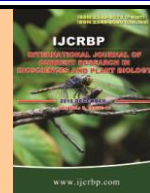




International Journal of Current Research in Biosciences and Plant Biology

ISSN: 2349-8080 Volume 2 Number 12 (December-2015) pp. 80-83

www.ijcrbp.com



Original Research Article

Some Commonly Used Medicinal Herbs in Siddha Varmam Therapy

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Abstract	Keywords
India is home to countless arts which have flourished since time immemorial. Siddha medicine is one such scientific medicine which thrived in the southern parts of India. The sages who discovered this system of medicine were collectively known as Siddhars. Due to various foreign occupations, this art was hidden by the people of South India. Some medicinal herbs are used in the preparation of Varma medicines which help in the speedy recovery of the patients. The written evidence of this art continues to be preserved in the form of palm leaf manuscripts. The Indian herbs present in medicinal formulations like Varma porridge and other medicines are reviewed for its scientific background.	Indian medicinal herbs Palm leaf manuscripts Siddha medicine Varma therapy

Introduction

Varma medical system is one of the great specialties of Siddha medicine. It has been in existence for the past 3000 years. The varma medicine is still alive and flourishing in southern parts of India. It is taught in traditional gurukulam style to only a handful of students. The varma manuscripts available today, most of them are written in the language "Tamil" which is being spoken in the southern parts of India. Medical treatment in the southern part of India is identified with Siddha medicine, the traditional Dravidian system of medicine. The Siddha medical system, otherwise known as *siddha vaidyam*, is attributed to sage Agathiyar (Samabasivam Pillai, 1993).

Varma is a component of traditional massage, medicine, and martial arts in which the body's pressure points (*varma* or *marma*) are manipulated to heal or cause

harm. The healing application called *varma vaidhiya murai* is used to treat patients suffering from paralysis, nervous disorder, spondylitis and other conditions. Its combat application is known as *varma adi* or *marma adi*, meaning "pressure point striking".

Folklore traces *varma kalai* to the God Shiva who is said to have taught it to his son Murugan. While disguised as an old man, Murugan passed the knowledge of *varmam* to the sage Agathiyar who then recorded it and disseminated the skill among his students. We get a detailed description from Siddha medicine of Varmam and it is 108 in number. Marma or Varmam are the vital points in human body which may be a joining place of two bones or two muscles or a muscle with a bone or a passage of arteries / veins / nerves. The particular points can act as trigger points and giving pressure to these points in particular way are using to cure many diseases (Thiyagarajan, 1994a). Though Varmam is a martial art,

there are some supporting medicines to help in the improvement of the patient. They are classified into

Varma aga marundugal (Internal medicines) and Varma pura marundugal (External medicines) (Table 1).

Table 1. Some commonly used medicines in the Varmam treatment.

S. No.	Varma pura marundugal	Varma aga marundugal
1.	Varma nasiyam	Varma tirikadugu kanji
2.	Varma sanni pugai	Pazaya varma kanji
3.	Varma Ottradam	Amukkira kudineer
4.	Narambu tettral poochu	Kukkuda kudineer
5.	Sadai vali poochu	Seenapaavu kudineer
6.	Murivenna	Varma chooranam
7.	Vasavenna	Varmaani kuligai
8.	Purai ennai	Varma sanni kuligai
9.	Mudamirukki ennai	Sippi sarvaanga nei
10.	Kurunthotti ennai	Varma vallarai nei
11.	Kaaya tirumeni ennai	Kandankathiri nei

The herbal ingredients in these formulations are highly effective in controlling the disease symptoms of the patient.

1. Name of the medicine: Vasavennai (Thiyagarajan, 1994b)

Ingredients: (all equal quantities)

1. *Citrus acida* juice
2. *Aloe vera* juice
3. Coconut oil
4. Castor oil
5. *Hemidesmus indicus* powder

Method of preparation of Vasavennai

The juices and powder are added to boiling oils in a open vessel. The mixture is cooked for 30 minutes till the oil is boiled fully and the juices are mixed completely in the oil. Then this oil is applied to the ailing patient daily three times for one week.

Dosage: As directed by the physician

Dietetic advice: Energy boosting gruel Varmam kanji (Porridge) is helpful to improve the overall energy level of the patient. As a food supplement it can be used in all age groups, to increase stamina, vigor and vitality.

2. Name of the medicine: Varma kanji (Thiyagarajan, 1994c)

Ingredients: (all equal quantities)

1. *Trigonella foenum-graceum*
2. *Aegle marmelos*
3. *Cuminum cyminum*
4. *Cardiospermum helicacabum*

5. *Centella asiatica*

6. *Glycyrrhiza glabra*

7. *Sida cardifolia*

Method of preparation of Varma gruel

All the ingredients are tied in a small muslin cloth. This bolus is added to boiling rice in an open vessel. The gruel is cooked for 30 minutes till the rice is boiled fully and the ingredients of the bolus are mixed completely in the rice. Then this gruel is administered orally to the ailing patient daily three times for one week.

