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#### Review article

# Ayurvedic approach for the treatment of side effects caused by radiotherapy and chemotherapy in cancer patients

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#### Article history

#### ABSTRACT

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Keywords

Arbuda Ayurvedic medicine Cancer Chemotherapy Radiotherapy Ayurveda has its own role in the prevention and management of cancer's complications. Chemo- and radiotherapy are highly toxic and both damage adjacent healthy cells. Their side effects may be acute like nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and fatigue or chronic like pharyngitis, esophagitis, laryngitis and persistent dysphasia. According to Ayurveda, many medicines show the anticancer properties such as *Brihamarasayan, Brahmi, Guduchi, Yasthimadhu, Ashwgandha*, and *Amalaki* which can be helpful in treating cancer as well as the side effects caused by chemo- and radiotherapy in cancer patients. In the present work, the literature regarding classical *Ayurvedic* texts, research papers in peer reviewed journals and related data of different websites was critically reviewed. The review concludes that *Ayurvedic* Medicines have effective result in cancer and reducing the complications.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Many chronic diseases like Cancer can easily come to stay with us and become our unwanted guests. The cancer was mentioned in ancient Ayurvedic literature by the name of Arbuda (tumour). It is one of the surgical diseases and was explained in detail by Aacharya Sushruta whereas Aacharya Charaka mentioned the Arbuda under the heading of Sopha. Aacharya Vagabhat told in his word that any mass bigger than the *Granthi* (gland) is called Arbuda. Ayurveda has its own role in the prevention and management of cancer. Initially during the beginning period of Ayurvedic Science, the cancer was not an important disease entity due to its less prevalence. However, presently, the situation has thoroughly changed and it is now the major cause of fatality, second only to cardiac ailments. It is no more considered as an unimportant illness as in the past. Most of the cancers are named for the organ or type of cell in which they start e.g. cancer that begins in melanocytes of the skin is called melanoma. The major causes of cancer for normal and abnormal multiplications of Paramanu (cells) are Vata (deranged internal environment), Karma (acquired genetic injury) and Svabhava (inherited genetic injury) (Metri et al., 2013). The analysis of changes in Dhatus in a specific pathology is given in Table 1.

S.No.	Character of Dhatu	Sign
1.	Dhatu-	Staulyam (proliferation of
	vriddhi	tissues from growth factors)
2.	Dhatu-	<i>Rajayaksma</i> (chronic
	kshayam	respiratory disorders)
3.	Dhatu-	Raktapittam (failure of
	dushti	abnormal cells to undergo
		apoptosis)
4.	Dhatu-	Jvaram (field defect and
	pakam	inherited defect causing
		clonal origin of cells)
5.	Dhatu-	Prameha / Paadu (Defect in
	uaithilyam	DNA production with
		heterogeneity forming
		clonal production)

pathology

**Table 1.** Analysis of changes in Dhatus in a specific

The available treatment of the cancer can be prolonged the survival of patient, but may cause severe adverse effects and obliterated the quality of life. Even experts believe that role of chemotherapy is complex issue at the end of life. Thus, ray of hope turns toward palliative care to treat the cancer. With an aim to increase the life quality of the cancer patients, author consulted the classic texts of *Ayurveda*. It was found that the disease resembling with the cancer codified in the classic texts of Ayurveda in the form of Granthi and Arbuda with Shodhan (curative) and Shaman (palliative) treatment and regimen to follow Aahar. Vihar, Dincharya, Rutucharya, Sadvritta, Yoga, and Satvavajaya treatment. The object of Ayurveda is to protect health of the healthy persons and to cure the disease of diseased one. Avurveda treatment plays an important role in the cancer. During the chemotherapy and radiotherapy patients face many side effects, principles of Ayurvedic treatment can help the patients to reduce side effect. Hence, there is an urgent need to communicate precious holistic knowledge of Ayurveda to the scientific world. This will lead to create awareness about palliative concept of Ayurveda in scientific community. Ayurveda has the potential to become an important arm in standard care of cancer treatment. The ancient wisdom of Ayurveda needs to be explored in a scientific world. The doctors, Vaidyas, researchers, and scientists have to work together to generate various level of evidence to improve the quality of life in cancer patients and make them peaceful while moving toward end. When the major side effects of chemo-radiotherapy are looked through an Ayurvedic perspective, it appears that they are the manifestations of aggravated Pitta Dosha especially under the group of disorders. The signs and symptoms of aggravated Pitta as per ancient Ayurveda texts are Mukhapaka (stomatitis), Trushna (excessive thirst), Osha (feeling of hot sensation in

the body), *Galpaka* (pharyngitis), *Payupaka* (urethritis), *Gudapaka* (proctitis), *Davatu* (acid regurgitation), *Dava* (burning sensation in the oral cavity) and *Abhishandha* (conjunctivity) (Baliga, 2010).

