



**Case Study**

**AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF PEMPHIGUS VEGETANS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Pemphigus vegetans is a group of autoimmune disorder characterized by mucocutaneous bullae or pustules that erode to form hypertrophic papillated plaques that predominantly involve the scalp, and the face. It is the rarest variant of pemphigus vulgaris representing about 1-2% of all pemphigus. It may be correlated with *Kardama visarpa* in Ayurveda. The contemporary management of pemphigus is by systemic steroids. This case report of a 38 year old, male patient diagnosed with Pemphigus vegetans who presented with pustular lesions with foul smell, reddish spots with hypertrophic papillated lesions on scalp, itching and burning sensation over various body parts especially on upper parts since 20 years. He was treated with both *Samana* as well as *Sodhana* therapies for about 1 month. This condition was assessed using Pemphigus diseases area index. After treatment there was a significant reduction in the score. Moreover no new lesions were formed suggesting non progression of the diseases.

**INTRODUCTION**

The ultimate goal of Ayurveda therapies is maintenance of health (*Swasthasya swastya rakshanam*) and diseases prevention (*Athurasya vikara prasamanam*). In the current scenario there is an emergence of numerous diseases due to improper diet and life style. Moreover psychological factors like stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia further contribute to the disease progression especially in dermatological disorders.

Pemphigus vegetans is considered to be area variant of pemphigus vulgaris. It was first described by Neumann in 1876 [1]. It is characterised by vesicles, bullae, pustules, and erosions that form vegetating masses. It has two variants- Neumann and Hallopeau. Neumann variant is a non-healing bullous disorder. Hallopeau variant is characterised by pustular lesions, which merge after rupturing and gradually evolve into vegetating erosions. Contemporary management of this disease is with systemic steroids in the form of Prednisolone or injectable Dexamethasone.

Pemphigus vegetans may be correlated with *Kardama visarpa* in Ayurveda. It is caused by the vitiation of *Kapha* and *Pitha* and is accompanied by clinical features like blackish discoloration, dirty swollen and heavy lesions, which undergoes ulceration from deep inside. Due to an increase in *Ushna guna* the affected part becomes very moist, fall of like slush when touched, exposes the deep tendons and vein and emits foul smell [2]. Thus it is required to treat this life threatening diseases with Ayurvedic modalities.

**Patient Information**

A 38 year old male patient with no known comorbidities who was working as chef came with complaints of pustular lesions over neck, axillary region, inguinal region and face since 20 years. Since 5 years he developed pustular lesions over scalp with foul smell, reddish spots, itching and burning sensation. He studied hotel management and as a part of his job in the year 2000 he went abroad. From there his life style changed dramatically. As he had late night and early morning duties he used to skip his meals frequently. His frequent food pattern included non-veg items like chicken, shawarma, Chinese food items, rabbit, duck, porotta and bread. Moreover he also used to take 5-6 tea daily during work time. After two years the eruptions initially appeared in the neck region. He thought it was due to dye allergy and took some medicines from nearby medical store. These lesions resolved but gradually it spread to other regions like

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axilla, back of pinna, inguinal region and hands. These eruptions were associated with pus discharge, itching and burning sensation. Thereafter whenever the lesions appeared he took medicines and got temporary relief. In the year 2018 the lesions spread to the scalp region, initially as eruptions and within two years the lesions developed as pustules with reddish spots associated with itching and pus discharge it later changed to hypertrophies papillated lesions. He consulted a dermatologist and was advised to do take a skin biopsy which revealed this condition as pemphigus vegetans. Though he was continuing the medicine no permanent relief was obtained. So he got admitted in our IPD for a better management.

**History of Past Illness**

There was no known history of diabetes mellitus, hypertension, dyslipidaemia or thyroid dysfunction. There was no history of any other chronic medications.

**Family History**

There was no relevant family history.

