



Review Article

THE CONCEPTUAL APPROACH OF PRECONCEPTIONAL CARE IN AYURVEDA

Rajashree Shelare Raut^{1*}, Praful Raut²

*¹Assistant professor, Department of Prasuti Tantra stree roga, BMAM, Nagpur, ²CCH, BMAM, Nagpur, India.

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ABSTRACT

For every couple, pregnancy is one of the most beautiful precious events created by nature and it should always be planned not by accidental or chance. The concept of preconception is described in Ayurveda as a *Garbhadhanvidhi*. It explains about right mode of conception and importance of diet, lifestyle and *Shodhan*. Preconceptional care plays important role to identify the risk factors, stabilizing the previous disease, to discontinue the teratogenic medications and to prevent any reproductive disease and to ensure that women enters pregnancy with optimal state of health which would be safe for both foetus and herself. The preconception care which may be adopted by all the couples planning for pregnancy. So may be implemented as an integral part in community healthcare. Preconception care begins with the selection of the right partner, which includes right mode of conception and balanced diet, modification of lifestyle and *Shodhan Chikitsa* which helps to detox and normalize vitiated *Dosha* that will help to established foundation for the outcome of healthy progeny.

Preconceptional care is to identify the risk factors, stabilizing the previous disease, to discontinue the teratogenic medications and to prevent repetitive reproductive disease and to ensure that women enter pregnancy with optimal state of health which would be safe for both foetus and herself.

The concepts described in Ayurveda which must be elaborated and studied in details with scientific methods. It is need of an hour to develop the guidelines for preconceptional counseling and it could be completed after research work.

INTRODUCTION

For every couple, pregnancy is one of the most beautiful and precious event created by Nature and it should always be planned not by accidental or chance. The concept of preconception is described in Ayurveda as a *Garbhadhanvidhi*.^[3] Preconception care begins with the selection of the right partner, which includes right mode of conception and balanced diet, modification of lifestyle and *Shodhan Chikitsa* which helps to detox and normalize vitiated *Dosha* that will help to established foundation for the outcome of healthy progeny and contribute for healthy society.

Preconception care is term refers to process of identifying social, environmental and biomedical risks to woman's fertility and pregnancy outcome, and by reducing these risk through preconceptional counseling and care.^[1]

Preconception care is an opportunity for couple to improve their health and prepare body for pregnancy, birth and beyond. It improves the chances of pregnancy and having better progeny. It is need of an hour to develop the guidelines for preconceptional counseling and it could be completed after research work.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The Aim and objectives of preconceptional care is to identify the risk factors, stabilizing the previous disease, to discontinue the teratogenic medications and to prevent repetitive reproductive disease and to ensure that women enters pregnancy with optimal state of health which would be safe for both foetus and herself.

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MATERIAL AND METHODS

Various Ayurved *Samhita* and literature are reviewed for reference, related modern text and research articles are referred for utility of preconceptional care in present era's obstetric care.

DESCRIPTION

Ayurvedic texts have mentioned about *Shodas Sanskaras* out of this *Vivaha* and *Garbhdhana* are the two *Sanskaras* concerned with Preconception care.^[4] According to Ayurveda text following factors should be considered for healthy pregnancy and outcome of better progeny.

A) Marriage

Marriage should be *Atulyagotriya* it means marriage shouldn't be consanguineous. There may be chances of various hereditary diseases like diabetes etc. if marriages are consanguineous^[2]

B) Age for Conception

For healthy conception both couple should be physical and mentally fit in all purpose and suitable age for conception for man is after 25 years and women should be above 16 years of age^[3]. The preparation of both partners prior conception plays significant role for outcome of healthy pregnancy. Various studies show that late marriages and late Pregnancy are one of the major contributory causes for the congenital anomalies.

According to study published in Pediatric and perinatal Epidemiology, 26, Blackwell publishing ltd. Page 25 by Gibbs et al, The study was conducted on teen age pregnancy on girls less than 15 years or 2 years after menarche. The study reviewed three studies conducted in central and south American countries found anemia significantly than pregnancies at older age 20-24 years^[5]. This study also conclude that there is an association between preterm birth and young maternal age and that association may be stronger in developing countries^[5] observation conclude that Adolescents are more likely to have immature pelvis, as it continues to grow throughout the adolescents. This can lead to various obstetric complications like cephalopelvic disproportion, obstructed labour and other obstetric complications.^[6] Study held by Phupang et al (Thailand) showed that Preeclampsia was significantly more in adolescents.^[5]

C) For conception of Pregnancy following factors are responsible^[3]

Ayurveda mentioned four factors required for conception they are as follows-

1. **Ritu-** *Ritu* is considered as a time of ovulation, where ovulation takes place and the chances of conception is maximum.
2. **Kshetra-** *Kshetra* means place where fertilization or implantation takes place, we can considered it

as a reproductive tract which includes uterus, fallopian tubes, ovaries etc.

3. **Ambu-** Nourishment of women plays important role for the outcome healthy progeny.

4. **Beej-** Healthy sperm and ovum.

D) Regimen followed to be prior conception

Both the partners firstly undergo *Shodhan* therapy with *Purvakarma Snehana Swedan* then *Vaman Virechan Asthapan* and *Anuvasan basti* and rule out all risk factors.

- Couple should observe celibacy (*Brahmcharya*) before attempting coitus.

