

Shiropichu: preventive approach for stress management: a critical review.**Bhelawe Prajakta Bhaktaraj¹, Ukey Sapana Amol², Belge Archana Raman³**¹PG Scholar, ²Assistant Professor, ³Professor & HOD,

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*Corresponding author: Email: prajaktabhelawe4347@gmail.com Ph. No. - 9834201369**ABSTRACT:**

Background: In the midst of fast paced modern competitive life, everyone is affected by stress in some way. Stress affects body, mind and behavior in many ways and everyone experiences stress differently. It adversely affects a wide range of health condition and may cause several diseases. These diseases can be prevented by stress management. Concepts of *Ayurveda*, *Yoga*, meditation and a balanced diet may play an important role in relieving stress effectively. *Shiropichu* is one of the most active treatments to reduce stress. **Aim:** To study the preventive approach through *Shiropichu* for stress management. **Materials & Methods:** There is a rising prevalence pattern of stress disorders in society.

Ayurveda is a holistic system of medicine with its concern for prevention & management of stress along with promotion of mental health. *Shiropichu* is a procedure of application of drug on the *Shiro* (head). *Shiropichu* is one of the four types of *Murdhni Tailam*. **Observation:** The effect of *Shiropichu* procedure appears to produce a relaxation response. *Shiropichu* increases the circulation by amending the brain circulation. *Shiropichu* has a relaxing and cooling effect on the brain and the whole nervous system and hence releases the stress and anxiety stagnant in the brain. It strengthens the mind and body. **Conclusion:** People are dealing with variety of stress and are working hard to get rid of them. It can provide a good work life balance; an individual can

achieve better health, wellness and greater job satisfaction.

Keywords: *MurdhniTailam*, Prevalence, Prevention, *Shiropichu*, Stress, Yoga.

INTRODUCTION:

Stress is a normal psychological & physiological reaction to changes in someone's environment which could be emotional, physical, social or cultural.^[1]

There is a rising prevalence pattern of stress disorders in society. Prevalence of all forms of stress is found 53% in COVID-19 pandemic.^[2] Stress affects body, mind, behavior in many ways & everyone experiences it differently.

Several studies have identified stress as one of the key factors responsible for various health condition.^[1] In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on public mental health.^[3] Research shows that stress play a part in problems such as headaches, high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, skin conditions, asthma, arthritis, depression, and anxiety.^[4]

Working people frequently experience a variety of complaints related mood changes.^[3] In recent studies the prevalence of stress is obtained as 29.6%, the prevalence of anxiety is 31.9%, and the prevalence of depression 33.7%. Prevalence of work stress was found 64.6% in working women in New Delhi.^[5]

Some research shows that females experience more stress than males & consistently report more physical and somatic symptoms.^[6]

Ayurveda the most ancient science of life, practiced in India for thousands of years based on its own unique fundamental principles such as prevention of disease, maintenance of health and promotion of longevity of life. Prevention is better than cure is the first principle of Ayurveda to maintain the health.^[7] Hence effective prevention of stress' adverse effects is must. It has proven already that the stress is one of the greatest troubles to human well-being. Ayurvedic methods of treating stress not only maintain the balance in body and mind but also progressively raise the level of inner happiness and satisfaction. Ayurveda helps to attain optimum health and peace of mind by acting on stress through natural way.^[8]

In Ayurveda, *Shiropichu* is considered as one of the most powerful treatments that releases emotions. *Shiropichu* is a procedure of application of drug on the *Shiro* (head). *Shiropichu* is one of the four types of *MurdhniTailam*. It is a type of *BahyaSnehana Karma*.^[9] *Shiropichu* is a relaxation technique that rejuvenates the nervous system, releases emotions, opens the subtle channels, and gives bliss to the mind and body.^[10] In few researches, the clinical benefits have been observed with

Shiropichu as anti-anxiety, anti-hypertensive, sleep inducing effects and also in stress aggravation.^[11]

In several studies conducted around the world, stress has been identified as one of the causing factors of psychosomatic disorders.^[12] *Shiropichu* is an ancient Ayurvedic therapeutic technique that helps reduce stress by finding balance in the mind, body, and spirit for holistic well-being.^[13] Thus in this study, we set out to investigate the preventive approach through *Shiropichu* for stress management.

AIM: To study the preventive approach through *Shiropichu* for stress management.

MATERIAL & METHODS: Relevant literature is referred from the Samhitas, Sangraha Granthas and contemporary literature along with personal experience.

