

Ayurvedic Understanding of Madhumeha with Reference to Diabetes Mellitus: Its Prevention and Cure

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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces Madhumeha as described in Indian scriptures and relates it to the modern lifestyle disease Diabetes Mellitus, aiming to highlight its prevention and treatment. The knowledge of Madhumeha has existed in India since at least the time of the Charaka Samhita (1200 BC) or earlier. Charaka Samhita, Sushruta, and Wagbhatta provide detailed explanations of the disease, including its course, causes, signs, symptoms, pathogenesis, treatment principles, management, prevention, and prognosis. The Samhitas describe the disease in detail.

Keywords: Madhumeha, Diabetes Mellitus, predisposing factors, pathogenesis, prodromal features, prognosis.

INTRODUCTION

Madhumeha is a metabolic disorder related to lifestyle. The causes, risk factors, symptoms, complications, and treatment of Diabetes Mellitus and Madhumeha are similar. In ancient Indian medicine, Prameha is listed under Astmahagad. Prameha is a Tridosha Janya urinary disorder, where the patient passes large amounts of cloudy urine more frequently. [1] Chattopadhyay et al. [17] recently published a major systematic review that covered 199 randomized controlled trials, 21,191 participants, and 98 Ayurvedic medicines. Some interventions were linked to lower HbA1c or fasting glucose. However, the review pointed out issues such as poor reporting, weak methods, limited quality-of-life data, and incomplete reporting of adverse events.

Kapha dosha (Jal Bahula), meda, and mamsa dhatu (abaddha) play a major role in Prameha [2]. Based on the involvement of dosha and dushya, and the clinical features such as changes in the color, odor, and smell of urine, there are 20 types of Prameha. There are ten types of Kaphaja Prameha: Udaka meha, Iksuvalika rasa meha, Sandra meha, Sandra prasada meha, Sukla meha, Sukra meha, Sita meha, Sikata meha, Sanair meha, and Alalameha. Pittaja Prameha includes six types: Ksāra meha, Nila meha, Manjista meha, Kala meha, Rakta meha, and Haridā meha [4]. Vataja Prameha has four types: Vasameha, Majjameha, Hastimeha, and Madhumeha [2]. Madhumeha is considered a vaatik type of Prameha.

The term "Madhumeha" is made up of two words: 'Madhu' means sweet or sweetness, and 'Meha' means excessive urination, also called atipravrutti. Madhumeha is a condition where a person passes urine that is sweet like honey, astringent, pale, rough in quality, and produced in large amounts. In this disease, sweetness is also present throughout the body. [8] Acharya Charaka describes Madhumeha as a disease in which a person passes urine that is astringent, sweet, and rough. [2] Acharya Sushruta calls Madhumeha "kshaudrameha" and says that in this condition, the urine looks like honey. This paper solely focusses on Ayurvedic side of the Madhumeha and mildly discusses its relationship with Diabetes Mellitus. Madhumeha and modern diabetes mellitus are similar in how they describe symptoms like excessive urination, metabolic imbalance, overeating, lack of activity, obesity, hereditary risk, and gradual worsening of the body. Still, they are not exactly same. Madhumeha is an Ayurvedic framework that uses concepts like doṣa, dūṣya, agni, srotas, and ojas to explain

disease, while modern diabetes is defined by measurable changes in blood sugar, insulin function, β -cell activity, and organ damage. [18]

Some studies show that certain Ayurvedic herbs, structured diets, and yoga can slightly improve short-term blood sugar levels in people with type 2 diabetes. However, the research is mixed and does not prove these methods can replace standard treatment or prevent long-term problems. Their best use is as supervised add-on therapies, especially for helping with lifestyle changes and physical activity. [19]

