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## Review of Researches on *Agnikarma* [Cauterization] Therapy

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### ABSTRACT

*Agnikarma*, an ancient para surgical modality is lauded for its multifaceted results. Foremost written record of the utility of heat therapy in squashing ailments was found in Ancient Ayurvedic treatises. An alarming downfall in practice of this modality has been noted in Buddhism period, but of late, it is gaining popularity. Ayurvedic Postgraduate institutions are conducting researches on various indications of *Agnikarma* cited by *Sushruta*. 160 research works are being reported across India among various institutions targeted mainly on musculoskeletal ailments. There is enormous scope for researchers on *Agnikarma* and a number of indications are yet to be tested through clinical studies.

### KEYWORDS

*Agnikarma, Heat therapy, Cauterization*



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## INTRODUCTION

*Agnikarma*, a para surgical modality advocated in Ancient Ayurvedic texts, is advancing popularity. *Agnikarma*, correlated to *Moxibution* of contemporary science is one of age-old modality offering aid to the musculoskeletal disorders. The form of transfer of heat either through direct or indirect mode with the help of certain materials or herbs to produce a therapeutical burn of dry or moist form is considered as *Agnikarma*. An ample number of diseases indicated to be treated by *Agnikarma* from simple Headache to a grave malignant condition and are said to be cured by proper implementation of the procedure giving due consideration to the principles and guidelines cited<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>. Research activities have gained a momentum since few decades in India, this article details about the studies conducted on *Agnikarma* from the inception of the Postgraduate Studies in the Ayurvedic curriculum.

Around 160 research works are conducted on *Agnikarma* till 2017 from inception of PG studies across Ayurvedic Institutes in India, which was carried out mainly on various musculoskeletal diseases. The information gathered from the titles of the researches is being assessed, as the entire

thesis was not accessible for comprehensive review of the works.

## MATERIALS & METHODS

- Titles of the thesis are procured from 'Researches in Ayurveda'- A classified directory of PG & PhD research works carried out at various institutions throughout India, compiled by Prof. M.S.Baghel<sup>5</sup>.

**Method:** Hand Search.

- By personal communication with certain institution / faculty members.

**Method:** Personal communication.

### Observations & Discussion:

Across the India, a good number of research works are being carried out on *Agnikarma*, which is gaining popularity. It is one of age old treatment modality which was cornered few decades back, but at recent times its popularity is appreciable. In India, 160 research works are reported from various Ayurvedic Institutions.

### Limitations:

The main limitation of this article is, the only data which can be gathered by the titles of study are being analyzed. Many of the titles of the studies yield scarce information on details of study. Research Methodology adopted in all these studies could not be retrieved.



Table No.1 shows number of research works across India, in which bulk of research works are done Govt. Ayurvedic Medical College, Bangalore.

