



IJCSPUB PUBLICATION (IJCSPUB.ORG)

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CURRENT SCIENCE (IJCSPUB)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

A CRITICAL REVIEW ON PROACTIVE STEPS OF LIFESTYLE MODIFICATION IN GERIATRICS

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ABSTRACT:-

Aging is a complex phenomenon, a sum total of changes that occur in a living organism with the passage of time and lead to decreasing ability to survive stress, increasing functional and psychological impairment and growing probability of death. Physical and social environments can affect health directly or through barriers or incentives that affect opportunities, decisions and health behaviour in geriatrics. Maintaining healthy behaviour throughout life, particularly eating a balanced diet, engaging in regular physical activity, detoxifying body by *Panchkarm* therapy, regular use of *Nitya Sevaniya Rasayana* like *Ghrita* with milk in early morning and refraining from tobacco & alcohol use, all contribute to reducing the risk of non-communicable diseases, improving physical and mental capacity and delaying care dependency. *Ayurveda* has considered the process of ageing and the stage of old age to be '*Swabhavik*' meaning 'natural'. Senescence occurring at chronologically right time that is the '*Kalaj Jara*' is inevitable (*Nishpratikaarya*). Therefore there is need to adapt lifestyle according to conditions or situation to maximize the good parts of getting older while taking proactive steps to maintain health and minimize the negative aspects.

Key words : Aging, lifestyle, Geriatrics, *Rasayana*, *Vruddhavastha*.

INTRODUCTION

The study of disease that afflict the elderly is known as geriatrics. It also refers to medical care for older adults. Adaptation means the process of changing to fit some purpose or situation. According to Ayurveda, *Vruddhavastha* begins at 60 - 70 years of age.⁽¹⁾ *Ayurveda* has considered the process of aging and the stage of old age to be natural. Conditions like hunger, thirst, defecation, urge of urination, old age, sleep, death etc. all are the results of power of time and nature². So they can be only adopted and maintained.

Getting older involves changes in all realms of life, from the physical to the mental to the social, emotional, sexual and more. Some of these changes may regard as positive and some negative. By adopting healthier life style, the risk of noncommunicable disease can be reduced. As people age, bones become thinner and more brittle with age as they lose mass, or density sometimes resulting in osteoporosis. The walls of the arteries also tend to accumulate a buildup of fatty deposits, called plaques, which also harden and narrow the arteries, reducing blood flow to the heart. The buildup of fatty deposits is called atherosclerosis. It's common for people to experience some slight forgetfulness as they get older, and their ability to process new information or to multitask may slow with age as well. Digestive tract slows down and doesn't contract as often as it did in younger age, which can lead to constipation, stomach pain, and feelings of nausea. Skin loses its elasticity and may start to sag and wrinkle. All five senses also start losing its normal function.

Ayurveda has got the potential for prevention of disease by health promotion and management of disease occurring in elderly age. To tackle with problems in old age, lifestyle should be adapted such as *Dincharya & Rutucharya Palan*, smoking cessation, exercise, *Yoga*, *Panchkarm* and *Rasayan* therapy.

Special consideration in old age³

Multiple illnesses related to medical and psychiatric, multiple problems related to social, financial & family, communication difficulty, sensory impairment, need for collateral sources of information, risk of drug side effects, atypical presentation of disease.

Steps towards Healthy and Happy Aging : -

1. By following a Healthy & Well-Balanced Diet

Ayurveda states that for the good care of health one desires to have three *Sthambhas* (i.e. pillars), as well as three *Upasthambhas* (supporting pillars), functioning perfectly. The three *Upastambha* are *Aahaara* (Food), *Nidra* (Sleep) and *Bhramacharya* (Celibacy)³.

Balanced diet is the initial and foremost pillar of Ayurveda. What does a balanced diet mean? A balanced diet is one which affords humans with a needed supply of proteins, carbohydrate, vitamins and fats. *Ahara* is fundamentally preventive in nature. *Ayurveda* provides the initial approach that can be useful in the creation and maintenance of ideal health and to ease the symptoms of illness.

