



Siddha and Energy Healing: A Novel Concept to Holistic Well Being

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Abstract

Siddha medicine, is a type of ancient Indian alternative medicine, which embrace a range of practices intended at promoting holistic well-being through the manipulation of energy fields within the body. Energy healing has vast prospective in delivering valuable aids across a broad spectrum of health diseases; its safety and efficacy in the management of various conditions. Despite its growing popularity, Energy healing techniques remains disputable and combats several obstructions to its approval and acceptance by the medical community.

This paper endorses a broad overview of the concept and practice of Energy healing in Siddha medicine, historical evidence of resemblance to other ancient practices, familiarity to different forms of modern body energy systems, and in-depth driving factors for its practice, and applications in few cases. Additionally, paper also probes the resistance to its widespread approval and adoption; requirement of conduction of thorough scientific research to prove its efficacy and safety to help connect traditional medicine with energy medicine highlighting the potential for a more unified move to health and healing.

Keywords: Energy Medicine; Holistic Healing; Siddha Medicine; Complementary and Alternative Modality

Abbreviations

EM: Energy Medicine; CAM: Complementary and Alternative Modality; NCCIM: National Centre for Complementary and Integrative Health.

Introduction

Healing practices have been employed globally for centuries to address physical, mental, and spiritual discomfort, long preceding the advent of allopathic medicine [1]. Modern medicine is currently undergoing a shift, from old conventional ways into an expanded, integrated new

approach that prioritizes comprehensive healthcare, treating the whole person as one rather than just their specific ailment [2]. It combines various therapeutic modalities and complementary approaches both traditional and modern, to offer patients a broader range of treatment options [3]. Siddha medicine also called as Siddha vaidyam; is one of the oldest form of traditional medicine and healing practice in the world, quite prevalent in Southern part of India and seen adapted in Sri Lanka and Malaysia too. The core principles of Siddha are quite similar to Ayurveda though it differs in spiritual adepts and practices. Siddha's simplistic, non-invasive approach to healing and curing ailments, is making it more versatile and acceptable. It focuses on

enhancing physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being by conforming simple lifestyle practices such as posture maintenance, breathing exercises, meditation, and dietary habits. These forms help promoting the body's energy, offer potential benefits for pain management, stress reduction, and overall well-being, contributing to a holistic approach to health care [4].

Siddha healing conceptualizes mind and body as unified entity, aiming to align them to enhance health. The misalignment of the body and mind causes an imbalance in the body's energy field also referred to as biofield of an individual causing some ailment or illness [5]. This concept aligns with other energy modalities or therapies, such as Energy medicine, holistic healing and quantum physics of modern times. Traditional Siddhas, who have passed on their teachings in generations; incorporated energy healing sessions, the practices that focus on manipulating the body's energy fields to promote remedial and cures for diseases and improve physical, emotional, and mental health [6]. These sessions are based on the belief that the body's natural energy fields which can be disrupted or manipulated by overlapping energy frequency of others or perceived thoughts, memories, past incidents, physical traumas, interactions, things to manifest, and places visited by an individual [7]. A Siddha practitioner evaluates the person's sensations and imbalances, identify the causal factors and stimulates the energy field by aid of various manipulative methods, mind-body interventions and energy sessions aiming to restore harmony in the energy levels of the soul [8].

Holistic approach is the cornerstone of Siddha medicine and treatment procedures in Siddha system helps in normalizing the altered vital life factors. Though, Siddha treats many ailments by herbal medications, in this paper highlight will be drawn to energy healing practices common to healers who learnt this from their ancestors (vanshaanugat) and is passed on to next generations. Ancient Siddha manuscripts mentions energy manipulations that resembles modern times Energy medicine practices, highlighting common conceptual and practical connections to Energy Healing [3]. Understanding these connections can offer insights into how traditional practices have driven modern complementary medicine and provided a holistic approach to health care. This paper provides a broad overview of the concept and practice of Energy healing in Siddha medicine, historical evidence of resemblance to other ancient practices and modern energy systems, driving factors for its practice, and application of energy sessions in few cases to show its efficacy. Paper also probes the challenges and resistance for its adoption; requirement of conduction of thorough scientific research to prove its effectivity and safety to help connect conventional medicine with Siddha medicine highlighting the potential for

a more unified move to health and healing.

