

Management of Lymphoedema by *Varma* therapy: A case study

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Abstract

Varmam is the flow of vital energy in the body. Energy junctions in the body are called *Varma* points. Proper vibration or turning of the vital points (*Varmam*) by experts promotes health. These are very important vital places and any injury to these parts may lead to complications. In this case study, 22 years old female patient with lymphoedema and pain in both legs was selected. Finally identifying the *Varma* points and *Varma* stimulation therapy was done three times daily for 14 days and heated *Thalankai* oil-soaked cotton was applied over stimulated regions. 5th-day *Patthu* application and 13th-day, *Suddigai* (*Agni*) *karma* therapy were done on *Varma* points. After fourteen days the patient shows relief from the symptoms she suffered. This case study can be considered evidence of *Varma* therapy for lymphoedema. This can be explained by the concept of *Varma* stimulation on *Varma* points which leads stimulation to the endocrine system *Anagatham* (Thymus gland) and activate the Lymphatic channels. Lymphedema occurs when the lymph system is damaged or blocked. Fluid builds up in soft body tissue and causes swelling. So *Anagatha chakra* activates the Lymphatic channels and that effect plays a direct part in lymphoedema. The most important outcome of the study is relieving the symptoms and there is no recurrence within the study duration, as well as the follow-up, was done every month for more than eighteen months. Hence this study has a positive outcome and can be recommended as the therapeutic procedure for Lymphoedema.

Keywords: *Varma, Marma, Thalankai oil, Anagatha chakra, Lymphoedema*

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Introduction

Varmam is one of the basic Siddha medical treatment because *Tridosha* is rectified only with the help of *Varma*. It is said that the 1st Siddhar Lord Shiva taught *Varma* to his son Murugan. Murugan saint to Agasthiyar and Agasthiyar in turn to his disciples. Agasthiyar was the prime and pioneer of all Siddhars. He was also called “*Kumbamuni*”. *Varmam* is a vital energy flow circulating inside the body¹. It is the manifestation of the basic five elements (water, earth, air, space and fire), three bio-humours (*Vata, Pitta* and *Kapha*), ten bio-energy transmitter pathways (*Naadi*), vital energy (*Vasi*) and *Kundalini*². *Varma chikitsa* is very popular in many places as a traditional skill³. A number of bone setters and *Nadi vaidyas* practice by this specialty. But as a traditional skill, it has no scientific explanation behind it and it is limited to some traumatic lesions of muscle and bones. The *Varma* therapy can be done in an hour. This science is still obscure. In light of the theoretical description available in the old texts and present research and knowledge, *Varma chikitsa* has been further developed and practiced⁴. *Varma* therapy contributes to increasing or recharging physical, mental and spiritual energies. On the physical level, it helps to revitalize or reenergize the body tissues; at the cellular level, it improves vital functions like digestion, respiration, blood circulation and excretion⁵. On the psychological level, it improves the mental faculty by directing it in a positive direction. It also offers a way to treat many psychosomatic ailments without any drugs. It harmonizes the functioning of nervous and endocrine systems to control psychological

disorders⁶. The aim of Siddha Ayurvedic medicine is to preserve the health of a healthy individual and to cure the diseases of the diseased person. There is a major role of *Varma* therapy and yoga along with Siddha and Ayurveda medicine to fulfill the above-mentioned goal. Under the present circumstance, many people have come to realize the importance of *Varma* therapy and *Yoga* as practical methods of improving the state of bodily health and the quality of life. *Varma* therapy and yoga are used for achieving equilibrium, harmony and balance in day-to-day life.

Lymphoedema is a chronic (long-term) condition that causes swelling in the body's tissues⁷. It can affect any part of the body but usually develops in the arms or legs. Other symptoms of lymphoedema can include an aching, heavy feeling in affected body parts and difficulty moving them⁸. The lymphatic system is a network of vessels that carry protein-rich lymph fluid throughout the body. It's part of your vessels that carry protein-rich lymph fluid throughout the body. It's part of your immune system. Lymph nodes act as filters and contain cells that fight infection.⁹

Case study

A 22-year-old female patient with lymphoedema and pain in both legs is selected for the case study. The patient was very active, and plays golf each weekend, experienced swelling in her left knee and ankle joint and later in the right leg with severe pain and got her first treatment in 2019. The physician noted the patient's apparently lymphoedema and asked if she had ever been treated for it. Same time patient developed itching of the legs and was referred to a Dermatologist to treat the hyperpigmentation. Thereafter the patient was referred to a Rheumatologist in September 2020 but no improvement was found. Then referred to the surgical clinic for evaluating bilateral lower limb swelling in 2021. The Magnetic resonance venography (MRV) of the Bilateral lower limb study did not show any abnormality. Subcutaneous edema seen in both lower limbs could be due to lymphoedema. Knee joint effusion is seen on the left

side. The patient was advised to do a bandage to reduce edema in her legs, but she felt difficult to practice, which lead to difficulty to reduce. Then the patient was referred to the treatment center for treatment and a home maintenance program. The patient seeks native therapy and presented to Herbal Health Care with the same complaints.