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the present literary study, the related literature was thoroughly searched from classical Ayurvedic texts, research papers in peer reviewed journals using online scientific search tools like google scholar, Pubmed, and Scopus. In addition, some relevant data from different websites was critically reviewed.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The malignant disease, once it reaches beyond the control, nothing can reverse its progression. The only possible measure we can take is the aid for peaceful demand of the sufferer. The measures are the pain reduction and relief from the intensity. The treatment of the cancer through radio and chemotherapy causes many serious side effects (Prasad, 1987). In addition to the most frequent complication i.e. pain, other side effects caused by radio and chemotherapy are given in Table 2 whereas most frequently used modern and Ayurvedic drugs to treat cancer side effects are given in Table 3.

Table 2. Common complication after chemo- and radiotherapy

Short term side effects	Long term side effects
1. GIT Related side effects: loss of appetite, mouth and throat sore,	1. Osteoporosis
diarrhea, constipation, nausea and vomiting	2. Damage of vital organs
Urinary tract related side effects: dysuria and urinary incontinence	like liver, heart, kidney and
2. Reticulo-endothelial system related side effects: anemia and blood	lungs
infection	3. Vision impairment
3. Reproductive system related side effects: sexual problems, fertility	4. Hearing loss
issues, menopausal symptoms like- vaginal dryness and hot flushes	5. Permanent damage to
4. Generalised side effects: neuropathy of hands and feet, weight loss,	brain, spinal cord and
chronic fatigue, hair fall, cognitive dysfunction and increased anxiety	nerves.

S.No.	Side effects	Modern drugs	Side effects of	Suitable Ayurvedic drugs with
			modern drugs	Reference
1.	Pain (nerve	Acetaminophen	Constipation,	Systemic relaxation, massage, Haldi
	damage,	NSAIDs (aspirin),	dizziness,	(Curcuma longa), Shunti (Zingiber
	headache,	Opioid (morphine),	feeling faint,	officinalis) (Sexton, 2013), Dashmool
	muscular pain,	Antidepressants	drowsiness,	kwath (Das, 2016), Shatavari ghrit
	stomach pain)	(imipramine),	nausea,	(Lakshipatishastri, 1973),
		steroids	vomiting,	Kamdudharas, Shankhvati
		(prednisone)	liver damage,	(Hariprapannai, (1998), Erand (Ricinus
			allergic	communis)(Chunekar, 2015), Kulattha
			reaction, etc.	(Dolichos biflorus), Shalprni
				(Desmodium gangeticum) (Sastri, 2012),
				Shigru (Moringa oleifera), Ahiphen
				(Papaver somniferum), Dhatura (Datura