Energy Healing- An overview

Subtle energy, also known as life force or vital energy, is a concept recognized in many traditional healing practices around the world. This form of energy is believed to permeate the body and influence physical, mental, and spiritual health. While not directly measurable by conventional scientific methods, subtle energy is considered a fundamental aspect of various healing modalities. This life force is referred to by various names across different cultures in world, such as prana in Hindu and Tibetan traditions, chi in China, and ki in Japan. A similar concept exists in Western traditions as the Holy Spirit, with references found in Old Testament passages that have roots in ancient religious traditions [9,10].

The National Centre for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIM) defined energy healing as process involving channeling of healing energy via the hands of a healer or practitioner into the patient's body to restore equilibrium in energy disturbances and, therefore, achieving health [10]. Energy healing similar to Siddha philosophy employs an expanded inflection of health and disease, it too identifies the mind-body relations with core belief in physical body as being surrounded by an energetic field, with illness originating in part due to psycho-social or emotional issues that manifests due to imbalance in energetic flow [11]. Despite its deep historical roots and widespread acceptance in various regional contexts, energy healing remains a controversial affair due to the lack of substantial proof supporting its historic presence and outcomes.

Historical Pretext of Energy Healing

Old inscriptions, manuscripts and writings around the world confirm people attributing sickness to witchcraft, demons, adverse astral influences, or the will of gods and adhering to remedies provided by local vaidyas, rishis, and shamans [12]. However, the technological advancements in medicine over the past two centuries has significantly replaced many of these traditional health practices. Recently, holistic approach via different ways has gained popularity. It is seen when conventional management of diseases seems ineffective, these energy-modulating practices are been adopted in modern medicine [13].

Hippocrates, Father of medicine; quoted natural forces within humans as the true healers of disease [12,14]. He believed that illness can be attributed to thoughts, ideas and feelings and contrary to the belief of many others, mentioned them to come from the brain and not from the heart. Theophrastus P. a physician and philosopher portrayed a human being having two bodies: a visible body (physical)

and an invisible body in form of energy. The dual approach of Roman medicine through integration of physical and holistic methods by adopting both spiritual and cultural practices, addressed both the physical and psychological aspects of patient care. They had adopted massages closely related to Varmam deep pressure therapy of Siddhars, that similarly concentrates on specific points in order to tonify and balance the energy system in the body [15].

According to Hindu mythology, the twin brothers Ashwini Kumar's were known for their healing abilities, they practiced sacred and divine rituals and stressed on importance of both body and spirit to keep energy levels high to enhance body's ability to heal with amazing recoveries. In ancient vedic period, rishi-munis treated people suffering with some ailments with "laying on of hands" as first-line therapy attributing to magical spells [16]. Ayurvedic medicine utilizes diet, detoxification and purification techniques, herbal and mineral remedies, yoga, breathing exercise, meditation and massage therapy as holistic healing methods [17]. Tibetan Buddhists highlighted the importance of meditations and mindfulness practices in creating a positive thought and environment, which boosts immune system. The deep meditative states achieved during the Medicine Buddha Empowerment, enlightens the soul with energy for healing, dispelling sickness and for awakening the innate healing wisdom that lies within every individual [18].

Long before Therapeutic Touch came into existence, ancient Americans, Shamans; were healing the ill with laying on hands to cleanse the body and remove negative energy to restore physical and spiritual balance quite similar to Siddhars and vedic people [19]. The Chinese medicine is deeply rooted to 4000 years old and believed that meridians conduct energy (qi) which regulates spiritual, emotional, mental and physical balance. On disruption in the flow of energy, by poor health habits or other circumstances, pain and/or disease occurs [20]. Ancient civilizations of Japan, China, Greece and Polynesia showed evidences of using 'Pranic healing', or modulation of energy of individuals, with varied names for this force like Ki, Chi, Pneuma, Mana, Ruah [21]. In alignment with these, proponents of ancient Siddha healers believe that the physical body is permeated by an energy system which consists of energy centers, energy pathways, through which the pranic energy flows [22,23].

