Tourniquet: The Emergency Measure in Snake Bite: The Ayurvedic Approach

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Received: February 18, 2020; Published: March 03, 2020

Abstract

Snake bite is a great challenge for the physicians. It is agreed that, in all situations snakebite should be considered as emergency as some snakes contain very strong poison that can cause immediate death of the patient. On the other hand, it is not easy to differentiate a non-poisonous snake bite from a poisonous snake bite at the initial stage. Hence it is important to take appropriate measure to protect the patient from the fatal effect of the snake venom.

Ayurvedic classics nicely describe snakebite as an emergency and advised to start prompt effective treatment. The ancient scholars working in the field of Ayurveda advice 24 (Twenty Four) treatment procedures in their writings (Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita etc.). Among these 24 treatment procedures advised for treatment of poisoning “Application of tourniquet - Aristabandhana” is mentioned with top priority. It is said that, this is the procedure that prevents/slow down the spread of poison in the body.

There are lot of facts to be discussed on the procedure, benefit etc. of Aristabandhana which may provide new field to the Toxicologists.

Keywords: Snakebite; Emergency; Tourniquet; Ayurvedic Classics; Toxicologists

Introduction

Snakebite is a major threatening to the human society probably since creation. There are many stories of suffering of the human beings due to anger of the snakes. A good number of interesting stories are also found in the Indian classics about the creation, behavior etc. of the snakes. Even some dangerous snakes are considered as ornament of some Gods like Bishnu and Siva.

Among the other natural character of snakes their anger and biting reaction are important. The bite of poisonous snake can cause fatal sequence immediately. Hence snakebite is considered as an acute emergency by the medical science. The Ayurvedic scholars, even before thousands of years of Christ, describe snake venom as immediately fatal (Sadyomaraka).

Mentioning 24 nos. of treatment procedures for a patient of poisoning, specially for snakebite, application of tourniquet is mentioned with top priority.

A detail discussion on tourniquet application in snakebite is seemed to have importance even in this scientific era.
Aim of the Study

This study is aimed to search the detail viz. importance, method of application, necessary precautions etc. of the procedure “application of tourniquet in snakebite” and to throw light on the scientific background of the concepts of the Ayurvedic scholars.

Materials and Method of the Study

The Ayurvedic classics, specially Charaka Samhita and Susruta Samhita, were studied to gather the necessary knowledge on the topic and the findings are arranged methodically as a scientific article.

Observation and Result

From the study the following observations were noted:

1. Definition: It is a process of application of ligature in a patient of snakebite [1].
2. Expected benefit: To prevent the spread of the poison from the site of bite to the other parts of the body [1].
3. Indications: In any type of snakebite on the extremities this procedure should be applied immediately [2].
4. Site of application: 4 Angulies (approximately 4 inches) above the site of bite [2].
5. Material to be used: Soft substances, like gauze piece, interior part of the bark of tree etc. [3].

Discussion

From the observation it can be noted that:

1. The Ayurvedic physicians were aware about the dangerous and quick effects of the snake venom.
2. They considered that, if by application of some measures the blood flow from the site of bite can be slowed down then the spread of poison can also be slowed down and some more time for treatment can get.
3. Observing the effects of rough, hard ligature materials like local injury, complete obstruction of circulation to the distal part leading to necrosis etc. the materials advised to use for the purpose are selected to be soft.

Summary and Conclusion

As summary it can be opined that, the knowledge on snakebite and its management of the ancient Ayurvedic scholars is resourceful and informative. The scientific background and applicability should be re-evaluated and applied for the purpose as mentioned. Proper education about the process to the common people of the snakebite susceptible areas after scientific evaluation can be proved valuable in reducing the mortality from snakebite.

Bibliography


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