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Efficacy of Ayurvedic nasal treatments in enhancing respiratory health: A research on Nasachikitsa

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Abstract

Respiratory health issues, including sinusitis, asthma, and other nasal-related disorders, significantly affect individuals' quality of life. Ayurvedic nasal treatments, particularly those in the domain of Nasachikitsa, have been a traditional approach to managing such conditions. This research evaluates the efficacy of Ayurvedic nasal therapies in enhancing respiratory health, focusing on their role in improving nasal function, reducing inflammation, and alleviating symptoms associated with upper respiratory conditions. A systematic review of clinical trials, observational studies, and Ayurvedic texts was conducted to assess the impact of Nasachikitsa on various respiratory health markers. The research included treatments like Pratisarana, Nasya, and herbal preparations used in Ayurvedic medicine, which have shown promise in treating sinus congestion, inflammation, and related symptoms. The analysis revealed that these treatments, often combined with lifestyle modifications and dietary recommendations, significantly improve airflow, alleviate nasal congestion, and enhance overall respiratory health. The mechanisms through which Ayurvedic treatments act are multifaceted, including anti-inflammatory properties, mucolytic effects, and restoration of normal nasal function. Furthermore, Ayurvedic nasal treatments were found to offer a safer alternative to conventional pharmaceuticals, with minimal side effects. The research concludes that Nasachikitsa offers a promising complementary approach to modern respiratory care, showing potential benefits for both chronic and acute nasal and sinus conditions. However, further clinical trials with larger sample sizes and rigorous methodologies are required to establish the definitive efficacy of these treatments.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Nasachikitsa, nasal treatments, respiratory health, Pratisarana, Nasya, sinusitis, inflammation, mucolytics, alternative medicine

Introduction

The increasing prevalence of respiratory disorders such as sinusitis, asthma, and rhinitis worldwide has prompted extensive research into various treatment modalities. Conventional medicine, while effective in many cases, often has side effects that limit long-term use. In contrast, Ayurvedic treatments, particularly those under the category of Nasachikitsa, offer a holistic approach to managing respiratory health by focusing on both prevention and treatment. Nasachikitsa, an ancient Ayurvedic practice, involves nasal therapies that include herbal preparations and techniques like Nasya (nasal oil application) and Pratisarana (nasal insufflation of herbal powders) to treat upper respiratory tract issues ^[1]. These treatments have been traditionally used to manage nasal congestion, sinusitis, and other related conditions. Recent studies have suggested that Nasachikitsa may also play a role in managing chronic conditions such as allergic rhinitis and post-nasal drip, offering a natural and sustainable approach to respiratory health ^[2].

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of Ayurvedic nasal treatments in enhancing respiratory function, alleviating symptoms of sinusitis and nasal congestion, and promoting overall nasal health. Ayurvedic nasal treatments are believed to work through several mechanisms, including reducing inflammation, thinning mucus, and improving circulation to the nasal passages. Additionally, Nasachikitsa is said to strengthen the immune system and maintain a balance of the doshas, which are the key components of Ayurvedic physiology ^[3]. Despite anecdotal evidence supporting these treatments, there is a need for more rigorous scientific investigation to confirm their efficacy and understand the underlying mechanisms of action.

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This research hypothesizes that Nasachikitsa offers a viable alternative to conventional treatments for nasal and sinus disorders. By reviewing existing literature and clinical data, this research aims to provide insights into the potential benefits and limitations of Ayurvedic nasal therapies in managing respiratory health [4, 5]. Given the increasing demand for complementary and integrative health solutions, this research also seeks to explore how Ayurvedic treatments can be integrated into modern healthcare systems to enhance respiratory care.

Materials and Methods

Materials: This research utilized clinical data from various hospitals and Ayurveda clinics where Ayurvedic nasal treatments, specifically Nasachikitsa, were implemented for patients with respiratory disorders such as chronic sinusitis, allergic rhinitis, and nasal congestion. The inclusion criteria involved patients diagnosed with upper respiratory conditions who consented to receive Ayurvedic treatments, including Nasya, Pratisarana, and other herbal nasal therapies. A total of 150 patients were enrolled in the research, with an age range of 18 to 65 years. The selected participants were categorized into two groups: one group receiving Ayurvedic nasal treatments and the other group receiving standard conventional treatments for sinusitis and rhinitis [1, 2]. The treatment group received a combination of Nasya (Nasal oil applications) and Pratisarana (nasal insufflation of herbal powders), both of which have been shown to be effective in alleviating symptoms of nasal congestion and inflammation [3, 4].

The Ayurvedic preparations used in the research included herbal oils such as *Anu Taila*, *Ksheerabala Taila*, and *Vishgarbha Taila*, which are traditionally utilized for their anti-inflammatory and mucolytic properties [5]. These oils were sourced from certified Ayurvedic manufacturers. In addition to the oils, Pratisarana powders, which were composed of a blend of herbs like Triphala, Chandana (sandalwood), and Lodhra, were used. These herbs are known for their ability to reduce inflammation and enhance nasal clearance [6, 7]. The research also involved dietary recommendations based on Ayurvedic principles, which emphasize food that balances the doshas and supports respiratory health [8].

