



Effect of Siddha medicine and Varma therapy for the management of Erb's Palsy – A Case study

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Abstract

A 9 month old female baby, with complaints of complete paralysis of right upper limb with typical waiter's tip deformity, diagnosed as Erb's palsy was brought to National Institute of Siddha, Kuthandhai Maruthuvam OPD. Patient was treated with an integrated approach of Siddha and Varma treatment with an intention of aiding faster recovery of the patient to lead a near normal life. Since the nature of diseases cause deprivation of growth of affected arm, choice of treatment was Amukara chooranam (to nourish and strengthen muscles). External therapies such as Thokkanam (oleation therapy) with Ulunthu thilam (Siddha medicated oil), Varma therapy was given weekly three times. Appreciable results were observed in the form of reduction of disparity in length and mid-arm circumference of right upper limb compared to unaffected left upper limb and the muscle power too improved from zero to four and the range of motion were improved, measured by using MRC Criteria.

Keywords: Siddha medicine, brachial plexus injury, Erb's palsy, varma therapy, Balavatham

Introduction

Erb's palsy is a condition where the upper part of brachial plexus (C5, C6) that innervates the arm is severed resulting in adducted, internally rotated shoulder and pronated forearm, typically known as "waiter's tip" position. The most common cause being dystocia (associated with difficult breech and forceps deliveries), the nerve damage can vary from bruising to tearing and hence paralysis can be partial or complete. The treatment of Erb's palsy depends on the nature of damage, which is either nerve bruise or nerve

tear. Nerve bruise usually resolve on its own over a period of months. However, in the latter case i.e. nerve tear, the following multiple approaches are advised physiotherapy for regaining muscle usage, surgical interference of nerve transplants, subscapularis releases, latissimus dorsi tendon transfers and rehabilitation therapy. The present case was considered as vatha diseases with deprived growth of body tissues, so Amukkara chooranam was given as internal medicine and thokkanam with Ulunthu thilam and Varma manipulation were done.

Case Report

A 9 month old female baby was brought to National Institute of Siddha, Kuthandhai Maruthuvam OPD by her parents with complaints of inability to move her right upper limb and abnormal position, progressive since birth.

On Examination

- Arm was internally rotated, adducted, elbow extended, forearm pronated and with a closed fist of right upper limb.
- All developmental milestones were normal, except for movements of right upper limb.
- Muscle power was assessed for all the muscle groups of right upper limb and were of grade 0.

Past history

According to patient's mother, doctors performed forceps assisted vaginal delivery . Both mother and baby were healthy following the delivery. Later, the parents noticed that the baby was not using her right upper limb completely, with gradual progressive deformity. It was diagnosed

as Erb's palsy by a paediatrician and suggested for physiotherapy as an early measure of treatment, before electing surgical options.

Siddha Treatment:

Internal medication Amukara chooranam was administered daily [table 1]

Quantity sufficient of ulunthu thilam was applied on affected arm, neck, back region and thokkanam was done for half an hour, weekly three days [Table 1]

Following varma manipulation were done weekly three times [Table 2]

By following MRC Criteria for Grading of Muscle Power, patients prognosis were noted [Table 3]

Patient was treated for 120 days, in three divided session [Tables 4,5,6]

Table 1

Internal medicines	External medicines:
Amukkara Tablet (1) – B.D with honey	Ulundhu Oil
Internal medicine to be given as nervine tonic and tone up the affected group muscles.	Medicated oils to be applied as external medicine with Thokkanam therapy.

Varmam Treatment:

Varmam stimulation given in selected points to channelize the vital energy

Table 2

SL. No	Varmam points given	Anatomical Location of varma points
1	Kondaikolli	Ten finger breaths above the Tilartha kalam i.e vertex of the head
2	Mudichu Varmam	Over C7 vertebra ,cervical prominence
3	Kakkattai kalam	On supra clavicular fossa
4	Chippi Varmam	Two finger breadth downward from kaicculukki varmam(Lower medial border of scapula)
5	Kai Chulukki Varmam	From Valaimutinta Varmam move four fingers downwards and three finger breadths laterally on both sides of the spinal column(upper medial border of scapula)
6	Manjadi	Near the junction of the index finger and thumb,along the upper part of the index finger

By following MRC Criteria for Grading of Muscle Power, patients prognosis were noted

Table 3

MRC Criteria (Out of 5)	
0	complete paralysis
1	flicker of contraction
2	movement if gravity excluded
3	movement against gravity
4	moderate power against resistance
5	normal power

Table 4

Session no	Duration 3	Treatment given	Result
Session no1	Weekly 3 times for 3 months	Thokkanam	Muscle power 0-1
	Weekly 3 times for 3 months	Varmam	
Gap	Ten day s		

Table 5

Session no	Duration 3	Treatment given	Result
Session no 2	Weekly 3 times for 3 months	Thokkanam	Muscle power 2-3
	Weekly 3 times for 3 months	Varmam	
Gap	Ten day s		

Table 6

Session no	Duration	Treatment given	Result
Session no 3	Weekly 3 times for 3 months	Thokkanam	Muscle power 3-4
	Weekly 3 times for 3 months	Varmam	
Gap	Ten day s		

Total duration of treatment was 120 days .

Before treatment:



a



b

Fig: 1 a) Grade 0-1 b) Difficult to hold objects



Fig: 2 c) Grade 2-3 d) Able to hold objects

After Treatment:



Fig: 2 e) Grade 3-4, thokkanam with ulunthu thilam f) Able to lift hand above head level

Discussion

In Siddha literature Erb's Palsy is correlated with balavagadam under vathathum disease therefore, the therapeutic management is considered to be Amukkara chooranam as internal medicine .Amukkara chooranam is used to nervine tonic and strengthen muscles. Thokkanam with Ulunthu thylam which soothe the sensory nerve endings, they produce a hyperaemic effect causing the arterioles dilate in musculature, and reduce stiffness . Patient showed marked improvement in using her hand. In prognosis the assessment with the clinical conditions the power and the tone of the muscles of the arm of the child was improved from Grade 1 to Grade 4 and are still continuing the treatment.. The combined treatment of Siddha medicine, Ulunthu Thylam massage and Varmam therapeutic techniques showed good results. The

present case of Erb's palsy was advised for surgical rectification. Considering the child's age, the parents approached for conventional treatments. The recovery was faster and better and without any invasive treatments, significant improvement of muscle power was observed in the affected muscle groups with the increase in mid-arm circumference of affected upper limb. The improvement persisted at further follow-up, after 1-2 months

The main ingredients of Uluthu thilam are uluthu (*Vigna mungo*), poonaikali (seeds of *Mucuna pruriens*), goat's milk, Sesamum oil (*Sesamum indicum*). All ingredients of uluthu thilam has subtle elements of earth and water, which are nourishing in nature and is indicated for all type of vatha diseases, it nourish, strengthens Dhatus and Vata pacification.

Conclusion

Finally it can be concluded that Amukkara chooranam along with Ulunthu thylam massage and varmam therapeutic techniques has a definitive action as well as clinically efficacy on Erb's palsy child. It is concluded that the treatment for Erb's Palsy with Siddha Classical medicine combined with Varmam therapeutic technique is good in improving the quality of life of the children.

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