**Personal History**

- Appetite- Good
- Bowel- Frequency once per day
- Evacuation- Incomplete
- Stool consistency – Hard
- Micturition - 6-7/day, 2/night
- Sleep- Disturbed due to stress and anxiety. Had day sleep due to late night duties.
- Diet- breakfast- Dosa, idli, curry
- Lunch- Rice, curd, fish chicken, beef, leafy vegetables
- Dinner- Rice and fish curry, during late night hours he used to have junk foods.
- Food habits- 5-6 tea per day
- Addiction- Alcohol 3 peg day since 20 years, smoking -nil

**General Examination**

- Built - Lean
- Pallor- Present
- Icterus- Absent

- Cyanosis- Absent
- Clubbing- Absent
- Lymphadenopathy- Absent
- Tongue - Coated
- Pulse rate- 72/min
- Blood pressure- 110/80 mmHg
- Integumentary system examination

**Inspection**

- Distribution- Scalp, back of pinna (B/L), right side of face, lips, neck
- Symmetry- Discrete lesions, involvement of genital regions -present

**Palpation**

- Tenderness- Present
- Temperature- Normal
- Tethering – Absent
- Nikolsky sign- Positive
- Candle grease sign- Negative
- Auspitz sign- Negative
- Nail changes- Absent

**Morphology**

- Colour- Yellowish, white, pustular lesions
- Size- Varying size
- Consistency- Soft
- Configuration- Discrete
- Margin- Well defined
- Surface -Moist
- Primary lesions – Pustules
- Secondary lesions- Crust
- Lichenification- Over armpit and inguinal region

**Laboratory Investigation**

**Table 1: Blood investigation**

Blood Routine examination as on 22/12/2023
Hb- 9gm%
Esionophil- 12%
ESR- 52mm/Hr
Albumin- 2.8mg%
Globulin- 4mg%

**Table 2: Ayurvedic examination**

<i>Ashtasthana pareeksha</i>	<i>Dasavidha pareeksha</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Nadi- Vata pitha</i></li> <li>• <i>Mootra - Sadharanam</i></li> <li>• <i>Mala - Sadharanam</i></li> <li>• <i>Jihwa - Upalipta</i></li> <li>• <i>Sabda - Vyakta</i></li> <li>• <i>Sprasa – Anushana seetham</i></li> <li>• <i>Drik - Vyakta</i></li> <li>• <i>Akruti – Madyama</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Prakriti- Vata pitha</i></li> <li>• <i>Vikriti- Kapha pitha</i></li> <li>• <i>Sara - Madhyama</i></li> <li>• <i>Satwa - Avara</i></li> <li>• <i>Satmya - Sarvarasa (Katu, Ushna pradhana)</i></li> <li>• <i>Desa - Anoopaa</i></li> <li>• <i>Kala - Kshanadi- ushna vyadhyavasta-purana</i></li> <li>• <i>Samhanana - Madhyama</i></li> <li>• <i>Ahara sakti – Abhyavaharana sakti- pravara; Jarana sakti-pravara</i></li> <li>• <i>Vyayama sakti- Madhyama</i></li> <li>• <i>Vaya - Madhyama</i></li> </ul>

**Diagnosis**

Diagnosed case of pemphigus vegetans (skin biopsy).

