

Review of ENT Cancers In Ancient Indian Medical Science Ayurveda

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Abstract

Ayurveda is an ancient Indian medical science. There are references to various malignancies in Ayurveda. The tumor is referred as 'Arbuda' or 'Gulma' in Ayurveda. All the characteristics of tumor are very well mentioned in Ayurveda. Ayurvedic acharyas while suggesting the operation for these tumors, said that these tumors should be excised completely along with surrounding healthy tissue otherwise it recurs soon indicating the malignant nature of the tumor. Most of the tumors are mentioned as incurable again indicating its malignant nature

Cancer is one of the major causes of death across the globe accounting for nearly 10 million deaths in 2022. Worldwide in terms of incidence of cancer, following China and the United States, India ranks third, contributing 7.5% (1.38 million) of all new cancer incidences. Every 6th death in the world is due to the cancer. According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer (ARC), by 2040, the global burden of Cancer is expected to grow by 27.5 million new cases. The five most prevalent cancer types that accounts for new incidences and mortalities in India affecting both genders account for over 44%. Female breast cancer remains the most prevalent cancer among females, contributing to 13.8% of all new cases. Followed by oral (10.3%), cervical (9.2%), respiratory (5.8%), and esophagus (5%) cancers. And it's going to increase further due to faulty dietary and lifestyle practices. In India, with habit of chewing tobacco and 'Gutakha', the incidence of oral cancer is increasing day by day. Therefore, it is necessary to look for every possible solution including the ancient medical sciences such as in Ayurveda. In Ayurveda, tumor is classified on the basis of *doshas* (humors) and structural appearance. There are references to Liver tumor, Nasal tumor, Ear tumor, Throat tumors, head tumor, muscle tumor. Liposarcoma and hemangiosarcoma. Among the treatment modality for Cancer, apart from medicine and surgery, cauterization and application of Alkali is also suggested in Ayurveda to avoid the recurrence. It is observed and concluded that Cancers are very well documented in Ayurveda and the treatment suggested for treating the tumors need to be reexplored in the light of modern researches.

Keywords: *Arbuda, Gulma, Tumor, Cancer.*

1. Introduction

Cancer is one of the major causes of death across the globe accounting for nearly 10 million deaths in 2022 and there were almost 20 million new cases of cancer. According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer (ARC), by 2040, the global burden of Cancer is expected to grow by 27.5 million new cases. Demographics-based predictions indicated that the annual number of new cases of cancer will reach 35 million by 2050, that is, a 77% increase from the number in 2022. Lung cancer was the most frequently diagnosed cancer in 2022 – representing almost 2.5 million new cases, or one in eight cancers, worldwide (12.4% of all cancers globally) – followed by cancers of the female breast (11.6%) and colorectum (9.6%). Lung cancer was also the leading cause of cancer death, being responsible for an estimated 1.8 million deaths (18.7%); the next most common causes were colorectal (9.3%) and liver cancer (7.8%) [?].

The five most prevalent cancer types that accounts for new incidences and mortalities in India affecting both genders account for over 44%. Female breast cancer remains the most prevalent cancer among females, contributing to 13.8% of all new cases followed by oral (10.3%), cervical (9.2%), respiratory (5.8%), and esophagus (5%) cancers. In males, Oral cancer accounted for more than 13% of all cancer-related mortalities, with an average survival rate of 8.08, followed by the respiratory (11.6%), oesophagus (8.3%), colorectum (5.6%), and stomach (5.5%) cancer. These top five cancers accounted for 44% of incidences and mortality in males [1]. In India, with habit of chewing tobacco and 'Gutakha', the incidence of oral cancer is increasing day by day. With unhealthy dietary and lifestyle practices, it is going to increase further. Therefore, it is necessary to look for every possible solution including the ancient medical sciences such as in

Ayurveda. In the context of global burden of cancer, it becomes essential to explore the cancer literature in ancient medical science to find every possible cure. The tumor is referred as 'Arbuda' or 'Gulma' in Ayurveda. All the characteristics of tumor are very well mentioned in Ayurveda. Ayurvedic acharyas while suggesting the operation for these tumors, said that these tumors should be excised completely along with surrounding healthy tissue otherwise it recures soon indicating the malignant nature of the tumor. Most of the tumors are mentioned as incurable again indicating its malignant nature. In Ayurveda, tumor is classified based on *doshas* and structural appearance. There are references to Liver tumor, Nasal tumor, Ear tumor, Throat tumors, head tumor, muscle tumor. Liposarcoma and hemangiosarcoma.

