

Management of winter disorders – focus on Kasa-shwasa

Kasa and shwasa are common problems in the winter season. Many patients who do not have any symptoms otherwise, develop a cough and wheezing in winter. Often, the symptoms aggravate as well. There are several medicines for kasa-shwasa, which are prescribed based on dosha and dooshya affected. **Agasthya hareetaki** or **Agasthya rasayana** is a rasayana given for chronic cough. The Rasayana is especially useful to prevent the recurrence of cough. Hareetaki and Yavadhanya in **Agasthya rasayana** is beneficial to patients. The benefits of these two are elicited in the below shloka.

हरीतकी

हरीतकी पञ्चरसा लवणा तुवरा परम् । रूक्षोष्णा दीपनी मेध्या स्वादुपाका रसायनी ॥
चक्षुष्या लघुरायुष्या बृंहणीचानुलोमिनी । श्वासकासप्रमेहार्शः कुष्ठशोथोदर क्रिमीन् ॥

यव

यवः कषायो मधुरः शीतलो लेखनो मृदुः । व्रणेषु तिलवत् पाथ्यो रूक्षो मेधाग्नि वर्धनः ॥
कटुपाको अनभिष्यन्दी स्वर्यो बलकरो गुरुः । बहुवातमलो वर्णस्थैर्यकारी च पिच्छिलः ॥
कण्ठत्वगामाशायश्लेष्म पित्तमेदः प्रनाशनः । पीनसश्वासकासोरुस्तम्भ लूहिततृट्प्रनुत ॥

The amount of yavadhanya is more than hareetaki in **Agasthya hareethaki**. Bhavaprakasha tells us that yavadhanya is beneficial in reducing the Kapha. It also acts as expectorant because of its lekhana property. Besides kasa-shwasa, it is beneficial in ajeerna.

This issue is dedicated to medicines used for the management of Kasa-shwasa. You can read further about application of Tulasi-kantakari and Vasaka.

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Tulsi-kantakari for Kasa-shwasa: Moving from irrational treatments to rational treatments

Introduction

Cough is not as simple as one thinks, especially when it is chronic. A simple-looking cough can cause psychological, physical, and social burdens and impair quality of life. Cough is also an important reason for sleep deprivation. Cough can manifest in almost all respiratory conditions, so the diagnosis remains complex. In most countries across the world, cough is treated with empirical therapy without reaching a specific diagnosis.¹

Treatment remains irrational in most cases

The complexity of cough diagnosis paves the way for irrational treatments. In most cases, patients opt for over-the-counter cough medications, and there is also a risk of abuse because of opioids in cough syrups. Irrational combination of various medicines is also extremely prevalent. There are several cough syrups, which are permutations and combinations of a cough suppressant, expectorant, two or more antihistamines, decongestant, and bronchodilator.¹ Do we really need these irrational combinations for the treatment of cough?

Cough syrup, the placebo effect

There are at least 61 compounds used in cough treatment that have a placebo effect. The patient

feels cough relief, but it is difficult to say if it is because of the pharmacological action of the medicine or because of a placebo effect. There are several things added to cough medicines to give this feeling. Agents are added to provide a cooling effect, warming effect, tingling effect, and giving viscosity. Besides, specific colors and odors are added to provide for the placebo effect. This indicates that the pharmacological activity of most cough medicines is questionable. Therefore, it is important to educate patients about the placebo effect of cough remedies and direct them toward pharmacologically effective rationale treatment options.²

Tulsi-kantakari, a rational combination for cough management

Tulsi

Tulsi's medicinal benefits are well-known all over the country, and aptly it is called the "elixir of life" and is grown in front of every household in the country. Its leaf juice is used with other herbs to treat cough in several households. There are several benefits of Tulsi, which make it useful for treating cough. The benefits of Tulsi in Kasa are summarised in the below table.³⁻⁵