**Treatment Schedule****Table 3: Treatment schedule**

Date	Internal medications	External treatment	Remarks
06/10/2023	-	<i>Sadyovamana</i> 100ml <i>Kashaya</i> of <i>Yasti</i> , <i>Indrayava</i> , <i>Madanaphala</i> + 3g <i>Madanaphala choorna</i> + honey + <i>Saindhava</i>	18 <i>Vegas</i> obtained, <i>Pravara sudhi</i> Patient had slight fatigue, and oozing slightly reduced from the lesions of scalp.
07/10/2023		<i>Peyadi karma</i> 3 days	
10/10/2023	<i>Shaddharanam</i> tablet 2-2-2 <i>Yavagu</i> with <i>Shaddharana choorna</i> afternoon and night <i>Kshadirarishatam</i> 20ml twice daily, after food	<i>Shirodhara</i> with <i>Aragwadadi kshaya</i> + <i>Nimba twak kwatha</i> for 7 days.	Itching relieved, oozing persists
18/10/2023	<i>Guggulu thiktakam kashaya</i> 90ml twice, before food <i>Kaisora guggulu</i> 2-0-2 <i>Guggulu panchapala choornam</i> 1 teaspoon with honey, three times after food	-	Appetite improved
25/10/2023	-	<i>Snehapana</i> <i>Gugguluthiktaka gritha</i> Test dose -25ml, Starting dose-60ml increased upto -150ml	<i>Samyak snigdha lakshanas</i> like <i>Vatanulomyata</i> , <i>Agnideepthi</i> , <i>Snigha asamhata varchas</i> , <i>Snigdhagatha</i> were observed.
02/11/2023	-	<i>Abhyanga ushma sweda</i> with <i>Sudha durvadi tailam</i> 2 days	<i>Utklesana ahara</i> like <i>Ksheera</i> , <i>Tila</i> , <i>Guda</i> , <i>Madhura ahara</i> were consumed on the previous day of <i>Vamana</i>
04/11/2023	-	<i>Vamana</i> with <i>Nimba kashaya</i> in which <i>Kutaja</i> was put as <i>kizhi</i> - <i>Vamana dravya</i> <i>Yasti kashaya</i> + <i>Lavanodaka-Vamanopaka dravya</i> [3]	6 <i>Vegas</i> and 15 <i>Upavegas</i> Oozing, foul smell completely relieved, lesions began to heal
5/11/2023		<i>Peyadi karma</i>	2 days
7/11/2023		<i>Snehapna Gugguluthiktakam gritha</i>	7days <i>Samyak snigdha lakshanas</i> like <i>Snehadweda</i> , <i>Vatanulomyata</i> , <i>Snigha asamhata varchas</i> , <i>Snigdhagatha</i> were observed
14/11/2023		<i>Abhyanga Ushma sweda</i> with <i>Sudhadurvadi tailam</i>	3 days
17/11/2023	-	<i>Virechana</i> with <i>Patolamooladi kashaya</i> 60ml+ <i>Drakshadi kashaya</i> 30ml at 8am	6 <i>Vegas</i> attained Oozing absent Lesions healed
18/11/2023	-	<i>Peyadi krama</i>	2 days

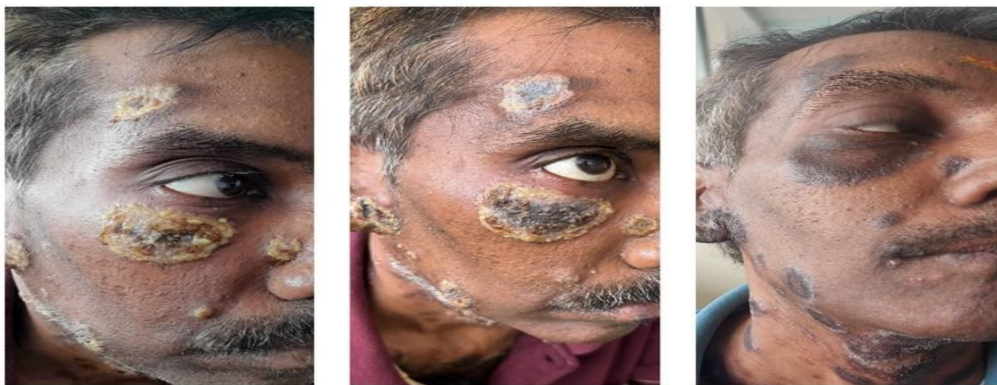
**RESULT AND OBSERVATION**

**Table 4: Pemphigus Diseases area index [4]**

Anatomical location	Erosion/ blisters/ new erythema		Post inflammatory hyperpigmentation or erythema from resolving lesions	
	Before treatment (06/10/2023)	After treatment (19/11/2023)	Before treatment (06/10/2023)	After treatment (19/11/2023)
Ears	2	0	0	0
Nose	0	0	0	0
Rest of face	3	0	0	0
Neck	3	0	0	0
Chest	0	0	0	0
Abdomen	0	0	1	0
Back, buttocks	0	0	0	0
Arms	1	0	0	0
Hands	0	0	0	0
Legs	0	0	0	0
Feet	0	0	0	0
Genitals	0	0	1	0
Total skin	09/120	0/120	02/12	02/12
Total Scalp	10/10	10/10	0/1	0/01
Total mucosa	02/120	0/120	-	-
Total activity score and total damage score	21/250	10/250	02/13	02/13

Total activity score which was initially significant (21/250) became moderate (10/250) after treatment. The total damage score (2/13) remained the same which showed that there was no further progression of diseases.

