Nasal Drug Delivery In Ayurveda : A Narrative Review

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Abstract
Ayurveda is the ancient medical system in India that uses nasal therapy. During COVID-19 pandemic, the ministry of AYUSH provided guidelines to boost immunity. The Nasya (nasal delivery) was one of the recommendations by the AYUSH ministry to boost immunity. Nasya has been still in practice for various ailments like chronic rhinitis, headache, cervical spondylitis, Dyspnea, etc., but the knowledge about how Nasya works is still unclear.
This review article discusses the practice and current advances in nasal delivery in modern science. It also discusses the possible mechanism of how Nasya can act and boost immunity and what research can be done in the form of clinical and experimental studies to increase the knowledge and understanding of Nasya.

INTRODUCTION
Ayurveda is an ancient medical system of India which is become popular worldwide in recent times. During COVID-19 pandemic, Ayurveda become more popular, and many people sought Ayurvedic medicines to prevent and cure COVID-19.[1]

The ministry of AYUSH gave some general instructions for the prevention and cure of COVID-19.[2] In the guidelines, the practice of nasal administration of Ayurvedic oil in small quantities was advised. So, there was a question if the nasal administration of medicated oil can affect immunity. In Ayurveda nose is said a gateway to the brain, is this supported by the current literature? To answer this question a literature review was done, the relevant literature was collected, and critical analysis was done to open several questions and knowledge gaps in the understanding of nasal drug administration in Ayurveda.

METHOD
There has been already published literature on the mode of action of Nasya. We searched and analyzed the papers published earlier. Most of them have been described as theoretical parts of Nasya karma in Ayurveda, the types of Nasya by different texts, drugs used in Nasya, and the efficacy of Nasya Karma in various diseases or conditions. Some of the papers also discussed the possible mode of action of Nasya karma, but the exact model has been not identified. Some previous papers highlight the nose–brain connections. But their critical appraisal to understand the Nasya is not done so far. Therefore, this review was needed.

we identified various records and those eligible records were critically studied. we were interested to find out the absorption of nasal-delivered drugs in Ayurveda. So, those studies which have added new information to these subjects were only included. following keywords were used “Nasal drug delivery. Nose – brain connections” “Nose Brain connections” “ Nasya Karma” “Nasal Drug Delivery in Ayurveda” in’ PubMed’ ‘PubMed central’ and ‘google scholar’.  

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we found many similarities in the Ayurvedic concept and appraisal of nasal drug delivery in modern medicine. Modern science also supports Nasal drug delivery systems. The procedure of Nasya, each step in the procedure, the preparatory procedure, the main procedure, and the post-operative procedure of Nasya can be very well explained based on descriptions in physiology, pathology, and pharmacology.

**ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY IN BRIEF**

The nose is an organ made for mainly 2 functions; one is it works as part of the upper respiratory system, and the other is it plays an important role in the process of olfaction.

The air enters through the nose. The nasal cavity filters the air. This function is mainly done by the cilia present in the nasal mucosa. They trap dust, fume, insects, etc., and filter air. The nasal mucosa is provided with mucosa-secreting cells, due to which it always remains wet. Thus, dust particles can be accumulated in the mucosa.

Another function of the nose is to make the air slightly warm and humidified to assist pulmonary ventilation. This is done due to the rich blood supply to the nasal mucosa and the cavities inside the nose. Due to wetness in the cavities, the air is humidified. Due to humidification, the process of pulmonary ventilation gets eased.

The nose is made of a bony part. It contains sinuses. The structure of the nose makes the skull light. It is due to the ventilation due to the sinus. The nasal cavity is like a box. The sinuses provide ventilation to the cavity inside the nose.

The nose provides mainly two functions. It acts as a passage and takes inhaled air from the cavity. During this passage, the cilia present in the cavity filtrate the air. There are numerous mucosa-secreting glands inside the mucosa membrane of the nose cavity. Due to the mucosa, the surface always remains wet. The dust, fume, and insects inhaled are trapped in the cilia and wet mucosa and thus prevented from entering the respiratory tract.
Secondly, due to the rich blood supply to the nose, when the inhaled air travels through the nose cavity, it slightly gets warm and humidified. This nose function is very important regarding the pulmonary ventilation and exchange of gases inside the alveoli in the lungs.

The sinus inside the nose provides ventilation, as discussed earlier. This ventilation is very useful in the process of phonation. The open sinus provides resonance to the air, which helps in phonation. In sinusitis, the sinus is closed to the blockage, and a change in the voice can be seen.[3]

THE PROCEDURE OF NASYA

The procedure Nasya begins with the fitness for Nasya Karma. The early stages of rhinitis are contraindicated for the Nasya Karma as during this stage; the nasal mucosa is already secreting the secretions in larger amounts. Therefore, there is no space available for the absorption of the drug inserted through the Nasya.