Aspect	Madhumeha	Diabetes mellitus	Similarity or difference
Meaning	Madhu means honey or sweetness, while meha refers to urination. This condition is traditionally linked to having too much urine that is sweet or honey-like.	These are metabolic disorders where high blood sugar levels last over time, usually because the body does not make enough insulin, does not use it well, or both.	Both descriptions focus on unusual sweetness and frequent urination, but today, diabetes is identified using biochemical methods.
Disease classification	This topic is usually discussed as part of Prameha and is often linked to Vātaja Prameha. Ayurvedic authors may connect different Prameha subtypes based on how they develop.	Diabetes comes in several forms, such as type 1, type 2, gestational, monogenic, pancreatic, drug-induced, and a few other rare types.	Madhumeha does not mean the same thing as every type of diabetes.
Main causes	Eating too many sweet, rich, or oily foods, not being active enough, sleeping too much, being overweight, and having a family history can all be risk factors.	A person's risk increases when genetic factors are combined with obesity, eating too much, not being active, getting older, pregnancy, autoimmune conditions, pancreatic disease, or certain medications.	Lifestyle and hereditary risk factors often overlap in both, particularly in type 2 diabetes.

The main of this paper is to delve into Madhumeha as described in Indian scriptures.

Predisposing factors of Madhumeha

Acharya Charak explains Predisposing factor of Madhumeha separately in Sutrasthan. The following etiological factors are responsible for the development of Madhumeha. Excessive intake of heavy, unctuous, sour and saline taste foods. Newly harvested crops like cereals, rice etc. and fresh wine consumption in large quantity. Sedentary life-style, not indulging in any sort of physical and mental exercise. One who does not undergo bio-purification of the body. [3] All kaph prakopak factors are also responsible for Madhumeha.

We can categorized all factor as follows:

Dietary Predisposing factor

Using these items too much or for a long time: Foods that are rough, heavy, oily, spicy, salty, astringent, pungent, cold, sweet, heavy, rich in fats or bitter, newly harvested crop fresh wine; and items like Hyanak, Chinaka, Uddalak, Itkata, Mukundak, Mahavrihi, Harenu, black gram, and meat from domesticated, marshy,

or aquatic animals. Also, rice preparations such as payasa, krishra, vilepi, sugarcane products like jaggery, and dairy products such as milk, curd, and sweets. [3, 2,5,8]

Lifestyle Predisposing factor

Habits such as oversleeping, spending too much time lying down or sitting, avoiding physical or mental activity, ignoring natural urges, neglecting body cleansing, and having poor posture, especially when sitting for long periods, can be harmful [1,4,9].

Pathogenesis

Madhumeha develops through Vata-mediated pathology in two ways: Margaavrittajanya Madhumeha and Dhaatvagni Vikritijanya Madhumeha [8].

The factors mentioned above increase Kapha, Pitta, Meda, and Mamsa, blocking the normal flow of Vata. When Vata becomes disturbed, it carries Ojas to the bladder, or Mutravaha Srotas, leading to Madhumeha, which is difficult to manage.

Madhumeha often shows signs and symptoms related to Vata, Pitta, and Kapha, which may come and go over time. If the disease is not managed properly, it can lead to the development of seven severe Pidakas on muscles, vital organs, and joints [3]. If not treated in time, all types of Prameha can turn into Madhumeha [8]. When Vata is disturbed by factors like astringent, bitter, or rough foods, it spreads throughout the body and mixes with sweet Oja. This disturbed, dry, and astringent Vata combines with Oja and carries it to the urinary bladder, causing Madhumeha [2].

Prodromal features of Madhumeha

The premonitory stage of these diseases is marked by several characteristic features. These include matting of hair, a sweet taste in the mouth, numbness and burning in the hands and feet, dryness in the mouth, palate, and throat, increased thirst, and a feeling of tiredness. There may be an excessive buildup of waste on the body, especially on the palate, throat, tongue, and teeth, as well as excreta sticking to body openings. Other signs are burning and numbness throughout the body, the presence of bees and ants on the body or in urine, changes in urine, a fleshy odour from the body, excessive sleepiness and drowsiness, heavy sweating, and a limp feeling in the body. People may prefer to lie down, sit, or sleep, and may notice smearing in the heart, eyes, tongue, and ears. There can also be rapid growth of hair and nails, a preference for cold things, sweet and whitish urine, shortness of breath, a feeling of heaviness, and an oily or slimy sensation on the body. [2,4,8,5]

