

Thalapothichil or Shirolepana – A Kerala Speciality

Thalapothichil is a unique method of drug delivery which is widely practiced among the Physicians, especially in Kerala. The word comes from the Malayalam vocabulary, which literally means to cover the head (*Thala*-Head, *Potichil* – to cover). In this procedure prepared medicine in the form of a semisolid paste is applied and it is recommended in Autism, ADHD, diseases of head and in various mental disorders. The commonly used drugs are Gooseberry powder, *Panchagandhachoorna* (a combination of 5 aromatic herbs), *Musta* (*Cyperus rotundus*) etc. Drugs are selected as per the disease condition of the patient and prepared either by boiling and socking the drugs in buttermilk or simply socking the drugs in buttermilk and kept overnight. Drugs having fresh juice (*swarasa*) need not be socked but can be directly made into a paste by its juice.

Scalp should be hair free, suitable oil is applied over the head prior to *lepana* if required. The paste is applied initially over vertex, followed by front, right, back and left side of the scalp. The thickness of the paste should be 1-2 cm. The applied paste is covered with a plantain leaf or lotus leaf (made pliable by heating) and a hole is made on it on the vertex area and the paste from the vertex portion is removed to get a dip and it is filled with suitable oil. The procedure is done for 30-90 minutes. After that the paste is removed and abhyanga with suitable oil is applied. *Rasnadichoorna* is applied over the vertex after the procedure and the patient is advised to follow suitable *pathyakramas* (dietary and life style restrictions). It must not be done in night; Care must be taken that the paste over scalp must not dry by keeping it for long time.

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