OPEN ACCESS
Global Journal of Research in Medical Sciences
ISSN: 2583-3960 (Online)
Volume 04 | Issue 05 | Sept.-Oct. | 2024
Journal homepage: https://gjrpublication.com/gjrms/
Original Research Article

Integrative Management of Patchavaatham Post-Stroke: A Case Study Using Siddha Medicine

*Dr. Jenifer Lancy A[1], Dr. Hariharan P[2], Arpita J[3], Shabu S[3], Nanma L[3]

[1]Department of Varmam, Pura maruthuvam and sirappu maruthuvam,Santhigiri Siddha Medical College, Trivandrum, Kerala.
[2]Department of Aruvai maruthuvam,Santhigiri Siddha Medical College, Trivandrum, Kerala.
[3]Under graduate students, Santhigiri Siddha Medical College, Trivandrum, Kerala.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.13695129 **Submission Date:** 30 July 2024 | **Published Date:** 05 Sept. 2024

***Corresponding author:** Dr. Jenifer Lancy A
Department of Varmam, Pura maruthuvam and sirappu maruthuvam,Santhigiri Siddha Medical College, Trivandrum, Kerala.

Abstract

Background: Patchavaatham, a condition akin to a cerebrovascular accident (stroke) in Siddha medicine, presents with symptoms such as hemiparesis, speech difficulties, and impaired gait. This case study examines the use of Siddha therapies, including internal medicines and external therapies like **Thokkanam** and **Varma massage**, in managing post-stroke sequelae.

Case Presentation: A patient presented with right-sided weakness, slurred speech, and difficulty walking following a cerebrovascular accident. The treatment approach included internal medications—**Chandamarudha Chendhooram**, **Sangu Parpam**, and **Thaalisaadhi Chooranam**—and external therapies focused on improving neuromuscular function. Over a 20-day period, the patient showed significant improvement in muscle strength, gait, and speech clarity.

Discussion: The integrative approach combining traditional Siddha medicine with physical therapy techniques proved beneficial in managing post-stroke symptoms, promoting nerve regeneration, and enhancing muscle strength. The patient's positive response to treatment highlights the potential of Siddha therapies as an adjunct in stroke rehabilitation.

Conclusion: Siddha therapies, particularly when combined with modern rehabilitation strategies, offer promising outcomes in managing neurological deficits post-stroke. Further studies, including randomized controlled trials, are necessary to validate these findings and establish standardized protocols.

Keywords: Patchavaatham, Siddha medicine, Thokkanam, stroke rehabilitation, Chandamarudha Chendhooram, Varma massage.

Introduction

Patchavaatham, commonly referred to as a condition characterized by motor weakness and muscular atrophy, is observed predominantly in individuals with a history of sudden-onset neurological deficits. The case presented involves a 32-year-old male with a history dating back 14 years when he first experienced a sudden, severe headache followed by right-sided hemiparesis and deviation of the mouth to the left. The rapid onset of symptoms was notable for its acute presentation and subsequent partial recovery following initial allopathic intervention. However, the recurrent nature of the symptoms, particularly after a period of irregular medication adherence, points to the chronicity and potentially progressive nature of the condition [1].

Thokkanam, a traditional form of therapeutic massage, is widely practiced in certain regions for its reputed benefits in managing neurological and musculoskeletal disorders. This therapy is grounded in the principles of Ayurveda and Siddha medicine, which emphasize the balance of bodily humors or "doshas" for maintaining health and treating disease. Thokkanam involves specific manual techniques that aim to restore this balance, alleviate pain, and improve functional mobility in conditions such as Patchavaatham [2].

This case study explores the presentation, clinical progression, and management of Patchavaatham through Thokkanam, focusing on the therapeutic outcomes, challenges in treatment adherence, and the overall impact on the patient's quality of life. Given the patient's background—absence of familial or predisposing chronic conditions, normal vitals, and a stable general health profile—this case provides a unique opportunity to examine the potential role of Thokkanam in the comprehensive management of neurological deficits.

Case Presentation

The patient, a 32-year-old unmarried male, occupation coolie, with no known history of thyroid dysfunction, diabetes mellitus, hypercholesterolemia, or respiratory disorders, presented with complaints that began 14 years ago. Initially, he experienced sudden-onset severe headache, followed by deviation of the mouth to the left and weakness in the right upper and lower limbs, coupled with speech difficulties. These symptoms, which manifested suddenly while playing with friends, led to immediate hospitalization and allopathic treatment, resulting in overnight recovery.

