

Viddha Karma as an Emergency Analgesic for Muscle Spasms in Athletes: A Case Study

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Abstract: Muscle spasms during sports can impair an athlete's performance and require immediate pain management. This case study explores the effectiveness of Viddha Karma, a traditional Ayurvedic therapy, in managing acute muscle spasms. An 18-year-old professional football player experienced a severe calf spasm during a match, prompting the application of Viddha Karma for pain relief. The procedure involved therapeutic puncturing of the affected muscle, followed by herbal remedies. The athlete experienced immediate pain relief and improved mobility, highlighting Viddha Karma's potential as an emergency intervention for sports-related musculoskeletal issues.

Keywords: Viddha Karma, muscle spasm, Ayurveda, sports injury, pain management

1. Introduction

Ayurveda, often referred to as the "science of life," is an ancient holistic healing system originating from India. It emphasizes the balance of body, mind, and spirit to maintain health and prevent illness. Ayurvedic principles view each individual as unique, with a distinct combination of biological energies or *Doshas*: *Vata* (air and space), *Pitta* (fire and water), and *Kapha* (earth and water). Imbalances in these *Doshas* can lead to various health issues, including muscle spasms and pain. In *Shalya Tantra* (surgery) venepuncture is considered as half the treatment just like enema therapy as in *Kaychikitsa* [1]. According to *Sushruta Samhitha*, there are eight types of *Shastra Karma* (surgical procedures) known as *Chedana* (excision), *Bhedhana* (incision), *Lekhana* (scraping), *Vedhan* (puncturing), *Eshana* (probing), *Aharana* (extraction), *Visravana* (draining), and *Seevana* (suturing). *Sushruta Samhitha* is the elaboration of this word as to bore a hole, to drain, to let out entrapped *Vayu*, to let out entrapped circulation in blood vessels, as like to let out fluid in *Jalaudara* (ascites) and *Mutravridhi*, and to let out the pus in *Vidradhi* (abscess). *Acharya Dalhana* said that *Vedhyam* means to be punctured by instruments having small bores [2]

This study aims to assess the role of Viddha Karma as an emergency analgesic in managing acute muscle spasms in athletes, with a focus on its efficacy in pain relief and mobility restoration. *Vaidya of Kalari Gurukul* organization engaged in treating sports injuries by using conventional *Marma Chikitsa* (special treatment for injuries, contusion, sprain, dislocation and fractures) [3]. Every *Vatik* disorder should be managed with specific therapy or everywhere based on observation of its location and involved *Dushya* which is *Dhatu* substratum of pathogenesis [4].

Venepuncture is contraindicated in all those cases; it is authorised for the condition of poisoning and emergency [5]. Bloodletting is also useful in hard, dark-reddish or red coloured, painful, extensive and uneven inflammatory wound [6]. There are sixty measures of treatment of wound

in which *Vyadhan Karma* is given [7]. In disease manageable by puncturing, sharp instrument should be applied with appropriate measure according to disease and thus the morbid elements should be drained. *Acharya Sushrut* mentioned the two different methods i.e. puncturing and draining [8].

Understanding the effectiveness of *Viddha Karma* in emergency pain management can provide alternative therapeutic strategies for sports medicine professionals and *Ayurveda* practitioners, thereby broadening the scope of integrative healthcare.

Nirukti: According to the *Sanskrit Shabda Kalpadruma* dictionary, *Viddha/Vedhana* Sanskrit word is derived from *vid*'s root, which denotes "to pierce or penetrate"

Definition: *Viddha Karma* encompasses various surgical procedures described in ancient *Ayurvedic* texts, such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtang Hridaya Samhita*. These procedures involve making incisions, excisions, or punctures to address specific health issues.

Viddha Karma is indicated in conditions where non-invasive or medical interventions are inadequate or ineffective. Common indications include:

- 1) Removal of foreign bodies such as thorns, splinters, or stones.
- 2) Drainage of abscesses or collection of pus.
- 3) Excision of tumours or abnormal growths.
- 4) Correction of anatomical deformities.
- 5) Management of certain types of injuries.