STRESS:

Stress is an unpleasant and subjective sensation of discomfort. Stress can be distinguished as good stress and bad stress. Good stress acts as motivation for an individual for completion of a particular work or distress. While bad stress can negatively affect a person's short term & long term health. Stress is produced by various environmental & social challenges in day to day life. One's personality,

behavior and lifestyle all have important influences on stress level.^[1]

Various emotions of mind are stated in *Ayurveda*. It is also stated that, if these emotions are not controlled, they might result in physical diseases. Stress occurs through emotions such as jealousy, sorrow, ego, grief, fear, anger, hatred etc. are the causes which develop psychological dysfunctions, and also known to contribute in *Pradhnyaparadha*. The *Pradhnyaparadha* again works on the body and creates an imbalance of *Doshas*.^[14] These emotions weaken the mind, which activates the body's stress responses.

Over thinking and stressing is the *Atiyog of mind*, the total emptiness of mind or thinking less completely is the *Yog of mind* and fear, grief, anger, lust, pride, jealousy are the *Mithyayog of mind*.^[14] These are the components of stress and might be called as stressors. Stressors are the stress producing agents. Persistent stressed conditions are associated with a high probability of stress disorders.^[15]

Eating an unhealthy diet, smoking, drinking, and taking drugs can also contribute further to physical strain. Stress may be generated through work, at home, within relationships, as a result of internal emotional conflict, through environment, diet, ill-health, and financial insecurity as well as through major life events such as

marriage, death, divorce etc.^[16] The corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has had a huge impact on people all around the world. People's mental health has been affected by uncertainty and quarantine. Prevalence of all forms of stress is found 53% in COVID-19 pandemic.^[17]

From a biological standpoint, the stress response comprises a series of reactions involving the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenocortical and sympatho-adrenomedullary axis. A series of hormones are released, leading to increases in adrenaline, noradrenaline, and cortisol (or corticosterone in most animals). Although this stress response is essential for human functioning, excess acute activation or chronic activation is associated with several physical and mental disturbances. Acute stress is associated with allergic manifestations, such as asthma, eczema, or urticaria; migraines and headaches; hypertensive or hypotensive attacks; different types of pain conditions; gastrointestinal symptoms such as pain, indigestion, diarrhea, and constipation; and mental health disturbances such as panic attacks and psychotic episodes. Chronic stress is also associated with several disorders and diseases, including mental health disturbances such as anxiety and depression, neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease,

cardiovascular diseases, metabolic disorders such as obesity, metabolic syndrome, and type 2 diabetes mellitus, sleep disorders such as insomnia and restless leg syndrome and several cancers.^[18]

SHIROPICHU:

Shiropichu is a word composed of two words; *Shiro* means head and *Pichu* means swab or sterile cotton pad or a sterile cloth dipped in medicated oils.^[9] *Shiropichu* is a procedure of application of drug on the *Shiro* (head). *Shiropichu* is one of the four types of *MurdhniTailam*. It is a type of *BahyaSnehana Karma*.^[19] Thus, *Shiropichu* is an Ayurvedic procedure which includes keeping a sterile cotton pad dipped in herbal oils on the crown of the head and wrapping it up with a bandage cloth.

Shiropichu is one of the palliative treatments in *Ayurveda* used for neuropathic conditions involving the head region or headache and disorders of spine. In this procedure a thick cotton pad or sterile cloth dipped in ample amounts of lukewarm medicated oils or *Ghritais* applied on the top of the head for a specific time interval. The swab is replaced periodically to maintain the warm temperature. It is used in different diseases but when used in the head

region it is termed as *Shiropichu*.^[20] *Shiropichu* procedure includes keeping a sterile cotton pad dipped in herbal oils on the crown of the head at the *Brahmrandra* (anterior fontanelle) and wrapping it up with a bandage cloth. The application of medicine at the vertex region of the head has different methods like *ShiroAbhyanga*, *Shiropichu*, *Shirodhara*, *Shirobasti*, wherein the *Shiropichu* is the easiest and simplest treatment modality. *Shiropichu* is also beneficial for hair fall, splitting of hairs, loss of eye movement.^[21,22]

PROCEDURE:^[18,23]

Shiropichu procedure can be done in 3 stages i.e. *Poorva Karma*, *Pradhana Karma* and *Paschat Karma*.

1) *Poorva karma*: - It includes *Sambharsangraha* (collection of the materials which are needed for the procedure) and *Aturasiddhata* (preparation of the patient).

- ***SambharSangraha*:** Cotton, Bandage, Heating apparatus, lukewarm water, 2 Pan, 1 spoon.
- ***Athurasiddhata*:** Early morning at time of sunrise is the most ideal time to perform *Shiropichu*. Patient should be advised to pass stool and urine. Before going to perform the

procedure pulse, temperature and blood pressure should be recorded. Patient should sit comfortably in a knee high chair. Eyes and ears should be covered with cotton. Oil is heated in a water bath to make it lukewarm.