In chronic rhinitis, the secretions begin to diminish, and Nasya can be performed. Therefore, Nasya is indicated in chronic rhinitis (Jeerna Pratishyaya), while it is contraindicated in early rhinitis (Nava-pratishyaya). Nasya is also contra-indicated among persons who just have eaten, or drank water or milk. In these conditions, mucosal secretions may have increased. Due to this Nasya is contra-indicated.

The nasal mucosa is a very special type of mucosa which is very sensitive to even a small change in the climate therefore Nasya is advised in a particular season when there is no extreme heat, or cold.

The position of Nasya is very significant in the efficacy of this procedure. The angle of the head allows the medicine to enter the nasal cavity and provides contact between the drug and the nasal mucosa. This position must be kept for a certain period. It also makes the sinuses in the nasal cavity open. The process of oil massage overhead, face, and shoulders followed by the hot fomentation m the increased circulation and the warmth makes easy to mucus thin and easy to get expelled.[4]

RELATION BETWEEN DRUGS AND FORMULATIONS USED FOR NASYA AND MODE OF ACTION

There are specific drugs mentioned in Ayurveda for the Nasya Karma. Since these drugs have an affinity towards the receptors in the brain, those drugs are advised for Nasya Karma; for example, Vacha (Acorus Calamus) has Anti-convulsant activity. [5] Thus, the drugs which act on certain receptors are advised for Nasya Karma.

Similarly, the drug formulation is also one important factor regarding the Nasya Karma. Ayurveda advised various medicated oils, including Ghee, for the Nasya Karma. As fat-soluble substances can easily enter the bilipid membranes of the nasal mucosa, fats are an important medium for nasal instillation. Therefore, Ayurveda advised various oils for Nasya Karma. Acharya Vagbhata explained that oil is the best fat among the four fats in Ayurveda (Ghrita, Taila, Vasa, and Majja) in healthy individuals.

Furthermore, it should be noted that oils used for Nasya karma are heated repeatedly, unlike the oils used for massage or enema, which are prepared by heating for only one round. But for Nasya, about 100 such rounds are followed. For example, Dhanwantaram used for enema is heated through one cycle or round only, while Dhanwantarm (101) is Dhanwantaram prepared for massage is heated with goat milk 100 more times. This process makes minute particles of the herbal extract used for the preparation, increasing bioavailability due to the small particle size.

Saindhav (rock salt), honey, and Asava (fermented products) are commonly used substances for nasya. They have different pH values. The rock salt contains Na+ ions responsible for changing the drug from hypotonic to hypertonic. The Nasya drug is not expected to get absorbed every time. In the Virechana Nasya type, the Dosha is expelled. Therefore, rock salt plays an important role in Nasya.

IS THERE NOSE-BRAIN CONNECTIONS?

Yes. There is a nose – a brain connection. The cribriform plate contains many very small perforations. From these perforations, exit fibers of the ophthalmic nerve pierce. The cribriform plate is a part of the ethmoid bone and forms the roof of the nose cavity.

Sphenopalatine foramen is located at superior the level of the superior meatus, allowing communication between the nasal cavity and the pterygopalatine fossa. Blood supply the nose has a very rich vascular supply. It receives blood from both the internal and external carotid arteries. Anterior and posterior ethmoidal arteries are the internal carotid artery branches descending to the nasal cavity through the cribriform plate. These arteries form anastomoses in the anterior part of the nose.
MUCUS IN THE NOSE
It is a viscous and elastic fluid secreted by respiratory mucosa. The glands are made of mucus cells and serous cells. There are about 100000 glands in the human nose. Other goblet cells also secrete another type of mucosa. The mucosa consists of mucin, water, lipid, and proteins. These proteins are albumin, immunoglobulin, lysozymes, and lactoferrins. These immunoglobins produced by the nasal mucosa play an important role in immunity. [6]
The mucus secreted by the serous glands and goblet cells is quite different. It consists of 2 layers of upper gel and a lower sole layer. The lower sole layer is in contact with the cilia. Thus, this difference in the viscosity of the mucus layer affects ciliary beating, thereby having a larger effect on mucociliary clearance. The mucociliary clearance depends upon the thickness of these layers. The viscosity is also subject to change in reply to even small changes in the nasal cavity. The mucociliary clearance cause removal of foreign and harmful substances from the upper respiratory tract. Thus, the nose plays a very important role in immunity. [7]

NASAL DELIVERY IN MODERN MEDICINE
Nasal delivery began in seventy eighties in the modern system of medicine. It attracted scientists because of its quick onset of action, high absorption of the drug, and the medicine can cross Blood-Brain Barrier (BBB).
Many drugs have been studied and it has been well accepted that nasal administration of drugs directly gets absorbed into the brain circulation. Nasal application of tobacco, cocaine, Anti - Histaminic drugs, decongestants, and Antibiotics is in practice.
There are some key benefits of nasal drug delivery that the drug avoids first-pass metabolism, polar compounds, and drugs with poor stability can be administered by nasal route. The onset of action of drugs in nasal delivery is rapid.