These certain rule is advised to provide adequate rest and certain time for herself during menstrual period. When primordial follicles developing into graffian follicle. These will keep her away from environmental xeno-estrogens and mutations which can cause mutations leading to foetal anomalies.^[1]

The position of couple during coitus also has a good role to play in attaining conception. The women should lie in supine position, so that all the *Doshas* remain in their normal locations and is also aids in proper conception of the *Beeja*.^[2]

E) Detoxification and Diet Regimen Before Conception^[3]

1. Male

Male should consume *Sali* rice with *Ghrta* and milk. *Ghrta* is beneficial for *Ras*, *Shukra* and *Oja*. It has also having *Rasayana* property, due all these quality it helps for proper functioning of *Shukra* and helps to attain conception.

Sali Rice- it alleviates *Pitta Dosh*, it is *Madhura Rasa*, *Snigdha Balya Vrishya* etc which promotes the qualities of *Shukra*.

2. Female

Masha- *Masha* having properties of *Snigdha Madhura Ras*, *Ushna Virya*, it is chemically enriched with proteins, carbohydrate, vitamin B, magnesium, calcium iron and folic acid which plays important role for conception and pregnancy. Calcium and magnesium play a good role in regulating estrogen level and folic acid prevents neural tube defect.

Tail- It is considered as a effective in various *Vataj* disorders, it has *Garbhashay Vishodhan* property, it also gives strength and helps in *Yoni Vishodhan*, hence these qualities helps the female reproductive organs function properly that leads to fertilization.

4th day onwards after menstruation, the couple is asked for oral *Ghrta* ingestion, oil massage, steam bath and detoxification therapy is done by *Vaman* (emetics) or *Virechan* purgative, it should be decided by vitiation of *Doshas* and *Prakruti* of couple.

After that *Sansarjan Krama* that is dietary regimen is advised to follow for next eight days after detoxification. *Asthapan* And *Anuvasan Basti* is given

after emesis or Purgation Therapy. Simultaneously levels of hormones estrogen, progesterone, testosterone and semen analysis should be assessed before and after this regimen.^[7] The effects of detoxification in the view of modern aspects is not studied yet now. In Ayurveda the concept of *Shodhan Chikitsa* is unique, it helps to normalize the metabolism of body and that helps to maintain *Samyavastha* of *Doshas*. Assessment of lipid profile, liver and kidney function tests, electrolytes and semen analysis can be done as before and after detoxification therapy to check the effects of detoxification, if any. Before and after detoxification, study and research can also be conducted with the help of comparison of cell lines.^[11]

Effect of Psychology of the Women on the Foetus

As In Ayurveda says, "*Suamanasya Garbhadharnanam*" cha.su.25/40

Happiness of mind or psychological status of the couple is one of the most important factors for conception. Positive psychology and happy mood during pregnancy have many benefits in day to day life hence all physicians asked to maintain positive environment and thinking during Preconception and pregnancy period. It is also responsible for the development of healthy fetus.

Maternal stress, maternal nutrition, and the exposure to toxins and pollutants during pregnancy have impacts on prenatal developments and hence it should be taken account as per as pregnancy is concerned. Ayurveda has also mentioned that faulty diet and lifestyle are also responsible for teratologic abnormalities in fetus along with psychology of couple.^[10]

The crucial impact prenatal influences have on development has been recognized for millennia. It is now known that the environment experienced during pregnancy influences for physical and mental health throughout life.^[9]

Stress, anger, despair etc can disturb the phenomenon leading to reduced sexual vigor, so it is important maintain a good and happy relationship between the couple to remain stress free during this phase.^[12]

Position of Couple

The position of couple during coitus also has a good role to play in attaining conception. The women should lie in supine position so that all the *Doshas* remain in their normal locations and is also helps in proper perception of *Beeja*.^[2] The important factor here is the gravitation force and sperm travel, hence the supine position of women is perfect if she is trying to conceive, In any position, women can of course get pregnant having intercourse but there are certain gravity defying positions such as sitting, standing, or

woman on top that may discourage sperm from traveling upstream.^[11]

In this way women can enters pregnancy with optimal state of health which would be safe for both fetus and herself.

Role of Preconceptional Counseling in Ayurveda with Modern Perspective

There have been several prospective and case control trials that clearly demonstrate that preconceptional counseling improves pregnancy outcome, to be effective counseling about potential pregnancy risk and strategies to prevent them must be provided before conception. The concepts in Ayurveda mainly focus on individual health to improve reproductive outcome with minimizing obstetric complications. After detoxification of both partners there is physical, mental and spiritual status is improved which will help to outcome healthy progeny and minimize obstetric complication during pregnancy.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda offers radical and informative knowledge about the preconception care which may be adopted by all the couples planning for pregnancy. So may be implemented as an integral part in community healthcare. The concepts described in Ayurveda which must be elaborated and studied in details with scientific methods. The physical and mental status of woman during coital act, detoxification before conception and position for coital act can be discussed further in view of improving the health status of whole reproductive tract. Study can also be conducted for improving the quality of sperm with these concepts. Simultaneously, the psychological and physical status of the male should also be considered before conception. Study of harmful hormones secreted during mental stress and their effect on progeny could be a subject of research. Preconception care is an opportunity for couple to improve their health and prepare body for pregnancy, birth and beyond. It improves the chances of pregnancy and having better progeny. It is need of an hour to develop the guidelines for preconceptional counseling and it could be completed after research work.

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***Address for correspondence**

Dr. Rajashree Shelare Raut

Assistant professor,
Department of Prasuti Tantra
stree roga, BMAM, Nagpur.

Email:

rajashree.shelare@yahoo.com

Phone no- 9665911343

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