2) *Pradhan karma*: The patient is made to sit on a comfortable chair, facing East or North direction. The doctor, therapist (masseur) or attendant (while doing at home) who is conducting the treatment should take the small bowl filled with the medicated oil (chosen for the treatment). The temperature of the oil should be checked. It should be lukewarm and not too hot. About 30 ml of oil is poured on a 3*1 inch thick cotton pad and it is placed on the vertex of the head. Using a square cloth (40 inch) the head is draped which allows the cotton pad to be in firm touch with the scalp. Duration of the procedure is 30-60 minutes.

Procedure of heating the oil –

The oil used for *Pichu* should not be heated directly on fire. The oil is taken in a small bowl. Another big vessel should be filled with water, kept on fire (stove) and heated until it boils. The small bowl consisting of the oil should be placed over the boiling water. The oil should be allowed to get warm passively. The bowl should be removed after checking the temperature of the oil with the help of

sterile fingers and after making sure that it is warm.

Preparation of Gauze piece or sterile pad (*Pichu*) –

Take sterile cotton and make a thick pad out of it such that it is square in shape. This gauze pad is interposed between layers of bandage cloth. Alternatively the cotton pad is kept on the bandage cloth and the bandage cloth is wound around the pad 3-4 times such that the cotton pad is locked within the bandage cloth. The extra hanging edges of the bandage cloth and or cotton are cut and trimmed into a pad of uniform dimension.

Soaking the pad or *Pichu* –

The *Pichu* or cotton pad thus prepared is now dipped in the warm oil in the small bowl. It is left in place until the whole pad gets wet with the oil. This is an indication that the gauze piece or cotton pad or *Pichu* has absorbed the oil.

Placing the *Pichu* on the head of the patient –

The *Pichu* soaked with oil is squeezed along the borders of the bowl to remove excess oil. Otherwise, the oil will start dropping all over the body after the pad has been kept on the scalp. The *Pichu* is now kept on the crown of the head. The pad is now wrapped with another thin pad.

Tying the bandage cloth –

Now the sterile bandage cloth is tied around the *Pichu* in such a way that the bandage cloth takes 3-4 windings starting from the crown of the head and going behind the left ear, down the chin and upwards and behind the right ear and over the crown once again. The free ends of the bandage cloth are tied and knotted behind the right ear. The knot should be so easily tied that it can be removed easily. This procedure is done to keep the *Pichu* in position and to prevent it from falling down.

Paschat Karma

SarvangAbhyangam can be conducted after tying the *Shiropichu* if required. But *Shiropichu* alone can also give results for certain diseases. If further treatments are not planned after *Shiropichu*, the person is advised to relax. The patient should not immediately expose himself to cold or cold measures, wind, sunlight, dust, etc. Doing so might induce some symptoms like cold, headache etc.

Any excess oil dripping around the head should be wiped off using sterile clothes or sterile cotton pads.

Removal of *Pichu* –

After the completion of decided time of *Pichu* application, the bandage knot shall be opened and the bandage cloth and the *Pichu* should be removed carefully. All the materials used for *Shiropichu* shall be disposed since new materials have to be

used on the next day. *Pathya-Apathya* regimens described in the *Shiropichu* should be followed after the application of *Shiropichu*.

Duration: Duration of the procedure is 30-60 minutes.

Precautions:

- Patient should fit for the procedure.
- Oil temperature should not meet 99° F.
- Avoid *Shiropichu* in the condition like, skin thermo sensitivity, open wound of Head, *Dustya-vran* of head, *Ajeerna*, *Aamavastha*, Tuberculosis and tumor in head etc.

Probable mode of action of *Shiropichu*:

[18,24,25]

Mode of action of *Shiropichu* can be seen locally as well as systemically. Absorption of substances through the skin depends on a number of factors; the most important are duration of contact, concentration & solubility of medicated oil, physical state of the skin and part of the body exposed. In *Shiropichu*, oil form is used which has good compact concentration with longer duration of contact. Also the skin over the scalp is thin as compared to other parts of the body and absorption of the drug is quicker from the scalp. And the drug is absorbed in more

quantity as compared to other parts of the body. (As per the principle of drug absorption extreme absorption is in the scalp region.) Local effects of *Shiropichu* depend on the type of medicine used for the technique. Local effect is centered on cellular absorption of drugs through transdermal route. Systemically cellular absorption and circulation has possessions on Central Nervous System (CNS). According to the modern medicine, local application like ointment permits through the stratum corneum into the blood vessel and extents the suitable organ. Similarly the oil on forehead can be absorbed and certainly extents the brain cortex. The symptoms alike tension headache, and muscular tension affected due to continued contraction of skeletal muscles can be relieved by the physical effect of *Shiropichu*.