2. Material & Method

Literary descriptive method of research is adopted in the present study. Critical study of Ayurvedic literature with regard to cancer is done to come to logical conclusions.

2.1. Review of Literature

Concept of Oncologist In Ayurveda

As per oncologists (*Arbudagya*), when tumour erupts over the tumour (*Adhi-arbuda*) then that stage is also incurable [2].

Definition of Tumour As per Ayurveda

The abnormal muscular growth which is circular, fixed, mild aching, broad based, slowly growing, big and non-suppurating is referred as *Arbuda* (Tumour) [3].

2.2. Ayurvedic Classification of Tumour

Types of Tumors As Per Ayurveda

1. Vataj Arbuda
2. Pittaj Arbuda
3. Kaphaj Arbuda
4. Raktaj Arbuda
5. Mansaj Arbuda
6. Medoj Arbuda

Other Types of Tumors In Ayurveda [4]

As per oncologists (*Arbudgya*), tumors could also be classified into following types

1. *Adhi-Arbuda* – The tumour erupting over the tumour is called as *Adhi-arbuda*.
2. *Dwi-Arbuda* – The tumour occurring in pair or after one another are called as *Dwi-arbuda*.

Causes of Tumour As per Ayurveda

1. The repeated trauma to muscles
2. Excessive intake of meat

The cause no.1 leads to external tumors whereas cause no.2 may lead to internal malignant tumors [5].

2.3. Pathogenesis of Muscle Tumor

With above causes there is morbid vitiation of muscles and muscular built of organs leading to tumor development [5].

Features of Muscle Tumour

- Painless mass
- Unctuous mass
- Colour like skin
- Non suppurating mass
- Stony hard mass
- Fixed immovable mass

Cause for Non-Suppuration In Tumor

Tumors usually does not suppurate due to predominance of *Kapha* and *Meda* in it and also due to stability of *doshas* owing to cohesive intermixing [6].

2.4. Some Other Tumours

As its root is deep seated and not visible like the tuber (*kanda*) and as it is rigidly entangled in itself (*sanhat*) like tendril (*Gulma*) and have broad base, it is called as '*Gulma*' [7].

As per Ayurvedic acharya Bhela, the intermixing and consolidation of various tissues in the body is called as '*Gulma*'.

This definition of '*Gulma*' given by acharya Bhela, indicates towards the development of benign or malignant growth in the body.

Cause For Recurrence of Tumour

The left-over portion of excised tumor re-grow very fast. Hence it should be cauterized after excision [8].

2.5. Definition & Classification of Tumours

Tumour is a mass of tissue formed as a result of abnormal, excessive, and inappropriate, uncontrolled growth of the cells which continues indefinitely. Basically, there are 2 types of tumours.

- A. **Benign tumour:** It remain localized forming a single mass which is often symptomless and can be excised completely.
- B. **Malignant tumour:** It is also called as cancer. It invades the surrounding tissues and spreads through lymphatics and blood to other parts of the body where it gives rises to secondaries (metastasis).

2.6. Oral Malignancies In Ayurveda

Mansasanghat (Fibroma of Palate)

The disease in which there is fleshy painless growth occur on the palate is referred as *Mansasangha* [9].

