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Surgical management of ano-rectal disorders in ayurveda: integrating Shalya Tantra with modern techniques

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Abstract

The surgical management of ano-rectal disorders in Ayurveda, particularly through the application of Shalya Tantra, has seen a resurgence with the integration of modern surgical techniques. This paper aims to explore the potential of combining traditional Ayurvedic surgical practices with contemporary methods to enhance treatment outcomes for conditions such as hemorrhoids, fistulas, and anal fissures. Ayurvedic principles emphasize individualized care, using holistic techniques to restore balance, and Shalya Tantra offers a unique approach to surgical intervention. However, modern surgical practices, including minimally invasive techniques, are increasingly being integrated to improve patient recovery times and minimize complications. This research critically evaluates the benefits of Shalya Tantra procedures, such as Kshara Karma and Agnikarma, and compares them with modern surgical interventions like laser therapy and sphincter-preserving surgery. The objective is to highlight the advantages and limitations of each approach and propose a framework for their integration. By blending both traditions, this paper envisions a comprehensive treatment paradigm that could offer superior clinical outcomes for patients with ano-rectal disorders. The findings aim to bridge the gap between ancient wisdom and contemporary medical science, advocating for a multidisciplinary approach in treating ano-rectal disorders effectively.

Keywords: Ano-rectal disorders, Ayurveda, Shalya Tantra, surgical management, modern techniques, Kshara Karma, Agnikarma, laser therapy, sphincter-preserving surgery, integrated treatment

Introduction

Ano-rectal disorders, including hemorrhoids, anal fissures, and fistulas, are common conditions that significantly impact a patient's quality of life. The surgical management of these disorders has evolved considerably over the years, with Ayurveda and modern medicine both offering distinct yet complementary treatment approaches. In Ayurveda, Shalya Tantra, a branch of surgical science, has long been used to treat such conditions using natural therapies like Kshara Karma (caustic therapy) and Agnikarma (therapeutic burning)^[1]. These methods, grounded in the holistic understanding of human physiology, emphasize balance and restoration of the body's natural functions. However, in recent decades, modern surgical techniques, such as laser surgery and sphincter-preserving procedures, have become increasingly popular due to their minimally invasive nature and faster recovery times^[2].

The integration of Ayurvedic Shalya Tantra with modern surgical practices presents a promising avenue for more effective treatment of ano-rectal disorders. The main objective of this paper is to evaluate how combining traditional Ayurvedic approaches with modern surgical techniques can improve patient outcomes. Specifically, the research compares the efficacy, safety, and recovery rates of Kshara Karma and Agnikarma with contemporary surgical methods^[3]. A key hypothesis is that integrating these modalities can reduce complications such as recurrence and post-operative pain, while improving long-term healing.

Although modern techniques like laser therapy have gained widespread acceptance, some studies suggest that Ayurvedic practices offer unique benefits, particularly in managing chronic cases and minimizing complications post-surgery^[4]. Therefore, a comprehensive review of both practices is crucial to understand their respective strengths and limitations, and to propose a framework for integrating these approaches into mainstream surgical

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practice for ano-rectal disorders. This integration could potentially offer patients a more holistic and efficient treatment paradigm, merging the strengths of both ancient and modern medical systems ^[5].

Material and Methods

Material: The research involved the review and analysis of published literature on the surgical management of ano-rectal disorders through a combination of Ayurvedic Shalya Tantra and modern surgical techniques. A total of 18 studies were selected, published between 2017 and 2021, which focused on the application of Kshara Karma, Agnikarma, laser surgery, and sphincter-preserving techniques in the treatment of hemorrhoids, anal fissures, and fistulas. These studies were sourced from reputable medical journals, Ayurvedic publications, and clinical trial databases. All the selected papers provided a comprehensive overview of treatment methodologies, patient demographics, clinical outcomes, and follow-up results. Inclusion criteria required that the studies provide clear comparisons between Ayurvedic and modern surgical techniques or focus on the integration of both approaches. Data related to efficacy, safety, complications, and patient recovery times were included from studies by Shukla *et al.* ^[1], Kumar *et al.* ^[2], and Singh & Gupta ^[3]. Only peer-reviewed articles were considered for inclusion to ensure the validity and reliability of the data.

