

Evaluation of Effectiveness of Varmam in the Symptomatic Management of *Thandagavadam*

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Abstract:

Low back pain and disability are chronic conditions, which are common in 70% of patients, who initially improve but experience repeated fluctuating pain episodes. *Thandagavadam* (Low back pain) characterised by pain in low back region with or without radiating to the lower limbs. It is a multi-factorial disease. Even though the contemporary western strategies offer effective symptomatic relief in the acute phase, they are associated with high cost and many adverse reactions when taken for long periods. Hence there is a need for treatment procedure which compensates all these lacunae. *Varmam* is traditional non-invasive approach advocated in Siddha system and is highly affordable. Moreover, immediate pain relief is possible by manipulation of *Varmam* points. It is a highly effective treatment methodology for low back pain and other painful musculoskeletal conditions. However, there is only limited evidence that exhibits and documents the efficiency of *Varmam* on low back pain. Hence we would like to prove the therapeutic benefits of *Varmam* techniques in reducing pain and discomfort in low back pain patients. The sample consists of 10 patients of middle age group residing in Chennai. The Outcome of the study of *Thandagavadam* is assessed by visual analogue scale (VAS) and Oswestry disability scores. The study show edpromising result and using Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test statistical analytical methods, the inference of the study proved the effectiveness of *Varmam* treatment in *Thandagavadam*.

Keywords: Varmam, Thandagavadam, Low backpain, Oswestry questionnaire

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Introduction:

Globally, life with disability caused by low back pain increased by 54% between 1990 and 2015, mainly because of population increase and ageing, with the biggest increases in low-income and middle - income countries⁽¹⁾. Low back pain is now the leading cause of disability worldwide. Low Back Pain and disability are chronic conditions, which are common in 70%of people among developing countries like India. The contemporary western strategies for *Thandagavadam* (Sacroiliitis) include steroid injection, NSAIDs, muscle relaxants, physical therapy, and surgery. Even though these strategies offer effective symptomatic relief in the acute phase, they are associated with high cost and many adverse reactions when taken for long periods. *Varmam* is a traditional non invasive approach and is highly affordable and immediate pain relief is possible by manipulation of *Varmam* points. It is a highly effective traditional treatment methodology for low back pain and other painful musculoskeletal conditions.

Varmam or *Vaasi* means life energy

Methodology:

Study Design	:	Case Series
No. of Patients	:	10
Gender	:	7 female and 3 males
Age	:	30 – 60 years
Study place	:	PG. Scholar Dept. Of <i>Varma Maruthuvam</i> , Arignar Anna Hospital for Indian Medicine, Arumbakam, Chennai
Duration of the study	:	1 month
No. Of Sitzings	:	Twice a week
Amount of pressure to be given	:	¼ <i>Mathirai</i> (as per Siddha scale)

which is the basis of whole universe. It is the foremost energy which is derived from both the parents. This life energy is constantly flowing in particular pathway in human body⁽²⁾ and is concentrated in certain points called *Varmam* points. Disease occurs when the flow is obstructed (or damaged) partially or completely due to intrinsic or extrinsic causes. This decreased energy flow is resorted by using therapeutic *Varmam* point stimulation called *Varmam* treatment⁽³⁾. In this study we have tried to prove the therapeutic benefits of *Varmam* techniques in reducing pain and discomfort in low back pain patients. Common symptoms of *Thandagavadam* include pain and muscle tension, or stiffness localised the costal margin and above the inferior gluteal folds, with or without referred leg pain⁽⁴⁾. The elements comprising the lumbar spine (e.g, soft tissue, vertebrae, zygapophyseal and sacroiliac joints, inter vertebral discs, and neurovascular structures) are prone to different stressors, and each of these, alone or in combination, can contribute to low back pain.⁽⁵⁾

Varmam points for low back pain^{(6),(7)}

Six *Varmam* points are predominantly used for *Thandagavadam*. They are shown in Table 1

S.No	Name	Location in the body
1.	<i>Kaalkulachu</i>	Central point of anterior ankle crease
2.	<i>Aasankaalam</i>	A small pit just above Tragus of the ear
3.	<i>Sevikuthukaalam</i>	In the depression felt between tragus and mandibular joint when the mouth is slightly open at 30°
4.	<i>Nanganaputtu</i>	3 fingers lateral shallow depression over the Sacroiliac joint
5.	<i>Kombaerykaalam</i>	8 fingers above the medial malleolus border shin Bone
6.	<i>Viruthikaalam</i>	Web area in between great toe and second toe

Manipulation techniques:

KaalKulachu:



Technique:

Place the center part of the thumb in centre point of anterior ankle crease and give upward pressure.

AasanKaalam:



Technique:

Place the pulp of middle finger over the point bilaterally and give ¼ Mathirai pressure for 20secand release

Sevikuthu Kaalam



Technique:

Fix the centre part of the middle finger and apply gentle upward pressure.