Treatment - Incurable



As per modern medical literature, a palatal fibroma is a benign, non-cancerous growth of fibrous connective tissue on the roof of the mouth, often caused by chronic irritation or trauma. These growths are typically painless, slow-growing, and appear as firm, pale pink, or brownish lumps that can be sessile or attached by a stalk. The most common cause is chronic irritation from things like ill-fitting dentures, braces, or habits like thumb sucking. A clinical and histological examination after surgical removal is the definitive way to diagnose a palatal fibroma. The standard treatment is complete surgical excision of the lesion. Removing the source of irritation, such as replacing an ill-fitting denture, is crucial to prevent the fibroma from returning [10].

Walaya (Pharyngeal Malignancy)

The disease in which there is elevated and elongated edema in the throat associated with dysphagia is referred as *Walaya* [11].

Treatment - Incurable

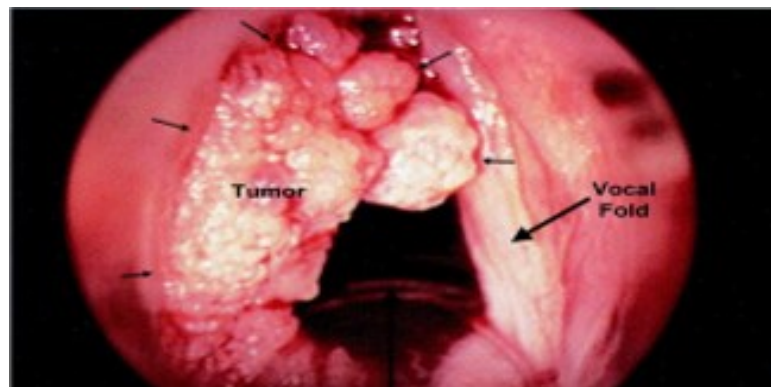


As per modern medical literature, a malignant pharyngeal tumor is often a squamous cell carcinoma, causing symptoms like persistent sore throat, difficulty swallowing, ear pain, hoarseness, or a neck lump, typically linked to tobacco/alcohol use or HPV infection. The upper pharyngeal cancer (behind nose) is linked to Epstein Bar Virus. The middle pharyngeal cancer (tonsils, soft palate, base of tongue) is linked to human papilloma virus. The lower pharyngeal cancer (near the larynx) is linked to consumption of heavy alcohol and tobacco [12, 13]

***Balas* (Pharyngo-laryngeal Malignancy)**

The disease in which aggravated *Kapha* along with *Vata* gives rise to edema in the throat associated with obstructive dyspnea and which is incurable is referred as *Balas* [14].

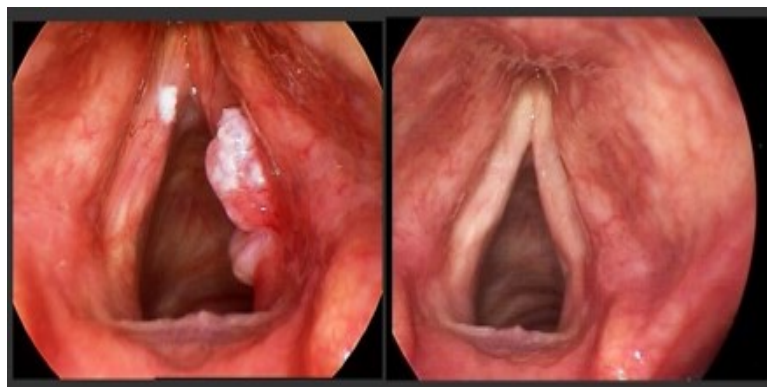
Treatment - Incurable



***Swaraghna* (Laryngeal Malignancy)**

The disease in which aggravated *Kapha* gives rise to laryngeal growth associated with change of voice, dryness of throat and dyspnea is referred as *Swaraghna* [15].