Effect	Use in cough
Anti-inflammatory	Inflammation because of infection and foreign body is characteristic in cough. Tulsi is known to block inflammatory mechanisms such as cyclooxygenase and lipoxygenase pathways of arachidonic acid metabolism. Tulsi also benefits by acting against oedema.
Immunomodulatory effect	Many people suffer from frequent cough because of altered immune response to stimuli. Studies show that Tulsi promotes production of white blood cells, hemoglobin, antibodies without affecting the biochemical parameters.
Anti-pyretic activity	Many cough patients may also have fever. Fixed oils in Tulsi possess prostaglandin inhibitory activity which could be the reason for its antipyretic activity. Studies also show that antipyretic effects of Tulsi are comparable to that of aspirin.
Anti-bacterial activity	Tulsi is well known for its antibacterial properties. A study showed that Tulsi (<i>Ocimum tenuiflorum</i>) effectively inhibited <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , which is among the common bacterial throat infections. Tulsi also has several anti-viral effects, which are beneficial in common cold and cough.
Cough	Tulsi is well-known for its soothing effect in sorethroat. Thus, is commonly used in cold and flu associated with cough
Promotes sleep	Sleep deprivation is an important adverse outcome of cough. Tulsi is known to reduce stress and improve sleep parameters in clinical study.

Kantakari

Kantakari is an important ingredient in traditional formulations like Dashamoola and Kantakari ghrita. It is traditionally used to manage cough/Kasa and asthma/Shwasa. It is also used in tympanitis, misperistalsis, piles and dysuria and for rejuvenation.⁶

The following chemical constituents of Kantakari are behind the pharmacological in cough/Kasa:⁶

- Several steroidal alkaloids like solanacarpine, and solamargine
- Plant steroids like solamargine, carpesterol, diosgenin, campesterol, and daucosterol
- Triterpenes like cycloartenol

The benefits of Kantakari in Kasa-shwasa are summarised in the below table.⁶

Effect	Use in Kasa-shwasa
Anti-asthma	<p>Kantakari helps in asthma/shwasa through smooth muscle relaxation, and antagonism of asthma mediators such as histamine, and eosinophils. Kantakari provides protection against mast cell degranulation, which is an important aspect of asthma pathology.</p> <p>Clinical studies have shown an improvement in lung function – forced expiration volume and peak expiration flow rates – with the use of Kantakari. Studies have also shown an improvement in peak expiratory flow rate (PEFR) with the use of Kantakari. Kantakari decreased the scores for rhonchi, cough, breathlessness and sputum in another asthma study. Evidence shows that Kantakari has bronchodilator effect, reduces oedema and secretions in the airway lumen.</p>
Acts on allergy	<p>Kantakari modulates immune reaction to allergy thus showing anti-allergic effect.</p>
Anti-inflammatory	<p>Inflammation is an important component of cough. Kantakari has anti-inflammatory effect. The compounds like carpesterol, diosgenin, and stigmasterol are also found to possess anti-inflammation action. Anti-inflammatory activity helps overcome airway hyperresponsiveness (AHR), and airway luminal narrowing.</p>
Bronchodilation	<p>Congestion is common in cough. Kantakari helps overcome cough as it has bronchodilatory effect and acts against airway luminal narrowing.</p>

Fortified by Tankana and Navasara

Tulsi-kantakari when combined with Tankana and Navasara, adds the essential elements for the treatment of cough. Tankana helps in Kaphavilayana and thus helps in Kasa and Shwasa. It has Ushna, Tikshana, and Sara Guna, which are helpful in the management of Kasa-Shwasa.⁸ Navasara inhibits cough, and it also acts as an anti-tussive.^{9,10} Besides, it is a kriminashaka or antiseptic.

Conclusion

Expert's opinion

Tulsi-Kantakari is an effective treatment of Kasa-Shwasa. It is very effective, along with other medicines. Tulsi-Kantakari can be used in combination with the following:

- Yashtimadhu churna in Kapha-pittaja Kasa
- Talisadi churna in Kapha-pittaja Kasa
- Sitopaladi churna in Kevala vata and vata-pittaja kasa

Navasara and Tankana bhasma in Tulsi-Kantakari, helps in kaphalekhana and kriminashana.



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Vasaka - *Adhatoda vasica*



Vasaka is a common plant that is grown on the fence. In Kannada, it is called Adu-soge — the plant untouched by Adu or Aja or Sheep. It is believed that sheeps lose fertility if they are fed Vasaka. The plant is useful in blood vomiting or rakta pitta. The leaf is blanched in steam, and juice is extracted. Two spoons of extracted juice is mixed with 1 spoon of honey and consumed every day for two weeks. The juice mixed with honey is also effective in cough and epistaxis when used two times a day for 1 to 2 weeks. The kashaya of Vasaka is helpful for skin diseases when consumed for a week.

For Cough, Asthama, Bronchitis

Tulasi Kantakari

Ayurvedic Proprietary Medicine

DOSE: 10ml thrice a day or as advised by the physician.

Available in: 100ml, 200ml



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