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RESEARCH ARTICLE

KSHARASUTRA: PARA-SURGICAL MEASURES – A TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

Ksharasutra has been described in the ancient text books of Ayurveda (Indian traditional medical system) as medicated caustic thread, a Para-surgical measures for the treatment of all those conditions which demand gradual excision of overgrown soft tissue. This condition includes haemorrhoids, polyps, papillae and also the non-healing chronic sinuses (i.e. Fistula-in-Ano) and ulcer where debridement is an essential factor to permit a healthy healing pattern. Ksharasutra is prepared by coating in cotton thread with Kshara (Alkali) made from whole plant of *Achyranthus aspera* L. and with the powder of rhizome of *Curcuma longa* L., with the sticky latex of *Euphorbia nerifolia* L.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a science of life which deals with the preventive, promotive and curative aspects of life. There are many procedure of treatment described in Ayurveda for the curing of several diseases. Among those procedures of treatment Ksharasutra therapy is highly accepted due to their beneficial effect. Considering the unique characteristics of Ksharasutra, ancient Indian physician developed and practiced a minimal invasive para-surgical measures through Ksharasutra, for the management of different Ano-rectal diseases etc. Even though initial references for Ksharasutra appear in Charak Samhita, but during the period of Chakradutta in twelve century, the exact methodology and application are clearly specified. This rich traditional medical heritage is now appreciated in the west and this measure is being practiced in Japan, Sri Lanka, Nepal etc. The word "Ksharasutra" comprises of the word - Kshara + Sutra.

Kshara - Alkaline salts

Sutra – A special thread which is used for the preparation of Ksharasutra.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Preparation of Ksharasutra

The Ksharasutra are prepared in an especially designed box which avoids the possibility of contamination during processing of threads. Firstly, an alkaline powder of the plant *Achyranthus aspera* L. is produced by cutting the whole plant into small pieces and burning them in clay or iron pot in the semi closed air. The ash is allowed to dissolve in water and the filtrate is dried over the sun. Secondly, the latex coats of *Euphorbia nerifolia* L. are smeared on the cotton thread and dried up for 11 times. Then the alkali ash of *Achyranthus aspera* L. is smeared with the help of latex for 7 times and lastly the rhizome powder of *Curcuma longa* L. is also coated as last three smears with the help of same latex. The thread is then dried in the shade. The frame is placed in specially manufactured cabin for drying and sterilization. The prepared threads are kept in sealed glass tubes which are properly labelled for the grade, date and the length.

Use of Ksharasutra

Ksharasutra therapy is very simple and ambulatory technique, so it can be carried out in outdoor clinic within minimum and simple instruments and material. It required local / topical anesthesia, sometimes spinal and general anesthesia, no antibiotic coverage is necessary. Ksharasutra is also used in

patients who are otherwise not fit for surgery e.g. diabetics, Cardiac patients, Hypertensive. It is a low cost effective procedure, fully Ayurvedic management associated medicines for internal and external use and minimum scar formation at the wound site.

Indication of Ksharasutra Therapy

Ksharasutra is indicated for the management of all those conditions which demand gradual excision of overgrown soft tissue. This condition includes haemorrhoids, polyps, papillae and also the non-healing chronic sinuses (i.e. Fistula-in-Ano) and ulcer where debridement is an essential factor to permit a healthy healing pattern.

Contraindications of Ksharasutra Application

It is necessary to treat flowing conditions first before the application of Ksharasutra, e.g. Diabetes mellitus, Tuberculosis, Chronic ulcerative colitis, Diverticulitis of the colon, Prostatic infections, Osteomyelitis of pelvic bones, Pot's diseases of spine and CA rectum.

Management of Hemorrhoids by Ksharasutra

- Patients are made to lie in lithotomy position
- Preparation of the perianal region
- Infiltration of Local Anesthesia at base of the masses
- Masses are made to protrude from anal orifice
- Hemorrhoidal mass is clamped by forceps
- Transfixation of the mass is done by Kshara Sutra.
- Ligated masses will slough out in 5 to 7 days
- Application of Medicated oil for Healing of the wound.

Fistula-in-ano and its management by ksharasutra

After keeping the patient in lithotomy position, good assessment of the tract was made by using probe. The extent of the tract is assessed by the probe by introducing it from the external opening. The Ksharasutra is applied at its distal end's eye and probe is taken out through another opening, which ultimately draws thread in the tract. Then the probe is discarded and the two ends of the thread are tied. A new piece of Ksharasutra should be replaced and tied on every 7th day by Rail-road technique till the last Ksharasutra gradually cut through fistulous tract, leaving a small healing ulcer at the anal verge. The length of Ksharasutra taken on each occasion was measured and recorded. Shortening of the thread removed at each change indicated the shortening of the fistulous tract.

Probable mode of action of Ksharasutra

- Local Chemical cauterization
- Ischemic necrosis
- Mechanical strangulation
- Antibacterial activity and debridement of unhealthy tissue.

Excellence of Kshar-sutra therapy

- Recurrence is practically nil or negligible.
- Minimal trauma and no tissue loss.
- Very less bleeding in comparison to surgery

- No need to hospitalization. Patient can perform his daily tasks
- No incontinence
- Minimal scarring

Ksharasutra procedure for non-ano-rectal ailments

Kshara sutra is mainly indicated for hemorrhoids and fistula-in-ano. It is not frequently used in non ano-rectal compilation. We should try to apply Kshara Sutra in different sinuses, growth etc.

New areas added to Ksharasutra therapy

- Pilonidal sinuses
- Osteomyelitic sinuses
- Pre-auricular sinuses
- Mammary sinuses
- Keloids & chondromas
- Corn
- Benign growth etc.

Conclusion

Ksharasutra therapy is a para-surgical measures for different Ano-ractal disorders mentioned in Ayurveda, the Indian traditional Medicine, which mainly used for the treatment of non-healing chronic sinuses i.e. Fistula-in-Ano etc. and this can be used in the outpatient department. Patients are ambulatory throughout the period of treatment and do not need regular dressing. No systemic side effects are observed in Ksharasutra therapy except transient local effects like slight burning and discomfort in few cases. These local effects can be attributed to the caustic nature of the latex and the ash (Kshara) used in the thread. Another advantage of this therapy is that of poor risk patients for anaesthesia and surgery can also be subjected to Ksharasutra therapy safely. Disadvantage of Ksharasutra therapy include the necessity for weekly hospital visits for changing the thread, apart from the burning sensation and increased discharge. Despite these, Ksharasutra therapy offers an effective, ambulatory and safe, alternative treatment for the patients especially with anal fistula.

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