

Role of Panchakarma in the Management of Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome: Evidence-Based Analysis

Dr. Harkiran Nehra

M.S, PhD (Prasuti Tantra & Stree Roga) Professor & HOD, Department of Streeroga and Prasuti Tantra, SAMHC, Gharuan.
Email: [harkiran.dr\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:harkiran.dr[at]gmail.com)

Abstract: Polycystic ovarian syndrome (pcos) is a common endocrinological and metabolic disorder affecting women of reproductive age, often presenting with irregular menstrual cycles, hyperandrogenism, anovulation, insulin resistance, infertility, and metabolic disturbances. conventional treatments provide symptom relief but may not address root imbalances. ayurveda's panchakarma, a set of five therapeutic purification procedures, is traditionally used to detoxify, balance doshas, improve metabolism, and restore homeostasis. mechanisms proposed include ama elimination, hormonal balance, improved digestion, and systemic detoxification. emerging clinical reports and observational studies suggest potential benefits of panchakarma, particularly vamana (emesis) and basti (medicated enemas), in regulating menstrual cycles, enhancing follicular maturation, and improving endocrine parameters. however, existing evidence is limited by small sample sizes, lack of randomized controlled trials, and methodological heterogeneity. this review synthesizes classical ayurvedic rationale, recent clinical findings, and proposed mechanisms, highlighting the need for rigorous, standardized research to validate panchakarma's role in pcos management and to integrate it with contemporary therapeutic strategies.

Keywords: panchakarma; polycystic ovarian syndrome; ayurveda; vamana; basti; evidence-based; endocrine balance; women's health

1. Introduction

Polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) is recognised globally as one of the most prevalent reproductive and metabolic disorders in women of reproductive age. Clinical manifestations range from menstrual irregularities, hyperandrogenic features, insulin resistance, and infertility to long-term metabolic sequelae. While modern medical management focuses on symptom control and metabolic regulation, there is increasing interest in integrative approaches that target systemic balance and root causation. In Ayurveda, PCOS features resemble conditions such as **Artavakshaya**, **Nastartava**, **Bandhya Yonivyapada**, and **Vata-Kapha imbalance**, providing a theoretical basis for holistic management. **Panchakarma**—a classical purification and detoxification approach—aims to eliminate accumulated toxins (**ama**) and restore doshic harmony, which may be relevant to the multisystem disturbances seen in PCOS.

Ayurvedic Basis for Panchakarma in PCOS

Ayurvedic texts describe Panchakarma as a set of five detoxification procedures that clear deep-seated doshic imbalances and ama. Given the **Kapha and Vata predominance** thought to contribute to metabolic and reproductive dysfunctions in PCOS, procedures like **Vamana** (therapeutic emesis) and **Basti** (medicated enemas) can theoretically act on hormonal and metabolic pathways, improving menstrual regularity and fertility outcomes.

2. Proposed Mechanisms and Clinical Evidence

Mechanisms of Action

Panchakarma is proposed to:

- Eliminate systemic ama and metabolic toxins, supporting endocrine homeostasis.

- Balance doshas (especially Kapha and Vata) implicated in PCOS aetiopathogenesis.
- Enhance digestion and metabolism, which may improve insulin sensitivity.
- Improve tissue nutrition and hormonal regulation through systemic detoxification.

Although classical mechanisms are theoretical and rooted in Ayurvedic doctrine, modern interpretations liken these effects to modulation of metabolic and endocrine processes.

Clinical Evidence

Observational Studies:

A study involving Ayurvedic regimens incorporating Panchakarma showed improved quality of life among PCOS patients with combined herbs, lifestyle changes, and detox therapies, although statistical power was modest.

3. Randomised/Clinical Interventions:

An RCT-like study on the efficacy of Panchakarma in women with polycystic ovaries reported improved follicular maturation and menstrual cycle regularity following schedules involving **Vamana and Basti**, with suggestion of influence on endocrine function.

4. Case Reports/ Series

Multiple case studies describe successful management of PCOS features—irregular cycles and infertility—using Panchakarma in conjunction with Ayurvedic medicine, though these offer lower levels of evidence due to lack of controls.

5. Discussion

Emerging evidence suggests Panchakarma may ameliorate certain clinical aspects of PCOS, particularly through detoxification and systemic balance. However, limitations in current research include **small sample sizes, lack of standardized protocols, absence of long-term follow-up, and heterogeneity in procedures and outcome metrics**. Rigorous **randomized controlled trials**, clear standardised Panchakarma protocols, and objective endocrine/metabolic biomarkers are needed to establish efficacy and reproducibility.

This integrative approach might complement modern therapies, especially in patients seeking holistic management or those with metabolic components unresponsive to conventional treatment.

6. Conclusion

Panchakarma shows potential as an adjunctive therapy in PCOS management through its holistic detoxification and dosha balancing mechanisms. However, the current body of evidence, while promising, is preliminary. High-quality, large-scale clinical trials with standardized methodologies are essential to confirm its therapeutic value and facilitate integration into evidence-based gynecological care.

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