



Review Article

CELL PROLIFERATION THROUGH THE LENS OF *TRIDOSHA*: A CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATIVE REVIEW OF AYURVEDA AND CELL BIOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Cell proliferation, a fundamental process underlying tissue growth and repair, is regulated in modern biology through coordinated cellular and molecular mechanisms, while in Ayurveda it is understood through the principles of *Tridosha* and *Dhatu Poshana*; this study interprets cell proliferation by conceptually correlating *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* with regulatory, metabolic, and structural functions, thereby conceptually linking Ayurvedic physiology with modern biological science. Classical Ayurvedic texts and modern scientific articles were reviewed to compare the *Tridosha* concepts with cell proliferation. Conceptual mapping highlights the similarities between Ayurveda and biology. The review demonstrated that each *Dosha* has a conceptual equivalence with the key components of cell proliferation. *Vata* governs movement and regulation, paralleling intracellular transport, cytoskeletal dynamics, and the signal-controlled initiation of the cell cycle. *Pitta* is responsible for metabolic transformation, corresponding to DNA synthesis, protein synthesis, enzymatic regulation, mitochondrial ATP generation, and growth-factor activity. *Kapha* represents structural integrity and nourishment, which aligns with cellular hydration, membrane stability, extracellular matrix formation, and regulated tissue growth. An imbalance in any dosha correlates with pathological proliferation, including slow healing, degeneration, chronic inflammation, and tumorigenesis. The results suggest that the *Tridosha* model provides a framework that closely mirrors the biological control of cell proliferation. Understanding proliferation through an integrated Ayurvedic-biomedical lens may help advance personalized and preventive healthcare.

INTRODUCTION

Cell proliferation is defined as an increase in cell number due to cell growth and division. This is a result of progression through the cell cycle.^[1] Cell growth refers to an increase in cell size, whereas cell division describes the division of a mother cell into two daughter cells. Control of cell growth and division is essential for the maintenance of cellular homeostasis and cell proliferation. Cell growth and cell division are two functionally distinct processes that are crucial for generating progeny of all cells and are strongly intertwined.^[2] The multiplication of somatic and germ cells is the most complex cellular function. Mitosis is controlled by genes that encode proteins that promote or inhibit the process of mitosis at different stages.

The cell cycle consists of four sequential phases: G1 (gap 1), S (synthesis), G2 (gap 2), and mitotic (M). In the G1 phase, mRNAs and proteins necessary for DNA replication, such as DNA polymerase, are synthesized. The S phase is characterized by nuclear DNA replication. During the G2 phase, the cell assesses the accuracy of newly synthesized DNA. The M phase involves mitosis, which occurs in four stages: prophase, metaphase, anaphase, and telophase. In prophase, chromosomes condense and appear as two sister chromatids joined at the centromere, and centrioles move to opposite poles as the nuclear membrane disintegrates. During metaphase, chromosomes are arranged at the equatorial plate of the spindle formed by microtubules. In anaphase, centromeres divide and sister chromatids separate and move toward opposite poles, while the cell membrane begins to divide in late anaphase. Finally, in telophase, nuclear membranes form around each chromatid set, and the cytoplasm separates completely. After division, daughter cells may continue

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to cycle or enter a resting phase, known as the G0 phase.^[3]

In Ayurveda, the body's cellular activity is explained through the concept of *Tridosha*, which includes *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*, the three *Doshas*. These three *Doshas* govern all physiological, biochemical, and structural processes in our body. Although the term "cell proliferation" is not specifically used in Ayurveda, similar concepts are discussed through *Dhatu Poshana* (tissue nourishment), *Vridddhi* (tissue increase), and *Upachaya* (growth). These concepts demonstrate a profound understanding of bodily regeneration and growth from an integrated, functional, and systems-based biological perspective. This study addresses the increasing need for a novel reinterpretation of classical Ayurvedic *Tridosha* concepts by specifically mapping them onto biological mechanisms of cell proliferation, thereby contributing to our understanding of how physiology supports tissue regeneration and repair.

