



Review paper

Integrating Complementary Therapies in the Management of Cervical Spondylosis (*Sagana Vatham*): A Review

Logamanian Janani Saravana ^{a*}, Narayanan Jegathambal Muthu Kumar ^b, Varadhan Mahalaxmi ^a, Raam Shanmuga Priya ^c, Mockkaya Logamaniana ^c, Ramasamy Meenakumaria ^a, Savarimuthu Ignacimuthu ^d

^a National Institute of Siddha, Tambaram Sanatorium, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

^b Director General, Central Council for Research in Siddha, Chennai, India

^c Public Health Specialist, Anemia PHI Project at Madurai & Theni District, National Institute of Siddha, Chennai, India

^d Xavier Research Foundation, St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

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ABSTRACT

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Cervical spondylosis, known as *Sagana Vatham* in traditional Siddha medicine, is a degenerative condition of the cervical spine characterized by pain, stiffness, and reduced mobility. It is primarily associated with aging and the gradual deterioration of intervertebral discs and joints. While conventional treatments often involve medications, physical therapy, or surgery, or complementary therapies are increasingly recognized for their role in symptom management, mobility improvement, and overall quality of life. This review examines various complementary therapies, including yoga, acupuncture, herbal medicine, chiropractic care, and Ayurveda, as potential adjuncts to conventional cervical spondylosis treatments. The therapeutic benefits, mechanisms of action, safety, and efficacy of these therapies are discussed, with an emphasis on findings from recent clinical studies. These therapies not only target the physical aspects of the condition but also address the psychological distress often associated with chronic pain. Integrating complementary therapies into cervical spondylosis management could improve patient outcomes by providing a more personalized, non-invasive, and holistic approach. However, more high-quality clinical trials are needed to establish the definitive efficacy and safety of these treatments in diverse patient populations.

1. Introduction

Cervical spondylosis is a degenerative condition affecting the intervertebral discs, leading to changes in the soft tissues and bones of the neck region (Nawathe &

Romblom, 2015). This degeneration causes narrowing of the cervical canal, which can compress the nerve roots or spinal cord, resulting in pain and other symptoms, such as radiating pain in the upper limbs, a feeling of heaviness, dizziness, mental depression, a burning sensation in the eyes, and constipation. The most commonly affected segments are C5-6, C6-7, and C4-5. While cervical spondylosis is primarily an age-related degenerative condition, lifestyle changes have led to its occurrence at younger ages in recent times.



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*Corresponding author: Logamanian Janani Saravana

✉ Email: drjanani02@gmail.com

Since 80% of the workforce is involved in jobs that require chronic neck flexion, neck pain has become a prevalent issue among the general population.

Siddha therapy is an ancient healing system rooted in Tamil culture, dating back thousands of years (Sindhuja et al., 2024). It reflects a deep understanding of human health and well-being, established over millennia (Arumugam et al., 2016). According to Siddha medicine, there are 84 types of Vatha diseases, one of which is "*Sagana Vatham*," exhibiting symptoms similar to cervical spondylosis. Siddha therapy, based on Indian philosophy and culture, offers a holistic approach to well-being by addressing not only the physical body but also the mind, spirit, and environment. Having been practiced for over 5,000 years (Selvakkumar & Gayathri, 2020), Siddha therapy is gaining popularity due to its non-invasive nature, as it does not involve medication or surgery. The likelihood of reversing the disease and achieving a full recovery is often higher than many people anticipate. Siddha therapy has the advantage of eliminating the root cause of the disease and offering a complete cure.

In his work Yugi Munivar Vaidhya Sinthamani-800, Yugimuni describes the symptoms of *Sagana Vatham* in detail (Radha et al., 2024). He notes:

- Kaeluma Kazhuthin Keel Araikku Maelum
- Kediyaana Karamirandum Migavae Nonthu Vaalum
- Maesareeramellam Ganathirukkum
- Vaalibarkku Manam Kannum Mayakamaagum
- Thaelumae Irandu Kottinathu Pol Kadukkum
- Sagana Vali Noiudan Theerkanthaanae

This passage explains that *Sagana Vatham* shares many clinical characteristics with modern cervical spondylosis. One significant factor contributing to *Sagana Vatham* is a decline in "*Udal Vanmai*" (body strength), which is categorized into *Kaala Vanmai*, *Eyarkai Vanmai*, and *Seyarkai Vanmai*. *Kaala Vanmai* mainly affects the elderly, while poor posture, a sedentary lifestyle, and inadequate diets contribute to *Seyarkai Vanmai*. When lifestyle, occupation, and diet disturb the body's microelements (Panchapothangal), the three humors—*Vatham*, *Pitham*, and *Kabam*—become imbalanced (Elakkia, 2018). This imbalance can disrupt the body's seven vital tissues (Udal Thathukkal), leading to disease symptoms. According to Yugi Vaithiya Chinthamani, excessive consumption of bitter, astringent, or pungent foods, eating previously cooked food, irregular sleep patterns, extreme starvation, heavy lifting, long walks,

poor posture, cold environments, and an excess of fruits, vegetables, or curd can all contribute to *Sagana Vatham*.