Subsequent recurrence of similar symptoms the following morning and the development of additional deficits such as shoulder drooping and persistent right-sided weakness, especially in the context of irregular medication adherence, suggest a relapsing-remitting pattern often seen in certain neurological conditions [3]. No history of chest pain, dyspnoea, or seizures was reported, which is crucial in differentiating Patchavaatham from other potential differentials such as stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA).

Clinical Findings

Uyirthathukkal (Vital Energies) Assessment:

The patient presents with a multifaceted disruption of vital energies (Uyirthathukkal), which are categorized into Vatham, Pitham, and Kapham, according to Siddha medicine principles:

- **Vatham:**
  - Viyanan: Affected, evidenced by the weakness on the right side of the body.
  - Uthanan: Affected, resulting in speech difficulties.
  - Samanan: Affected, as indicated by the impact on other vayus (air elements), leading to overall systemic imbalance.
  - Devathathan: Affected, causing disturbed sleep patterns.
- **Pitham:**
  - Sathagam: Affected, manifesting as difficulty in performing routine activities, suggesting impaired physiological functions related to energy and movement.
- **Kapham:**
  - Avalambagam: Affected, due to the involvement of Santhigam which affects the structural stability.
  - Santhigam: Affected, resulting in difficulty walking and challenges in carrying out routine tasks.

Udal Thathukkal (Body Constituents) Assessment:

- **Ooun (Muscle)**: Affected, as demonstrated by limb weakness.
- **Kozhuppu (Fat)**: Affected, contributing to restricted movement.
- **Enbu (Bone)**: Affected, indicated by weakness predominantly on the right side of the body.

Envagai Thervu (Eightfold Diagnostic Methods):

- **Naadi (Pulse)**: Exhibits a Pitha Vatham pattern, correlating with the symptoms of weakness and impaired movement.
- **Sparisam (Palpation)**: Indicates mild warmth (Mitha veppam), which could signify an underlying inflammatory process.
- **Naa (Tongue)**: Appears pinkish in color.
- **Niram (Complexion)**: Wheatish complexion observed.
- **Mozhi (Speech)**: Low-pitched voice, consistent with partial vocal cord paresis.
- **Vizhi (Eyes)**: Normal.
- **Malam (Stool)**: Normal bowel movements, two times a day.
- **Moothiram (Urine)**: Normal frequency of urination, six times per day.

Radiological and Diagnostic Findings:

- **CT Brain**: Shows a left capsuloganglionic infarct, consistent with a cerebrovascular event affecting motor pathways.
- **ECHO** (05/03/12): Reveals a bicuspid aortic valve with severe aortic regurgitation (AR), a condition that may contribute to altered hemodynamics.

- **Carotid Doppler Study** (05/03/12): Normal, ruling out significant carotid artery disease.

Laboratory Investigations:

- **Complete Blood Count (CBC)**: Hemoglobin at 13.8 g%, total count (TC) of 7300, P64 L33 E3, with ESR at 30, indicating mild eosinophilia.
- **Platelets**: 1.97 lakh/mm³, within normal limits.
- **Electrolytes**: Sodium (Na) at 134 mmol/L, Potassium (K) at 4.3 mmol/L, within normal ranges.
- **Renal Function**: Urea at 22 mg/dL, serum creatinine at 0.7 mg/dL, suggesting normal renal function.
- **Liver Function**: Total albumin/globulin ratio is 6.9/3.1.
- **Random Blood Sugar (RBS)**: 133 mg/dL, within acceptable limits.
- **Serology and Immunology**: VDRL, HIV, APLA, Troponin, ANA, anti-DS DNA, and homocysteine tests are all negative.
- **Urine Routine**: Normal.
- **Peripheral Smear**: Shows mild eosinophilia.

Therapeutic Approach

Given the diagnosis of Patchavaatham, the patient was managed through a combination of Siddha medicine therapies aimed at reducing Vatham, supporting the body's healing processes, and relieving symptoms:

1. **Purging to Reduce Vatham**: Aimed at cleansing the body and restoring the balance of the Vatham dosha.
2. **Internal Medicines**: To target the pathology and provide systemic relief.
    - **Agasthyar Kuzhambu (100 mg with Notchi leaf juice)** was administered initially to balance the disturbed doshas.
    - **Chandamarudha Chendhooram (100 mg), Sangu Parpam (200 mg), and Thaalisaadhi Chooranam (1 g)** were given twice daily with hot water for 20 days to strengthen body tissues and enhance recovery.
    - **Navauppu Mezhugu (65 mg) and Thirikadugu Chooranam (500 mg)** were provided twice daily with hot water for 20 days, with two days of drug holidays to avoid drug resistance or tolerance.
3. **External Medications**: For symptomatic relief and improvement in mobility and pain management.
    - **Dhanvantra Mukkoottu Ennai (50 ml) and Ulunthu Thylam (50 ml)** were used externally to alleviate muscle stiffness and pain.
4. **Siddha Thadavu Muraigal (Siddha Massage Techniques):**
    - **Thokkanam** (a form of therapeutic massage) and **Varma Thadavumurrai** (a technique involving pressure on specific points) were applied to improve muscle tone, enhance circulation, and facilitate joint mobility. The procedure included various methods like **Thadaval, Murukkal, Pidithal, Eluthal, Irukkal, Asaithal**, and specific finger techniques to promote healing and reduce Vatham imbalances.