				metel), Sarpgandha (Rauwolfia serpentina) (Bapalal, 2013), Gokshur (Tribulus terrestris) (Ojha, 2004)
2.	Nausea and vomiting (Pittaj Chardi)	Serotonin antagonists- Ondansetron, NK-1 antagonists- Rolapitant, Antacids- Ranitidine, Dopamine Antagonists- Metaclopramide, Cannabinoids- dronabinol	Diarrhea, constipation, Dizziness, headache, fatigue	Guduchi (Tinospora cordifolia) + Triphala + Neem (Azadirachta indica) + Patol (Trichosanthes dioica) mixed with madhu, Kalyanaka ghrit, Jeevaniya ghrit, Jambu (Syzygium cumini), Chandan (Pterocarpus santalinus) (Bapalal, 2013), Shunti (Zingiber officinalis) (Julie et al., 2012), Eladi churan, Haritaki (Terminalia chebula), Amra (Mangifera indica) (Bhavmishra, 1949), Kapitha (Feronia elephantum), Pippali (Piper longum), Amalaki (Emblia officinals), Giloy (Tinospora cordifolia) (Shastri, 2012), Murva (Marsdenia tenacissima), Talishpatra (Abies webbiana) (Narahari, 2010), Mulethi (Glycyrrhiza glabra) (Ojha, 2004)
3.	Alopecia (hair loss) ( <i>Khalitya</i> )	Corticosteroids injections, Hair sprays like Minoxidil, Contact immunotherapy	Skin rashes, Weight gain, nausea, vomiting, general debility	Pranayama, Shiropichu, Shirobasti, Arogyavridhanivati (Joshi and Ramnarayan, 2011), Dugadhika (Euphorbia pilulifolia), Sairiyakadi tail, Bhrangraj (Eclipta alba) + mulethi (Glycyrrhiza glabra), Vidarigandadi oil, Karveer (Nerium indicum) tail (Pandey, 2012)
4.	Diarrhea (Pittaj atisara)	Antibiotics like metrogyl, Antiparasitics Probiotics ORT	Skin rashes, Troublesome breathing, abdominal pain, Severe dizziness, Swelling of tongue and throat	Haritaki (Terminalia chebula), Bilv (Aegle marmelos, Ativisha (Aconitum heterophylum), Ajadugdha, Mustak (Cyperus rotundu, Deepan-pachan dravya, Shunthi (Zingiber officinalis) + Lodhra (Symplocos recemosa) + Lalchandan (Pterocarpus santalinus) + Khas + Neelkamal (Nymphea setallata) (Pandey, 2012), Bilvadi kwath, Rashanjanadi churan (Bhavmishra, 1949), Kutajghanvati, Shallaki (Boswelia serrata), Patha (Cissampelos pareira), Babool (Acacia arabica), Amra (Mangifera indica) (Chunekar, 2015)
5.	Anemia (Pandu)	Mild: iron and vitamins supplements Chronic: Injecting synthetic erythropoietin, blood transfusion, bone marrow transplantation	High grade fever, high BP, skin reactions, anaphylactic reaction, seizures	Punarnavadimandur, Nvayas churan (Bhavmishra, 1949), Loha bhasma, Arogyavridhanivati, Dhatriaavaleha, Ikshu (Saccharum officinarum), Amalaki (Emblica officinalis), Mulethi (Glycyrrhiza glabra), Draksha (Vitis vinifera), Cow urine + Triphala kwath + Haritaki (Pandey, 2012)
6.	Mouth and throat sores, Mucositis ( <i>Pittaj</i> Mukhapak)	Corticosteroids ointment, Antimicrobial mouth washes	Brushing, thinning of oral mucosa, local burning sensation, gastritis	Sheetal and tikta dravya, Chandan (Santalum album), Khadiradi vati, Haridra (Curcua longa) + Neempatra (Azadirchata indica) + Mulethi (Glycyrrhiza glabra) + Neelkamal oil (Nymphea setallata), Kawal-Triphala kwath, Jatiphalidi kwath (Chakrapanidatta, 1976), Laksmivilasharas, Khadir (Acacia catechu), Kalaka churna, Mulethi (Glycrrhiza glabra), Jati (Jasminum

