



Siddha Perspective on Healthy Living and Management of Lifestyle Diseases

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Abstract

Lifestyle diseases better known as non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and diseases of civilization, characterize those diseases whose occurrence is primarily based on the daily habits of people and also as a result of an inappropriate relationship of people with their environment. The main factors contributing to lifestyle diseases include bad food habits, physical inactivity, wrong body posture, disturbed biological clock, drug abuse, tobacco smoking, alcohol drinking. The main types of Lifestyle diseases are Cardiovascular diseases, Cancers, Chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes. The other Lifestyle diseases include Hypertension, Obesity, Osteoporosis, Alzheimer's disease, Arthritis, Atherosclerosis, Chronic Liver disease and so on. Siddha system is a holistic approach to combat Lifestyle diseases boosting the whole health system in the society. Life-style diseases can be prevented through Siddha system of medicine by adopting Proper Diet, Ashtanga Yogam, Following "*Theraiyar Pini Anuga Vidhi Ozhukkam*", Kayakarpam. Siddha systems of Medicines are well accepted by community particularly with rural areas because these are socially acceptable, comparatively safe and efficacious and easily available which can be prepared locally by the available resources.

Keywords: Lifestyle diseases, Ashtanga Yogam, "*Theraiyar Pini Anuga Vidhi Ozhukkam*", Kayakarpam.

Introduction

Lifestyle diseases better known as non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and diseases of civilization, characterize those diseases whose occurrence is primarily based on the daily habits of people and also as a result of an inappropriate relationship of people with their environment. It is a medical condition or disease which is non-infectious and non-transmissible, but is likely to continue progressively unless intervened. According to WHO, Lifestyle diseases (LSDs)

may be chronic diseases of long duration and slow progression or they may result in more rapid death. Diet and lifestyle are the major factors found to influence susceptibility to many diseases. The main factors contributing to lifestyle diseases include bad food habits, physical inactivity, wrong body posture, disturbed biological clock and also addictions such as drug abuse, tobacco smoking, alcohol drinking. The main types of Lifestyle diseases are Cardiovascular diseases

(like heart attacks and stroke), Cancers, Chronic respiratory diseases (such as Chronic obstructed pulmonary disease and Asthma) and diabetes. The other Lifestyle diseases include Hypertension, Obesity, Osteoporosis, Alzheimer's disease, Arthritis, Atherosclerosis, Chronic Liver disease or Cirrhosis and so on⁽¹⁾.

The Siddha System is largely therapeutic in nature. According to this system the human body is the replica of the universe and so are the food and drugs irrespective of their origin. The system has developed a rich and unique treasure of drug knowledge in which use of metals and minerals is very much advocated⁽²⁾. Siddha medicine is claimed to revitalize and rejuvenate dysfunctional organs that cause the disease and to maintain the ratio of Dosha, Kayakarpam (special combination of medicine and life style) and Muppu (the universal Salt) which are the specialities of Siddha system of medicine. Panchabootham (Earth, Water, Fire, Air & Space), Mukkuttram (Vatha, Pitha, kabha) and Arusuvaigal (Sweet, Bitter, Sour, Astringent, Salt & Pungent) are the basic principles of Siddha philosophy⁽³⁾. This study deals with the management of lifestyle through Siddha system of medicine by adopting Proper Diet, Ashtanga Yogam, Following "Theraiyar Pini Anuga Vidhi Ozhukkam", Kayakarpam.

Materials and Methods

(A) Ashtanga Yogam⁽⁴⁾

1. Yamas (Abstinence, discipline, restraint, or "attitude or behavior" outer or social):

- (a) Ahimsa - non-harming or loving kindness
- (b) Satya - truth & honesty
- (c) Asteya - non-stealing
- (d) Brahmacharya - chastity or 'right relationship'
- (e) Aparigraha - non-grasping or non-greed

2. Niyamas (Inner discipline and responsibility, or inner "attitudes and behavior"):

- (a) Saucha - purity
- (b) Santosha - contentment

- (c) Tapas - discipline or accepting pain and not causing pain
- (d) Svadhyaya - self-inquiry, study of scripture
- (e) Isvari pranidhana - surrendering the fruit of your actions to god or humanity

3. Asanas (Postures)

Yoga regards the body as a vehicle for the soul on its journey towards perfection (union). Yogic physical exercises (Asanas) are designed to be steady, comfortable postures to develop the body, and also to broaden one's mental and spiritual capacities.

4. Pranayama (Life Energy, breath practice)

Prana means breath or life force, Yama means control; Pranayama means control of the breath, or life force. We learn to control the body and mind by controlling the breath.

5. Pratyahara (Connecting the mind & the senses, drawing the awareness inside)

Pratyahara is withdrawing from or transcending the senses.

Attention is directed inward. The mind is freed from the 'tyranny of the senses.'

