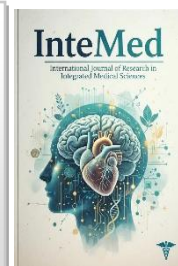




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Review Article

Pharmacological and Clinical Evaluation of *Panchakoladi Lepa*: A Review of Transdermal Therapies in the Classical Texts

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ABSTRACT

The management of localized inflammation (Shotha) and pain (Shoola) constitutes a significant portion of general medical practice. While contemporary medicine largely relies on NSAIDs and topical analgesics, the Ayurvedic pharmacopeia offers a range of transdermal applications known as Lepa. This review critically examines the formulation Panchakoladi Lepa, a compound cited in the Charaka Samhita comprising five specific pungent herbs. The paper analyzes the rationale behind this formulation, its putative mechanism of action regarding Kapha-Vata stagnation, and the clinical precautions required due to its vesicant properties. We posit that Panchakola acts not merely as a counter-irritant, but as a localized metabolic stimulant (Agni enhancer) capable of penetrating deep tissue barriers.

1. Introduction

In the classical management of disease, Ayurveda distinguishes between Antah-Parimarjana (internal purification) and Bahir-Parimarjana (external purification). While internal medicine receives the bulk of scholarly attention, external applications play a pivotal role in managing localized pathology, particularly where systemic drugs fail to reach adequate tissue concentrations due to poor circulation or blockage (Srotodushti).

Panchakola, a pentad of five spices, is predominantly known as an oral appetizer (Deepana) and digestant (Pachana). However, references in the Charaka Samhita suggest its utility extends to external application. When processed into a Lepa (paste), these herbs are indicated for conditions characterized by coldness, stiffness, and heaviness—markers of Kapha and Vata vitiation.

2. Literary Review and Pathological Correlations

While the Charaka Samhita provides the foundational ingredients, the therapeutic utility of this formulation is crystallized in the following classical verse, which outlines its specific indications:

Panchakolasamayukto lepah shothavinashanah |

Shoolamavataharashcha syat panchakoladi uchyate ||

This verse delineates a tripartite mechanism of action, targeting Shotha, Shoola, and Amavata. The scientific correlation of these classical claims can be analyzed as follows:

2.1 Shotha Vinashana (Resolution of Edema)

In this context, the text refers to Kaphaja Shotha—edema that is pitting, cold to the touch, and non-erythematous.

Scientific Mechanism: The essential oils and alkaloids in the paste (specifically piperine from Pippali and gingerols from Nagara) act as local rubefacients. By irritating the skin, they induce localized vasodilation. This sudden increase in blood flow improves venous return and lymphatic drainage in the stagnant area, effectively "flushing out" the accumulated interstitial fluid responsible for the swelling.

2.2 Shoola Hara (Alleviation of Pain)

The term Shoola here implies deep-seated, spasmodic pain caused by Vata blockage, often seen in colicky conditions (Udara Shoola).

Scientific Mechanism: The mechanism parallels the Gate Control Theory of pain. The intense sensation of heat generated by Chitraka (*Plumbago zeylanica*) competes with the transmission of pain signals from the visceral

or deep muscle tissue. Furthermore, prolonged application likely depletes Substance P (a neurotransmitter of pain) in the local nerve endings, acting similarly to modern capsaicin patches used for neuralgia.

2.3 Amavata Hara (Counteracting Rheumatic Pathology)

Amavata describes a condition where Ama (undigested metabolic byproducts) lodges in the joints, causing stiffness and heaviness.

Scientific Mechanism: In conditions like Rheumatoid Arthritis (specifically the inactive, stiff stage), the joints suffer from poor perfusion. The transdermal absorption of these pungent principles increases the local metabolic rate (local hyperthermia). This heat increases enzymatic activity in the tissue, helping to break down ("digest") the fibrotic changes and protein complexes that cause morning stiffness.

