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Preconceptional care in *Ayurveda* for a healthy mother and child A classical review

Review Article

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Abstract

Motherhood is a divine blessing. The main aim of *Ayurveda* is maintain the health of the healthy person & cure the disease of diseased. According to *Taittareeya Upanishad* reproduction is the one of the primary character of the living organism. Preconception care is one such preventive measure to get *shreyasi praja*, it helps in early identification of high risk factors & prevent the adverse effect of that. Increasing in the incidence of congenital anomalies & prenatal deaths. In such situation *Ayurveda* can contribute tremendously with the effective Preconception care & Antenatal care which monitors the mother regularly makes the dream come true. For every woman bearing & bringing up a healthy offspring is a joyfull experience.

Incidence of congenital anomalies affect an estimated 1 in 33 infants and result in approximately 3.2 million birth defect-related disabilities every year. An estimated 2,70,000 new-borns die during the first 28 days of life every year from congenital anomalies.

In modern era is challenged with the number of congenital, chromosomal & genetic issues in the newborns. The purificatory & other methodology adopted in the Preconception care in *Ayurveda* seems to be a great contribution in be getting the healthy progeny.

Key words: Preconception care, congenital anomalies, *Garbhadan*, healthy baby, *Ayurveda*, *Panchakarma*

Introduction-

Making the decision to have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart to going to walking around. *Ayurveda* is philosophical knowledge of life. It is not only a medicine system it is a holistic way of life that take care of all the aspect of human. The main aim of *Ayurveda* is maintain health of

healthy person & cure the disease of diseased (1). Motherhood is a divine blessing. Reproduction is the one of the primary character of the living organism. As per *Taittareeya Upanishad* having good progeny in society is pride thing in the world .A healthy, intellectual, beautiful offspring with long life is desired by all. (2)

Preconception care can be defined as the care or advice to couple planning a pregnancy well before the actual conception. When a couple is seen & counselled about pregnancy, its course & outcome well before the actual conception. (3)

Preconception care is one such preventive measure to get *shreyasi praja*, it helps in early identification of high risk factor & prevent the adverse effect of that. As there is an increasing incidence of congenital anomalies & prenatal deaths. In such situation Ayurveda can contribute tremendously with the effective preconception care & Antenatal care which monitors the mother regularly makes dream come true .For every woman bearing and bringing up a healthy offspring is a joyful experience .India is one of the 6th countries that account for 50% of the maternal deaths worldwide. Maternal Mortality Rate is 230 per 100, 00 live births in developing countries. (4)

Incidence of congenital anomalies (also referred as birth defects) effect an estimated 1 in 33 infants and result in approximately 3.2million birth defect – related disabilities every year. An estimated 270, 000 newborns die during the first 28 days of life every year from congenital anomalies. The most common severe congenital anomalies are heart defects, neural tube defects and Down syndrome. Although congenital anomalies may be genetic, infectious or environmental in origin, most often it is difficult to identify the exact cause. (5)

In the modern era is challenged with the number of congenital, chromosomal & genetic issues in newborns, which is posing confront to the aim of a healthy humanity. Data reveals that 3-5% of all births results in congenital malformation, 20-30% of all neonatal death are due to genetic disorder, 30-50% of post-natal deaths are due to genetic disorder 18.5% are with congenital malformation, 50% of mental retardation

cases are of genetic basis. (6)The purificatory methods & other methodology adopted in the Preconceptional care in Ayurveda seems to be give a great contribution in the be getting the healthy progeny . Pregnancy should always be planned not by chance. So this planned pregnancy ensures to

- Train the future citizen in the uterine world.
- To get high ranked personalities.
- To elevate the physical, spiritual, psychological & health status of foetus.
- To gain the optimal potential of the individual to achieve the spiritual goals of man.
- To combat the social problems like addictions, criminal tendency, which are indicative of *heen satva* (low self-esteem).
- To combat the personal health problems like allergies, neurological, psychological problems etc by increasing the psychological & physical immunity.
- To treat the Bad Obstetrics History cases with chromosomal & genetic problems.
- To eradicate/control the hereditary disease.
- To ensure the baby of choice to mother in natural way.
- To ensure the woman to enter the pregnancy with optimal state of health which would be safe to herself & foetus.

