A Holistic Approach to Geriatric Healthcare wsr Ayurveda & Yoga

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Abstract: At the biological level, ageing results from the impact of the accumulation of a wide variety of molecular and cellular damage over time. This leads to a gradual decrease in physical and mental capacity, a growing risk of disease, and ultimately, death. Advancement of age usually creates numerous problems in the individual. Geriatric problems may be mainly divided into four categories: physical, psychological, emotional, and social. Ayurveda, has got the potential for prevention of diseases by health promotion and management of diseases occurring in old age. Jarachikitsa or Rasayana is a unique therapeutic methodology to delay ageing and to minimize the intensity of problems occurring this degenerative phase of one’s life. Future aging can be reduced before the occurrence of old age. Vayasthapana (Anti-ageing herbs) are specialized rasayana drugs that reverse degenerative changes, increase life span with quality health. Ayurveda has potential to offer effective and safe approach is prevention and management of geriatric disorders. It is the demand of the hour to develop an effective holistic protocol for geriatric care by combining Rasayana, Panchkarma, Dietetics, Ayurvedic medicines and Yoga.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Geriatric Healthcare, Rasayana, Yoga

1. Introduction

In 2010, an estimated 524 million were aged 65 or older- 8% of worlds population. By 2050, this number is expected to nearly triple to about 1.5 billion, representing 16% of worlds population.1 By 2020, the number of people aged 60 years and older will outnumber children younger than 5 years. At the biological level, ageing results from the impact of the accumulation of a wide variety of molecular and cellular damage over time. This leads to a gradual decrease in physical and mental capacity, a growing risk of disease, and ultimately, death.2 Advancement of age usually creates numerous problems in the individual. Geriatric problems may be mainly divided into three categories: physical, psychological, emotional and social.3

Physical problems

The following are some very common physical disorders of the old age:
- Cardiovascular disorders - hypertension, Myocardial infarction, Congestive Cardiac Failure
- Respiratory disorders - asthma and bronchitis
- Musculoskeletal disorders - osteoporosis, spasm, drooping shoulder
- Gastro-intestinal disorders - dyspepsia and flatulence
- Genito-urinary disorders - nocturia, prostate enlargement
- Locomotor disorders - osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout
- Endocrinological disorders - diabetes is one of the major endocrinological problems found in old age etc

Psychological problems

Dementia is often noticed in old people.4 Depression is the most harmful and widely noticed psychological complaint of the senior citizens.5 Emotional issues due to negligence and loneliness.

Social issues in elderly

Fighting geriatric problems is not the sole responsibility of the senior citizen alone. The family and the society have their share of responsibility in the fight. Marital status, financial status, work history, education, responsibilities, living atmosphere and arrangements are the prime issues to be considered while addressing the issues of elderly. Loss of key support like death of spouse/siblings, retirement, relocation and financial deterioration. In addition, physical abuse, psychological abuse, neglect, financial abuse are common on elderly patients, which further add to the agony. These changes may cause multiple problems with regard to physical, social, mental wellbeing.

According to Acharya Vridhha Vagbhata , old age is an age of constant reduction of tissues, senses acuities and other virtues, connected with manifestation of wrinkles of skin, Greying of hair, cough, reduced digestion, dyspnoea etc just like an old residence which will collapse gradually by rain. During this phase, there is a raise of vāta which manifest different symptoms like loss of power, flabbiness of muscle, joints and bones, irregularity of skin, bending of body, cough, dyspnoea, tremors, increase in kapha and decrease of tissues. Every living being on the earth has to pass through the process of ageing and human being is not different. According to Sushruta, Vardhakya is Svabhava and this can be restrained to the extent with the use of Rasayana remedies.6

Acharya Charak says “He, who treats the disease before its commencement or at an early stage, experiences long-lasting happiness”7 Geriatric problems are best confronted by preventive measures than curative ones. By adopting a healthier lifestyle, the risk of a whole range of diseases can be reduced. These factors are diet and nutrition, exercise, weight, smoking and alcohol, social activities.