As per *Ayurveda* there are 8 basic considerations which should be followed during consuming any kind of food⁴ -

- a. *Prakruti* (Natural qualities)
- b. *Karana* (Preparation)
- c. *Samyoga* (Combination)
- d. *Rasi* (Quantity)
- e. *Desa* (Habitat)
- f. *Kala* (Time of eating)
- g. *Upayoga samstha* (Dietary Rules)
- h. *Upayoga* (Condition of the person eating food)

The diet should be regulated taking into account the habitat, season, age and according to one's capacity of *Jathragni*. Following dietary advise can be given⁵ -

- i. Heavy food should not be given at night. The proper time for dinner is just before sunset.
- ii. The food should be tasty, nutritious, fresh and good in appearance.
- iii. Too spicy, salty and pungent food should be avoided because in *Vruddhavastha Vata Dosha* is prominent and this food may lead to vitiation of *Vata dosha*⁶.
- iv. It should neither be very hot nor very cold because too hot and cold food disturbs *Jathragni*.
- v. Liquid intake should be more frequent and in small amount to maintain hydration.
- vi. Heavy food can be advised in a limited quantity.
- vii. Heavy physical work should be avoided after meal because it increases *Dravpitta* and results into acidity.
- viii. Mind should be peaceful while eating meal.
- ix. Eating only whenever hungry and avoidance of over eating.
- x. Inclusion of seasonal vegetables and fruits in diet.

2. Getting the proper Sleep according to body needs³

Sleeping (*Nidra*) for great times or sleeping late in morning imbalances the regular routine and gets a poor impact on health. Insomnia (absence of proper sleep) leads to lethargy, burning sensation in the eyes, headache, and body ache. Sleep means when the mind and sense organs get fatigued, then sense organs cannot conjugate with their objects and this exhaust of mind and sense organs leads to sleep. Elevation of *Tamas* quality and fatigue induced sleep. Heart and brain is the seat of the mind. *Satva, Rajas, and Tamas* are the qualities of mind. *Tamas* quality induces sleep while *Satva guna* is effective for awakening stage. Sound sleep at night is a natural and nourishing phenomena. Quality sleep is an indicator of good health as it is stress relieving and normalizes bodily tissue.

3. By following *Brahmacharya* (Abstinence)³

Brahmacharya is the secret of good health and fitness because with *Brahmacharya*, *Vairagya* comes in mind. Here the word *Brahmacharya* stands for *Shukra Raksha*. Excellent quality of last digestive product of food is known as *Shukra Dhatu*. *Brahmacharya*, one of the three pillars of *Ayurveda*. In *Sanskrit* language, *Brahmacharya* means movement in a great-awareness. In *Brahmacharyashram* – '*Brahmacharya*' means dedication towards gaining education. This knowledge or education that is needed to attain eventual means, as there is business, a job, trade etc. requires to be maintained during this period, therefore here abstinence from any other distraction is described as *Brahmacharya*. As getting older, *Brahmacharya* should be followed for maintaining *Sharirbala and Ojas*. With full mind purity, body starts to pure automatically. Because mind is real person and its shadow is our body. If mind is pure, body is pure and toxin free. If mind is impure, no one can save the *Shukra Dhatu* and without *Shukra Dhatu*, body start to weak and disease make home in the same weak body.

4. Staying Physically Active for a Healthy Body and Mind.

Keeping physically active can help offset many of the effects of aging. Exercising regularly can improve your balance, help keep you mobile, improve your mood by reducing feelings of anxiety and depression, and contribute to better cognitive functioning. It's also an important part of managing some chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, breast and colon cancer and osteoporosis.

5. Cutting down smoking and alcohol

Drinking is linked to liver diseases, stomach ulcers, gout, depression, osteoporosis, heart disease, and hypertension.

Sensitivity to the effect of alcohol increases with the age. So it is necessary to cut down or stop taking of alcohol and smoking.

6. By engaging in Social activities

Mixing with other people of similar age, at similar stage of life or perhaps with similar health concerns, can help people realize that they are not alone. The elderly need not always be seen as care receivers. They can be resource too - Transmitters of culture, care of grandchildren (storytelling, playing), counselors to the young couple, they had vast and varied experiences, helps in problem solving and trouble shooting.

7. By involving in Spiritual Activities⁸

Active involvement in religious activities helps the patient in active life style and socializing, which in turn minimize the problems arising from isolation and chronic diseases. Interaction with people will also increase the awareness and hence there will be possibility for early detection of the diseases and better treatment compliance. Religious and spiritual persons tend to recover from diseases more quickly. Elderly persons attending religious activities remain motivated to stop addictions like smoking, alcohol, which help in better health and social status. The common spiritual interventions are praying, reading religious books, visiting auspicious places, attending religious rituals and meditation. Try to keep the mind and personality always pleasant. This will increase the socialization, reduce isolation and promote the feeling of belongingness.