Diagnosis

The diagnosis was done according to the evidence of Magnetic resonance venography (MRV) and ultra-scan reports of Bilateral lower limb impression of lower limbs. Knee joint effusion is seen on the left side. An assessment of both legs and feet indicated for bi- lateral lymphoedema.

Treatment

Treatment regimen

The patient is guided to sit in a comfortable position and adopted the main procedure (*Pradhana karma*).

Pradhana Karma

Initially identifying the *Varma* points for the *Varma* manipulation method. The selected *Varma* points were *Panchamuka varmam*, *Komperikalam varmam*, *Kalcanni varmam*, *Ullankal vellai varmam*, *Muttu varmam*, *Muttukkannu varmam*, *Muttu cirattai varmam*, *Kutirai nuni nakku varmam* and *Kanapati mukav*. The *Varma* stimulation therapy was done daily for 14 days continuously.

Panchamuka varmam

Location: Around the patella

Patient position: Supine position.

Physician approach: Reach the *Varmam* point from the front side of the patient.

Finger selection: both the thumb (Medial ¼ part of the thumb).

Procedure: place the tip of the thumb along the base of the patella and glide over the borders till the apex of patella (Figure 1, 2 and 3).

Duration: 30 seconds

Force type: ½ *Mathirai* (Frequency): 3 times

Komperikalam varmam

Location: Eight finger breadths above the medial malleolus.

Physician approach: place the tip of the middle three fingers over the point. Press three times (in a pumping motion) towards the medial border of the tibia.

Duration: 30 seconds

Force type- $\frac{1}{2}$ *Mathirai* (Frequency): 3 times

Kalcanni adankal varmam

Location: At the junction of the big and second toe.

Physician approach: Place the tip of the thumb over the *Varmam* point and then press and release

Ullankal vellai varmam

Location: At the junction of the big and second toe in the plantar region.

Physician approach: Place the tip of the thumb over the *Varmam* point and then press and release.

Muttu varmam

Location: Center of popliteal fossa.

Physician approach: Place the tip of the middle three fingers over the points, press and move upwards.

Muttukkannu varmam

Location: In the dimple just below the base of the patella on either side.

Physician approach: Place the finger on the *Varmam* point and press or give intermittent pressure. Also, stimulate *Muttu cirattai varmam*.

Muttu cirattai varmam

Location: In the base and apex of the patella.

Physician approach: Place the thumb on the *Varmam* point and press. Also, stimulate *Muttukkannu varmam* simultaneously.

Kutirai nuninakku varmam

Location: The lower end of the calf muscle (posterior aspect).

Physician approach: Place the thumb over the *Varmam* point and then press (Simultaneously the patient is asked to flex and extend the neck) (Figure 5 and 6).

Kanapati muka varmam

Location: Five-finger breadth above the *Kutirai muka varmam*. Directly opposite to *Kutirai adi nakku varmam* in the anterior aspect of the leg.

Physician approach: Place the thumb on the *Varmam* point and press for 30-60 seconds and give rotatory motion followed by stimulation in the posterior direction.

The *Varma* stimulation therapy was done daily for 14 days. After the *Varma* stimulation, heated *Thalankai* oil soaked with a cotton piece was applied over stimulated regions (Figure 7). 5th-day *Pattu* application and 13th day (Figure 8) applied the *Suddigai (Agni) karma* therapy on each *Varma* point (Figure 9 and 10).

Preparation of Drugs

The oil of *Thalankai* was prepared according to the classical text of Siddha Ayurveda *Ovdathasangiram*¹⁰. Preparation of Traditional *Pattu* was done according to the methods mentioned in the “Jaffna traditional Siddha Remedies” by Dr. Ganesh.

Traditional Paste

Withania somnifera -1 part (60g), *Caryophyllus aromaticus* -1/2 part (30g), *Syzygium aromaticum* -1/2 part (30g), *Vigna mungo* -1 part (60g), were grinded with 150 ml of egg white and mixed with 100ml bee honey to a semi-solid foam paste.



