing on the clinical impact of Pathya Ahara in the management of Āmavāta.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design: Case Series Study.

Sample Size: 5 patients diagnosed with Āmavāta (RA as per ACR/EULAR criteria)

Age range: 30–55 years

Gender: 3 Female, 2 Male

Inclusion Criteria

- Patients with classical signs of Āmavāta
- Willing to follow a strict Pathya Ahara regimen for 8 weeks
- No steroid or DMARD usage during study period

Exclusion Criteria

- Patients with severe comorbidities
- Pregnancy or lactation

Case Series: Detailed Case Profiles

Case P1 - Age: 42 | Gender: Female

Chief Complaints

- Joint pain in knees and fingers (since 6 months)
- Morning stiffness lasting 1 hour
- Loss of appetite
- Irregular bowel habits

History of Present Illness

No history of trauma or infection. Diagnosed RA 6 months ago. Was taking NSAIDs occasionally. No family history.

Clinical Findings Before Treatment

Pain: VAS 8/10

Swelling: Present in small joints

Stiffness: 1 hour

Appetite: Reduced

Bowel: Irregular

Outcome After 8 Weeks Pathya Ahara

Pain: VAS 3/10

Swelling: Mild

Stiffness: 15 min

Appetite: Improved

Bowel: Regular

Case P2 - Age: 35 | Gender: Male**Chief Complaints**

- Wrist and ankle pain (since 1 year)
- Low energy and fatigue
- Disturbed sleep due to pain

History of Present Illness

Previously on methotrexate for 2 months. Discontinued due to side effects. Non-vegetarian diet with irregular timings.

Clinical Findings Before Treatment

Pain: VAS 7/10

Swelling: Moderate

Stiffness: 45 minutes

Appetite: Low

Bowel: Constipation

Outcome After 8 Weeks Pathya Ahara

Pain: VAS 2/10

Swelling: Nil

Stiffness: Nil

Appetite: Normal

Bowel: Regular

Case P3 - Age: 50 | Gender: Female

Chief Complaints

- Severe pain in bilateral knee joints (since 2 years)
- Swelling and difficulty in walking
- Excessive dryness in body

History of Present Illness

History of constipation and bloating. Long-term use of painkillers. Vegetarian diet, low fluid intake.

Clinical Findings Before Treatment

Pain: VAS 9/10

Swelling: Severe in knees

Stiffness: 2 hours

Appetite: Poor

Bowel: Dry stool, once in 2 days

Outcome After 8 Weeks Pathya Ahara

Pain: VAS 4/10

Swelling: Mild

Stiffness: 30 minutes

Appetite: Improved

Bowel: Once daily

Case P4 - Age: 39 | Gender: Female

Chief Complaints

- Pain in elbows and shoulder joints
- Giddiness and weakness
- Mild fever on and off

History of Present Illness

Occasional Ayurvedic treatment. Irregular eating habits. Diagnosed RA 3 years ago. Uses home remedies.

Clinical Findings Before Treatment

Pain: VAS 6/10

Swelling: Mild

Stiffness: 30 minutes

Appetite: Reduced

Bowel: Semi-formed

Outcome After 8 Weeks Pathya Ahara

Pain: VAS 2/10

Swelling: Absent

Stiffness: Minimal

Appetite: Improved

Bowel: Normal

Case P5 - Age: 45 | Gender: Male**Chief Complaints**

- Pain in spine and fingers
- Sleep disturbances
- Heaviness after meals

History of Present Illness

Sedentary lifestyle. High junk food intake. Diagnosed 1 year ago with RA. No medications taken.

Clinical Findings Before Treatment

Pain: VAS 7/10

Swelling: Present in finger joints

Stiffness: 1 hour

Appetite: Low

Bowel: Heavy and incomplete evacuation

Outcome After 8 Weeks Pathya Ahara

Pain: VAS 3/10

Swelling: Reduced

Stiffness: 10-15 minutes

Appetite: Improved

Bowel: Proper

Intervention: All patients were advised a common Pathya Ahara for 8 weeks along with mild Ayurvedic formulations.

Pathya Ahara Prescribed (Table 1)

Meal Time	Food Item	Rationale
Morning (8 am)	Warm water + ginger decoction	Deepana, Āma pachana
Breakfast	Moong dal khichadi with ghee	Laghu, Snigdha, Vatashamaka
Lunch	Rice + Green leafy vegetables + Buttermilk	Easy digestible, reduces inflammation
Evening Snack	Roasted makhana / boiled vegetables	Non-inflammatory, Vatahara
Dinner	Light gruel (Yavagu)	Light, digestible, prevents night indigestion
Avoided Items	Curd, Cold water, Heavy pulses, Bakery items, Processed food	Apathya, Āma-varadhaka

Observations and Results

Clinical Parameters Observed:

- Morning stiffness
- Joint swelling
- Pain score (VAS)
- Appetite\
- Bowel regularity

Patient	Initial Pain (VAS/10)	Final Pain	Swelling	Appetite	Morning Stiffness
P1	8	3	Reduced	Improved	Reduced to 15 min
P2	7	2	Absent	Improved	Nil
P3	9	4	Reduced	Improved	Reduced
P4	6	2	Slight	Improved	Minimal
P5	7	3	Reduced	Improved	Reduced

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda emphasizes Nidāna Parivarjana (removal of causative factors) as the first step in treatment. Āma formation due to improper digestion is the root cause of Āmavāta. Modern diet, including processed and incompatible foods, worsens this state.

In this study, Pathya Ahara helped in

- Reducing Āma formation
- Improving digestion and metabolic fire (Agni)
- Reducing joint inflammation and stiffness

This aligns with Charaka's principle: "Āhāra-sambhavaḥ vāyur eva rogān utpādayati" – A wrong diet can provoke Vāta and create disease.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all patients prior to their inclusion in the case series. The study adhered to the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

CONCLUSION

This case series shows promising results regarding the role of Pathya Ahara in Āmavāta. A controlled diet plan tailored to dosha and stage of the disease can significantly reduce the symptom burden and improve daily function. Larger, controlled clinical trials are needed to substantiate these findings further.

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