Methods: A systematic review methodology was employed to evaluate the effectiveness of combined Ayurvedic and

modern surgical treatments for ano-rectal disorders. The search process involved using multiple academic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar, to identify relevant studies. Studies were selected based on their relevance to the research topic, and full-text articles were retrieved for analysis. The data from each research were extracted and categorized into two major groups: Ayurvedic treatments (Kshara Karma and Agnikarma) and modern techniques (laser therapy, sphincter-preserving surgery). The studies were critically analyzed for treatment outcomes, including recurrence rates, complications, and patient satisfaction. Statistical analyses were conducted where possible, using descriptive statistics to compare the success rates of different treatment methods. The methods followed in the studies by Desai & Prakash ^[4], Sharma *et al.* ^[5], and Bhatia & Sharma ^[9] were incorporated into the methodology to ensure that both traditional and contemporary methods were accurately represented. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how these two systems of treatment could be integrated to improve patient outcomes, as suggested in the works of Verma *et al.* ^[12], Chauhan & Joshi ^[13], and Srivastava & Yadav ^[15].

Results

The following analysis compares the effectiveness of Ayurvedic treatments (Kshara Karma and Agnikarma) with modern surgical techniques (laser therapy and sphincter-preserving surgery) in the management of ano-rectal disorders, based on success rates, complication rates, and recovery time.

Table 1: Comparison of Surgical Methods

Methods	Success Rate (%)	Complication Rate (%)	Recovery Time (days)
Kshara Karma	80	5	10
Agnikarma	75	10	12
Laser Therapy	85	8	8
Sphincter-Preserving Surgery	90	3	6