8. By practicing suitable Yoga Asanas⁹

The *Yoga Asanas* suggested for an elderly person may be the same as those for a younger individual. The difference lies in the effort & time spent in a posture and the flexibility involved.

There is a range of standing, sitting, lying down and chair yoga asanas for senior citizens.

- I. Standing Yoga Asanas - *Trikonasana*, *Katichakrasana*.
- II. Sitting Yoga Asanas - *Badhakonasana* (butterfly pose), *Shishuasana*(child pose), *Marjariasana*.
- III. Yoga poses lying on the back or stomach - *Bhujangasana*, *Shalabhasana*, *Pawanmuktasana*.
- IV. Chair Yoga Asanas - Neck roll, Cow stretch, Seated forward bend, eagle arms, Seated spinal twist & Temple rub.

Benefits of the Yoga -

- a) Yoga provides a good balance , blood stream and tissue liveliness, enhanced flexibility and provide stability.
- b) It is possible to reload the most essential brain function with the relaxing characteristics of Yoga.
- c) The person gains experience with his own existence, body and mental performance. Person learns to control body movements.
- d) It reduces sympathetic activity with relaxing techniques. Pain, fatigue, depression and stress decrease with relaxing response. Memory becomes retentive.

9. By taking regular *Rasayana*

Rasayana has broad concept indicating qualitative and quantitative improvement of all seven *Dhatavaha*. It helps to delay the process of aging and thus helps to live longer with good strength and immunity. *Vyasthapana* are specialized *Rasayana* drugs that reverse or slow down the process of degenerative changes, increases life span with quality health. The utility of *Rasayana* therapy is in functional and degenerative disorders. *Rasayana* becomes more fruitful and effective, if it is given after *Panchkarm* therapy. *Panchkarm* therapy completely purifies the body, enhances the strength of digestive fire, opens the blocked channels, relaxes the body and mind and helps in rejuvenation of *Dhatu* (tissue). *Rasayana* are all those methods and material which delay *Jara* and increases immunity to deal with *Vyadhi* in geriatric. *Rasayana* establishes an enjoyable lifespan and provide longevity.

DISCUSSION :

In *Vruddhavastha*, *Vata dosha* are predominant compared to *Pitta dosha* & *Kaph dosha*. Strength of body (*Sharirbala*) & digestion power (*Agnibala*) is less in old age. Eating meal in required quantity after digestion of previously taken meal and feeling of hunger, helps in digestion of meal in proper way. Good quality of *Aahar Rasa* obtained after digestion, helps in formation of *Saravan Dhatu* (pure of *Dhatu*). Sleep plays important role in supporting the emotional centers of the brain as well as overall emotional and behavioral health. Sleep has important restorative functions and plays a critical role in the repair and rejuvenation of *Dhatu*s (tissues). Activities like muscle growth, tissue repair, wound healing occurs during sleep. Sleep also promotes the more efficient removal of metabolic wastes and supports the immune system. Besides *Ahara* and *Nidra*, *Brahmacharya* is third component of *Upastambha-traya*. The practice of *Brahmacharya* promotes life and preserves health. By staying physically active, helps in improvement of muscle strength, joints and bones. Engaging in spiritual activity and involvement in social media, reduces symptoms of anxiety & depression, fosters improvements in mood and feelings of well being. Regular practice of Yoga, gives strength to muscles and provide more stability. *Rasayana* are all those methods and material which delay *Jara* and increases immunity to deal with *Vyadhi*. *Rasayana* establishes an enjoyable lifespan and provide longevity. Physiological changes occurs with aging in all organ systems. Therefore normal activities is hampered so they need to change their lifestyle according to situation, physically, socially & mentally. They need to adopt some activities which will help them to live life happily and peacefully for the rest of life.

CONCLUSION :

From above verses following conclusion can be drawn that,

- By adopting a healthier lifestyle the risk of a whole range of disease & challenges in geriatrics can be reduced.
- The proactive steps which helps in improvement of health physically and psychologically are taking balanced diet on time, adequate sleep, abstinence, cessation of smoking and alcohol, social activities, spiritual activities, *Rasayana* and Yoga Asanas.

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