

Concept of Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)

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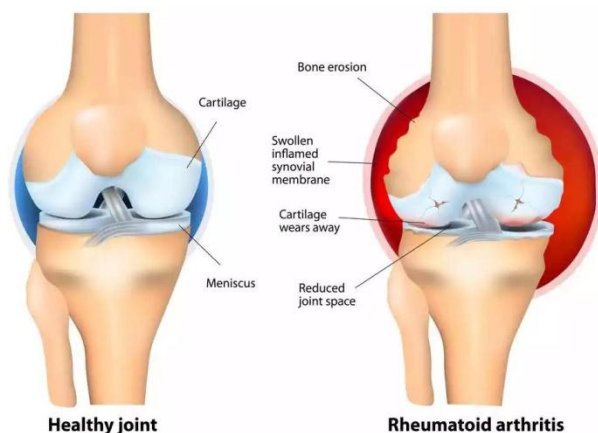
Abstract: Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic inflammatory joint disease that can cause cartilage and bone damage as well as disability. Early diagnosis is the key to optimal therapeutic success, particularly in patients with well-characterized risk factors for poor outcome such as high disease activity, presence of autoantibodies, and early joint damage. Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic systemic autoimmune disease that primarily affects the lining of synovial joints and is associated with progressive disability, premature death and socioeconomic burden. There is an urgent need for a better understanding of how pathological mechanisms drive the slowdown of RA progression in individuals in order to develop therapies that effectively treat patients at each stage of disease progression. Here we divide the etiology and pathology into specific stages triggering, (ii) maturation, (iii) targeting, and (iv) fulminant stage, concomitant with hyperplastic synovial, cartilage damage, bone erosion, and systemic consequences. Modern pharmacologic therapies (including conventional, biological, and novel potential small molecule disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs) remain the mainstay of RA treatment and there has been significant progress toward achieving disease remission without joint deformity. Despite this, a significant proportion of RA patients do not effectively respond to the current therapies and thus new drugs are urgently required. This review discusses recent advances of our understanding of RA pathogenesis, disease modifying drugs, and provides perspectives on next generation therapeutics for RA.

Keywords: autoimmune disease; complications; immunopathology; inflammatory; joints

1. Introduction

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is an autoimmune disease that causes chronic inflammation of the joints. While inflammation of the tissue around the joints and inflammatory arthritis are characteristic features of rheumatoid arthritis, the disease can also cause inflammation and injury in other organs in the body.

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS



Rheumatoid Arthritis can also produce diffuse inflammation in the lungs, membrane around the heart (pericardium), the membranes of the lung (pleura), and white of the eye (sclera), and also nodular lesions, most common in subcutaneous tissue. Although the cause of Rheumatoid Arthritis is unknown, autoimmunity plays a pivotal role in both its chronicity and progression.

In some patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis, chronic inflammation leads to the destruction of the cartilage, bone, and ligaments, causing deformity of the joints. Damage to

the joints can occur early in the disease and be progressive. Moreover, studies have shown that the progressive damage to the joints does not necessarily correlate with the degree of pain, stiffness, or swelling present in the joints.

About 1% of the world's population is afflicted by Rheumatoid Arthritis, women three times more often than men. The disease occurs in all ethnic groups and in every part of the world. It is most likely to strike people 30-50 years of age, but it can occur in children, teenagers, and elderly people. A similar disease affecting young people is known as juvenile rheumatoid arthritis.

2. Symptoms

Rheumatoid Arthritis usually inflames multiple joints in a symmetrical pattern (both sides of the body affected). Early symptoms may be subtle, usually with only minor joint pain, stiffness, and fatigue. Wrists, fingers, knees, feet, and ankles are the most commonly affected.

- Chest pain when taking a breath (pleurisy)
- Nodules under the skin (usually a sign of more severe disease)
- Numbness, tingling, or burning in the hands and feet
- Sleep difficulties
- Dry eyes and mouth (Sjogren syndrome)
- Eye burning, itching, and discharge

Joint symptoms may include:

- Morning stiffness, which lasts more than 1 hour, is common. Joints may feel warm, tender, and stiff when not used for an hour.
- Joint pain is often felt on the same joint on both sides of the body.

- Over time, joints may lose their range of motion and may become deformed.

Diagnosis

Two lab tests that often help in the diagnosis are:

- Rheumatoid factor test
- Anti-CCP antibody test

Other tests that may be done include:

- Complete blood count
- Joint x-rays
- Synovial fluid analysis
- C-reactive protein
- Erythrocyte sedimentation rate
- Joint ultrasound or MRI

Coming to Ayurved all most these systems have been mentioned in a scientific manner AC to Ayurved the main Lakshanas (symptoms) of the disease are.

According to Ayurveda, Rheumatoid Arthritis can be compared as “*Ama vata*“. It has been described as

*”Sa Kashtaha Sarvarogaanaam yadaa prakupito Bhavet |
Hastha paada shiro gulpha trika jaanu uru sandhishu ||
Karoti sarujam shopham yatra doshaha prapadyate |
Sa desho rujate atyatham vyavidha iva vrishchkaiki || “*

This means” If the disease “ama vata” (Rheumatoid Arthritis) gets aggravated, it becomes most difficult disease comparatively to others. The joints of hands, feet, ankles and elbow, low back, knee, and hip become inflamed and painful. The pain in the affected joints resembles the pain of a scorpion’s sting.”

