

Prevention of eye diseases in Ayurvedic medicine

M.A. Subotyalov¹, V.Yu. Druzhinin²

(¹FSBEI HPE "Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University",

²SBEE HPE "Novosibirsk State Medical University"

Novosibirsk)

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MA Subotyalov¹, V.Yu. Druzhinin²

²SBEI HPE "Novosibirsk State Medical University" (Novosibirsk, Russia),

¹FSBEI HPE "Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University" (Novosibirsk, Russia)

SUMMARY

The article is devoted to the study of the means used for the prevention of eye diseases in the Ayurvedic medical tradition. The author analyzes the authentic Sanskrit texts of the three most important primary medical sources - "Sushruta-samhita", "Charaka-samhita" and "Ashtangahridaya-samhita". Methods used for the prevention of eye diseases are demonstrated. The contribution of Ayurvedic medicine to this area of medicine is shown.

Keywords: history of medicine, Ayurvedic medicine, ophthalmology, Sanskrit, medical primary sources.

RESUME

This article is devoted to the study of preventive measures for eye-diseases, used in Ayurvedic medical tradition. Authentic Sanskrit texts of three of the most important primary sources of medicine - "Sushruta-samhita", "Charaka-samhita" and "Ashtangahridaya Samhita" were analyzed. Ways of prevention of eye-diseases are demonstrated. The contribution of Ayurvedic medicine in this field of research is shown.

Keywords: history of medicine, Ayurvedic medicine, ophthalmology, Sanskrit, medical literature sources.

According to the WHO, there are currently about 150 million people with significant visual impairments in the world, including 40 million blind people. Over the past 20 years, the number of the blind has increased by 12 million people [1]. Therefore, the study and development of preventive and recreational measures to reduce them is one of the urgent tasks of medical science and public health. Over the past decades, WHO has actively promoted the study and implementation of the experience of traditional medicine into health care practice. One of the leading areas of traditional medicine is Ayurvedic medicine, the written sources of which date back several millennia [2].

Purpose of the study. To study the methods and means of prophylaxis of eye diseases in Ayurvedic medical tradition based on authentic primary sources.

Research results

The concept of health and disease in Ayurveda is inseparable from the theory of tridosha (tridoṣa), that is, the concept of three physiological factors, which, when their equilibrium state is disturbed, become pathophysiological [3]. This is confirmed by the authors of all canonical works. The Charaka-samhita (1.9.4a) says: vikāro dhātu-vaiṣamyam sāmym prakṛtir ucyate - "Disease is the imbalance of the three doshas, and their balance is health" [4]. Vagbhata says in Ashtangahridaya-samhita (1.1.20a): rogas tu doṣa-vaiṣamyam doṣa-sāmyam arogatā - "Disease is a consequence of imbalance of doshas, and health is the result of equilibrium state of doshas" [5]. Based on this concept, the author of Sushruta-samhita (6.1.28-29) speaks of 76 types of eye diseases associated with the imbalance of each dosha separately (vāta, pitta, kapha), out of balance of all three doshas (sarva-jā), external causes (bāhya) and blood pathology (rakta). Sushruta-samhita (6.1.26-27) also indicates the causes leading to imbalance of doshas, and ultimately to eye diseases. Among the etiological factors, Sushruta mentions bathing in water, when the eyes were exposed to intense heat or bright sunlight, eye strain caused by looking at far away or small objects, disturbed sleep patterns (daytime sleep while awake at night). He further speaks of excessive attachment to something, long and strong crying, constant irritability or prolonged grief and suffering, trauma, sexual excesses, excessive consumption of acidic foods, as well as horse peas (*Dolichos biflorus*) and urad-dala (*Phaseolus mungo*), containment of natural urges, excessive sweating, eye contact with smoke, frequent vomiting or the inability to commit it, as well as holding back tears [6]. Therefore, a lifestyle aimed at preventing or reducing the influence of these factors is the prevention of eye diseases.