Treatment - Incurable

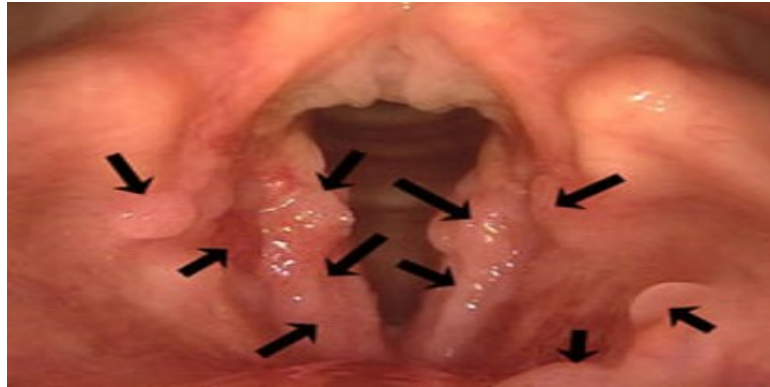


As per modern medical literature, a Pharyngo-laryngeal malignancy refers to cancers developing in the pharynx (throat) or larynx (voice box), common types of head and neck cancers, often linked to tobacco, alcohol, and HPV [16].

***Shataghani* (Throat papiloma)**

The disease in which aggravated *Kapha* gives rise to thorny rounded growth associated with change of voice, dryness of throat and dyspnea is referred as *Shataghni* [17].

Treatment - Incurable



As per modern medical literature, a papilloma in the throat is a benign, wart-like growth caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). These growths can cause hoarseness, difficulty speaking or breathing, or noisy breathing (stridor). Treatment typically involves surgery to remove the growths, but they often recur. In children, it can be contracted during birth if the mother has a genital HPV infection. In adults, it can spread through oral sex or deep kissing. Factors that increase the risk of oral HPV include having multiple sexual partners, using tobacco, and drinking alcohol [18].

***Talu Kachhapa* (Palatine Adenoma)**

The disease in which there is gradually developing, hard, painless growth like elevated back of tortoise in the palate is referred as *Talu Kachhapa* [19].

Treatment - Incurable



***Talu Arbuda* (Palatine tumour)**

The disease in which there is lotus like growth in the palate is referred as *Arbuda* [20].

Treatment - Incurable



As per modern medical literature, it is a common, benign tumor arising from the minor salivary glands in the roof of the mouth (palate), appearing as a slow-growing, painless lump. It can rarely become malignant. It is removed surgically to prevent recurrence [21].

***Nasa Arbuda* (Nasal Tumour)**

The big bag like growth in nasal cavity is Nasal tumour (*Nasa Arbuda*) [22].



A nasal tumor is an abnormal growth in the nasal cavity or sinuses, which can be benign or malignant. Symptoms are sinus related like stuffiness, pain, headaches, and nosebleeds, but persistent or one-sided symptoms warrant investigation, as these tumors can spread to nearby areas like the eyes or brain.

***Karna Arbuda* (Ear Tumours)**

There are 7 types of Ear tumours (*Karna Arbudas*) [23]

The earlier said features regarding tumors should be considered with regard to Ear tumors also and accordingly the treatment strategy should be planned [24].



Ear Tumours are abnormal growths in the ear (outer, middle, or inner) that can be benign (noncancerous) or malignant (cancerous) and often present as hearing loss, fullness, or discharge.

2.7. Diagnostic & Therapeutic Rhinoscopy

To remove the nasal tumor (*Nasa Arbud Harnartham*) [25]

2.8. Treatment of Tumors

External Tumour

Apply the paste of sesame, kulthi, meat, and curd on the tumour. Allow the flies to drop eggs on it. When maggots eat the tumour significantly, scrap it little and then cauterize it. After regression in size, excise it [26].

2.9. Treatment of Liposarcoma

After fomentation, excise it completely and clean it. Ensure hemostasis and then ligate it For C & D, use *Karanj taila* mentioned for the t/t of abscess to prevent the recurrence of tumour. If not excised completely tumour recurs [27].

2.10. Prognosis of Tumors

The tumor from which the blood oozes, which is developed in systems or in vital parts and which is very much fixed, is incurable and should not be treated.