				gradiflorum), Dharuharidra kwath (Bhavmishra, 1949), Arka (Calotropis procera), Kumari (Aloe vera), Green tea (Freitas et al., 2012)
7.	Loss of Appetite, Anorexia ( <i>Arochaka</i> )	Orexigenics (Ranging from antihistamines to synthetic hormones)	Undesired weight loss with wasting of muscle tissues	Drakshaashava, Sitopaladichuran, Kamdudharas, Lavangadi churna (Bhavmishra, 1949), gargles of Shunthi (dried ginger), maricha (Black pepper), Pippali (Pepper longum), lodra (Symplocos racemosa), Teja patra (Cinnamomum zeylanicum), Yavaksharas (Hordeum vulgare) (Pandey, 2012), Aadraka (Zingiber officinalis), Emlipanak, Dadimadi churan, Yvanikhandav churan, Pippali (Pepper longum), Mustaka (Cyperus rotandus) (Chunekar, 2015)
8.	Constipation (Vibandh)	Laxative like Dulcolas, stool softeners like- decussate	Skin rashes, internal blockage, muscle cramps, irregular heartbeat, irritation around rectal and anal area	For mild : Haritaki (Terminalia chebula), Aragvadha (Cassia fistula), Patol (Trichosanthes dioica), Isabgol husk (Plantago ovata), Eranda tail, Abhayadikwath, Triphala, Avipatikarchurna (Joshi and Ramnarayan, 2011) For severe: Danti (Baliospermum montanum), Trivart (Operculina terphantam), Jayapal (Croton tiglum), Senna (Cassia angustifolia), Abhyaarisht, Brahami (Bacopa monnieri), Drakshasava (Lakshipatishastr, 1973)
9.	Sexual problems, Fertility issues (Male- <i>Klaibya,</i> Female- <i>Bandhya</i> )	Nitric oxide Enhancers like Viagra, levitra etc., flibanerin (anti- depresent), In women- Hormonal therapies, Clomiphene, citrate for ovulation, hormonal injection, <i>in vitro</i> fertilization	Angiopathy, low bp, sleepiness, severe fatigue weight gain, decreased libido, premature delivery, visual impairment	<ul> <li>Panchkarma: Vamana (emesis therapy), virechana (purgation), Basti (enema with medicated decoctions or oils, Brahatashatavari grita (Pandey, 2012).</li> <li>Male: Vajikarn Aushadh, Gorakshadi modak, Vanari vati, Kapikachu (Mucuna pruriens), Ashvagandha (Withania somnifera), Mash (Phaseolus radiates), Shigru (Moringa oleifera), Swetmushali (Asparagus adscendens), Goksura (Tribulus terrestris) (Palatty et al., 2012).</li> <li>Female: Ashoka (Saraca asoca, Kumari (Aloe vera), Ashokarista, Rajapravrtinivati, Shatavari (Asparagus recemosa), Phalghrita, Kalayank ghrit, Mahanarayan tail (Das, 2016)</li> </ul>
10.	Menopausal ( <i>Rajonivriti</i> ) Symptom like vaginal dryness, hot flushes, anxiety	Hormonal replacement therapy, Antianxiety drugs	Risk of blood clots, breast cancer, headache, extreme depression, drowsiness	Pranayama, Sharirabhyang, Abhyantar snehan, Amalaki (Emblica officinalis), Patrangaashav, Chandarprabhavati, Kamdudharasa, Shatavari ghrit, Mulethi (Glycyrrhiza glabra), Chandrakalarasa, Gokshuradi guggulu, Chandnadivati (Joshi, 2011)
11.	Pharyngitis	NSAIDs, Acetaminophen, Amoxicillin Steroids- Dexamethasone	Stomachache, ulcer, ringing in ears, high BP, headache, dizziness, dry skin, insomnia	Pranayam, Surya namskar, Khadiradivati for chewing, Lavangadi vati, Vyoshadi vati, Spray-Eucalyptus citriodora oil, Eucalyptus globules oil, Mentha piperita oil, Origanum syriacum oil, Rosmarinus officinalis oil (Ben-Arye et al., 2011)
12.	Urinary incontinence	Mild: Iron and vitamins	High grade fever, high BP,	Medhya dravyas, Rasayan- Ashwaganda (Withania somnifera),

		supplements Chronic: injecting synthetics erythropoietin, blood transfusion, bone marrow transplant.	Skin reactions, anaphylactic reactions, seizures	Chawanprashavaleha, Dashmool, Kasayam, Brahmrasayan, Chandraprabhavati, Punarnavavaleha, Aamlaki (Emblica officinalis) (Joshi, 2011)
13.	Blood infection (Raktavikar)	Broad spectrum antibiotics, Vasopressor IV fluids	Severe allergic reactions, chest pain, tinnitus	Triphala, Haridrakhanda, Panchtikta ghrita, Guggulu, Kashor guggulu, Mahamanjistadikwath, Manjista (Rubia cordifolia), Shariva (Hemidesmus indicus), Haridra (Curcuma longa) (Chunekar, 2015)
14.	Neuropathy of hands and feet, numbness, pain, tingling (Vatavyadhi)	Analgesic like- acetaminophen, corticosteroids, Seizure medications like- gabapentine	Memory loss, depression, loss of coordination	Dashmool, Mahanarayan tail, Pinda tail, Mahamasadi tail, Akangveer rasa, Rasnadi kwath, Vatarirasa (Bhavmishra, 1949)
15.	Weight loss ( <i>Krish</i> )	Hormonal pills like- methyl testosterone, Steroids injections	Allergic reactions, uncontrolled weight gain, renal failure	Madhur and brihana dravya, Anuvashan basti, Ashvagandha (Withania somnifera), Mulethi (Glycyrrhiza glabra), Kusmadavaleha, Chawanprashavaleha (Pandey, 2012)
16.	Chronic fatigue ( <i>Duarbalya</i> )	Sleeping pills, Antihypertensive, Antidepressants	Mania, daytime drowsiness, depression, burning feet	Shilajeet rasayan, Jeevaniya dravya, Ashvagandha, Shatavari (Asparagus racemosa), Shastikshali, Ashwagandha tail (Bapalal, 2013)
17.	Skin changes- sebostasis, epidermal atrophy, itching, dryness, eczema	Corticosteroids- Momethasone Antibiotics- Metronidazole, Antihistamines- Alimemazine, Cetirizine	Clouding of the lens in both eyes, burning during urination, nausea, dry mouth	Massage with bala tail, swedana karma (sudation therapy), Virechan, basti (enema), Panchanimba churna, Arogyavardhini vati, Kashor guggulu, Triphala guggulu (Sarangadharacharya, 2004)
18.	Cognitive dysfunction	Antipsychotic drugs, Antidepressants, Hypnotic drugs	Sexual dysfunction, Persistent withdrawal symptoms, cardiac problems, birth defect	Shirodhara, Pranayam, Shatvajaya chikitsha, Brahmarasayana, Medhya rasayan - Shankhapushpi (Convolvolus pluricaulis), Brahmi (Bacopa monniera), Mandukaparni (Centella asiatica), Ashwaganda (Withania Somnifera), Jatamansi (Nardostachys jatamansi), Sarpagandha (Rauwolfia serpentine), Shatvajaya chikitsha, Amalaki (Emblica officinalis), Kauch (Mucuna pruriens), Shatvajaya chikitsha, Tagar (Valeriana wallichii), Shilajit rasayan, Kalyanaka Ghrita, Chyavanprashaavaleha (Pandey, 2012)
19.	Sleep problem	Hypnotic (Zolpidem and Zaleplon), Sedative- Barbiturates, chloral hydrates	Burning or tingling in hands, arms, feet, constipation, dizziness, changes in appetite, paranoia, irritability, slurred speech	Whole body massage with <i>Kshirbala</i> and <i>mahamasha</i> oil, bath, food items such as rice with curd or milk or ghee etc., meat soup of aquatic or forest animals, listening to soft and pleasant music, taking pleasant smell, sleeping in soft and comfortable bed, cuddling before sleeping (Pandey, 2012), <i>Nidrodya rasa, Brahmrasayan,</i> <i>Drakshaashav, Sarpgandhaghanvati,</i> <i>Ashwaganda (Withania Somnifera),</i>