Siddha Healing - Connection with other Energy Healing Practices

Energy Medicine and Siddha medicine both operate under the broader umbrella of traditional healing practices but share many foundational concepts. Their focus on vital energy, balance, and holistic health offers a bridge between ancient wisdom and contemporary medical practices. Both

EM and Siddha medicine take a comprehensive approach to health, emphasizing that physical well-being is interconnected with mental and spiritual health. Understanding these connections can enhance the appreciation of Siddha medicines relevance in modern CAM contexts.

Siddha medicine is based on ancient roots in the concept of "Prāṇā," which is similar to the concept of vital energy or life force. Siddha philosophy posits that health is a balance between three vital energies or "humors": Vāta (air), Pitta (fire), and Kapha (earth and water) [24]. The balance of these 'Doshas' or humor is essential for maintaining health and treating disease. EM talks of subtle energy or biofield and aims to balance and harmonize the energy fields for well-being. It is believed that disruptions or blockages in this energy can lead to illness similar to belief of Siddha which lays emphasis on vital energy or prana to flow harmoniously through the body's channels for health maintenance.

Siddha and Unani were the oldest medicine systems which focused on examination of Nadi (pulse) to gauge imbalances in the body's energy systems and diagnose illnesses. EM also utilizes diagnostic techniques like biofeedback or visual inspection to determine the disturbed aura [25]. Therapeutic techniques like siddha Varmam and Thokannam bears a lot of similarity to Chinese massages and acupuncture. Instigating energy points by mind-body reading are been used by both Siddha and Reiki. Putative type of EM is based on theory of generating low frequency energy field by a therapist or practitioner instead of a device through hands like in Siddha where the expert manipulates the healing by hand movement on body [26]. For mind and body balance all energy healing systems stress on lifestyle modification, herbal remedies and ritualistic practices to achieve therapeutic outcome which is the core of Siddha medicine. It projects satvik food and yoga to help energy level equilibrium [22,27].

Though, the popularity of Energy healing worldwide and Siddha in Indian subcontinent is increasing for their potential contributions to modern healthcare, their mechanism of action remains obscure and there are no scientifically proven theories on how these energy modalities operate [28]. Both fields seek to bridge traditional practices with modern medical approaches, advocating for a more integrative model of health care. By exploring these parallels, practitioners and researchers can foster a greater understanding of how traditional practices can inform and complement contemporary approaches to health and healing.

Siddha's Concept of Energy Disbalance

Our minds are powerful, and many diseases begin in the mind. The mind acts as a canvas where our thoughts

are projected, representing a crucial part of human consciousness. It serves as a holographic representation of the human body. Positive thoughts and a genuine intention to heal, can trigger healing at a spiritual level and stimulate our energies. Siddha medicine like conventional medicine acknowledges the fundamental structure of life is atom, which possess continuously changing energies that underpin the chemical reactions occurring in every cell of the body [24]. The healing process involves changes in the body's energies at multiple levels, including the behavior of ions moving across cell membranes, electrical impulses in the nervous system, and the electromagnetic fields surrounding each organ. Electrical impulses in the nervous system play a vital role in transmitting signals that regulate bodily functions and responses to healing [29].

Siddha conceptualizes that all entities possess different energy frequencies which influence our own, and often unresolved energies embedded within individuals for longer duration leads to blockages and health disorders. These blockages can hinder the free flow of prana or energy, leading to physical ailments and preventing us from achieving personal goals and desires [13,14]. Negative experiences, chronic stress, emotional trauma, and negative thought patterns too can leave lasting imprints on respective body, and can manifest as tension, pain or psychological distress or imbalance causing illness and low energy levels [30]. Carrying these emotional blockages over the years can disrupt various aspects of life, including physical capabilities, health, careers, relationships, and overall quality of life. Vital Energies transferring these blockages as memories and information distributed throughout the body, has been gaining interest, particularly in the treatment of psychological trauma [31].