Understanding muscle spasm in Ayurveda:

Muscle spasms are involuntary contractions of muscles, commonly experienced during rigorous physical activities such as sports. It often hindering performance and leading to discomfort. In *Ayurveda*, muscle spasms are often attributed to imbalances in the *Vata Dosha*, which governs movement and nervous system functions. Excessive *Vata* can lead to muscle stiffness, cramps, and spasms. Factors such as

overexertion, dehydration, poor circulation, and inadequate warm-up can aggravate *Vata* and contribute to muscle spasms, particularly during physical activities like sports. The action of aggravated *Vata* are *Sransa*, *Vyasa*, *Vyadha*, *Svapa*, *Sada*, *Ruka*, *Toda*, *Bhedana*, *Sanga*, *Angabheda*, *Sankocha*, *Varta*, *Harshana*, *Tarpana*, *Kampa*, *Parushya*, *Saushirya*, *Shosha*, *Spandana*, *Vestana*, *Stambha*, astringent taste, reddish brown and dark brown colour [9].

Vayu, when imbalanced, can cause stiffness, convulsions, numbness, swelling, and pain throughout the body [10].

Role of *Viddha Karma*:

Viddha Karma, also known as *Siravedha* or Bloodletting Therapy, is a specialized *Ayurvedic* procedure used for therapeutic puncturing of tissues to alleviate pain, release tension, and restore balance in the body. It is commonly employed in cases of localized pain, swelling, and muscular disorders. *Viddha Karma* aims to remove excess *Doshas* or accumulated toxins (*Ama*) from the affected area, promoting circulation and facilitating the body's natural healing processes. Even in those who are prohibited for it, when they are affected by poison or are in an emergency, puncturing is not prohibited [11].

The differentiation of *Viddha Karma* and *Sira Vedhana* can be clarified as, when the *Siras* (veins) in *Mamsala* (muscular region) are neither correctly prominent nor palpable, hence follow *Viddha karma*. Additionally, it is accepted that nearby area of muscular region away from the *Marma* (vital) points can be pierced [12].

Case Study of an Athlete / Patient information:-

Name: ABC

Age: 18 Years, male

Occupation: Professional athlete (Football player)

Medical History:

Generally healthy, occasional muscle strains due to rigorous sports training. No history of any type of surgery or any disease condition.

Presenting Complaint:

18 Years male, a professional football player, was participated in an intense match. During match, kick to the ball, he experienced severe pain and cramp in his right calf muscle. He immediately stops playing and seeks medical assistance due to the intense pain, which is affecting his mobility and performance.

Timeline of Events:		
Date	Time	Events
09/01/2025	11 am	First consultation, experiences severe pain, noticeable swelling and cramp in his right calf muscle
09/01/2025	11.15 am	<i>Viddha Karma</i> performed by applying local anaesthesia
09/01/2025	11.17 am	Pain and cramp sudden reduced. Swelling remained
10/01/2025	10:00 am	Second consultation, swelling reduced to its half and no pain.
11/01/2025	10.35 am	Third consultation, No swelling and no pain.

Assessment: Upon examination by an *Ayurvedic* practitioner, athlete was found to have a sudden onset of

muscle spasm in the right calf muscle. His pain is severe and there is noticeable swelling and tenderness in the affected area. The practitioner determines that immediate intervention was required to alleviate Athlete's pain and restore his mobility so he can continue playing.

Treatment Plan:

Due to the urgency of the situation and the need for immediate pain relief, the *Ayurvedic* practitioner decided to perform *Viddha Karma*, a specialized procedure involving therapeutic puncturing of the affected muscle.

1) Procedure of *Viddha Karma*:

- Preparation:** Before initiating *Viddha Karma*, the practitioner ensures the athlete's comfort and cleanliness of the treatment area. This involves cleaning and sterilizing the skin to minimize the risk of infection.
- Selection of Instruments:** *Acharya Sushrut* said that *Kutharika*, *Brihimukha*, *Ara*, *Vetasapatra* and needle should be used for puncturing method [13]. A fine, sterilized needle no. 26 (**Fig.4**) was chosen based on the size and location of the affected area. The instrument should be sharp enough to penetrate the tissues effectively. The vitiated blood should be eliminated by venesection, horn, gourd, leech and scarification in regressive order according to depth of the morbidity. Leech used in the deep seated malady, Scarification used in localised lump, Venepuncture is used in generalised vitiation in blood and horn & gourd are used in skin disorder [14].