				<i>Mundi (Sphearanthus indicus)</i> (Chunekar, 2015)
20.	Hepatotoxicity (Yakrittodar)	Diuretic- Furosemide (Lasix), Hydrochlorthiazide, Pain killer	Chest pain, chills, fever, headache, lower back pain, abdominal pain, black, tarry stools, bleeding gum	Panchakarma, Panchkola Ghrita, Aarogyavardhani vati, Rohitak ghrita, Nvayash churan, Panchgavya ghrita, Salmali (Bombax malabaricum), Sharpunkha (Tephrosia purpurea), Pippalyadi churna, Kutaki (Picrorrhiza kurroa), Pippli (Piper longu), Ashwaganda (Withania Somnifera), Himsra (Capparis sepiaria), Syrup Liv 52, Kumaryaashava (Kataria and Singh, 1997; Madhavan et al., 2012;)

# Ayurvedic treatment for chemotherapy-induced side effects

Ayurvedic treatment is helpful in treating side effects induced by chemotherapy in cancer patients. Following treatment should be given preferably three days prior of the chemotherapy.

1. Sadya snehan: one teaspoon cow ghee + one teaspoon salt should be consumed at morning with hot water with empty stomach.

2. Manjishthadi kwath and Kachnar gugglu.

3. Coriander leaves juice: freshly prepared juice with 20-30 g concentration twice a day during the chemotherapy.

## Ayurvedic treatment for radiotherapy-induced side effects

During the radiotherapy, following Ayurvedic treatment should be given.

1. Sadya snehan + matra basti for three days.

2. Piece of tamarind to be kept in mouth during radiotherapy is advised for mouth and throat cancers.

3. Vaginal tampon of *Castor* oil is applied daily in vagina for cervical and rectal cancers.

4. *Mrudu virechan* (mild laxative) is always advised during radiotherapy except for vaginal and cervical cancers.

### CONCLUSION

The Ayurvedic medicines can be used in cancer survivors after chemo- and radiotherapy in certain conditions including for correcting Jataragni (appetite) and reducing the quality and quantity of side effects. In addition, during rest period between successive chemotherapy sessions, the Ayurvedic treatment can be given. The condition where vitamins supplements like- vitamin A, E, C (antioxidants) are causing increase in the severity of the adverse effects, the Ayurvedic treatment can be applied. This treatment should be given in combination with highly nutritional food. If the patient feels psychological changes during and after chemo- and radiotherapies or to increase the immunity, the Ayurvedic treatment is certainly helpful. These medicines are usually contain multiple active principles which correct the *Tridosha* vitiation at cellular level without showing any adverse effect and also act as the food supplement.

### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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