Orthodox and generational Siddhars often stumble upon detailed information about a person's history or incidences that seems to be stored in the body's energy system, causing auto-immune diseases like RA and Fibromyalgia. Instances shows these energy systems encode, store and transmit highly nuanced information and passes the genetic data to next generation so sometimes the influences or effects can be visualized in future kins [32]. Understanding the interplay between emotional and physical health underscores the necessity of addressing through appropriate therapies to mitigate physical symptoms, promoting a balanced and healthy life.

Healing Power of Siddha Energy Sessions

Free flowing energy throughout the body eliminates physical health problems attributed to pain, disease and structural dysfunction. Energy sessions significantly increases energy levels even if no specific problem exists. It is used as both a preventative as well as a healing treatment

in siddha medicine.

Energy sessions in the medical context, often referred to as energy healing therapeutic practices that focus on manipulating the body's energy fields to promote healing and well-being [33]. These sessions are based on the belief that the body has natural energy fields that can be influenced by healing touch and manipulation on these disturbed fields is performed through experts for improving physical, emotional, and mental health. Siddhars are able to influence subtle forms of energy with their hands, intentions, or meditation. By focusing on these vital energies, practitioners are able to feel vibrational frequencies with their hands and align the biofield through interactions and modulating them [10,14]. Experts in siddha also treats the spiritual aspect of healing by engagement of spiritual energy, which operates at a profound level on our spiritual essence. This type of healing entails the transfer of energy; derived not from the healers, but rather, the practitioner connects with 'Universal' or Divine energy to channel healing for the mind, body, and spirit through performance of some yagynas or ritualistic ceremonies; a form of worship and are integral to Vedic tradition, aimed at maintaining cosmic order and harmony [3].

Ancestral practitioners of siddha harnesses ancient healing methods, primarily the techniques of Nadi Vaidyam and Marma Chikitsa. Nadis are energy channels that facilitate the flow of pranic energy throughout the entire body. According to the Siddha medical system, there are 72,000 such energy pathways accessible through the skin's surface [13]. Marmani are potent energy points strategically located in the body, rich in nerves and blood vessels. These marmani play a crucial role in cellular communication, diagnosing specific conditions, and offering various therapeutic benefits [17]. The various external techniques like varmam (pressure therapy) or thokannam (manipulative therapy) are used to activate the marma or nadis through gentle strokes and direct pressures leading to release of toxins and tightness in muscles which facilitate the appropriate flow of blood and nutrients to the harnessed part. Treating disrupted marma and unblocking nadi points ultimately restores the body to its natural state from diseased state [22].

Benefits of Siddha Energy Healing Practice in Medical Context

To ease or counteract the side effects of conventional therapies, more people are turning to holistic modalities like siddha medicine that looks into not just the physiological, but mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of disease. Being diagnosed with a life threatening illness is emotionally and psychologically disruptive; Siddha helped the patient find solace despite challenges.

The energy sessions or healing offers a range of benefits, from being a complementary and holistic approach to healthcare, to providing non-invasive, gentle, and calming therapies. They help in addressing emotional blockages, leading to improved mental health and emotional stability. These therapies can go alongside the traditional treatments, particularly for conditions that are resistant to allopathic techniques or chronic ailments where improvements in well-being can give a quality life to the individual [7]. These methods are relatively safe, produce faster recovery and prevent drug abuse or misuse with less chances of morbidity or mortality [11]. Many medical practitioners prefer these modalities as they are designed to be gentle and calming, promoting relaxation and reducing stress. They work well as an aid in pain management, discomfort, insomnia and offer cost-effective solutions for chronic conditions [22]. Requisite energy sessions can enhance a patient's overall quality of life, making them feel more balanced and energized. Additionally, the ability for self-administration in cases of holistic wellness by yoga, massages and pressing points; empowers individuals to actively participate in their health and wellness journey [21].

