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Herbal drugs in the management of cardiovascular diseases: Ayurvedic perspective

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Background: Cardiovascular Disease (CVD), including heart disease and stroke, is the world's largest killer, claiming 17.1 million lives a year. The synthetic drugs that constitute the current pharmacological armamentarium are themselves effective in managing the condition but not without setbacks. To identify a drug that is safe, affordable and effective is a challenge to modern medicine today. British medical journal (June 2003) published a paper dealing with development of a polypill (Six drugs in one formulation) consisting of hypocholesteremic statin, diuretic thiazide, beta blocker, ACE inhibitor, folic acid and aspirin. Many scientific studies reported on the efficacy of Ayurvedic drugs in cardiovascular diseases.

Method: Ayurvedic classics, compendia, internet publications and journals were referred to compile the relevant information.

Result and Conclusion: Ayurvedic treatise documented drugs employed in Hridroga (Heart disease). A critical analysis of the herbal lore utilized in the management of Hridroga (Heart disease) like *Arjuna*, *Pushkarmoola*, *Bala*, *Nagabala*, *Sunthi*, *Pippali*, *Yashtimadhu*, *Haritaki* and *Dashmoola* etc. clearly indicates that they are possessing hypotensive, hypocholesteremic, anti-platelet and thrombolytic activities. The treatment protocol mentioned for pakshaghata (Stroke) which involves snehana, swedana and virechana is found to be beneficial in the management of CVD. These treatments exert thrombolytic and vasodilatory effects and facilitate to improve collateral circulation and blood supply to the affected area. An experimental study carried out to evaluate the cardioprotective activity of a classical Hridya yoga (Poly-herbal formulation) of Bhavaprakashasamhita reverted some parameters particularly transaminase enzymes in serum, cardiac parameters and LPO in heart tissue and histopathological changes which suggest the protective role of *Hridya yoga* in cardiac damage in rats.