There is an increasing need to reinterpret classical Ayurvedic concepts in the context of modern biological knowledge to achieve several objectives, such as understanding how Ayurvedic physiology supports tissue regeneration and repair, exploring dosha-based influences on individual variability in growth and healing, and identifying early signs of abnormal proliferation, such as tumor formation, using Ayurvedic diagnostic models. Studying cell proliferation in Ayurveda may also contribute to fields such as Ayurgenomics, which examines how individual constitutions affect biological processes, including tissue response and healing. A deeper understanding of proliferation through Ayurvedic principles may provide a complementary framework to modern physiology, enriching healthcare with individualized and integrative approaches that promote optimal tissue health and recovery. This study on the conceptual mapping of *Tridosha* to cell proliferation aims to provide a deeper understanding that may serve as a complementary framework to modern physiology.

METHODS

Qualitative analysis was performed by reviewing classical Ayurvedic texts, including the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, alongside contemporary scientific literature focused on cellular dynamics. The analysis specifically aimed to identify the functions of *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* in relation to cell growth, division, and repair. This review utilized an extensive literature-based approach to explore and correlate the mechanisms of cell proliferation with the Ayurvedic concept of *Tridosha*. Classical Ayurvedic scriptures were examined alongside modern scientific literature on the physiology of proliferation. Relevant research articles

were identified from databases including PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar using keywords such as *Tridosha*, *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, cell proliferation, and cell cycle, combined using Boolean operators for specificity. A conceptual mapping framework was used to interpret the similarities between Ayurvedic physiology and modern cellular mechanisms. Since this study was based solely on existing literature, ethical approval was not required. Being a conceptual integrative review, it relies on interpretative correlation rather than empirical data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Role of *Tridosha*

Role of *Vata*

In Ayurveda, *Vata* is one of the *Saririka doshas* that governs the physiological and psychological functions of the body.^[4] *Vata* is regarded as the force responsible for movement, communication, and regulation of all bodily activities. Conceptually, it plays a vital role in all forms of movement and change within the body, including the transport of nutrients, oxygen, hormones, and the flow of electrical impulses between cells. These processes are essential for proper cell functioning and proliferation. *Vata*'s influence on cell division can be understood through its role in regulating mitotic spindle assembly, cytoskeletal movement, and molecular transport.

Ayurveda views *Dhatus* as fundamental building blocks of the body.^[5] The formation of *Rasa dhatu* marks the initial stage in the creation of *Dhatus*, and *Rasa dhatu* plays a crucial role in nourishing the other *Dhatus*.^[6] *Vata* facilitates the movement of these nutrients to other *Dhatus*. During the formation of *Rakta dhatu*, *Vata* aids in circulation, ensuring that oxygen and essential nutrients are delivered to cells for their proper function and proliferation. Similarly, *Vata dosha* supports the formation of all other *Dhatus*.

Cell proliferation occurs through various signaling pathways that can be seen as being influenced by *Vata*. This includes the movement of signals that trigger mitosis and other repair processes. Effective communication between cells and tissues is vital for coordinated cell division, leading to the creation of new cells that are essential for growth and repair.^[7]

Cell proliferation requires the controlled initiation of the cell cycle, DNA synthesis, and appropriate intracellular signaling.^[8] These processes align with the functions of *Vata*, such as *Pravartana* (movement), *Gati* (motion), and *Vyuhana* (formation).^[9]

Vata dosha, characterized by the *Gunas ruksha* (dry), *Laghu* (light), *Sheeta* (cold), *Khara* (rough), *Sukshma* (subtle), and *Chala* (mobile)^[10], plays a regulatory role in cellular processes from an Ayurvedic

perspective. A balanced expression of *Vata* qualities- specifically mobility (*Chala*), subtlety (*Sukshma*), and lightness (*Laghu*)- is essential for effective communication within cells, quick metabolic responses, and smooth progression through the cell cycle.

The table 1 given below summarizes the conceptual correlations of *Vata guna* with cellular biology and their respective influences on the regulation of cell proliferation.