Figure 1: Tourniquet



Figure 2: Cotton Bandage



Figure 3: Rock Salt



Figure 4: Surgical needle No.26

- c) **Anaesthesia:** Linen, cloth, cotton, swab, *Samudraphen*, *Yavakshara*, rocksalt and turgid leaves may be used for scrapping [15]. A local anaesthesia made from natural substances to minimize discomfort during the procedure, such as rock salt (*Saindhava*) (**Fig.3**) or any salt (*Lavana*) would be applied topically to numb the area. Also, given oleation and sudation therapies, liquid food or gruel which are exactly opposite in qualities of aggravated *Doshas* [16].
- d) **Viddha Karma:** Athlete should be asked to sit in erect posture. Then affected site tied with tourniquet (**Fig.1**), controlled/ restrain from movement, neither very firmly nor very loosely then search for the site of puncture [17]. In Muscular areas, puncturing should be of the size of the *Yava* (barley grain), in other areas it should be half *Yava* or one *Vrihi* (paddy/ rice) using a *Vrihimukha Sashttra* (Trocar/ Puncturing needle) [18]. With precise techniques, the practitioner carefully punctures the skin and penetrates the affected muscle at specific points with the help of sterilized needle no.26. The depth and angle of insertion are determined based on the severity and location of the spasm. It discharges blood in a stream for a while and then stops when checked should be known as punctured properly. It is just like at first yellow coloured sap oozes out from *Kusumbha* flowers; vitiated blood comes out first on puncturing the vein [19]. The procedure aims to release trapped energy (*Prana*) and promote the flow of vital fluids (such as blood and lymph) to the area, thereby relieving muscle tension and pain.
- e) **Post-procedure Care:** After completing *Viddha Karma*, the tourniquet was released slowly. The part was washed with cold water. The practitioner would apply herbal poultices or analgesic and anti-inflammatory swab or cotton bandage (**Fig.2**) soaked in oil to the affected area [20]. When the blood stops by itself after adequate flow, then it should be considered as a pure and properly drained [21]. The athlete was advised to rest, elevate the affected limb, and apply ice packs intermittently to reduce swelling and promote healing. Feeling of lightness of the body, mitigation of suffering, subsiding of severity of the disease and

cheerfulness of mind are the symptoms of proper blood flow [22].

2. Discussion

In this case, *Viddha Karma* proves to be an effective emergency intervention for relieving the severe muscle spasm in his right calf during the football match. By addressing the underlying imbalance in *Vata* and releasing tension in the affected muscle, *Viddha Karma* facilitates rapid pain relief, restoration of mobility, increased flexibility and allowing athlete to continue playing. As practitioner used the 26 no. needle which have merits of sharp instrument said by *Acharya Sushrut* are Good handle, made of good quality metal, well-edged, well-formed, well-tipped and uncrooked [23]. Also *Acharya Sushrut* enlightened that puncturing needle should be like a hair [24]. Wholesome regimen and diet was followed because The *Doshas* deviate from their original path due to tying of tourniquet. The *Doshas* mix with the vitiated blood therefore till the *Doshas* reach their original site, wholesome diet and regimen were to be followed. The wholesome diet should not be very hot, nor very cold, light, stimulates digestive fire. If it is not done in proper way it gives impact on activities of blood and digestive fire [25].

The holistic approach of *Ayurveda*, which integrates personalized care, natural therapies, and emphasis on overall well-being, aligns with the principles of *Viddha Karma* in promoting health and healing.

3. Conclusion

This case study demonstrates the effectiveness of *Viddha Karma* as an emergency analgesic for managing acute muscle spasms in athletes. The athlete experienced immediate pain relief and restored mobility, reinforcing the significance of *Ayurveda* in sports medicine. The holistic nature of *Ayurvedic* interventions, which focus on individualized treatment and natural healing, highlights the potential for integrating traditional therapies with modern sports injury management. Further studies can explore the broader applicability of *Viddha Karma* in treating other musculoskeletal conditions.

Acknowledgement

Author acknowledges the patient for his cooperation, consent and faith in *Ayurveda*.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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