NASAL DRUG DELIVERY IN AYURVEDA
Nasya Karma is an important Panchakarma as mentioned in Ayurveda. Nasya Karma is very important to keep the health of the eyes, ears, and brain functions such as control over the and body, muscle coordination. It is of great therapeutic and preventive value. It is also indicated in local diseases of the nose and throat such as sinusitis, the diseases of the throat and larynx.
However, there is very little research work done to get more insight into Nasya’s karma. Nasya is to be administered after local massage over the head, neck, and face followed by hot fomentation. whether these procedures affect absorption of the drug is not known.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Journal</th>
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<tr>
<td>P Rahul, D Suman</td>
<td>Therapeutic uses of Nasya karma: a conceptual, critical review</td>
<td>International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research, Nov.2020 8 (supplement 2)</td>
<td>Review Article</td>
<td>The article discussed Nasya Karma, types, pharmacodynamics, and the diseases or conditions in which Nasya Karma is indicated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>L Smita, P Swapnil et al.</td>
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<td>Review</td>
<td>Different types of Nasya Karma, type, and mode of action have been discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Review</td>
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<td>World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews Jan 2020</td>
<td>Review</td>
<td>The nose-brain connection has been discussed.</td>
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<td>Dr. Amit Mukherjee, Dr. Sanjeev Malhukar Rao Khuje, Dr. O. P Dwivedi</td>
<td>The potency of Nasya Karma</td>
<td>Journal of Drug Delivery and Therapeutics 2019</td>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Nasya types and Nasya vidhi is discussed in detail. There is a discussion regarding the absorption of the drugs used in Nasya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Navin</td>
<td>Concept of Sharir in Nasya Karma</td>
<td>Indian Journal of Pharmaceutical and Biological Research</td>
<td>Review</td>
<td>The anatomical aspect of Nasya karma is described in short.</td>
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### Scientific Basis of Nasya

**Procedure** | **Effect**
--- | ---
Preparatory procedure - local massage by oil and hot fermentation | Increase blood flow in head, neck and face. Stimulate mucociliary clearance.
Position of the patient - sleeping in supine with head slight tilted | Makes respiratory mucosa exposed and increases the area for nasal absorption.
The patient has to remain in same position after nasal instillation | Increases duration of the drug contact with the respiratory mucosa.
Patient should not swallow the drug instilled in the nose | The drug mainly contains mucus and debris and bacteria or viruses which may enter the GI tract.
Hot water gargling and medicated smoke inhalation | Hot water gargling kills bacteria or viruses in the throat and medicated smoke helps to dry up the mucus in the nasal cavity.

### Discussion

This review paper aimed to find out more insight into how Nasya Karma works and whether it affects the immune system. The nasal drug delivery is called the Nasya Karma and the nose is said to be a gateway to the brain in Ayurveda which is supported by modern anatomy and physiology as well. The Nasya Karma is a very systematic procedure to deliver the drug into the nose and to reach it up to the brain. If the indications of Nasya Karma are seen they are related to the local diseases of the nose and the diseases related to the Central Nervous System (CNS) as well. Thus, the study explains in detail the scientific basis of this procedure.

Nasya Karma can be studied properly from the following aspects:

1. Studies to get more insight on Nasya karma like its effect on CNS circulation, the effect over brain waves, the effect on the respiratory system and the cardiac system.
2. Studies to find out the effects of Nasya karma on various aspects such as the effect on mucociliary clearance, the effect on mucus, effect on anatomical structures such as mucosa, nasal cartilage, paranasal sinuses.
3. Studies to find out different types of Nasya like Pratimarsha Nasya which is advised for a longer period on the immune system.
4. Studies to find out the effect of Nasya karma on various allergic conditions and psychiatric disorders.
5. Animal studies can be performed wherever suitable before the clinical trials. But as the Nasya has been practiced since ancient times direct clinical trials can also be done. If the evidence-based practice of Nasya karma is done, it can generate more confidence to deal with new global healthcare challenges like COVID-19.

### Conclusion

This review article concludes that Ayurveda had a developed nasal drug delivery system and the Nasya Karma in Ayurveda is a scientific and systematic procedure for nasal drug absorption. The current literature also suggests the effect of Nasya Karma on the immune system. However, more studies in the form of animal studies or human trials are needed to detail the exact effects.
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