**Table 1** Depicts numbers of research works at various institutions

Sr. No.	College	No. of works
1.	Govt. Ayurvedic Medical College, Bangalore, Karnataka	22
2.	Institute For Postgraduate Teaching & Research In Ayurveda Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar, Gujarat	21
3.	K V G Ayurveda Medical College & Hospital, Sullia, Karnataka	16
4.	Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Nasik, Maharashtra	10
5.	Govt. Ayurvedic College, Trivendrum, Kerala	09
6.	Alva`S Ayurvedic Medical College, Moodbidri, Karnataka	09
7.	National Institute Of Ayurveda, Jaipur, Rajasthan	10
8.	Rajiv Gandhi Govt. P G Institute of Ayurveda, Paprola Himanchal University, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh	06
9.	Faculty Of Ayurveda Institute of Medical Sciences, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh	06
10.	Shri Jagadguru Gurusiddeshwar Co - Operative Hospital and Research Institute (Shri J G C H Society), Ghataprabha, Karnataka	05
11.	S N K Jabshetty Ayurvedic Medical College, Bidar, Karnataka	04
12.	S D M College Of Ayurveda, Hassan, Karnataka	03
13.	Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya, Hubli, Karnataka	03
14.	S D M College Of Ayurveda, Udupi, Karnataka	04
15.	R K Toshaniwal Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya, Akola, Maharashtra	03
16.	Muniyal Institute Of Ayurveda Medical Sciences, Manipal, Karnataka	03
17.	Bharti Vidyapeeth` s University, College of Ayurved, Pune, Maharashtra	03
18.	Govt. Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya, Nanded, Maharashtra	02
19.	T M A E`S Ayurvedic Medical College, Hospet, Karnataka	02
20.	Ashwini Ayurvedic Medical College, Davanagere, Karnataka	02
21.	Bhagwan Mahaveer Jain Ayurvedic Medical College, Gajendragad, Karnataka	02
22.	Sri Jagadguru Gavisiddeswar Ayurvedic Medical College, Koppal, Karnataka	02
23.	Shri Narayan Prasad Awathy Government Ayurved College, Raipur, Chattisgarh	02
24.	Shri Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur, Maharashtra	01
25.	Gopabandhu Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya Utkal University, Bhubaneswar	01
26.	Shri Shivayogeshwar Rural Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital, Inchal, Karnataka	01
27.	Rajiv Gandhi Ayurvedic Medical College, Ron, Karnataka	01
28.	Government Ayurveda College, Tripunithura, Kerala	01
29.	Rajasthan Ayurved University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan	01
30.	Yashwant Ayurvedic College, Post Graduate Training & Research Center, Kodoli, Tal. Panhala, Dist. Kolhapur, Maharashtra	01
31.	Smt. Kamaladevi Gauridutt Mittal Puanvasu Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Mumbai, Maharashtra	01
32.	Hon. Shri. Annasaheb Dange Ayurved Medical College, Ashta, Sangli, Maharashtra	01
33.	Loknete Rajarambapu Patil Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital, Islampur, Sangli, Maharashtra	01
34.	R. A. Poddar Medical College (Ayu), Worli, Mumbai, Maharashtra	01
	Total	160

*Agnikarma*, a key para surgical procedure laid down by Ancient Indian System of Medicine, hasn't been utilised much for serving the needy.<sup>6</sup> The reason could be

non applicability of this modality on various other systemic illnesses and dominance of *Ksharasutra* therapy in Ayurvedic surgical Practice. *Sushruta* has



elaborated a detailed, organized methodology of this modality. A number of disorders are said to be curable by *Agnikarma*.<sup>7,8,9,10,11</sup> Supremacy of *Agnikarma* is being stressed by *Sushruta* among other surgical and para surgical procedures.

Screening of titles of these research works indicate, majority of works were targeted on Disorders related to musculoskeletal problem. The first research work was conducted on 1968 by SD Varshney at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. Based on the data gathered by the titles of the research works, it appears, 96 comparative, 60 observational, two literary and one survey study are being done. Among the research titles one study fails to clarify about the type of the study.

**Table 2** Types of Research studies

Types of Research Study	Number of Works
Comparative Study	96
Observational Study	60
Literary	2
Survey	1
Not Clear	1

*Gridhrasi* [Sciatica] tops the table with 31 research studies followed by *Sandhigata Vata* [26 research works]. Two studies were related to conceptual, detailing about the literary information on *Agnikarma*. The indications cited by *Sushruta* are not entirely been tested. Disease wise specific sites are identified in the text and it's noteworthy that, works assessing the rationality of the site of

*Agnikarma* with that of disease are not been reported.