Table 1: Correlation of *Vata Gunas* with Cell Biology and Influence on Cell Proliferation

<i>Guna of Vata</i>	Conceptual Correlation in Cell Biology	Influence on Cell Proliferation
<i>Chala</i>	Intracellular transport Signal transmission Initiation of the cell cycle	Facilitates activation and progression of proliferative processes
<i>Sukshma</i>	Molecular signaling Diffusion of growth factors and regulatory molecules	Supports precise regulatory control essential for cell division
<i>Laghu</i>	Quick metabolic activation Timely transition through cell-cycle phases	Promotes efficient and coordinated cell-cycle progression
<i>Ruksha</i>	Compromised membrane fluidity, reduced nutrient assimilation	May restrict optimal cellular growth and proliferation
<i>Khara</i>	Structural instability Impaired cellular interfaces	Can limit cellular integrity and suppress proliferative capacity
<i>Sheeta</i>	Slower enzymatic and biochemical reaction rates	Associated with reduced metabolic activity and diminished proliferation

These characteristics are linked to the dynamic movement of molecules, accurate signal transmission, and timely activation of pathways that control cell growth. On the other hand, an excess of qualities such as dryness, roughness, and coldness can lead to reduced nourishment of cells, changes in cell membrane behavior, and lower enzyme activity. This imbalance disrupts cellular signaling and diminishes the ability of cells to grow and divide.

Among the *Panca vatas*, *Vyana*, *Prana*, and *Samana vatas* play major roles in cell proliferation through their function.

Vyana Vata regulates the distribution and coordination of physiological activities.^[11] Functionally, it supports the uniform delivery of nutrients and regulatory signals and facilitates synchronized intercellular communication and intracellular transport, which are essential for orderly cell cycle progression and controlled cellular proliferation. Disturbance of *Vyana Vata* function may result in uneven signal distribution and uncoordinated proliferative activity.

Prana Vata regulates signal reception and initiates physiological activity. Functionally, it supports cellular sensing, integration of growth cues, activation of regulatory pathways, and entry into the cell cycle. Disturbance of *Prana Vata* function may impair signal responsiveness and disrupt the normal regulation of proliferation.

Samana Vata, through its role in *Pacana* and *Vivecana*^[12] ensures metabolic support by maintaining digestion, assimilation, and availability of substrates required for biosynthetic activities such as DNA replication and cellular growth. Disturbance of *Samana*

vata leads to suppressed, disorganized, or pathological cell proliferation due to the loss of metabolic and cell cycle homeostasis.

Role of *Pitta*

The *Dosha* that governs all metabolic and transformational processes in the body, including digestion, metabolism, and enzyme activity^[13]. Because *Pitta* is involved in the transformation and metabolic processes, conceptually it plays a crucial role in cell proliferation- the process of cell growth and division that is essential for tissue development, repair, and regeneration

When cells divide, the DNA in the cell nucleus must replicate to ensure that each daughter cell receives a complete set of genetic information. *Pitta*'s conceptual influence over metabolism and energy transformation ensures that the necessary biochemical processes for DNA replication are efficient and functional.

For cells to proliferate, they must synthesize proteins used in cell structures or enzymes. *Pitta* regulates the metabolism of proteins, ensuring that amino acids and enzymes are appropriately synthesized. The availability of these building blocks is critical for the formation of new cells.

Pitta governs the digestive fire and is responsible for breaking down food into usable forms of energy. This energy is used by cells during cell division, protein synthesis, and other processes that support cellular proliferation. Without adequate metabolic energy provided by *Pitta*, the body cannot generate the energy required for proper cell growth.

Pitta controls the activity of enzymes that are necessary for digestion, nutrient absorption, and cellular processes. Enzymes involved in DNA replication and protein synthesis are vital for cell proliferation. *Pitta* regulates the production and activation of these enzymes to ensure proper cell division.

Hormones are key regulators of cell proliferation, and *Pitta* is responsible for the transformation of substances into active hormonal signals in Ayurveda. Several key hormones, including growth hormones, thyroid hormones, and insulin, regulate cellular activities such as growth, differentiation, and survival. *Pitta's* influence over metabolism and digestion ensures that the body produces and regulates these hormones properly.

Growth factors, such as insulin-like growth factors (IGFs), epidermal growth factors (EGFs), and fibroblast growth factors (FGFs), are critical for stimulating cell proliferation.

Pitta influences the secretion and activity of these growth factors, ensuring that they are available to support tissue growth and cellular regeneration.

Pitta dosha, characterized by *Gunas* such as *Sneha*, *Ushna*, *Tikshna*, *Visra*, *Sara*, *Drava*, and *Laghu*,^[14] is fundamentally responsible for *Agni*-mediated transformation and metabolism in the body. These properties correlate at the cellular level with the biochemical processes required for survival and proliferation.