According to Ayurveda, there are five senses, the substrate of which is specific organs. The Charaka-samhita says (1.8.8): tatra cakṣuḥ śrotram ghrāṇam rasanam sparśanam iti pañcendriyāni - "The five senses are sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch." Each of the five is associated with a certain primary element of being. Charaka-samhita (1.8.14) explains it as follows: tejas-cakṣuṣi kham śrotre ghrāṇe kṣitiḥ āpo rasane sparśane nilo viśeṣeṇopapadyate - "The element of fire predominates in the organ of sight, in the organ of hearing - ether, in the organ of smell - earth - water, in the organ of touch - air." Due to antagonistic relationships, excess mucus is harmful to the organ of vision, which has a fiery nature. Charaka-samhita (1.5.16) says:

cākṣus-tejomayam tasya viśeṣāc-chleṣmato bhayam |
tataḥ śleṣma-haram karma hitam dṛṣṭeḥ prasādanam ||

"Eyesight has the nature of fire, and therefore is afraid of shleshma (mucus), because of this, the use of agents that drive away mucus is beneficial to vision" [4].

Such a remedy used to prevent eye diseases is anjana (añjanam), or kajjalam (kajjalam). There are several types of these medicines - sauvira-anjana, rasa-anjana, srotonjana,

pushpanjana and nilanjana. The charaka-samhita (1.5.15) says:

sauvīram añjanam nityam hitam akṣṇoḥ prayojayet |
pañcarātre'ṣṭarātre vā srāvaṇārthe rasāñjanam ||

“For the sake of the eyes, sauvira-anjana should be used every day, while rasa-anjana should be used once every five or eight nights to increase lacrimation” [4].

As a rule, sauvira-anjana means antimony trisulfide, or stibnite. Naturally, this raw material is purified and transformed by various processes, which makes it safe to use [7].

Rasa-anjana is a yellow extract formed by boiling Asian barberry (tree trunk) and milk in equal parts to the desired consistency [8]. The Asian barberry (*Berberis asiatica*, *dāruharidrā*), which is part of it, has many useful properties. Rasa-anjana is thus an irritant and causes lacrimation.

Charaka-samhita (1.5.17-18a) speaks about the peculiarities of using *rasaanjana*:

divā tan na prayoktavyam netrayos tīkṣṇam-añjanam |
vireka durbalā dṛṣṭir ādityam prāpya sīdati || tasmāt
srāvyaṁ niśāyāṁ tu dhruvam añjanam isyate |

“Anjana, which has a stinging nature, should not be used during the day, as vision is impaired by the release of tears in bright sunlight. Therefore, the agents that cause lacrimation are used at night”[4].

The Vagbhata (1.23.23-24) also mentions cases when anjana should not be used:

nāñjayed bhīta-vamita-viriktāsīta-vegite | kruddha-
jvarita-tāntākṣi-śiro-ruk-śoka-jāgare || 23 || adṛṣṭe 'rke
śiraḥ-snāte pītayor dhūma-madyayoḥ | ajīrṇe 'gny-arka-
saṁtapte divā-supte pipāsate || 24 ||

“Anjanas are not used in people with fear, emetic or laxative therapy, who are hungry, restrained, or angry. During fever, eye fatigue, headache, grief and loss of sleep when the sun is hidden, after washing the head, smoking or drinking alcohol, indigestion, thirst, fatigue from overexposure to fire and sun, and after naps anjanas should not be used”[5].

In addition to anjanas applied to the edge of the lower eyelid, Ayurvedic medicine also uses eye drops (*āścyotana*), poultices (*piṇḍika*) and cooling applications (*tarpaṇa*) [9].

Charaka-samhita (1.5.18b-1.5.20a) speaks of the benefits of using eye care products:

yathā hi kanakādīnām malinām vividhātmanām | |
dhautānām nirmalā śuddhis taila-cela-kacādibhiḥ |
evam netreṣu martyānām añjanāścyotanādibhiḥ | |
dṛṣṭir nirākulā bhāti nirmale nabhas īnduvat |

“Just as contaminated gold and other metals are purified from

defects with oil, cloth, brush and other methods, and people's eyes become clear when using these products. When applied, vision becomes as clear as the moon in a cloudless sky "[10].

Conclusion

Carried out overview medical primary sources demonstrates the undoubted historical and scientific-practical significance of methods and means of preventing eye diseases in the Ayurvedic medical tradition.

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Author's address

Subotyalov M.A., Associate Professor of the Department of Anatomy, Physiology and Life Safety, Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University

subotyalov@yandex.ru

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