**Table 3** Disease wise distribution of thesis works on *Agnikarma*:

<i>Amavata</i> [Rheumatoid arthritis] <sup>12</sup>	1
<i>Aprapta Phalakosha</i> [Hernia] <sup>13</sup>	1
<i>Ardhavabhedaka</i> <sup>14,15</sup>	2
<i>Arshas</i> [Haemorrhoids] <sup>16,17</sup>	2
<i>Avabahuka</i> [Frozen Shoulder] <sup>18,19,20,21</sup>	4
<i>Bhagandara</i> [Fistula in Ano] <sup>22,23</sup>	2
Cancer <sup>24,25</sup>	2
Carpel Tunnel Syndrome <sup>26</sup>	1
Cervical Paraspinal Spasm <sup>27</sup>	1
<i>Garbhashaya Greevamukhagata Vrana</i> [Cervical erosion] <sup>28,29,30,31,32,33</sup>	6
Chalazion <sup>34</sup>	1
<i>Charmadala Kushta</i> <sup>35</sup>	1
<i>Charmakeela</i> [Wart] <sup>36,37,38,39,40,41,42</sup>	7
<i>Gridhrasi</i> [Sciatica] <sup>43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50,51,52,53,54,55,56,57,58,59,60,61,62,63,64,65,66,67,68,69,70,71,72,73,74,75,76</sup>	33
Iliotibial band friction syndrome <sup>77</sup>	1
<i>Kadara</i> [Corn] <sup>78,79,80,81,82,83,84,85,86,87,88,89,90,91</sup>	14
<i>Kaphaja Shirashoola</i> <sup>92</sup>	1
<i>Karnini Yoni vyapad</i> <sup>93</sup>	1
<i>Kati graham</i> <sup>94</sup>	1
<i>Kati shoola</i> – [Low backache w.s.r. to Lumbar Spondylosis] <sup>95,96,97,98,99</sup>	5
<i>Laganam</i> <sup>100</sup>	1
<i>Manyastambha</i> <sup>101,102,103</sup>	3
Osteoarthritis <sup>104</sup>	1
<i>Pakshaghata</i> [Paraplegia] <sup>105</sup>	1
<i>Parikartika</i> [ Fissure in Ano] <sup>106,107</sup>	2
<i>Sandhigata Vata</i> <sup>108,109,110,111,112,113,114,115,116,117,118,119,120,121,122,123,124,125,126,127,128,129,130,131,132,133,134,135</sup>	28
<i>Sandhi shoola</i> [Arhralgia] <sup>136</sup>	1
<i>Snayugata Vata</i> [Tennis elbow] <sup>137,138,139,140,141,142,143,144,145,146</sup>	10
<i>Vataja Shirashoola</i> <sup>147,148</sup>	2
<i>Vatakantaka</i> [Plantar fasciitis] <sup>147,148,149,150,151,152,153,154,155,156,157,158,159,160</sup>	14
<i>Vicharchika</i> [Psoriasis] <sup>161</sup>	1
<i>Vishwachi</i> – Cervical Spondylosis <sup>162</sup>	1
Pain management <sup>163,164</sup>	2
Retrocalcaneal bursitis <sup>165</sup>	1
Not mentioned <sup>166,167,168,169,170,171,172</sup>	05
Total	160

Almost all works are seems to be aimed at painful ailments specific to musculoskeletal ailments. *Pakshaghata*



[Paraplegia/Hemiplegia] was treated by *Agnikarma* in one of the study. Two studies are on cancer, but, not specifying the type of neoplasm.

Few *Shalaky*a disorders were also studied by adopting this para surgical procedure. Few studies were also reported on Gynaecological conditions.

Although *Agnikarma* is indicated in various medicinal and surgical conditions, yet it's being more tested on musculoskeletal problems. No study has attempted to standardize the procedure nor all the materials cited in the treatise for *agnikarma* is evaluated. This review revealed the need for the studies to be conducted on other indications too. The multifaceted results of *Agnikarma* must get wider recognition and a push is needed to enhance more research activities in this line.

#### **Untouched areas of research in *Agnikarma*:**

- Simplification and standardisation of the procedure is technological advancement of the materials used in the procedure.
- Technological modification of *dahana upakarana* [Materials used for *Agnikarma*]
- Evaluation of Ayurvedic claim of non recurrence of illness by *Agnikarma*.

- Utility of *Agnikarma* in ophthalmological ailments

- Utility of *Agnikarma* in dermatological disorders

A good number of Ayurvedic practitioners laud the benefits of *Agnikarma* in preventing certain bone replacement surgeries like Hip replacement or knee replacement surgery. Evidenced based study in large sample has to be done. Early stage Hernia is said to be corrected through *Agnikarma* by employing semicircular shaped rod like instrument [*Ardhendu Shalaka*] on near the superficial inguinal ring to occlude the contents to herniate.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The review denotes *Agnikarma* is researched for various musculoskeletal conditions and only a meagre number of researches are carried out on other indications specified by *Sushruta*. The procedure is being used mainly for analgesic actions, is truly alarming, and as curative and non recurrence action of the procedure is least tested. This study also stresses the need for the research studies to be carried out on unexplored ailments cited to be treated by *Agnikarma* and also validate the effects of *Agnikarma* by scientific reasoning.



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