The aims and objectives of preconceptional care is to identify the high risk factors , stabilising the previous disease, to discontinue the teratogenic medications, improve the base level health , to prevent the repetitive reproductive disease & to ensure that woman enters pregnancy with optimal state of health which would be safe for both herself & foetus. (7)

Precautionary care in Preconceptional care in Ayurveda

1-Age criteria- *acharya's* consider 25 years for male & 16 for female as appropriate age for marriage. (8) This also holds good even today .At this age both are fully matured , the born child will also possess those qualities. If girl is less than 15 years then chances of Neural tube defect in foetus. Increasing the age i.e 30 years incidence of Down's syndrome (primi). (9)

2-Diet-for male milk & ghee prepared from sweet drugs, for female *taila* (oil) & *masha* (black gram) is advised for the period of one month. *Asthanghruday* advocates ghee especially *Phalaghrita* & *mahakalyanak ghruta* (10). *Acharya kashyap* explains *Lashuna kshir* (milk prepared by garlic) & ghee (11) Grossly diet should consist of *Rasayana* (rejuvenator) properties & are *garbhasthapak* (helps in implantation & stabilization of pregnancy). As per modern iron folic acid supplemented. (12)

Acharya Harita mentioned indirectly in *Vandhya chikitsa* (treatment of infertility) while giving description of *pathyapathya* (congenial & non congenial diet) like *Kacchur* (*Curcuma zedorodia* Rosc), *sooran* (*Amorphollus companulata* _ _ _), *amla* (sour substances), *kajikam* (type of fermentative preparation), *vidahi* drugs (causes burning sensation) are contraindicated. As *pathya* (congenial diet) explained *vandhyakarkatimoola* (*Momordica cochinchensis* Spr.), *langali* (*Gloriosa superba* Linn), *devadali* (*Luffa echinata* Roxb), *brihatidvaya* (*Solanum indicum* & *solanum surrattens*), *katutumbi* (*Langenaria vulgaris* Ser.subsp.siceraria) etc (13). These indicated drugs probably contains some amount of Phyto-estrogens which maintains the regulation of menstrual cycle. (14)

Milk is mainly explain by almost all *achary's* .When we see the contents of the milk it is good source of calcium & adequate quantity of water content. Milk

delivers many nutrients like Protein (contain 9 essential aminoacids), vitamins etc. Milk is high needed biological value protein. These are essential for foetal development .It is important for foetal linear growth. Consumption of milk also increases blood concentration of insulin like growth factor (I GFI). It is major determinant of growth. Milk is rich in iodine because of which IQ can be boosted. Enhancing the maternal milk intake during pregnancy results in arise in birth weight foetal growth parameters. Effect related to macro & micronutrients along with minerals. (15)

Ghee is one more component explained in preconceptional & in ANC. Ghee is rich in Vitamins A & E. It is rich in conjugated linoleic acid, has an anti-oxidant with Antiviral properties. It is rich in medium chain fatty acids which are absorbed directly into liver & burnt as energy. Butyric acid in it supports production of killer T cells in the gut thus helps in healthy immune system. (16)

Shashtikashali contains some amount of nitric oxide which increases the blood flow to the uterus. (17)

3-Rajaswala charya - classics says to follow celibacy, sleep on grass bed, avoid day sleep, excessive talking, massage & bathing etc. Then after 3 days take bath wear white clothes & do the offspring to the God. (18)

Critically when we observe these it probably indicated during menstrual period so as to provide adequate rest to the lady & certain time for herself. When primordial follicles developing into graffian follicles & hence may be advised certain rules & regulations. These will keep her away from the environmental xeno-estrogens & mutagens which can cause mutation leading to foetal anomalies. (19)

4-Atulyagotravivaha-Ayurveda says marriages shouldn't be consanguineous. (20) If marriages made in consanguineous then there may be chances of *Prameha* (Diabetes), *Kusthta* (skin disorder), *arsha*

(piles), *khandistha* (cleft palate/lip) etc. Recent updates also says the consanguineous marriages carries recessive traits (21).