**Fig.1: *Varma* stimulation of the left knee joint
*Panchamuga varmam***



**Fig. 2: *Varma* stimulation of the left knee joint
*Panchamuga varmam***



Fig. 3: *Varma* stimulation of the right knee joint *Panchamuga varma*



Fig.5: *Kuthirai nuninakku varma* stimulation (Right leg)



Fig. 4: *Varma* stimulation of the left ankle joint



Fig. 7: Heated medicated oil with cotton apply the affected part



Fig. 6: *Kuthirai nuninakku varma* stimulation (Left leg)



Fig. 8: *Pattu* (Medicated poultice) application



Fig. 9: Identify the Suddigai point



Fig.10: Application of Suddigai (Agnikarma)

Results

Table 1 shows the leg measurements before and after treatment

Table 1: Leg Measurements (cm) before and after treatment

	Right leg (cm)		Left leg (cm)	
	Before treatment	After treatment	Before treatment	After treatment
Midpoint of the knee joint	38.2	36.2	39.8	36.4
Midpoint of the calf	41.9	39.3	43.2	39.5
Midpoint of the ankle joint	26.8	23.8	26.8	24.0

Discussion

According to Agustheyar, there are 108 vital points mentioned in the body, which are called “*Varmam*.” These are very important and vital places as any injury to these parts may lead to severe pain, disability, loss of function, loss of sensation (anesthesia) and death¹¹. Meanwhile, eleven *Varma* points are mentioned in each leg region. In Siddha medicine, the concept of *Varmam (Marma)* plays a vital role as a disease affecting these vital parts has a bad prognosis¹². Certainly, we can say that the disease or lesions away from the *Varmam* can be treated easily. When the *Varma* points, gets injured there can be a fatal response¹³. Keeping this concept in mind one should try to apply *Varma chikitsa* to provide the cure for different body ailments. *Varma* therapy contributes to increasing or recharge

physical, mental and spiritual energies. On the physical level, it helps to revitalize or reenergize the body tissues; at the cellular level, it improves vital functions like digestion, respiration, blood circulation and excretion¹⁴. On the psychological level, it improves the mental faculty by directing it a positive direction. It also offers a way to treat many psychosomatic ailments without any drugs¹⁵. It harmonizes the functioning of nervous and endocrine systems to control psychological disorders. This case study can be considered as an evidence of *Varma* therapy for lymphoedema. This can be explained by the concept of *Varma* stimulation on *Varma* points which leads stimulation to the endocrine system Anagatham (Thymus gland) and activate the Lymphatic

channels. Lymphoedema occurs when the lymph system is damaged or blocked. Fluid builds up in soft body tissue and causes swelling. So *Anagatha chakra* activates the Lymphatic channels and that effect play a direct part in lymphoedema.

Pain has no outside or external existence. It is a most personal experience, and cannot be shared by any other person. Pain is an individual experience of ill being. Inadequate management of pain causes impaired function, depression and insomnia. One kind of pain may not be managed by any single medicine or manual practice, because they may have different causes. In Siddha Ayurveda there is no particular uniform medicine for any kind of pain. Management of pain depends upon the causative factor or *Doshik* predominance responsible for the pain. In conventional (allopathic) pain treatment a number of analgesics, anti-inflammatory, anti-pyretic drugs, chemotrypsin and serratiopeptidase like chemicals and opioids are used, but there is no universal drug for all kinds of pain till date. Every individual responds to pain in a different way. In the same way, every analgesic chemical acts pharmacologically in a different way. Only one analgesic preparation cannot solve the problem of pain. So, the management of pain is not so simple and satisfactory with the aforesaid drugs. Instant pain relief is the motive of *Varma* therapy. Stimulation of *Varma* can produce analgesia by secreting a number of prostaglandin inhibitors, endorphins, interferon and other opioid-like substances which are a hundred times more potent than opium. Instant pain relief by *Varma* therapy is possible within no time. Pain management aims at minimizing distress, and feeling of unrest and improving the quality of life. A cardinal point in the management of pain is that it should be holistic and patient-centered in its application. This can be fulfilled in the Siddha Ayurvedic approach only in terms of *Varma chikitsa*.

Meditation, *Pranayama*, yogic practices and especially *Varma chikitsa* are safe and medicine-free options for conscious relaxation of body and mind. The practice of relaxation results in a reduction of skeletal muscle spasms and a drastic

reduction of metabolic activity¹⁶. It gives a chance to make the body's energy flow in a proper way, uninterruptedly, enhancing physical health. *Varma* therapy must be practiced for a few minutes as the commencement of all physical exercises like yogic exercises and western style exercises. With this, every muscle of the body is persuaded to relax. In a nutshell, we can say that *Varma* therapy is the shortcut key to all aforesaid physical exercises, Yoga and *Pranayama*.

Varma therapy is the best technique to attain the effects of *Yoga* and *Pranayama*. It is based on the wisdom of ancient Vedic science and has been formulated in terms of the most suitable technique for the present times.

Conclusion

The most important outcome of the study which, helps in relieving the symptoms and there is no recurrence within the study duration as well as follow-up done every month for more than eighteen months. This enables the patient to resume day to day activities during the treatment. There was good improvement in all signs and symptoms. The patient was able to do daily routine work without any difficulty. Hence this study has a positive outcome and can be recommended as the therapeutic procedure for Lymphoedema. To a great extent, this study authenticates that *Varma chikitsa* has a good result in treating patients with Lymphoedema. The value of *Varma* therapy is well recognized worldwide as it is harmless, cheapest and easiest therapy in the present times,

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