

A-13: A survey on Ayurvedic medicines used by traditional medical practitioners of Sri Lanka for chronic arthritis

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Inflammatory disorders of the synovial membrane, joint space, and articular cartilage are known as arthritis. Rheumatoid arthritis and osteo arthritis lead to chronic arthritis.

A high percentage of patients with arthritis visit the Ayurvedic hospitals which may be due the unavailability of successful permanent cure in other methods of treatment. The efficacy of Ayurvedic drugs is promising. So far no work has been done to evaluate such Ayurvedic drugs. Therefore the present preliminary study was undertaken.

1. Collection of information on ayurvedic drugs used in Sri Lanka for Rheumatoid and Osteo arthritis. Ten districts were selected by scientific sampling methods for the survey, with the assistance of the Dept. of Statistics, University of Colombo. 200 Traditional physicians (20 from each district) were selected randomly from lists of registered traditional physicians of each district. For collection of data from these physicians the following aspects were considered and a structured questionnaire was prepared. (a) Symptoms used for the diagnosis of the disease, (b) The treatment prescribed for the disease; (c) The ingredients used and the procedures of preparation of the drugs; (d) The therapeutic claims of the drugs
2. Steps in computerisation :
 - (a) Feasibility study on development of a computer program to carry out the required operation.
 - (b) Design and development of an analytical system which includes: (I). Development of a database to store data collected from the survey. (II). Development of databases for medicinal plants and ayurvedic drugs such as decoctions, pattus (Paste), arishtas, oils and guli (Pills). (III). Selection of most commonly used drugs in the treatment of rheumatoid and osteo arthritis from the databases.

The most commonly used ayurvedic terms for describing the symptoms of chronic arthritis by 200 physicians were: 'Amavatha' (over 75%) followed by 'Vatarakta' and 'Sandi gata vata'.

The most commonly used decoctions were Rasna saphthakaya, Eranda saphthakaya, Rasna panchakaya, and Patola katukabheeru.

In addition to the above the pastes (pattu) Dashangaleapya, Delipothupattuwa, Thiladilepaya, Murugadilepayal' and pills (guli) Yogaraja guggulu, Kaishora guggulu and Chandraprabhaveti, and Gokhshuradi guggulu were commonly prescribed in the treatment of chronic arthritis. The oils that were commonly used were Narayana tailaya, Pinda tailaya, Vatha viduranga tailaya, Siddhartha tailaya and Sarshapadi tailaya.

The arishtas and asavas that are mostly prescribed were Dasamularishtaya, Amurtarishtaya, Balarishtaya and Punaranawasawa.

By merging the 2 databases used namely Survey.dbf and Plants. dbf the occurrence of each of the medicinal plants in all kinds of treatments described above such as Decoctions, Oils, Pattus etc. was determined. It was found that the medicinal plants which were most commonly used in the treatment of chronic arthritis: Rasakinda, Aratta, Erandu, Nerinchi, and Devadara are the plants used in the preparation of the most commonly used decoctions mentioned above.

It can be concluded that Ama-vata, vata rata, sandhigata vatha and premaha vata are the chronic arthritis conditions commonly treated by ayurvedic physicians. The drugs that are most suitable for further clinical, pharmacological and toxicological evaluations are Rasna and Eranda saphthakaya.

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