**Figure 1: Lesions on the face - at the time of admission (6/10/2023), before *Sodhana* (4/11/2023) and after *Sodhana* (19/11/2023)**



**Figure 2: Lesion on the neck at the time of admission before *Sodhana* and after *Sodhana***



**Figure 3: Lesion on the scalp at the time of admission, before *Sodhana*, after *Sodhana***



Figure 4: Lesion on the back of pinna at the time of admission, before *Sodhana* and after *Sodhana*



## DISCUSSION

Most of the Ayurvedic treatments are found to be effective in many life threatening ailments which are incurable in the contemporary system of medicine. There is no direct correlation for pemphigus vegetans in Ayurveda. It may be correlated with *Kardama visarpa*. Acharya *Vagbhata* while explaining *Visarpa chikitsa* mentioned that no medicated ghee which is not a purgative should not be initially used in the management of *Visarpa*. It may leads to *Paka* of the deeper *Dhathus* [5]. *Raktamoksha* is considered to be a vital therapy in the management of *Visarpa*. *Kardama visarpa* is caused by vitiation of *Kapha* and *Pitha*. Here the patient indulged in *Rakta*, *Pitha dusti nidanas* like frequent intake of curd, fish, different meat, exposure to hot environment and alcohol intake. *Kaphadusti nidanas* like *Diwaswapna*, *Athimatra asana* of *Guru, Snidgha ahara*. This resulted in vitiation of *Kapha* and *Pitha* there were also *Vata kopa nidana* like intake of tea, over exertion, *Bhaya*, *Soka* and *Akala bhojana*, *Badha puresha*. Thus there is a *Kapha pitha pradhana tridosha dusti*. It results in the vitiation of *Rasadhathu* which further vitiates *Raktadhathu*. The *Doshas* getting aggravated by the respective causes quickly spread throughout the body and get localised in external areas like scalp, face, inguinal region, axillary region and abdomen. Since most of the lesions were located in the *Jatru oordha* and was in an *Uthklishta avasta*, *Sadyo*

*vamana* was done. *Yasti*, *Indrayava* and *Madanaphala* have both *Vamanopaga* as well as *Kustahara* properties. After *Vamana* there was a slight reduction in oozing nature. *Khadirarista* and *Shaddharana choorna* which is specifically mentioned in *Kusta* were selected as *Shamana oushadas*. Since itching as well as oozing is still persisted *Shirodhara* was done with *Aragwadadi kashaya* and *Nimba twak*. *Aragwadadi gana kashaya* is mainly indicated in *Kapha pitha* dominant conditions and specifically mentioned for *Dushta vrana ropanam* and *Visodhanam*[6]. Dermatological disorders have a positive relationship with stress factors so for the purpose of mind calming *Shirodhara* was done.

For *Rookshana*, *soshana* and *Vata kapha shamana*, *Guggulu thiktakam kashayam*, *Guggulu panchapala choorna* and *Kaisora guggulu* were given. Later *achasnehapana* was done with *Guggulu thiktakam gritam* is indicated in *Kushta*, *Nadivrana* and *Oordha jatru vikaras*. [7] After attaining the *Samyak snidgha lakshana* as the *Doshas* were localised in *Oordha jatru vama* was selected for *Sodhana*. *Vamana* was done using *Nimba*, *Kutaja* along with *Yastimadhu* act as *Visarpahara*. *Virechana* is considered to be the best *Upakrama* for *Pitha vikaras*, for this *Patolamooladi kashaya* mentioned in *Kushta*

*chikitsa* was taken since there was burning sensation, *Vata pitha samana yogas* like *Drakshadi kashaya* was added. Acharya *Charaka* has stated the importance of repeated *Sodhana* therapies in the management of dermatological disorders. *Vamana* should be done in every 15 days *Virechana* in one month, *Nasya* in 3 days and *Raktamokshana* in 6 months<sup>[8]</sup>. Moreover in *Visarpa chikitsa Acharya* has mentioned that it is beneficial to administer *Sodhanas* like *Vamana*, *Virechana* and *Raktamoskhana* in the beginning of treatment itself <sup>[9]</sup>. The condition was assessed using Pemphigus diseases area index, which revealed a significant score initially. After treatment the score was reduced to moderate. Moreover no new lesions were formed which suggested that there was no further diseases progression.

### CONCLUSION

The observations made from the above case study suggested that Ayurvedic treatment is beneficial in the management of skin ailments like pemphigus vegetans. The internal well as external therapy acts synergistically to relieve the symptoms. This condition may be correlated with *Kardama visarpa* and the formulations mentioned in *Kushta* as well as *Visarpa* can adopted for its management.

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