

Knowledge Attitude and Practice of Ayurveda Treatment in Children among Parents

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Background: Ayurveda, the Indian System of medicine, has been practiced in India since ages. We evaluated the overall use of Ayurveda treatment in children of preprimary and primary classes of two schools in Thaikkattussery, Thrissur, Kerala.

Methods: A KAP study was conducted on parents of 100 children of preprimary and primary classes of two schools in Thaikkattussery, Thrissur, Kerala as per a paper-based survey using a standardized questionnaire.

Results: The study revealed majority of participants have knowledge about Ayurveda in common pediatric ailments and is using Ayurveda medicines. There is a lack of knowledge about use of Ayurveda in pediatric neurological and behavioral diseases. There is a need to spread awareness about the utility of Ayurveda in pediatric developmental and behavioural disorders.

Keywords: KAP survey, Kaumarabhritya, Ayurveda, children

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Introduction

Ayurveda, the Indian system of medicine is being practiced in India since ages. According to WHO estimate about 70 percent of the world's population uses herbal or traditional medicine to treat various ailments.[1] AYUSH has played an important part in the health care of India since years. In this scenario of medical pluralism, the level of awareness among patients regarding Ayurveda optimizes the success of healthcare system. Ayurveda has a personalized approach in predictive, preventive and curative aspects of medicine.[2,3]

Kaumarabhritya, one of eight branches of Ayurveda deals with pediatric care including neonatal well being. Care of child right from intrauterine life has been stressed in Ayurveda. All aspects from pediatric care including neonatal care, care of common gastrointestinal, respiratory, integumentary & nervous system diseases are well explained in Ayurveda with due consideration of strength (*Bala*) of child. Kerala, place where Ayurveda has major role in public health has seen considerable developments in area of *Kaumarabhritya*. Many public health programmes initiated by Government especially during COVID times has offered benefits of Ayurveda in modifying immune status & general health of child. We did this study to investigate level of knowledge, attitude & practice of parents about use of Ayurveda in pediatric population.

Methodology

This was a cross-sectional questionnaire-based study done among parents of preprimary and primary classes of Thaikkattussery School during November 2024.

Sample Size

100

Eligibility Criteria

Parents of preprimary primary school children of Thaikkattussery school who could understand Malayalam or English and gave informed consent

Data collection tool

The survey was conducted using a standardized paper-based questionnaire developed and validated by faculties of departments of Vaidyaratnam Ayurveda College, Ollur.

The questionnaire was designed by faculties of Department of Kaumarabhritya, Vaidyaratnam Ayurveda College, Ollur after literature review and content validity was confirmed by 3 experts in the field.

The first part of the questionnaire enquired about demographic characteristics (age, gender, religion, area of residence and socioeconomic status) and second part contained data on knowledge and attitude about the use of Ayurveda in children and third part contained data on practice of Ayurveda in children.

Observations

Demographic and socioeconomic characteristic of participants

Variable	Ayurveda user in %	Ayurveda non user	Total
Mean age (in years)	36.3	34.2	35.8
Men	30	17	47
Women	33	20	50
Hindu	50	24	74
Muslim	8	6	14
Christian	5	7	12

Knowledge and attitude of participants about Ayurveda

SN	Question	Yes	No	Don't know
1.	What does Ayurveda treatment for children include			
	■ Herbal drugs	100	0	0
	■ Metallic and herbal	20	40	40
	■ Diet	40	40	20
	■ Panchakarma	84	16	0
2.	Ayurveda is effective in treating			
	■ Acute disorder such as fever in children	34	56	10
	■ Issues with appetite and weight gain	68	23	9
	■ Developmental delay	33	45	22
	■ Behavioral disorders like autism	12	65	23
3.	Is it safe to give Ayurvedic medicine to your child without physicians consultation	45	25	30
4.	Can Ayurvedic medicine be given with modern medicine to your child	24	46	20

