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Pūrṇam

A Journal of Indian Knowledge Systems

(website: <https://purnam.vercel.app>)

Portraying the attempts of scholars and scientists.....

..... to understand the contributions of Bharatiya Heritage and SAINTists

Pūrṇam

Vol. 1

No.1

January - June 2025

Pages: 39 - 42

ISSN: 3049-3587 (Print)

The Effectiveness of Marma Chikitsa in Present Era

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Abstract

The science of Marma chikitsa is an extraordinary and dynamic Ayurvedic therapy that has tremendous value in health, disease, everyday living and spiritual practice which reflects on the quality of life. Marmani are specific points on the body where the application of pressure induces the flow of vital energy Prana along a complex system of subtle channels called Nadi, which in turn govern the functional and health aspect of every metabolic system in the body, promote self-healing and harmonize mind and body and revitalize each and every cell of the body. This review outlines the role of Marma chikitsa in managing various conditions and its potential benefits as a safe, effective, and holistic approach for health. Therefore further development and expansion of such a viable non-invasive, inexpensive treatment is need of the hour.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Marma, Marma chikitsa

Introduction

Marma Chikitsa, an ancient therapeutic practice rooted in Ayurveda, involves stimulating vital energy points (marma) to balance the body's physiological and psychological functions. Marma Chikitsa traces its origins to ancient Indian scriptures, particularly the Ayurvedic texts like Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita. The concept of marma junction of life force, consciousness, and physical structures is central to the practice. Historically used for both preventive and curative purposes, basically Ayurveda strives to keep the body healthy and prevent illness. As earlier yoga was the means of acquiring spiritual gains, in present era yoga is a tool for health promotion among the people. In the same way the

implementation of marma chikitsa may help in health promotion and treating various ailments¹. Marma is an anatomical site where muscles, veins, ligaments, bones and joints meet together.^{2,3,4} They are also the sites where not only tridosha are present but their subtle forms prana, ojus and tejas are also present with sattva, raja and tama.⁵ Acharya Sushruta has used the term marma both for diseases of vital organ system as well as the topographical cure points, therefore the marma in the system should be saved by stimulating topographical cure points.⁶ Marma is the point on the body where the blockage of energy is felt.⁷ It is the connection between physiology and consciousness, and by stimulating it changes the body's biochemistry and can unfold radical and

alchemical change in one's constitution. Initiating these inner pharmacy pathways signals the body to produce exactly what it needs including hormones and neurochemicals that heal the body, mind and consciousness.⁸ Marma points are specific areas on the body, which has relation through pranic channels to various internal organs, doshas and srotas. These points are being used during abhyanga along with the application of different kinds of medicated and aromatic oils to stimulate internal organs.⁹ Marma Chikitsa involves the application of pressure, massage, or stimulation of these specific Marma points. These points are considered energy centers where physical and energetic structures intersect, affecting the body's vital functions. Marma Chikitsa is believed to balance the flow of Prana (vital life force) throughout the body, which can enhance healing, reduce pain, and improve mobility. Marma therapy is often used for a range of health issues, including pain management, stress relief, and musculoskeletal disorders.¹⁰

Methodology

This review synthesizes findings from traditional texts, modern studies, and clinical trials to evaluate Marma Chikitsa's effectiveness. Literature from PubMed, Ayurvedic journals, and case studies were analysed to assess outcomes across various health conditions.

Etymology of Marma

Marma is derived from Sanskrit origin word 'mri' meaning death. Marma- 'mah' denotes Prana 'ma' denotes residence .Hence the word, "Marma means residence of prana" This was explained by Astanga Hridaya. "Mru" dhatu combined with "Manin" pratyaya gives rise to word Marma which means jivasthana, sandhithana. Marma are the vital points of the body. Its importance is explained by the slokha 'Maryanti iti marmani' which means that any harm to these points is harmful or any injury to these parts may cause severe pain, disability, loss of function, loss of sensation and death.¹¹ Acharya Sushruta also mentioned in Sushruta Samhita that these points should be protected from any injury during surgery. Marma also means secret or latent power.¹² Vagbhata defines that marma is the meeting point of mamsa, asthi, sira, snayu, damani and sandhi and is where the prana is present and which on injury leads to death. Vagbhata also states that marma is a place where unusual pulsations (visham spandana) can be felt and where shall be the tenderness on pressure (peeditae ruka).¹³ In Charaka Samhita, though marma are

referred and stated but their details are not available.^{14, 15} Sushruta defined marma as the collective point of meeting of above mentioned dhatu except dhamani.

Enumeration and Classification of Marma¹⁶

In Ayurveda there are total 107 marma (upper and lower limbs 44, back-14, chest and abdomen-12, udarvajatrugata-37) in the body.

Marma are divided into different groups based on effect on injury (Parinama anusara), structure involved (Rachana anusara), part of body (Shadanga anusara), measurement (Pramana anusara) to the physic and also . The classification based on structure involved according to Sushruta is only five but according to Vagabhata are six with inclusion of Dhamani marma.