Shiropichu increases the circulation there by correcting the brain circulation which is very important in stress. *Shiropichu* may be supportive in regularizing the blood supply of brain. *Shiropichu* is one of the supreme effective treatments for dipping stress and nervous tension. It works through exploit on *Tarpak Kapha*, *Sadhak Pitta* and *Pran Vayu*. Due to *Tikshana*, *Vyavayi* & *Sukshma* property of *Taila*, it enters easily into *Manovahasrotas* modifying vitiation of *Manas Dosha* (*Raja* & *Tama*). At the

similar time the *Bhrimhana*, *Balya*, *Vaataashamana*, *Medhya* properties of *Taila* amends all *Maanasvikaras*.^[18]

DISCUSSION:

Based on the literature reviewed, there is a strong effect of *Shiropichu* on several stress disorders. Stress has a direct link to stress disorders. Stress Disorders commonly found as an independent or secondary condition.^[26]

People are dealing with a variety of stress and are working hard to get rid of them. There is significant evidence, not only in psychiatry but in many medical areas, that a person's mental well-being is essential for effective care of the body. High levels of perceived stress are linked to an increased risk of headache, insomnia, and various psychosomatic disorders.^[27] The psychological basis behind those stress disorders is unknown; however it could be linked to stress-induced hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis activation.^[18]

Nowadays stress is common and have a significant influence on the quality of life & disrupt professional and personal life & they may have a major harmful impact on general health. Modern system of medicine is still in need of an effective anti-stress agent. Though anti-depressive drugs are claimed to have anti-stress activity, these drugs do not fulfill the criteria of a true safe and specific anti-stress agent.

Irrespective of symptomatic relief offered by such drugs initially these drugs also offer a dose dependency, & rebound withdrawal symptoms.^[28]

Ayurveda the most ancient science of life, practiced in India for thousands of years based on its own unique fundamental principles such as prevention of disease, maintenance of health and promotion of longevity of life. Prevention is better than cure is the first principle of Ayurveda to maintain the health.^[7] Hence effective prevention of stress' adverse effects is must. It has proven already that the stress is one of the greatest trouble to human well-being.^[29] Ayurvedic methods of treating stress not only maintain the balance in body and mind but also progressively raise the level of inner happiness and satisfaction. Ayurveda helps to attain optimum health and peace of mind by acting on stress through natural way.^[30,31]

In *Shiropichu* therapy, prolonged and continuous absorption of the medicated oil may cause tranquility of mind and induce natural relaxation. *Shiropichu* is deeply relaxing and induces a relaxant state; these effects are mediated by the brain wave coherence, Alpha waves, and a down regulation of the sympathetic outflow.^[9]

Psychosomatic disorders are the outcome of the modern way of life and changing value systems and hence their incidence is

rapidly increasing. Overuse and misuse of the senses is one of the main causes of today's illness. With today's overstimulation of the senses, *Shiropichu* is a vital and effective treatment for the prevention of psychosomatic conditions. It's an absolute antidote to modern life. Appropriate lifestyle modifications, including self-care and reduction in stress levels can be utilized to avoid symptoms of stress disorders & reduce symptoms associated.^[32]

CONCLUSION:

With the rapid progress and advancement comes the disease burden created by psychological stress & depression, which is engulfing our society. Stress & stress disorders are the emerging factors in the current scenario, leading to stress disorders.

The effect of *Shiropichu* procedure appears to produce a relaxation response. In *Shiropichu* patients feel relaxation both physically and mentally. It strengthens the mind and spirit & this continues even after the relaxation. Due to *Tikshana*, *Vyavayi* & *Sukshma* property of *Taila*, it enters easily into *Manovahasrotas* modifying vitiation of *ManasDosha* (*Raja* & *Tama*), which has beneficial effects on the body. *Shiropichu* is done directly on head, so it is good for relieving the stress.

Hence Stress can be avoided as far as possible and body should be protected by *Shiropichu*.

There is very little public awareness of the association between health and disease. Many are unaware that a change in lifestyle is an important factor in emergence of stress disorders. Nowadays, stress is common and has a significant influence on the quality of life. Despite the fact that further study is needed, this review is a resource to support that *Shiropichu* effective in stress management.

In order to conclude one who desires for healthy and happy life, one has to follow regular preventive principles of Ayurveda for the prevention of diseases. One has to take care of disease in its initial stages itself to prevent further propagation of disease to limit disability and appropriate preventive aspects have to be followed.

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