Clinical feature of Madhumeha

Turbid urine and frequent urination are signs of Madhumeha. Patients with Madhumeha pass urine that is astringent, sweet, pale, and not oily, and the condition is considered incurable. [2] Their urine tastes sweet and their body has a smell similar to honey. [6] Even mild or early symptoms are also considered signs of Madhumeha. [5]

Classification

When Madhumeha appears from birth or in children of parents with Madhumeha, it is considered incurable due to genetic factors. This type is called Sahaj or Kulaj Madhumeha, and patients are usually thin (Krish pramehi) [4]. Similarly, other inherited disorders are also seen as incurable. If Madhumeha develops because of lifestyle or metabolic issues, such as poor diet and habits, it is called Apathyanimittaj Madhumeha and is considered manageable. These patients are often obese (sthoor Pramhi) [7]. If any type of Prameha is not treated at the right time, it can turn into Madhumeha and then becomes incurable [5].

Complications of Madhumeha

Some complications of Prameha or Madhumeha include thirst, diarrhoea, fever, burning sensations, weakness, loss of appetite, indigestion, and Prameha Pidakas.[2] Other complications of Madhumeha are stiffness in the chest, increased desire for various things, trouble sleeping, rigidity, tremors, abdominal pain, and constipation [5].

Prognosis of Madhumeha

Kaphaja Prameha can be cured because the treatment for dosha and dushya is similar. Pittaj Prameha can be managed since the treatment for dosha and dushya is opposite. Vataj Prameha cannot be cured because the treatment is opposite and there is severe decay of the dhatu (Majja). Kaphaja and Paittika types of Prameha cannot be cured if early symptoms continue to appear.[4] All types of Prameha can be cured if the Meda dhatu is not affected. [4] Complicated Madhumeha cannot be cured. [5] Madhumeha that is ignored or not treated in time cannot be cured.

Principle of Treatment

In madhumeha, both vata and kapha doshas are affected, so both need to be treated at the same time. Treatment begins by avoiding causes such as heavy or oily foods, jaggery, dairy products, oversleeping, inactivity, and similar factors. This follows the principle of Nidana Parivarjanam. [4,15] The approach to treating Madhumeha depends on the patient's vitality, constitution, and the cause of the disease. There are two main types of patients: those who are obese and strong, and those who are lean and weak. Lean and thin patients should receive promotive or pacifying (santarpan) treatment. Patients with excess dosha and strength should receive evacuation or purifying (apatarpan and sanshodhan) treatment. [4]

For Balvaan (sthula) patients with Madhumeha, start with oleation therapy using trikantadhya taila. After this, give emetic therapy, followed by purgation therapy. Once purgation is complete, use asthapana basti, and finally, apply Santarpana (saturation) therapy. [16] For lean and weak (krish) patients, recommend mantha, churna, juices, extracts, barley powder linctus, and light foods. Medicines and diet should be easy to digest (laghu and pachana therapy) and have a nourishing (santarpana) effect. [3] Use sneha therapy (medicated oils and ghee) if vata dosha is dominant. [4,12]

For stula patients, drugs with guru, ruksha, tikshna, and ushna virya properties such as Apamarga, Agaru, Karvellaka, Shilajit, Ativisha, and Gudmar are recommended. For krisha patients, drugs with laghu, snigdha, and mridu virya like Arjuna, Java, Amalaki, Anantamula, Aragwadha, and Kodrava are beneficial. The diet should match the patient's agnibala (digestive and metabolic strength), prakriti, desh (body constitution), and the current state of dosha imbalance, while remaining balanced overall [13,14]. Regular physical exercise and yoga postures such as Sarvangasana, Dhanurasana, Bhujangasana, Gomukhasana, and Chakrasana can help manage Madhumeha [11].

CONCLUSION

In this study, we reviewed Madhumeha, including its causes, pathogenesis, signs and symptoms, complications, prognosis, and management, as described in the Ayurveda Samhitas. These principles are effective and form the foundation for different treatment approaches.

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