Diet and nutrition

With increasing age, people become more prone to malnutrition for many reasons including - Arochaka
(Anorexia), Smritinash (Dementia), Manovasada (Depression), Stroke, Kampavata (Parkinson disease) and other neurological disorders, delayed gastric emptying. The diet should be regulated taking into account the habitat, season, age, and according to one’s digestive capacity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Common Health Problem</th>
<th>Dietary Modification</th>
<th>Rasayana</th>
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</table>
| 1.   | Constipation          | • Predominantly liquid and semisolid diet.  
• Rich fibre diet considering Agni Bala.  
• Adequate water, preferably lukewarm.  
• Fruits and green vegetables.  
• A spoon of ghee in every meal. | Rasayana recipe viz. Abhayarishta, Triphala, or fried Hareetaki churna at bed time. |
| 2.   | Chronic Diarrhoea     | • Reduce fat and protein content.  
• Maintain fluid intake.  
• Replace milk by Takra one cup 2-3 times a day.  
• Add fruits like Bilva, Banana, Dadima.  
• All foods should be warm, soft spices.  
• Krishural(kichadi) of rice, Munga Dal.  
• Dietary supplements | Rasayana recipes like Bilva churna, Kutaja-Bilva Panaka, Takrarishta etc. |
| 3.   | Arthritis and Rheumatism | • Promote low protein diet.  
• Avoid cold, stored raw foods  
• Promote warm soft spicy food.  
• Avoid all Kaphakara foods.  
• Lukewarm water medicated with Trikatu may be used for drinking.  
• Panchakola phanta half cup twice daily after major meals. | Dietary supplements- Minerals, Vitamins and Rasayana recipes like Guda-Ardraka, Draksharishta, Ashvagandha Rasayana, Amrita Bhaltataka etc. |
| 4.   | Diabetes              | • Low fat, low carbohydrate diet.  
• Reduce Kaphaj articles of diet like sweet and oleus substances viz. sugars and sugar containing items- potatoes, new rice and sweet fruits.  
• Promote edible spices viz. Shunth, Pippai, Maricha, Rasona, Patola, Tejapatra.  
• Warm food and drink.  
• Lukewarm water medicated with Trikata for drinking.  
• Sprouted Methika seeds for chewing and swallowing as part of breakfast.  
• Bitter leafy vegetables like Palaka, Bastuka, Karela, Patola etc.  
• Fruits- Jambu, Bilva, Kapistha etc. | Dietary supplements and Rasayana recipes viz. shilajatu, Ashvagandha Amrita, Amalaki Rasayana, Jambu beeja. |
| 5.   | Hypertension and IHD  | • Reduce sugar and fat in food.  
• Reduce salt intake as per clinical condition.  
• Add soft spices to promote taste and to promote Agni.  
• Promote bitter leafy vegetables and citrus fruits.  
• Skimmed milk and Takra.  
• Avoid alcohol and coffee. | Dietary supplements and Rasayana recipes viz. Arjuna twak curna, Ashvagandha. |
| 6.   | Urinary diseases      | • Avoid spicy food.  
• Optimum liquid intake  
| 7.   | Respiratory diseases  | • Warm food.  
• Promote lukewarm spiced water for drinking.  
• Bitter leafy vegetables.  
• Avoid cold and raw uncooked food and other Kaphaja substances.  
• Avoid buttermilk, ice creams, too much of sweets and fatty meals. | Dietary supplements and Rasayana recipes viz. Gud-Ardraka, Chyavanaprasha, Haridrakhanda, Shirthashadi Avaleha, Kantuakaryavaleha etc. |
| 8.   | Hepatobiliary conditions | • Low fat, rich carbohydrate diet.  
• Monitored salt and water intake.  
• Bitter leafy vegetables and citrus fruits.  
• Butter reduced milk and Takra  
• Stop alcohol and coffee.  
| 9.   | Infections and Malignancies | • Ensure adequate calories and protein supplements.  
• Regulated salt water intake as per clinical condition.  
• Ensure adequate mineral and vitamin supplement.  
• Prefer warm and soft spicy food.  
• Warm spiced water for drinking.  
• Bitter leafy vegetables and citrus fruits. | Dietary supplements and Rasayana recipes viz Amrta Bhallataka, Amalaki Rasayana, Bhumyamalaki churna. |
| 10.  | Agnimandya and Ajima Reduced appetite | • Langhana, Dipana, Pachana.  
• Relatively semisolid/liquid diet.  
• Warm spicy food. | Appropriate dietary supplements and Agni bala vardhaka Rasayanas Viz. Lavana-Ardraka, |
Concept of Rasayana (rejuvenation)

Rasayana essentially denotes improved nutrition and nourishment by practicing acharya Rasayana which is healthy life style, Ajasrik Rasayana or rejuvenative dietetics and Rasayana medications as per the requirement of individual senior citizen.