Ingredients

1. Pippali
Piper longum
2. Pippalimoola
Piper longum root
3. Chavya
Piper chaba
4. Chitraka
Plumbago zeylanica
5. Shunthi
Zingiber officinale

Method of Preparation ::

1. Collection of Raw Materials
All drugs are collected and cleaned properly
2. Powder Preparation
Each drug is powdered separately (fine powder)
Mixed in equal proportions
3. Preparation of Lepa
Take required quantity of powder
Add suitable liquid (Anupana), such as:
Warm water
Gomutra (in specific conditions)

Oil (for Vata conditions)
Mix to form a smooth paste

Method of Application ::

Apply locally over affected area
Thickness: ~0.5–1 cm layer
Direction: Opposite to hair follicles (Pratiloma)
Duration: Keep until semi-dry (30–60 min)
Wash with lukewarm water

Therapeutic Benefits ::

Reduces swelling (Shotha)
Relieves joint pain
Improves mobility

Useful in:

Sandhivata

Amavata

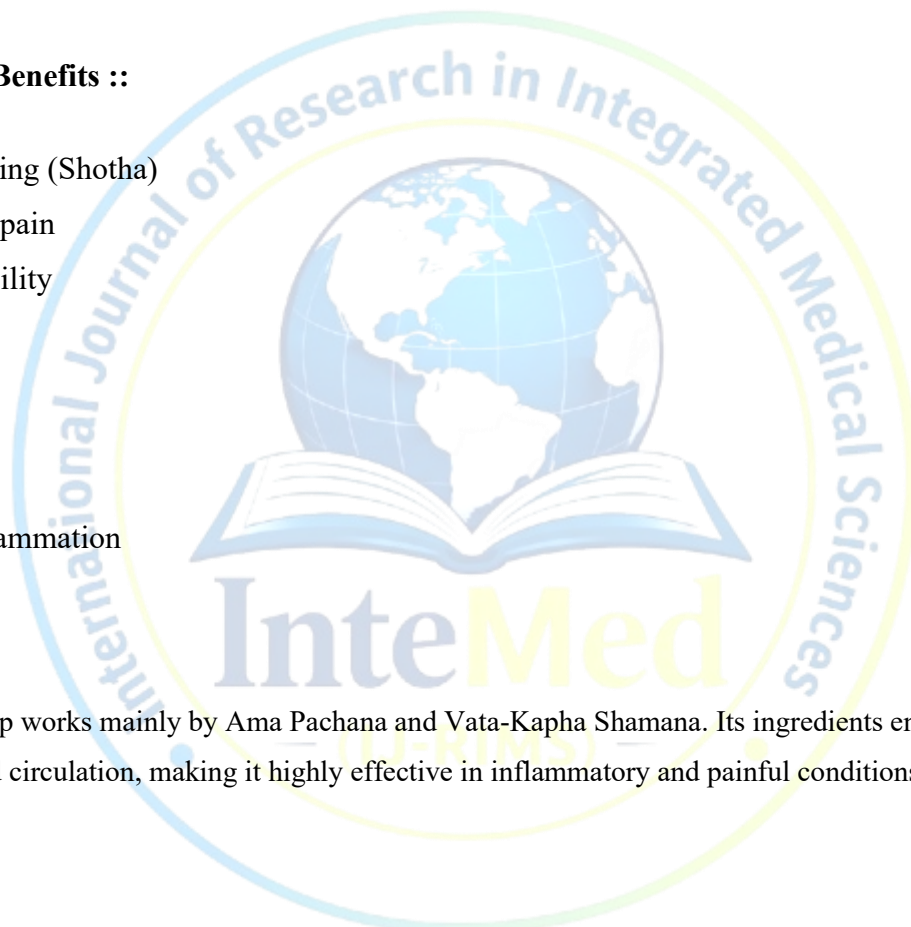
Localized inflammation

Discussion ::

Panchkoladi Lep works mainly by Ama Pachana and Vata-Kapha Shamana. Its ingredients enhance local metabolism and circulation, making it highly effective in inflammatory and painful conditions.

Conclusion::

Panchkoladi Lep is a simple yet effective Ayurvedic external formulation for managing pain and inflammation. Its Ushna and Tikshna properties make it especially beneficial in Ama-dominant and Vata-Kapha disorders.



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