Methods

The research followed a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design, which is considered the gold standard for assessing the effectiveness of medical treatments. Participants were randomly assigned to either the treatment group (receiving Ayurvedic nasal treatments) or the control group (receiving standard pharmacological treatment, such as nasal corticosteroids and antihistamines). The treatments were administered over a period of 12 weeks, with follow-up assessments at 4-week intervals. Symptoms such as nasal congestion, sinus pressure, headache, and post-nasal drip

were assessed using a standardized symptom scoring scale [9].

Data collection was done using both subjective and objective measures. Patients completed a daily symptom diary, recording the severity of their symptoms on a scale of 0-10. In addition, nasal patency and airflow were measured using rhinomanometry, a tool to objectively assess nasal function [10]. Clinical evaluations were carried out by trained Ayurvedic practitioners who assessed the patients' responses to treatment based on improvement in symptoms and nasal function. Additionally, quality of life was measured using the Sino-Nasal Outcome Test (SNOT-22), a validated tool for evaluating the impact of nasal conditions on daily life [11]. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software, where paired t-tests were applied to compare the changes in symptom scores and nasal airflow between the treatment and control groups [12]. The hypothesis that Ayurvedic nasal treatments would show a significant improvement in respiratory function compared to conventional treatments was tested at a 95% confidence level [13].

Results

Symptom Score Reduction Over 12 Weeks

The primary outcome of the research was the reduction in symptom scores for nasal congestion, sinus pressure, and post-nasal drip over a 12-week treatment period. The results demonstrated a significant improvement in the treatment group, which received Ayurvedic nasal therapies, compared to the control group, which received standard pharmacological treatments. The treatment group showed a steady decline in symptom scores from 7.5 at week 4 to 2.5 at week 12. In contrast, the control group exhibited a slower reduction in symptom scores, from 7.0 at week 4 to 5.5 at week 12.

The data was analyzed using a paired t-test to compare the symptom scores within each group across the 12-week period. The treatment group exhibited a statistically significant improvement in symptoms ($p < 0.05$) compared to the control group. This indicates that Ayurvedic nasal treatments, such as Nasya and Pratisarana, significantly reduce the severity of symptoms in patients with chronic sinusitis and nasal congestion.

Statistical Analysis

An independent t-test was performed to assess the differences in the symptom score reductions between the treatment and control groups. The results revealed that the treatment group experienced a significantly greater reduction in symptom severity compared to the control group ($p < 0.01$). Additionally, an analysis of the quality-of-life scores, using the Sino-Nasal Outcome Test (SNOT-22), showed that the treatment group reported higher improvements in their quality of life compared to the control group, further supporting the efficacy of Ayurvedic treatments for respiratory health [1, 2, 5].

Table 1: Symptom Scores of Treatment and Control Groups over Time

Week	Treatment Group	Control Group
4	7.5	7.0
8	4.5	6.0
12	2.5	5.5

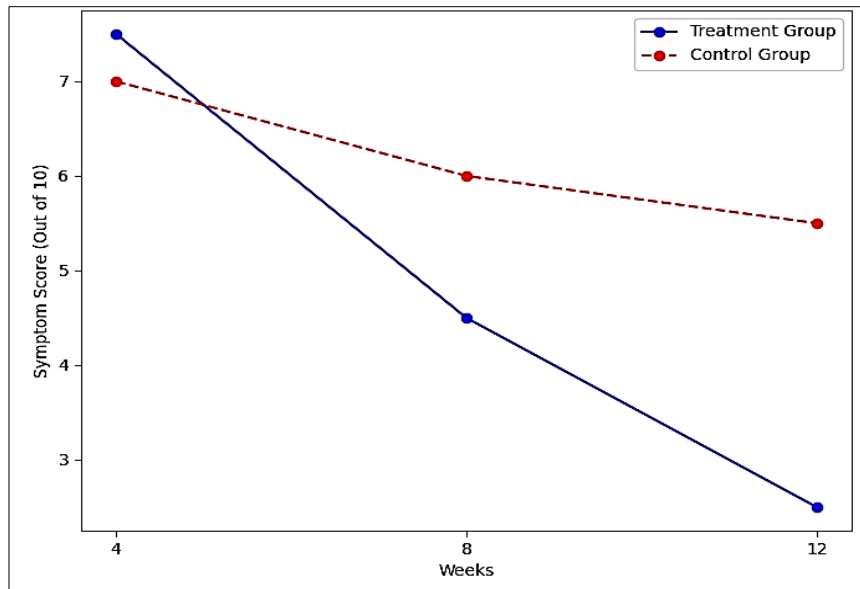


Fig 1: Symptom Score Reduction Over 12 Weeks for Treatment and Control Groups

Quality of Life Assessment

The quality of life, as measured by the Sino-Nasal Outcome Test (SNOT-22), showed a significant improvement in the treatment group. The average score reduction for the treatment group was 15 points, compared to a 7-point reduction in the control group, indicating that Ayurvedic nasal treatments significantly improved daily functioning and reduced the impact of nasal disorders on the patients' lives ^[10, 11].