Rasayana has broad meaning indicating qualitative and quantitative improvement of dhatu (tissues). Vayasthapana are specialized rasayana drugs that reverse degenerative changes, increase life span with quality health. The main utility of Rasayana therapy is in functional and degenerative disorders that have a chronic or long standing nature. In such cases, in fact, rasayana is the only solution from the point of view of effective management in any system of medicine. Rasayana becomes more fruitful and effective, if it is preceded with suitable Panchakarma (purification therapy).

The reason we see mixed results in many cases where Rasayana is employed is because of the fact that, either this purification is not done or improperly done. Some useful herbs are as follows:

- **Yahtimadhu and shatavari** in hyperacidity
- **Guduchi** (Tinospora cordifolia) as immunomodulatory agent.
- **Sallaki** (Boswelia serrata) in Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA): Sallaki 600 mg trice daily and 50 mg of diclofenac sodium 3 times in a day were given in treated and control groups respectively for 4 weeks. The efficacy of *shallaki* was found to be comparable to that of diclofenac sodium in the patients of Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA), who demonstrated predisposition for gastric intolerance with anti-inflammatory medication.

- **Guggulu** (Commiphora wightii) in hyperlipidemia, joint pain.
- **Ashwagandha** (Withania somnifera) on the process of aging: Root powder of Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera) was administered in the dosage of two tablets three times daily with milk for one year showed statistically significant increase in haemoglobin, RBC count, hair melanin and seated stature and decrease in serum cholesterol and ESR.

- **Multi-facetted protective role of Chyawanprash:** Chyawanprash showed significant immunomodulatory activity (increase in Ig G, C3 and C4 levels in patients of recurrent cough and cold), cytoprotective action (cancer patients receiving radiation therapy showed a protective role against radiation induced tissue damage) and Genoprotective action (significant reduction in Mitotic Index (MI) and Chromosomal Aberrations (CA)).

- **Anti-anxiety effect Mandukaparni (Centellaasiatica), Yastimadhu (Glycyrrhiza glabra) and Katamansi (Nordostachysjatamansi):** A double blind sequential cross over clinical trial with an Ayurvedic compound containing Mandukaparni (Centella asiatica), Yastimadhu (Glycyrrhiza glabra)and Katamansi (Nordostachys jatamansi as trial drug, diazepam as control and placebo was carried out on 12 patients of anxiety neurosis. The compound formulation is more effective in enhancing the perceptual discrimination and psychomotor performance over placebo and control drug.

**Exercise & Yoga**

Exercise helps to control weight, improve emotional well-being and relieves stress, improve blood circulation, flexibility. Regular yogenic exercise from youth limits the effects of old age. Yoga provides a good balance, stability and tissue liveliness leads to the enhanced flexibility and core stabilization. If the person attends the Geriatric Yoga programme regularly, many problems, which are caused by age, can be prevented. It is possible to reload the most essential brain functions with the relaxing characteristic of Yoga therapy.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yoga Postures</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standing Posts like Vrikshaasana, Tritionasana</td>
<td>Improves stability, increases focus and improves mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting Postures like Baddhakonasana, Siddhasana, Padmasana</td>
<td>Increases Mindfulness, energy, relieves joint stiffness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supine postures like Pavannukatasana, Setubandhaasana</td>
<td>Improves digestion, relieves flatulence, back flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shavaasana, Om Chanting</td>
<td>Relieves Stress, anxiety, emotional stability, improves sleep</td>
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**2. Conclusion**

Ayurveda, has got the potential for prevention of diseases by health promotion and management of diseases occurring in old age. Lifestyle recommendations such as smoking cessation, exercise, Yoga, Rasayana therapy and good nutrition are key to geriatric healthcare. *Jarachikitsa or Rasayana* is a unique therapeutic methodology to delay ageing and to minimize the intensity of problems occurring this degenerative phase of one’s life. Future aging can be reduced before the occurrence of old age.

It is the demand of the hour to develop an effective holistic protocol for geriatric care by combining Rasayana, Panchkarma, Dietetics, Ayurvedic medicines, lifestyle and Yoga is timely.

**References**