- 1) Angamardha : Pain in different parts of the body
- 2) Gauravam : Heavyness
- 3) Jvara : Fever
- 4) Apakah : Indigestion
- 5) Sunatanga : Swelling in joints
- 6) Aruchi : Anorexia
- 7) Tirishna : Thirst
- 8) Alasyam : Fatigue

Cardinal symptoms of Amavata

- Vrisikdamsha vata vedana (Morning pain severe in nature)
- Karmahani (loss of movements)
- Sandhi Vikruti (joint deformity)
- SanchariVedana (shifting pain)
- Stambha (stiffness of joints)
- Jwara (Increase temperature)
- Kshudhamandya (Loss of appetite)

According to dosha

According to the dosha predominance it is said that in pittanubanda Amavata there will be burning sensation along

with pain and swelling, in vatanubanda Amavata there will be severe pain, in Kaphanubanda Amavata there will be more rigidity and stab data which may lead to stiffness of joints and restriction of movement.

If patient can come for the treatment in early stages of the disease, even complete cure is also possible provided patient follows all the guideline including diet restrictions strictly.

In chronic cases, complete cure may not be possible but control over the disease and dependency on allopathic medicines can be reduced.

Treatment

According to modern point of view main goals of therapy of R.A. are

- 1) Relief of pain
- 2) Reduction of inflammation
- 3) Preservation of Functional capacity

The drugs of modern medicine are mainly divided into 3 groups

- 1) Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs
- 2) DMARDS – Disease modifying anti rheumatic drugs
- 3) Glucocorticoid drugs.
 - a) As first line of treatment, normally aspirin like nonsteroid anti-inflammatory drugs along with low dose glucocorticoids are used.
 - b) As second line of treatment DMARDS like gold compounds, D- pencillamine, Antimalarials, sulfasalazine etc. are used.
 - c) Sometimes immune suppressive drugs like Azathioprine, Cyclophosphamide etc are used. Though all the above drugs are in practice no drug is having satisfactory results. Almost all are having severe adverse effects. Even NSAIDS prolong use cause gastric irritation, platlet dis-function, azotemia etc. DMARDS are not similar chemical compounds. They are having different mode of actions. One cannot say which patient will respond to which DMARD drugs and they also having adverse effects. Though gluco corticoid therapy gives temporary relief as it is not altering the course of the disease, in later days it further worsens the condition.

Majority of these practical problems in the treatment of R.A, can be overcome by Ayurvedic line of treatment and Ayurvedic formulation. The important thing in Ayurvedic line of treatment is, it is based on the etiopathogenesis of the disease and the drugs which are used can also be supported by the properties of those drugs.

Ayurvedic procedures in the treatment of R.A. are practically giving relief without any side effects:

Treatment

- 1) Nidan Parivarjan: Removal or avoiding the causes of the disease.

- 2) Pathya Sevana: Changing the lifestyle and diet to facilitate the cure:
 - a) Pathya Ahara (The right food):- Whole wheat, pulses (moong and masoor), pumpkin, bitter gourd, spinach, ginger, garlic, vegetables with high water content, cucumber, beans, Red rice etc., because these are easily digestible and do not produce gas.
 - b) Pathya Vihar (The right lifestyle):- Light exercises and yoga help (it does not aggravate vata)
- 3) Shamana (Ayurvedic Medicine therapy):- It is done by using very effective and time tested Ayurveda formulations like kashaya, asavarista, Choorna, vati, taila, Rasoushadi etc.

underground stems since these substances are cold in nature and aggravate Vata as well as Ama. Bathing with cold water and exposing oneself to cold wind should be strictly avoided.

At CHARAKA,

We are providing a very effective treatment methodology for treating Rheumatoid Arthritis (Ama vata), based on the Ayurveda lines of management coupled with years of experience and dedication.

- Amritotharam Kashayam: Ajamodadichoornam
 - Pippalyasavam: Nagara choornam
 - Dasamoolarishtam: Pancha kola choornam
 - ShunthiChoornam: Amrutadichoornam
- 1) ShodhanaChikitsa(Ayurvedic PanchakarmaTreatment):Elimination of vitiated doshas from the body.
 - a) Langhan (Fasting):- It may be complete or partial, depending on the strength of patient, place and season. It normalizes irregular bowel function.
 - b) Virechana:- Medicated purgation therapy, Ama is eliminated from the body and bowels are also cleansed.
 - 2) After complete digestion of Ama, if pain and swelling still persist then a course of the following is given:-
 - Shamana- - Amvatatiras
 - Valiya Rasnadi Kashayam - Amavatadrivajraras
 - Guggulutiktam Kashayam - Yogarajaguggulu
 - Balarishtam - Rasnasaptakakwatha
 - Punarnavadi and Gukshuradi Guggulu - Vatariguggulu

Shodhana:

- 1) **Basti**:- It is also known as medicated enema, highly beneficial in cleansing and detoxifying the body.
- 2) **Oil bath therapy**:- highly rejuvenating treatment. It increases blood circulation and enhances muscular tone.
 - a) Saindavaditailam
 - b) Satapushpadilepa
 - c) Vijayabhariravatailam
 - d) Dashmula Kwath
 - e) Erandamula Kwath
 - f) Aranda taila
- 3) Also known as herbal Potli treatment, it promotes better circulation, increases perspiration which helps skin to eliminate the toxins and improve muscle tone.

One should avoid cabbage, cauliflower, potato, rice, curd, rajma (kidney beans), ice-creams, cold drinks, fried food,