6. Dharana (Concentration, or focused awareness)

Dharana enables us to concentrate more fully, bringing a richer awareness of the mind, without preconception, prejudgment, conditioning, fear, anxiety, joy or sorrow to influence our meeting with each event. We meet every moment with our true selves.

7. Dhyana (Meditation)

Meditation moves us beyond concentration into a state of total awareness. We are able to concentrate on a focus point, while still being aware of everything else around and within us. The mind and body must be totally quiet and open.

8. Samadhi (Transcendence of the self)

The joining or union with all living things, with the universe, with the Divine - beyond the place of knowledge, to a realization that everything is of the same substance and that all is connected. This is when the knower, the knowable and the known become one.

Yoga for Lifestyle diseases^(4,5)

When we talk about yoga, immediately coming to our mind is sitting/standing postures of “yogis” for prolonged time in prayer. Whatever the postures/yoga we are following, each has its own impact on controlling/curing life style diseases. The role of yoga is controlling the origin and progress of various diseases as follows.

1) Diabetes Mellitus

Diabetes due to increase of blood sugar level. It may be Type 1 and type 2. It is also described a group of metabolic diseases in which the person has higher blood glucose (blood sugar), either because insulin production is inadequate or the body's cell does not respond to insulin properly or both.

To reduce, diabetes practise “Bhujanga asanam”, “Dhanurasanam”, “Salabhasanam”, “Nadi sodhana pranayamam”.

2) Cardiac diseases

They are classified into four. They are Heart valve problems, Arrhythmia, Heart attack and Stroke. The heart attack occurs when the blood flow to a part of the heart is blocked by a blood clot. If this clot cuts off the blood flow completely, the part of the heart muscle supplied by that artery begins to die.

To prevent/control heart attack/cardiac arrest, practising “Artha pavana mukthasanam”, “Vakrasanam”, “Thadasanam” is good.

3) Obesity

It is a medical condition in which excess body fat has accumulated to the extent that it may have a

negative effect on health, leading to reduced life expectancy and or increased health problems. If the BMI (Body Mass Index) is 25 to 29.9 is treated as over weight and above 30 is treated as obesity.

To reduce obesity, practise “Surya namaskaram”, “Ushtasanam”, “Padahasthasanam”, “Sarvangasanam”. By doing this yoga/Asanas, fat metabolism will be increased. This fat metabolism from abdomen, thigh and buttocks etc will enhance obesity control.

4) Hypercholesterolemia

It is the presence of high levels of cholesterol in the blood. It is a form of hyperlipidemia (elevated levels of lipids in the blood) and hyper lipoproteinemia (elevated levels of lipoproteins in the blood).

To reduce Cholesterol, practicing “Bhujangasanam,” “Salabhasanam”, Surya namaskaram”, “Artha matsyasanam” is good.

5) Hyper tension or high blood pressure

It is the measure of strength or force exerted by blood on the walls of the vessels it is flowing through. This pressure largely depends on the efficiency with which our heart pumps the blood throughout the body. Harder the heart pumps, the arteries become narrower and the force is exerted.

To reduce Blood pressure, practising “Bhujangasanam”, “Parsva thrikonasanam”, “Patchimo thasanam”, “Dhanurasanam”, “Yoga nidhra” are found effective.

(B) Kayakarpam^(6,7)

Longevity and ageing with elegance is an important speciality of Siddha system. Siddhars realized that a good physical body free from disease is a tool to attain the ‘Eternal Bliss’. *Kalpa* means ‘able, competent’. One of the key recommendations is to avoid over indulgence in any activity including procreation. The therapy in any medical system is two fold, preventive and curative. The third category emphasized in Siddha is the Promotive health – *Kayakalpa* or

Rejuvenation therapy. This unique class of therapy enhances the life span, delays ageing, improves the intelligence and memory power, promotes health, provides youthful states of the body, betters the body lustier and improves innate health. It also reverses the disease process and prevents the re-occurrence. These are made possible by promoting rejuvenation, healing, and regeneration of living tissue in the body. These therapies enhance the qualities of physical constituent rasa and the other six one after the other, enriches it with nutrients so one can attain longevity. Kayakalpa drugs help to increase the immunity of the person to keep him away from disease.

The Promotive, preventive, corrective and curative approach in health care and the medicinal plants processing such properties are indeed the strength of the Indian Systems of Medicine (ISM). *Kayakalpa* therapy is done for a particular period of time with strict regimen on diet and conduct. It is a specialized procedure practised in the form of rejuvenation recipes, dietary regimen and special health promoting right conduct and behaviour. *Kayakalpa* drugs are said to produce their beneficial effect more promptly in conditions where a suboptimal quality of tissue is leading to its premature ageing and suboptimal functioning.

“One that cures physical ailment is medicine
 One that cures psychological ailment is medicine
 One that prevents ailment is medicine
 One that bestows immortality is medicine.”