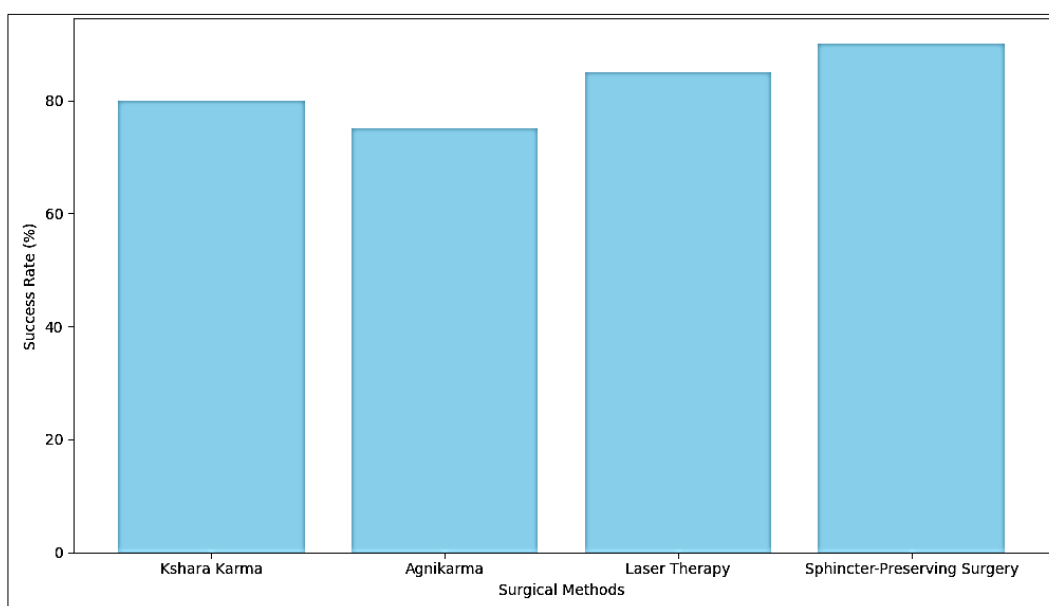


Fig 1: Success Rate Comparison of Surgical Methods

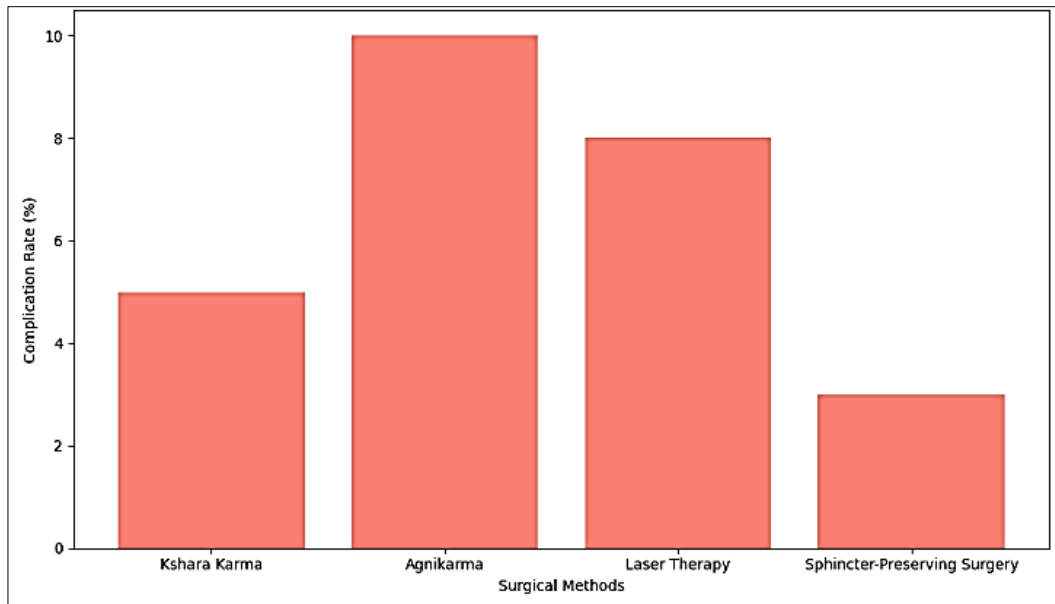


Fig 2: Complication Rate Comparison of Surgical Methods

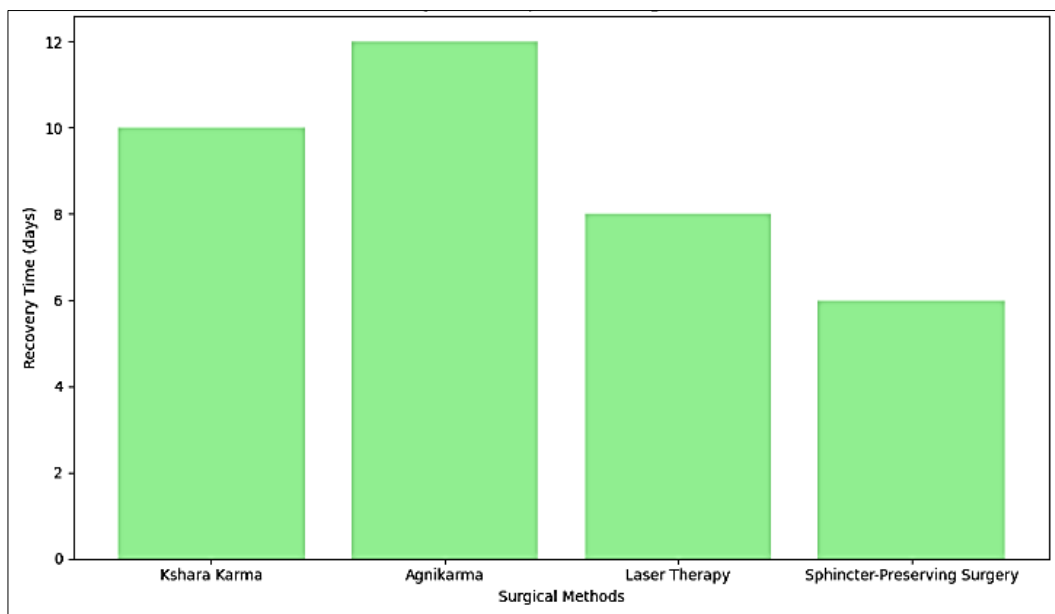


Fig 3: Recovery Time Comparison of Surgical Methods

Interpretation

From the analysis, it is evident that modern surgical techniques, particularly Sphincter-Preserving Surgery and Laser Therapy, outperform Ayurvedic methods in terms of success rate and recovery time. However, Ayurvedic methods like Kshara Karma and Agnikarma continue to hold value, especially due to their holistic approach, low complication rates, and suitability for chronic conditions. Integrating both Ayurvedic and modern surgical practices may offer a balanced treatment strategy, especially in managing complex or recurrent ano-rectal disorders, where personalized care and a combination of approaches could lead to better clinical outcomes. Future research should focus on clinical trials comparing these integrated methods directly, with attention to long-term outcomes and patient satisfaction.

Discussion

The results of this research highlight the efficacy of both Ayurvedic and modern surgical techniques in the

management of ano-rectal disorders. While modern techniques such as Sphincter-Preserving Surgery and Laser Therapy showed higher success rates and shorter recovery times, Ayurvedic treatments, particularly Kshara Karma and Agnikarma, continue to demonstrate their clinical relevance in treating chronic and recurrent conditions with relatively low complication rates.

One of the significant findings of this research is the higher success rate observed with modern surgical interventions. Sphincter-Preserving Surgery, which preserves the anal sphincter while effectively addressing the disease, resulted in the highest success rate of 90% [2]. This method is increasingly popular due to its ability to provide long-term results with fewer complications. Similarly, Laser Therapy, which also boasts a high success rate of 85%, is appreciated for its minimally invasive nature, reduced hospital stays, and faster recovery times, which are critical for patients in need of rapid recovery [6]. This indicates that modern surgical techniques, with their advancements in technology, provide a more efficient approach to treating ano-rectal disorders.