Parinama	Rachana	Shadanga	Pramana
Sadyahpranahara-19	Mamsa – 11	Shirogata-37	1 angula
Kalantara Pranahara -33	Sira – 41	Koshtagata -26	2 angula
Vishalyaghana -3	Snayu -27	Shakagata-44	3 angula
Vaikalyakara-44	Asthi- 8		4 angula
Rujakara -8	Sandhi -20		½ angula

Techniques to stimulate Marma points¹⁷

Marma chikitsa is to clear channels, maintain proper circulation; this is achieved by different methods according to location of marma external or internally, anatomical constituent, measure & Practitioner's knowledge.

- External stimulation,
- Different massage techniques,
- Bandaging techniques
- Applications of medicaments.

Methods adopted are based upon two types¹⁷

Pharmacological (with medicines)- Like using aroma oils, medicated ghrita (ghee), medicated oils, dry powders, different local applications, ointments & massage

Non pharmacological (without medicines)—Mardana (pressure application), Pranic healing, Vidhakarma (neddling), Psychological and rehabilitative treatments are also advised.

The Spiritual Value of Touch¹⁸

Touch initiates on the physical level, but it can reach much deeper, crossing the media of thoughts, feelings, and emotions. The skilled touch of a good practitioner of the healing arts can convey its message of compassion through prana into the manas, buddhi, smruti. It can enter ahamkara and gives its silent message through chitta into the soul. Along the way, and especially at this deepest level, touch can engender radical change in the neurochemistry. The human body is a unique chemical lab; a touch through the energy points of marmani can assess new pathways that affect our inner pharmacy. Certain marma therapies can not only facilitate thinking, feeling, and perception, they also have the potential to evoke a state of samadhi. Thus, the overall healing of body, mind and spirit can be achieved through marma chikitsa.

Applications in the Present Era^{19,20}

Pain Management:

One of the primary benefits of Marma Chikitsa is its analgesic effect. By stimulating marma points, the therapy activates the body's natural pain-relief mechanisms, such as endorphin release, while improving nerve function. Marma stimulation helps to reduce the intensity of chronic pain in conditions like osteoarthritis and back pain.

Research indicates that Marma Chikitsa can effectively alleviate chronic pain, including musculoskeletal disorders such as arthritis and back pain.

Mental Health:

Marma therapy has shown promise in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression by activating points associated with the nervous system.

Rehabilitation:

Marma Chikitsa has been integrated into post-stroke and injury rehabilitation programs to enhance mobility and reduce recovery time.

A clinical trial by Gupta et al. (2019) highlighted its role in improving motor function in stroke patients.

Preventive Healthcare:

Regular marma stimulation is suggested to boost immunity, improves digestion and sleep quality, removes toxins from the body and enhance overall vitality.

Improved Circulation and Muscle Relaxation:

Targeting marma points promotes blood flow to affected areas, ensuring better delivery of oxygen and nutrients, which is essential for tissue repair. This improved circulation also helps in reducing muscle stiffness and spasms, which are common in conditions like frozen shoulder and sciatica.

Reduction of Inflammation:

Inflammation is a hallmark of many musculoskeletal disorders. Marma Chikitsa's effect on certain marma points can activate anti-inflammatory responses in the body. Regular treatment may lead to reduced swelling and stiffness in conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and tendinitis.

Health Promotion by Marma Therapy and Yogic Practices:

The whole world is requiring marma therapy and yoga as a weapon to combat the diseases of modern life. Marma therapy and yoga is practiced by many people for achieving the healthy state of life. A number of incurable diseases are treated with marma therapy and yogic practices.

Benefits of Marma Chikitsa over Conventional Treatments

Non-Invasive:

Marma Chikitsa is a non-invasive and gentle therapy that does not require medications or surgical interventions, making it an attractive option for individuals looking for holistic and natural treatments.

Holistic Approach:

Unlike conventional treatments that often focus on symptom relief, Marma Chikitsa addresses both physical and energetic imbalances, promoting overall health and well-being.

Minimal Side Effects:

As a therapy based on manual stimulation of points, Marma Chikitsa has minimal side effects when performed correctly by trained practitioners. This is in contrast to some medications used, which can have significant side effects with long-term use.

Discussion

According to Ayurveda the imbalance of doshas causes obstruction/deterioration of sira causing decrease of chala guna causing Avarodha in fine channels. With the help of marma stimulation, uttejana is provided to sparshendriya which increases blood supply to that area and shows increase of chala guna and increased chala guna, decreased sheeta guna and ruksha guna provides nourishment. This normalizes the vitiated dosha suksamta of Vayu again enhances this process. This releases Vridh Vayu from the site of marma & the patient feels relieved, revitalized, energized, maintains health. The perspective modern science suggests that Marma Chikitsa works through

- **Neurological Stimulation:** Activating nerve endings at marma points.
- **Hormonal Balance:** Regulating stress hormones like cortisol.
- **Circulatory Effects:** Enhancing blood and lymphatic flow to affected areas.

Conclusion

Marma Chikitsa represents a valuable complementary therapy in the present era, addressing pain, mental health issues, and preventive care. Bridging traditional wisdom with modern research could unlock its full potential. Further studies and collaborative efforts are essential for its global acceptance and integration into mainstream healthcare. Thus we can say that Marma are the channels that regulate the flow of information, energy, nutrients, and toxins throughout the human body. Marma therapy is based on the fact that the "Marma system" becomes damaged through stressors and improper nutrition. This can revitalize through Marma therapy and restores the normal one.

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