5- contraindication to garbhadharan-

Woman who is suffering with excessive hunger, is suffering with thirst, is suffering with fear, not desirous of being pregnant, suffering with grief, who is anger, excessive desire eating meat, excessive desire for coitus, *atibal* (teens/younger child), *ativruddha* (aged), suffering with the chronic diseases-are avoided. If these lady get married they may give rise to *viguna praja* (deformed neonate). (22)

When we see the conditions mentioned these may increase the cortisol (stress hormone) level and may lead to foetal loss, very teen or aged are not fit for conceive these may gave birth to IUGR baby or child with chromosomal abnormalities. (23)

6-Garbhasambhavasamagri (factors required for proper foetal development) - the factors included

Rutukala (fertile period)-in which chances of fertilization are more. *Kshetra* is considered as female as well as healthy uterus. *Ambu* is nutrition to the child in the form of *Rasadhatu* (plasma tissue). *Beeja* i.e healthy sperm & ovum. *Acharya Vagbhata* says 5th as *Vata*. *Vata* is the main factor for division of cells. (24)

7-Garbhadan vidhi (procedure for conception) - It starts from the selection of right partner followed by purificatory methods like *snehan* (oleation therapy), *swedan* (sudation therapy), *Panchakarma* (purificatory methods), then specific diet for male & female for 1 month. Following all this pre-requisites one should do the *Putresthi Yagnya* (spiritual method to do the offerings to God) or any spiritual things like *homa*, *havan* etc can be done. After this on an auspicious day couples were made to take *shalyanna* (rice preparation) mixed with milk is consumed & body is anointed with oil, then advised to do the coital act. Afterwards for lady

strenuous work is avoided and advised to maintain the celibacy till the signs of pregnancy arrived. (25)

Others-consider the BMI, if parents are suffering with the obesity then born child may suffer with obesity, macrosomia, mental retardation etc . Habbits of the parents like alcohol & smoking may produce foetal alcohol syndrome & or IUGR respectively or any chromosomal anomalies. These habits must be avoided.

Discussion

Recent updates on *Panchakarma* therapies shown significant evidences in the disorders as well as for the prophylactic purpose. Selection of the partners & age for marriage are even holds good even today, late marriages & /late pregnancies are the one of the major contributory cause for the congenital anomalies. During early embryo genetic periods most important & vital organs will be produced & any insult during this time may end up in the anomalies i.e again burden to nation as well as for the parents too.

Diet explained like black gram- is the rich source of folic acid, which is required to prevent the neural tube defects, it acts as potent anti-oxidant so helps to reduce the oxidative stress, it also contains protein & fibres. Rice contains more of carbohydrates & rice bran contains vitamin B complex, which is easily digestible. Milk will provide calcium. Ghee contain Omega-3 fatty acids which is required for the brain development etc. (26)

Modern lifestyle leading to increase in the stress which is major cause for infertility. Along with the lifestyle habits like alcohol consumption & the environmental toxicity affecting the sperm count, quality, motility, it also depletes the zinc level in body, whereas in females it affects the ovulation & menstruation leading to the hypothalamic pituitary ovarian dysfunction. (27, 28)

Now days infertility troubling like epidemic. In such situation *Ayurvedic*

Panchakarma therapy may act on hormonal level & maintain normalcy of the hormones required for the maintenance as well as production of garbha. These would also help in the removing of the accumulated toxins. Diet explained will provide the essential micro & macro nutrients to would be mother & future child.

Along with the classically told methods few additions like folic acid, iron, calcium supplementation & taking care of BMI, avoiding habits like alcohol, tobacco, & avoiding use of narcotics would yield much more better & desired results.

Conclusion-

- Pregnancy should always be planned, not by chance
- Outcome of pregnancy should be happier to society
- Ayurvedic preconceptional measure help to achieve the goal of preconception to have healthy progeny
- Ayurvedic remedy for getting healthy progeny emphasizes again preventive aspect of Ayurveda.

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