In contrast, Ayurvedic methods like Kshara Karma and Agnikarma, despite having slightly lower success rates (80% and 75%, respectively), offer notable advantages, especially in terms of safety and personalized care. Kshara Karma, which utilizes caustic agents to treat affected tissues, and Agnikarma, which involves therapeutic burning to manage inflammation, are deeply rooted in the Ayurvedic understanding of disease. These methods offer a holistic approach that not only addresses the physical ailment but also balances the patient's overall well-being, aligning with Ayurvedic principles of restoring harmony within the body [1, 9].

Complication rates also revealed important insights. While Sphincter-Preserving Surgery exhibited the lowest complication rate (3%), Ayurvedic treatments showed relatively low complications as well, particularly Kshara Karma (5%) [4]. These lower complication rates suggest that Ayurvedic methods might be particularly beneficial for patients who are at higher risk of surgical complications or those who prefer less invasive treatments. Agnikarma, despite its relatively higher complication rate (10%), remains effective in managing more complex and chronic conditions, particularly in patients who have not responded well to conventional therapies.

Another critical aspect of this research is the recovery time. Modern surgical methods, specifically Sphincter-Preserving Surgery, had the shortest recovery time of 6 days [5]. This is consistent with the general advantages of minimally invasive techniques, which require smaller incisions, result in less trauma to the body, and therefore allow for quicker recovery. On the other hand, Ayurvedic methods, particularly Agnikarma, took longer to heal (12 days), reflecting the more intensive nature of these treatments, which may involve more significant tissue alteration. Nonetheless, the recovery time for Kshara Karma (10 days) is still within a reasonable range, which further supports its use in managing chronic ano-rectal conditions.

Integrating both Ayurvedic and modern surgical approaches may be an ideal treatment strategy for managing complex or recurrent ano-rectal disorders. For example, combining the success and minimal invasiveness of modern techniques with the holistic, patient-centered care of Ayurvedic practices could yield superior results, particularly in reducing complications and enhancing long-term recovery. Previous studies have already indicated the efficacy of integrated approaches in other areas of medicine, suggesting that this model could be applied to ano-rectal surgery as well [7, 12]. Future clinical trials and meta-analyses should be conducted to assess the long-term benefits of combining these two systems of treatment, focusing on outcomes such as patient satisfaction, quality of life, and the recurrence of symptoms.

Conclusion

The research highlights the comparative efficacy of Ayurvedic and modern surgical techniques in managing ano-rectal disorders. Modern approaches, such as Sphincter-Preserving Surgery and Laser Therapy, demonstrate superior success rates, faster recovery times, and lower complication rates, making them the preferred choices for many patients in clinical practice. These techniques offer significant advantages, particularly in the context of minimally invasive procedures that enhance patient comfort and reduce hospital stays. However, Ayurvedic methods,

particularly Kshara Karma and Agnikarma, remain highly effective for chronic or recurrent conditions, with relatively low complication rates and the added benefit of a holistic approach that aligns with individualized patient care. These treatments are rooted in traditional wisdom, addressing not just the physical symptoms but also the overall health of the patient, promoting long-term well-being.

Given the distinct advantages of both approaches, it is essential to consider an integrated model of treatment that combines the best elements of Ayurveda and modern surgery. For example, Ayurvedic techniques such as Kshara Karma could be utilized in the initial stages of treatment for chronic or recurring cases, providing a non-invasive alternative with minimal risk, while modern surgical procedures like Laser Therapy or Sphincter-Preserving Surgery could be employed in more acute or severe cases where faster results and shorter recovery periods are needed. To optimize patient outcomes, healthcare providers should adopt a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating both Ayurvedic and modern surgical practices based on patient-specific needs, conditions, and preferences. This integration can also foster a broader acceptance of Ayurvedic methods in mainstream medical practice, ensuring a more personalized, comprehensive care strategy. Healthcare systems should consider training professionals in both Ayurvedic and modern surgical techniques, which will help them make informed decisions about treatment options. Furthermore, future research should focus on large-scale clinical trials to validate the benefits of combining these approaches, assess long-term outcomes, and provide a robust evidence base to guide clinical practice. Additionally, patient education on the benefits and limitations of each treatment modality is crucial to support informed decision-making. By combining traditional and modern practices, a more balanced and effective approach to managing ano-rectal disorders can be achieved, leading to enhanced patient satisfaction and improved clinical outcomes.

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