Dosage: 100 ml gruel.

3. Name of the medicine: Murivennai (Thiyagarajan, 1994d)

Ingredients: (all equal quantities)

1. *Ficus benghalensis* juice
2. *Hemidesmus indicus* powder
3. *Sida cordifolia* powder
4. *Wrightia tinctoria* powder
5. *Indigofera aspalathoides* powder
6. Gingelly oil
7. Cow's milk

Method of preparation of Murivennai

The juices and powders are added to boiling gingelly oil in an open vessel. The mixture is cooked for 30 minutes till the oil is boiled fully and the juices are mixed completely in the oil. Then this oil is applied to the ailing patient daily three times for one week.

Dosage: As directed by the physician

Some of the medicinal herbs are given in brief

Most of the Varmam medicines some commonly used herbs are taken into account and reviewed for its

scientific background. They are easily available and can be used for medicinal preparations. Some of the important and common herbs with their common names and scientific names are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Commonly used herbs in Varmam medicines.

S. No.	Tamil name	English name	Botanical name	Parts used	Activities based on Siddha texts
1.	Vendayam	Fenugreek seeds	<i>Trigonella foenum-graaceum</i> Linn.	Seeds	Seeds are diuretic, tonic, carminative and aphrodisiac. Fenugreek seeds stimulate appetite by their action on the human nervous system.
2.	Vilva pazam	Bael fruit	<i>Aegle marmelos</i> Corr.	Fruit pulp	The fruit pulp contains mucilage, pectin, sugar, volatile oil etc. Ripe fruit is sweet, aromatic, cooling, laxative and nutritive.
3.	Seeragam	Cumin seeds	<i>Cuminum cyminum</i> Linn.	Seeds	The seeds are carminative, aromatic, stomachic, stimulant, cooling and astringent.
4.	Mudakkaruthaan	Balloon vine, winter cherry	<i>Cardiospermum halicacabum</i> Linn.	Leaves	The leaves are diuretic, laxative, stomachic and externally rubefecient.
5.	Vallarai	Memory plant	<i>Centella asiatica</i> (L.) Urban	Leaves	The leaves are used as memory boosters since time immemorial. They act as a tonic to the human nervous system.
6.	Adhimaduram	Liquorice root	<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> Linn.	Root	The root contains a amorphous compound glycyrrhizin. The root is cooling, expectorant, tonic, diuretic and gentle laxative.
7.	Sitramutti	Country mallow	<i>Sida cordifolia</i> Linn.	Root and stem	The root is regarded as cooling, astringent, tonic, febrifuge and diuretic. It is used as a cardiac stimulant since time immemorial.

Discussion

The present review expresses the importance of herbal plants used in the age old Varma treatment, the martial art followed in the Southern parts of India. Plants have the ability to synthesize a wide variety of chemical compounds that are used to perform important biological functions, and to defend against attack from predators such as insects, fungi and herbivorous mammals. At least 12,000 such compounds have been isolated so far; a number estimated to be less than 10% of the total. Chemical compounds in plants mediate their effects on the human body through processes identical to those already well understood for the chemical compounds in conventional drugs; thus herbal medicines do not differ

greatly from conventional drugs in terms of how they work. This enables herbal medicines to be as effective as conventional medicines.

The use of human uses of plants is recognized as an effective way to discover future medicines. In 2001, researchers identified 122 compounds used in modern medicine which were derived from "ethnomedical" plant sources; 80% of these have had an ethnomedical use identical or related to the current use of the active elements of the plant. Many of the pharmaceuticals currently plants as medicines predate written human history. Ethnobotany (the study of traditional available to physicians have a long history of use as herbal remedies. The use of herbs to treat disease is almost

universal among non-industrialized societies, and is often more affordable than purchasing expensive modern pharmaceuticals. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 80 percent of the population of some Asian and African countries presently uses herbal medicine for some aspect of primary health care. Studies in the United States and Europe have shown that their use is less common in clinical settings, but has become increasingly more in recent years as scientific evidence about the effectiveness of herbal medicine has become more widely available. The annual global export value of pharmaceutical plants in 2011 accounted for over US\$2.2 billion (WHO, 2003).

Conclusion

Thus it can be concluded that herbal medicines along with Varma therapy will be more effective in treating the patients in an affordable way. They are easily available and it can be applied at immediate Varmam procedures. Such treatments must be explored and should be utilized to common man then only the

Varmam system will exist in a sustainable way for day today application.

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