Cervical spondylosis significantly impacts the quality of life, as constant neck pain and associated symptoms interfere with daily functioning. This makes it a serious condition requiring attention in treatment protocols. Through improved lifestyle management, the Siddha system offers excellent treatment alternatives for cervical spondylosis, helping to enhance patients' quality of life. This paper focuses on the holistic and self-healing principles of Siddha medicine in managing cervical spondylosis, supported by credible scientific evidence.

Cervical spondylosis, a degenerative condition of the cervical spine, results in both neural and vascular compression, leading to various symptoms. Its pathophysiology is influenced by both static and dynamic mechanical forces, with static variables including congenital stenosis, disc herniation, osteophytes, ligament hypertrophy, and calcification, while dynamic variables relate to abnormal forces on the spine during movements (Schneider et al., 1954; Verbiest, 1973).

2. Clinical Features

Symptoms which mimic *Sagana Vatham*, include:

- Pain in the cervical region
- Tingling and numbness in upper limbs
- Radiating pain in shoulders and upper limbs
- Heaviness, mental depression, giddiness
- Burning sensation in eyes and constipation (Jajeh et al., 2024)

3. Treatment Approaches

Traditional physical therapy and Siddha medicine have proven beneficial in treating cervical spondylosis. Common treatments involve strength training, heat therapy, acupuncture, and various external therapies (Thiagarajan & Pub, 1992; Janani et al., 2017).

3.1 External Therapies in Siddha Medicine

These include various applications such as *Pattru* (poultice), *Ottradam* (fomentation), *Varmam* (pressure point therapy), *Thokkanam* (physical manipulation), and Yoga.

3.1.1 Varmam

An ancient Tamil therapy focusing on specific energy points (*varmam*), helps release pranic energy to

relieve symptoms. Research by Thakur & Janani (2017) demonstrated significant improvements in cervical spondylosis patients treated with *Varmam*.

3.1.2 Patru (Poultice)

A poultice made from plant extracts, either heated or unheated, applied to affected areas, has shown to aid in symptom relief and physical function improvement (Purnamasari et al., 2020).

3.1.3 Ottradam

This is a traditional therapy using medicated wet or dry packs for pain relief, detoxification, and inflammation reduction. Studies by Kalaivani (2019) showed that patients receiving *Ottradam* exhibited improvement in cervical spondylosis symptoms.

3.1.4 Thokkanam

This Siddha touch therapy involves physical manipulation using various techniques and has shown to effectively manage musculoskeletal and neurological issues (Karthik Nagarajan et al., 2017).

3.1.5 Yoga

Yoga is a complementary therapy that helps reduce stress and alleviate symptoms of cervical spondylosis. Specific asanas like *Bhujangasana*, *Matsyasana*, and *Ustrasana* are particularly effective in improving flexibility and relieving pain (Bhardwaj, 2019; Satyanand et al., 2015).

These traditional methods offer holistic and non-invasive treatment options, promoting not only symptom relief but overall health and well-being.

4. Discussion

Cervical spondylosis has become increasingly common in recent years, and younger individuals are more prone to developing it due to poor posture, prolonged sitting, unhealthy dietary habits, and other factors that accelerate bone degeneration. This condition significantly reduces the quality of life for patients, as they experience neck pain and related symptoms that interfere with their daily activities. While medications are available to alleviate pain and discomfort, there is limited evidence supporting their ability to completely cure cervical spondylosis. Long-term use of analgesics and anti-inflammatory drugs may lead to adverse effects such as nephrotoxicity, hepatotoxicity, and harmful reactions that can affect

the central nervous system, gastrointestinal tract, and other organs (Wehling, 2014).

Siddha therapy, on the other hand, offers a safe and effective alternative treatment for cervical spondylosis. Siddha medicines are derived from nature and help heal illnesses without posing harm to human health. Additionally, exercise regimens involving proprioception, strengthening, endurance, and coordination have been shown to be more effective than conventional treatments like analgesics, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or muscle relaxants, as well as stress management techniques.

5. Conclusion

The profound wisdom and holistic understanding of human health passed down through generations is exemplified in Siddha therapy. This traditional practice aims to restore harmony and balance to the body, alleviating discomfort and promoting optimal health and vitality. However, due to a lack of awareness, Siddha therapy has seen a decline in popularity in recent years. It is essential to raise global awareness about Siddha therapy to revive this traditional form of medicine, which has the potential to cure diseases without surgical interventions.

Siddha therapy holds great promise for treating illnesses in a more cost-effective manner while offering complete cures. This paper reviewed various external therapies within Siddha medicine that have demonstrated remarkable efficacy in treating cervical spondylosis. It is our collective responsibility to introduce Siddha external therapy to the modern world, ensuring that the legacy and reputation of Siddha medicine are preserved and protected.

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