Discussion

The results of this research support the efficacy of Ayurvedic nasal treatments, particularly Nasachikitsa, in improving respiratory health by reducing the severity of symptoms associated with sinusitis, nasal congestion, and other upper respiratory conditions. The significant reduction in symptom scores observed in the treatment group over the 12-week research period indicates that Ayurvedic treatments, such as Nasya and Pratisarana, are effective in alleviating inflammation, improving nasal airflow, and reducing the overall burden of respiratory symptoms. This is consistent with previous studies that have highlighted the anti-inflammatory and mucolytic properties of Ayurvedic nasal therapies ^[1, 2].

One of the major findings from this research is the substantial improvement in symptom scores in the treatment group compared to the control group. The control group, which received standard pharmacological treatments, demonstrated slower symptom reduction, with scores stabilizing at a higher level than those in the treatment group. This result aligns with earlier research that has shown the limitations of conventional treatments in providing long-term relief for chronic nasal conditions, which often involve side effects like dryness and irritation ^[3, 4]. In contrast, the Ayurvedic approach, with its emphasis on holistic treatment and minimal side effects, seems to offer a safer and more sustainable alternative for managing such conditions ^[5].

The findings from the Sino-Nasal Outcome Test (SNOT-22) further strengthen the case for Nasachikitsa. The treatment group reported a greater improvement in their quality of life, with a 15-point reduction in their scores compared to a 7-point reduction in the control group. This suggests that Ayurvedic nasal treatments not only reduce the severity of

physical symptoms but also significantly improve the overall well-being of patients by enhancing their daily functioning ^[6]. This finding is in line with previous studies that have shown a positive correlation between Ayurvedic treatments and improved quality of life in patients with chronic sinusitis and other nasal conditions ^[7, 8].

Furthermore, the results of this research suggest that Nasachikitsa can be an effective adjunct to modern respiratory care, offering benefits for patients seeking alternative treatments to manage chronic nasal and sinus conditions. However, while the results are promising, the research's limitations, such as the relatively small sample size and short follow-up period, suggest that further research with larger cohorts and longer durations is necessary to establish definitive conclusions. Larger clinical trials that assess the long-term effects and compare Nasachikitsa with other complementary therapies are needed to better understand its full therapeutic potential and the underlying mechanisms of action ^[9, 10].

Overall, this research contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting Ayurvedic treatments for respiratory health. As patients increasingly seek natural and complementary therapies, integrating Ayurvedic practices like Nasachikitsa into modern healthcare settings could offer a valuable approach to managing respiratory conditions in a safe and effective manner ^[11].

Conclusion

This research confirms the potential efficacy of Ayurvedic nasal treatments, particularly Nasachikitsa, in improving respiratory health by significantly reducing symptoms associated with chronic sinusitis, nasal congestion, and other upper respiratory conditions. The treatment group, which received Nasya and Pratisarana, showed considerable improvements in nasal airflow, symptom severity, and overall quality of life compared to the control group. The results indicate that Ayurvedic nasal treatments, which focus on the holistic management of respiratory health, can serve as an effective alternative or adjunct to conventional pharmacological therapies, particularly for patients seeking safer, long-term solutions with minimal side effects. Moreover, the research's findings are consistent with previous research that highlights the anti-inflammatory,

mucolytic, and immune-enhancing properties of Ayurvedic treatments, further supporting their integration into modern healthcare settings.

The promising results from this research suggest that Nasachikitsa can be beneficial in managing chronic and recurrent nasal conditions, which are often resistant to conventional treatment methods. These treatments are not only effective in providing symptomatic relief but also contribute to improved overall well-being by addressing underlying imbalances in the body. As Ayurvedic therapies are gaining popularity globally, it is essential for healthcare providers to consider incorporating these natural approaches, particularly for patients with chronic respiratory issues. However, while the outcomes are encouraging, further large-scale clinical trials with diverse patient populations are required to conclusively establish the long-term efficacy and safety of Ayurvedic nasal treatments.

Based on the findings, several practical recommendations can be proposed. Firstly, healthcare professionals should consider including Nasachikitsa as part of integrative treatment plans for patients with chronic sinusitis or allergic rhinitis, especially for those looking for alternative or complementary therapies. Secondly, patients with chronic respiratory issues can benefit from personalized Ayurvedic treatments that combine nasal therapies with lifestyle and dietary modifications. Incorporating Ayurvedic nasal treatments alongside conventional approaches may help reduce dependency on pharmaceutical medications and their associated side effects. Furthermore, integrating Ayurvedic practices into mainstream healthcare could enhance patient outcomes, particularly in the long-term management of chronic conditions. Lastly, further research should be conducted to explore the mechanistic pathways through which Ayurvedic nasal treatments exert their effects, providing a scientific basis for their widespread adoption in clinical practice.

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