Nanganaputtu:



Technique:

Place the pulp of the thumb and gently press sideward.

KombaeryKaalam:



Technique:

Place tips of the both middle three fingers over the point press three times (like pumping action) towards medial border of tibia.

ViruthiKaalam:



Technique:

Fix the centre portion of the thumb and apply deep pressure and move upward.

Results:

The results obtained from clinical assessment, Oswestry Low Back Pain Disability Questionnaire, Visual Analogue Scale, are listed in Fig. 3, Table 2 and Table 3 respectively.

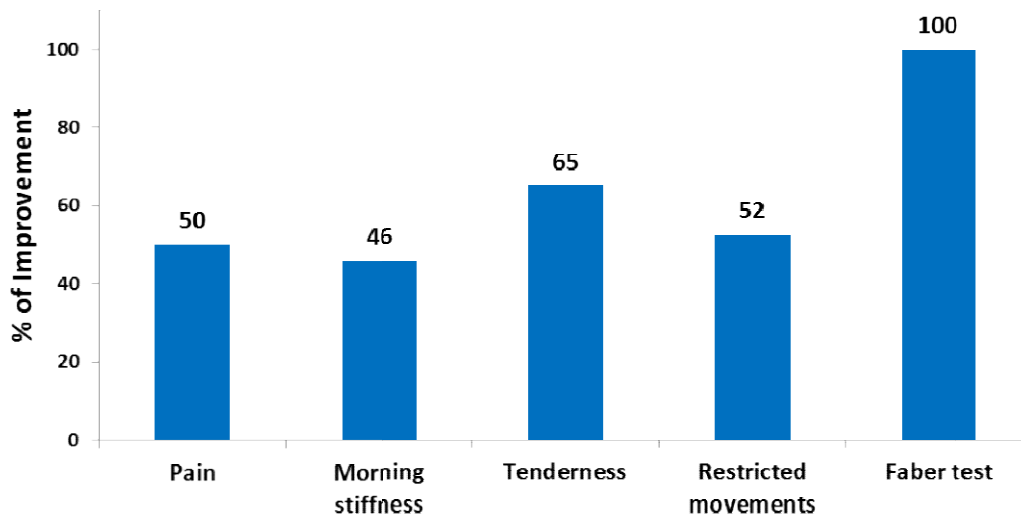
Table 2. Oswestry Low Back Pain Disability Questionnaire ⁽⁸⁾:

Various aspects of Quality of life	Before treatment	After treatment	Improvement (%)	Inference
Pain intensity	30	12	60.0	Significant improvement
Personal care	29	11	62.1	Significant improvement
Lifting	29	16	44.8	Improved
Walking	24	12	50.0	Significant improvement
Sitting	29	17	41.4	Improved
Standing	27	11	59.3	Significant improvement
Sleeping	19	13	31.6	Improved
Social life	23	15	34.8	Improved
Travelling	26	15	42.3	Improved

Table3. Visual Analogue Scale ⁽⁹⁾:

S.No.	Before Treatment	After Treatment	Improvement (%)	Inference
1.	500	200	60.0	Significant improvement
2.	400	100	75.0	Significant improvement
3.	700	600	14.3	Improved
4.	600	100	83.3	Clinically controlled
5.	700	500	28.6	Improved
6.	500	200	60.0	Significant improvement
7.	600	200	66.7	Significant improvement
8.	700	400	42.9	Significant improvement
9.	600	200	66.7	Significant improvement
10.	400	100	75.0	Clinically controlled

Fig.3. Clinical Assessment:



Discussion:

In the above case series, effectiveness of *Varma Maruthuvam* was assessed in patients with mild to severe *Thandagavadam* through clinical assessment, VAS scale and Oswestry Low Back Pain Disability Questionnaire. The acquired results showed considerable decrease in pain and other discomforting symptoms in-patients with mild and moderate symptoms. The pain relief was quick and lasted for few minutes to few

days. Significant improvement in the quality of life of the 10 participants is also noted. Moreover, we have not come across any adverse effects while practicing *Varmam* in our study. However, in severe cases only mild improvement is noted. Therapy for chronic back pain should include not only pharmacological or invasive interventions, but mostly change of lifestyle ⁽¹⁰⁾. Those severe cases may need combined treatment along with internal medicines.

Conclusion:

In the present case series study, many of the clinical symptoms of the patients were decreased along with significant improvement in range of movements. The authors hope that this study may open the gate for further clinical studies and randomised control trials with more number of patients to prove the

effectiveness of *Varma Maruthuvam* in *Thandagavadam* with stronger and objective evidences. Also, the studies should be designed to find out the ability of *Varma Maruthuvam* in modifying the disease process and its mechanism of action.

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