When tumor erupts over the tumor (*Adhi-arbuda*) When tumor occurs in pair or after one another (*Dwi-arbuda*). The *Mansarbuda* and *Raktajanya Arbuda* are also incurable [28].

3. Observations

Sr	Doshik Tumours	Dhatuj Tumours
1	Vataj Arbuda	Raktaj Arbuda
2	Pittaj Arbuda	Mansaj Arbuda
3	Kaphaj Arbuda	Medoj Arbuda

Sr	Ear Tumours	Oral Tumours
1	Vataj Karnarbuda	<i>Talu Kachhapa</i> (Palatine Adenoma tumour)
2	Pittaj Karnarbuda	<i>Talu Arbuda</i> (Palatine tumour)
3	Kaphaj Karnarbuda	<i>Mansasanghat</i> (Fibroma of Palate)
4	Tridoshaj Karnarbuda	<i>Walaya</i> (Pharyngo-Oesophageal CA)
5	Raktaj Karnarbuda	<i>Balas</i> (Laryngopharyngeal Malignancy)
6	Mansaj Karnarbuda	<i>Swaraghna</i> (Laryngeal CA)
7	Medoj Karnarbuda	<i>Shataghani</i> (Throat papilloma)

4. Discussion

Acharya Sushruta described oral malignancies in Nidansthana. Apart from oral malignancies, acharya Sushruta had also mentioned the nasal, aural and head malignancies. All the oral malignancies are said to be incurable by the Ayurvedic acharyas. The disease *Mansasanghat* mentioned in Ayurveda, appears to be the Fibroma of Palate. Although, it is stated as incurable in ayurveda, but as per modern science, it is non-malignant and completely curable after complete surgical excision.

The disease *Walaya* mentioned in Ayurveda, appears to be the Pharyngo-Oesophageal carcinoma. While Ayurveda, mentioned only one type of pharyngeal carcinoma, modern medical literature had mentioned three types of throat cancers depending upon the anatomical location and the aetiology concerned.

The disease *Swaraghna* mentioned in Ayurveda, appears to be the Laryngeal carcinoma. Pharyngo-laryngeal cancers share the same aetiology. In Ayurvedic literature, specific aetiology is not mentioned.

The disease *Shataghani* mentioned in Ayurveda, appears to be the Throat papilloma from modern point of view. *Shataghni* is an ancient oval thorny weapon to kill hundred enemies. As the oval growth appears thorny. It is named like that. Although in Ayurveda, it is mentioned as fatal due to unavailability of satisfactory treatment but it is mentioned as curable in the modern medical science.

The disease *Talu Kachhapa* mentioned in Ayurveda, appears to be the Palatine Adenoma tumor.

The disease *Talu Arbuda* mentioned in Ayurveda, appears to be the Palatine tumor. Although *Gulma* refers to the tumor, features of *Kaphaj*, *Gulma* are suggestive of malignancy. Whereas features of *Sannipataj Gulma* indicates the incurable stage of malignancy. The *medoj Arbuda* described by acharya Sushruta appears to be the Liposarcoma as its treatment consist of complete excision of tumor with surrounding healthy tissue. Acharya Sushruta had mentioned that liposarcoma can recur if not completely removed. The *Mansarbuda* described by acharya Sushruta appears to be rhabdo-myosarcoma and the *Raktarbuda* appears to be the hemangiosarcoma as it affects the blood vessels and leads to the incurability. But there is no reference to breast malignancy which is common today. The less prevalence of breast malignancy during ancient time could be due to better infant feeding practices as compared to today's era or it could be had been included under *Mansarbuda*.

5. Conclusion

ENT cancers are well documented in Ayurvedic literature. Oral malignancies were common in ancient time also. Most of the oral malignancies are said to be incurable as per Ayurveda which still holds true. Recurrence was higher after operation of ENT cancers. To avoid recurrence, cauterization and alkalization of surrounding tissue is found to be effective during ancient as well modern time.

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