The following table 2 presents the conceptual mapping of *Pitta guna* with key cellular and molecular mechanisms involved in cell proliferation.

Table 2: Correlation of *Pitta Gunas* with Cell Biology and Influence on Cell Proliferation

<i>Guna of Pitta</i>	Conceptual Correlation in Cell Biology	Influence on Cell Proliferation
<i>Usna</i>	Increased enzyme kinetics Enhanced mitochondrial activity Elevated ATP production	Supports energy-intensive processes such as DNA synthesis, mitosis, and biosynthetic reactions.
<i>Tikshna</i>	High specificity of biochemical signaling Accurate enzyme–substrate interactions Fidelity of DNA replication	Ensures precise regulation of cell-cycle checkpoints and maintenance of genomic stability.
<i>Sara</i>	Dynamic intracellular transport Cytoskeletal remodeling Mitotic spindle dynamics	Facilitates chromosomal movement, spindle assembly, and orderly chromosome segregation.
<i>Drava</i>	Cytoplasmic fluidity Molecular diffusion Vesicular trafficking	Enables efficient distribution of metabolites, signaling molecules, and mitotic components.
<i>Laghu</i>	Rapid metabolic turnover Cellular responsiveness Swift structural transitions	Promotes timely progression through cell-cycle phases and adaptive cellular remodeling.
<i>Sneha</i>	Lipid components of cell membranes, membrane fluidity, lipid microdomains Lipid mediated signaling pathways	Supports membrane biogenesis during mitosis, growth signal transduction,

Excess *Pitta* can lead to excessive inflammation, causing over-proliferation of cells, which may contribute to conditions such as cancer or tumors. An overactive inflammatory response can cause abnormal cell growth, resulting in diseases of the skin, blood, and other organs. *Pitta* deficiency may cause insufficient cell growth or slow healing processes. Tissues may fail to regenerate properly, leading to chronic wounds, delayed recovery, and weakened immune responses.

From a functional Ayurvedic perspective, *Pacaka*, *Sadhaka*, and *Ranjaka pitta* are primarily involved in cellular proliferation.

Pacaka Pitta is essential for metabolic processes, enhancing bioenergetics, nutrient absorption, and the availability of biosynthetic substrates needed for DNA replication and cell

division. *Sadhaka Pitta* contributes regulatory precision, conceptually aligning with intracellular signaling networks, cell-cycle checkpoint control, and adaptive stress-response mechanisms that ensure orderly, controlled proliferation. *Ranjaka Pitta* plays a supportive role by sustaining effective oxygen delivery, nutrient transport, and redox homeostasis, which are critical for the high metabolic demands of proliferating cells. Collectively, these *Pitta* offer a functional interpretive framework for understanding the metabolic activation, regulatory fidelity, and systemic support underlying controlled cell proliferation, without implying direct mechanistic equivalence.

Role of *Kapha*

Kapha governs the structure, nourishment, and lubrication of the body. Conceptually, *Kapha's* primary role in cell proliferation is to provide nourishment and

stability. It ensures that cells have the required building blocks for growth and repair, and its moist and stable nature is essential for the healthy division and differentiation of cells. Water is crucial for cellular functions, and proper hydration is essential for processes such as cell division and repair. Dehydration disrupts these cellular activities, thereby hindering overall cell health and functionality.

Kapha plays a significant role in regulating moisture to maintain cellular hydration levels. Its fluid nature provides essential lubrication to tissues, promoting healthy cell proliferation by reducing friction and stress on the cells. *Kapha's* moisture-based qualities ensure that cells are adequately hydrated and nourished, thereby supporting overall health and function.

Kapha regulates the immune system, indirectly influencing cell proliferation. The immune system is essential for recognizing damaged, aged, or infected cells and promoting their regeneration and replacement. Healthy *Kapha* ensures that the immune system remains strong and balanced, providing the necessary signals for cell proliferation in response to infection or injury.

Kapha governs mucus production, which acts as a protective barrier in the body's mucosal tissues. This mucus plays a role in maintaining the body's resistance to infection. By enhancing the immune system's efficiency, *Kapha* supports the rapid regeneration of cells that may be damaged by external pathogens, promoting the body's ability to proliferate healthy cells for recovery.