Practice of Ayurveda among children

SN	Question	Agree	Disagree
1.	Have your child undergone any Ayurvedic treatment	63	37
2.	Reason for not taking Ayurvedic treatment		
	▪ Costly	7	93
	▪ Longer recovery period	36	64
	▪ Non palatability	57	43
3.	Reason for taking Ayurvedic treatment		
	▪ No side effect	61	39
	▪ Complete cure	32	68
	▪ Nearest available ayurvedic institution	03	97
	▪ Familial	4	96
	▪ Can't take other forms of medicine	0	100
4.	Result obtained through Ayurvedic treatment and medicine		
	▪ Complete cure	64	36
	▪ Partial cure	26	74
	▪ No cure	9	91
	▪ Increase of disease	1	99
5.	Does children show interest in taking Ayurvedic medicine		
	▪ Yes	46	54
	▪ No	28	72
	▪ Sometimes	16	84
	▪ Eat by force	10	90
6.	Do you think Ayurvedic treatment is safe and effective for children		
	▪ Safe and effective	90	10
	▪ Safe but not effective	90	10
	▪ Neither safe nor effective	1	99

1. Knowledge and attitude

All of the parents believed that Ayurveda treatment includes herbal drugs. Regarding the use of metallic drugs only 20 percent of parents is aware of the use of metallic drugs in Ayurveda. Diet is also included as a part of Ayurveda treatment according to 40 percent of the participants. 84 percent of parents believe that Ayurveda treatment for children includes Panchakarma therapies.

Regarding the spectrum of diseases managed by Ayurveda 68 percent of them are aware of the scope of Ayurveda in gastrointestinal disorders, only 34 percent opine ayurveda is effective in acute illnesses, 33 percent of the parents are aware of the effectiveness of ayurveda in developmental disorders and only 12 percent is aware of the utility of ayurveda in behavioural disorders. Regarding the safety of medicines 45 percent opine it is safe to give medicines without physician's consultation and 24 percent opine giving ayurvedic medicines along with modern medicine.

2. Practice

Among the participants 63 percent has undergone Ayurveda treatment for their children. Among the 37 percent of children who haven't taken any ayurvedic treatment attributed poor palatability as the main reason, 36 percent also opined about longer recovery period and 7 percent attributed to the cost of Ayurveda medicines as the reason. Among the 63 percent of children who took Ayurveda medicines, absence of side effect for the medicine was pointed as the main reason and 32 percent also stressed that complete cure as been obtained with Ayurveda and this as the reason for taking Ayurveda medicine.

Regarding the results obtained through Ayurveda treatment 64 percent obtained complete cure with ayurveda medicine, 26 obtained only partial cure, 9 percentage of then had no cure and 1 of the had an aggravation.

Regarding the palatability 46 percent of them opined that the medicines are palatable and children are taking them with ease, 28 percent of children does not show any interest in taking medicines and 10 percent need to be fed by force. Regarding the safety and efficacy 90 percent opine that Ayurveda medicines are safe and effective and 1 percent only believe that ayurveda is neither safe nor effective.

Results

Kerala is a place where Ayurveda has flourished in the most classical way with utmost stress for all the *Ashtangas*. The participants had a general knowledge about ayurveda medicines. Regarding the area of pediatric ailments utility of Ayurveda in gastrointestinal disorders are well known, but the scope of Ayurveda in developmental and behavioral disorders still remains unknown for the participants.

Majority of the children has used ayurveda medicines and lack of side effect of Ayurveda medicine is stressed as the main reason for its use. Palatability is one of the main reason for not taking medicines.

Safety and efficacy of Ayurveda medicines are also stressed as the strongest point of Ayurveda medicine. The study revealed that the utility of Kaumarabhritya and benefits of Ayurveda medicines are known for the parents partially.

One of the thrust areas of Kaumrabhritya - the developmental and behavioural pediatrics remains less explored by the public. Further awareness should be given to the public so that the potential of *Kaumarabhritya* reaches a wider population.

Conclusion

Kaumarabhritya a branch which deals with the care of child in all aspects is known for the participants. Majority of them knows the benefits and utility of this branch of Ayurveda.

Spreading the utility of the branch to a wider parents will inculcate the practice of Ayurveda among children right from infancy right from a healthy daily regimes (*Dinacharya*), dietary practices and treatment of diseases.

Also, there is a need to create awareness about the safety and efficacy about the use of Ayurveda drugs in pediatric population. Addressing right from early childhood through Ayurveda helps provides a string foundation in critical events like physical, emotional, mental and behavioral development.

Further scope of study

Study may be repeated in different samples in different localities to know the use of Ayurveda. Similar study can be planned based on other branches of Ayurveda to know the knowledge, attitude and practice and further action plan based on the result can be devised.

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