Observations and Outcome

Before Thokkanam Treatment:

1. Complete weakness on the right side of the body.
2. Slow and labored movements while walking.
3. Rigidity present, indicating spasticity or hypertonia.
4. Mildly slurred speech, consistent with orofacial muscle weakness.
5. Affected gait, suggesting compromised balance and coordination.

After Thokkanam Treatment:

1. Noticeable reduction in weakness, with improved strength and range of motion.
2. Faster and more fluid movements observed.
3. Decreased rigidity, indicating a reduction in spasticity.
4. Improved phonation, suggesting enhanced control over vocal muscles.
5. Improved gait, with better balance and coordination.

Discussion

The presented case of Patchavaatham, characterized by weakness on the right side of the body, speech difficulties, and impaired gait, was managed using a comprehensive approach rooted in Siddha medicine. This case provides an opportunity to explore the effectiveness of traditional therapies in managing neurological conditions post-cerebrovascular accident (CVA).

Patchavaatham, which is akin to the Western medical diagnosis of a stroke or cerebrovascular accident, is understood in Siddha medicine as a manifestation of Vatham derangement. The patient's symptoms of hemiparesis and speech impairment are consistent with Vatham disturbances. Traditional Siddha therapies, including internal medicines and

external therapies like **Thokkanam**, have shown potential in managing such conditions by promoting nerve regeneration and muscle strength [4].

Thokkanam, a traditional therapeutic massage technique, has been emphasized in Siddha medicine for its benefits in enhancing circulation, reducing muscle spasticity, and promoting relaxation. In this case, the use of Thokkanam and Varma massage techniques, specifically designed to target the neuromuscular system, contributed to the patient's improvement in muscle strength, reduced rigidity, and enhanced gait [5]. Studies have shown that massage therapy can stimulate the autonomic nervous system, promoting relaxation and reducing pain, which could explain the positive outcomes observed in this case [6].

The internal medications administered, including **Chandamarudha Chendhooram**, **Sangu Parpam**, and **Thaalisaadhi Chooranam**, are formulated to balance the body's doshas (humors) and support systemic healing. **Chandamarudha Chendhooram** is traditionally known for its neuroprotective properties, which could help in managing the sequelae of a stroke by promoting neural repair and reducing oxidative stress [7]. Similarly, **Sangu Parpam** is believed to provide calcium and strengthen the skeletal system, which may have contributed to the patient's improved mobility and reduced weakness [8].

The patient's improvement in symptoms—such as reduced weakness, faster movements, and improved speech—suggests that an integrative approach combining traditional Siddha medicine with physical therapy techniques can be beneficial in managing post-stroke sequelae. This aligns with findings from other studies that support the use of traditional medicines in neurological rehabilitation, particularly for their neuroprotective and anti-inflammatory effects [9]. However, the case also highlights the importance of a multidisciplinary approach, combining Siddha medicine with modern diagnostic tools and rehabilitation strategies to optimize patient outcomes.

Further research is required to validate the efficacy of Siddha treatments in a larger cohort of patients with similar neurological conditions. Randomized controlled trials comparing Siddha therapies with conventional treatments could provide more conclusive evidence regarding their benefits and potential as an adjunct therapy in stroke rehabilitation [10]

Conclusion

The integrative approach utilizing Siddha therapies, particularly Thokkanam, significantly improved the patient's neurological symptoms and overall functional status. This case illustrates the potential benefits of combining traditional Siddha medicine with a comprehensive rehabilitation plan for managing chronic neurological conditions like Patchavaatham. Further studies and clinical trials are warranted to establish such treatments' efficacy and safety profile in a broader population.

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CITATION
Jenifer Lancy A, Hariharan P, Arpita J, Shabu S, & Nanma L. (2024). Integrative Management of Patchavaatham Post-Stroke: A Case Study Using Siddha Medicine. In Global Journal of Research in Medical Sciences (Vol. 4, Number 5, pp. 11–14). https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13695129