Kapha's role in nourishing tissues ensures that cell proliferation occurs healthily and in a balanced manner. It prevents excessive cell division that may lead to tumor formation, cysts, or other growth disorders. This is crucial because, while cell proliferation is necessary for healing, growth, and maintenance, it needs to be regulated so that tissues do not become too dense or rigid. *Kapha dosha*, defined by *Gunas* such as *Snigdha*, *Sheeta*, *Guru*, *Sthira*, *Manda*, and *Mridu*,^[15] is responsible for structural integrity, cohesion, and nourishment within tissues.

The following table 3 outlines the conceptual associations of *Kapha guna* with cell biology and metabolic mechanisms involved in cell proliferation.

Table 3: Correlation of *Kapha Gunas* with Cell Biology and Influence on Cell Proliferation

<i>Gunas of Kapha</i>	Conceptual Correlation in Cell Biology	Influence in Cell Proliferation
<i>Snigdha</i>	Membrane lipid integrity Hydration status Extracellular matrix lubrication	Maintains membrane fluidity and supports growth-factor receptor function
<i>Mridu</i>	Cellular compliance ECM flexibility Cytoskeletal plasticity	Creates a permissive microenvironment for cell expansion and division
<i>Guru</i>	Increased biosynthesis of proteins, lipids, and macromolecules	Supports cell mass accumulation and tissue building during proliferation
<i>Sthira</i>	Cell adhesion molecules Cytoskeletal anchoring Tissue coherence	Promotes stable tissue architecture in proliferating regions
<i>Manda</i>	Controlled metabolic rate Regulated signaling intensity	Prevents excessive or dysregulated proliferation, ensuring orderly growth
<i>Sheeta</i>	Reduction of excessive metabolic rate Control of enzymatic overactivity Anti-inflammatory cellular environment	Prevent hyperproliferation, maintains regulated cell cycle progression
<i>Slakshna</i>	Smooth cell surfaces Intact cell membrane Organized extracellular matrix	Facilitates orderly cell adhesion, migration, and cytokinesis during tissue growth

Kapha dosha plays a crucial role in cell proliferation by providing the necessary structure, nourishment, and stability for the growth of tissues. Among its five subtypes, *Kledaka Kapha* and *Avalambaka Kapha* are particularly important.

Kledaka Kapha is essential for maintaining hydration and cohesion at the cellular level. It helps sustain membrane integrity, supports hydration of the extracellular matrix, and protects proliferating cells

from stressors, thereby creating a conducive internal environment for cell growth.

Avalambaka Kapha provides structural support and stability during cell multiplication. It is involved in the synthesis of structural proteins and anchoring of the cytoskeleton, ensuring the maintenance of tissue mass as cells proliferate.

Together, these *Kapha* subtypes facilitate nutritional support, structural integrity, and sustained

anabolic activity, which are vital for normal and regulated proliferation. Conversely, *Kapha* imbalance can lead to reduced cell proliferation or excessive cell growth.

Kapha is the prime factor providing firmness and growth and functions as a supportive anabolic force in the body. When *Kapha* becomes imbalanced and excesses accumulate, conceptually it can lead to over proliferation of cells, especially in the form of cysts, tumors, or swelling.

CONCLUSION

Cell proliferation is a tightly regulated biological process that requires the coordinated control of signaling, metabolism, structure, and energy utilization. Interpreting this process through the *Tridoshas* and their *Gunas* offers a functional and integrative understanding of cellular growth and regeneration. *Vata gunas* primarily govern cellular communication, intracellular transport, and the orderly progression of the cell cycle. *Pitta gunas* drive metabolic activation, enzymatic reactions, and biochemical transformation essential for DNA synthesis and mitosis; while *Kapha gunas* provide the structural stability, hydration, and anabolic support necessary for tissue expansion and maintenance.

The *Guna*-based regulation concept emphasizes that normal cell proliferation is a system-level process that requires a balance among movement, transformation, and structure. This equilibrium leads to healthy growth, whereas any imbalance can cause impaired healing, chronic inflammation, or abnormal tissue growth. Understanding proliferation through *Gunas* reveals that it is a complex process rather than a simple molecular event.

In conclusion, this *Tridosha*-based perspective effectively connects Ayurvedic physiology with modern cell biology, providing a conceptual foundation that supports integrative, personalized, and preventive strategies for tissue regeneration and improved overall health.

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