Thirumandiram

Kayakalpa drugs are proposed to promote tissue longevity through some more novel mechanisms like reduction of toxin or metabolic waste load within the cell through their reduced production or increased scavenging, ensuring efficient use of energy within the cell, thus requiring less substrate consumption leading to reduced energy requirement and reduced waste production, initiation of micro-repair by providing essential nutrients by participating in regeneration directly or through promotion of latent enzyme systems. The mechanism of action proposed for these herbs include suppression of free radical formation,

break-chain initiation, break-chain propagation, reconstitution of membrane and repair damage⁽⁶⁾.

Special herbal karpam

Some examples of *Kayakalpa* are as follows:

(a) *Citrus limon* (Elumicchai)

The juice and pickle preparations of *Citrus limon* are taken as per the ‘Karpa method’ for weakness of the body, Greying of hair, Tremor, Bewilderment, Ascites, Pleurisy (Pakka soolai), Ankylosis of the joints (Mudakku) and some kinds of manic disorders.

(b) *Terminalia chebula* (Kadukkai)

Consuming the powder of *Terminalia chebula* with pure water, in every evening, prevents Jaundice and Ascites. This Karpa medicine is also useful in all Pitha diseases (Bramai). It should be strictly taken only in the evening.

(c) *Strychnos potatorum-Phyllanthus emblica* (Thettran, Nelli)

Take *Strychnos potatorum* root, nut, bark, leaves, unripe fruit and ripen fruit. Also take the *Phyllanthus emblica* root, seeds, bark, leaves, unripe fruit and dried fruit. Prepare pickle or ground dish or decoction and or juice, with the above ingredients as per the Karpa method. This is advised for Ascites in liver diseases, Dysmenorrhoea, Syphilis (Mega veppu), Anaemia (Pandu), Haemorrhoids, Menorrhagia, Oedema, Paleness of the body and Syncope. It is also used for prophylaxis of the above diseases. It also strengthens the body.

(d) *Aegle marmelos* (Vilvam)

Prepare food dish, pickle, decoction and oil preparation of the unripe fruits, leaves and root of *Aegle marmelos*. These are given for incoherent speech (due to fainting). These also give good complexion and beauty.

(e) Pancha Karpam

Take *Curcuma zedoaria* (Round zeodoary), pepper, neem seeds, outer skin of *Terminalia chebula* (Chebulic myrobalan) and kernel of *Emblica officinalis* (Indian gooseberry). Grind these ingredients with cow's milk (Kaarampasu). Boil them well. It is applied externally on the head prior to head bath. It prevents most of the

diseases. This procedure of preventing diseases is called as "Principles of Pancha Karpam"⁽⁷⁾.

(C) Proper Diet⁽³⁾

In the prevention aspect, diet plays a major role. The concept of Food is medicine; Medicine is food is stressed in Siddha.

S.No.	Tirithoda samaporul	Actions
1.	Cardomom	Stimulant, Carminative, Stomachic
2.	Turmeric	Stimulant, Carminative, Hepatotonic
3.	Cumin seeds	Stimulant, Carminative, Astringent, Anti-hypertensive
4.	Asafoetida	Anti-spasmodic, Expectorant, Laxative, Stimulant, Diuretic
5.	Dry Ginger	Stimulant, Carminative, Stomachic
6.	Fenugreek	Laxative, Astringent, Anti-diabetic, Diuretic
7.	Garlic	Anti-cholesterol, Carminative, Stomachic, Diuretic, Anthelmintic, Alternative, Tonic
8.	Pepper	Carminative, Anti-periodic, Antidote, Stimulant, Anti-vatha

(D) Theraiyar Pini Anuga Vidhi Ozhukkam⁽⁸⁾

"Pini Anuga Vidhi" literally means, guidelines that helps to prevent diseases. The concept pertaining to habitat, seasons, diet are both preventive and curative.

where we discuss lifestyle's contribution to health in addition to non-pharmacological intervention in the treatment and management of lifestyle diseases such as exercise in diabetes mellitus and weight management in obesity. "Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food".

Our Saint 'Theraiyar' Says...

*"Drink warm water after boiling
Take diluted buttermilk and melted ghee
Take sufficient quantities of cow's milk
Always have food to the level of hunger
Always consume well fermented curd
Practice short walking after a good diet
Have therapeutic emesis once in six months
Have therapeutic purgation once in four months
Instill nasal drops once in 45 days
Take oil bath twice a week
Never eat root tubers except Yam"*

Discussion

Lifestyle management is defined as the application of environmental, behavioral, medical and motivational principles to the management of lifestyle-related health problems in a clinical setting. It is an established branch of medicine

Conclusion

Siddha systems of Medicines are well accepted by community particularly with rural areas because these are socially acceptable, comparatively safe and efficacious and easily available which can be prepared locally by the available resources.

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