Direct measurement of vital energies is currently not possible due to a lack of understanding of these energies in contemporary terminology. Yet, in therapies like acupressure, siddha some indirect measurement of energy in the body is achievable. Many patients report positive outcomes and energetic with improvement in symptoms, scientific evidence supporting the efficacy of energy sessions is missing [34,35].

Potential Evidences of Siddha Energy Healing- Some cases

The primary reason for the popularity of energy healing is that, even though no clinical trials have yet been published evaluating it, people find that it works. Reports of increased vitality and sense of well-being among people who continue to use the techniques for a period of time seem almost universal. Siddha's energy healing through energy session is practitioner-delivered basis rather than self-practice like in other healing methods. It is performed by a skilled and an expert siddha practitioner who has capability to see different dimensions of the patient [3]. Here, we project some diverse cases where siddha varmam therapy was performed which is correlating to energy sessions and good outcomes were achieved.

A 11-year girl with Crohn's disease, who failed to enter clinical remission despite being adhering to medical therapy for two years was subjected to ten siddha energy sessions in form of varmam therapy and a strict siddha sathvik diet. During the sessions, girl's father's history was projected in form of blockages which was absolved. and colonoscopy done

after 6 months of sessions showed no inflammation with patient showing improvement in all aspects: energy levels and symptomatic shift [36]. Another report where a 45-year female with RA was addressed for body joint pains especially in her knees via siddha Varmam therapy manipulating her low energy levels owing to her lifestyle and physical inactivity. A thirty day therapy with diet restrictions was given showing marked improvement in her pain and quality of life with mark reduction on medication dependency [37].

A 2021 study of 120 patients with osteoarthritis published in Journal of integrative medicine found that experimental group who received siddha therapy reported significant reductions in pain, anxiety and fatigue, felt more energetic compared to control group [22]. Positive findings in a randomized, placebo-controlled trial published in 2012 were received in cancer patients who received healing by energy therapy. They had significant improvements in stress levels, BP value and weakness [9]. An obese 48-year old female with history of lymphoedema in left arm showed decline in her weight and breadth of arm after been projected to siddha therapy with 4 energy sessions for 25 days. She also displayed immense satisfaction in her back pain and physical activities along with weight reduction [31]. Siddha healing proved beneficial in a DMD diagnosed 10-year boy who had decreased stamina, low immunity and pain in upper body region. On giving him siddha sessions for one year intermittently, he had remarkable change in pain, strength and balance of body [33]. Similarly, a 39-year old female Covid positive patient who was introduced with the integrative therapy of Siddha and biomedicine along with dietary advice, the subject showed much decline in symptoms without adverse effects depicting the siddha's bright overview [37].

The findings from above reports serve as a catalyst for exploring the efficacy of Siddha therapy in managing body's energy, offer potential benefits for pain management, stress reduction, and overall well-being, contributing to a holistic approach to health care. By addressing the underlying energy imbalances and stimulating healing through non-invasive interventions, Siddha therapy presents a promising adjunct or alternative to conventional treatments [3]. However, it's crucial to note the limitations of these reports. The singular nature of the many cases restricts the generalizability of findings. Further studies encompassing larger sample sizes and controlled trials are imperative to substantiate the efficacy and applicability of Siddha therapy in supporting its theory of addressing emotional blockages, leading to improved mental health and emotional stability.

Challenges of Siddha Energy Healing

Like any other alternative modality, siddha healing practice faces several challenges that contribute to ongoing

disputes and skepticism regarding its effectiveness and integration into mainstream healthcare.

The primary controversy surrounding energy therapies stems from a limited understanding of their underlying principles, the credibility of a vital or prana energy within us, and a paucity of high-quality research. Very less researches are done towards its efficacy and all available studies are generally of medium quality, meeting only minimal standards for drawing valid inferences [4]. Few researchers are in favor of its lack of strict regulations and standardization, which gives way to quackery and significant variability in practitioner training, treatment quality, and overall effectiveness. There is always lack of experts and qualified practitioners in this field [23].

Limited insurance coverage for these treatments can make them financially inaccessible for many patients, thus hindering broader adoptions. Medical practitioners generate myths about risks of these treatments if not performed correctly highlighting adverse effects. It's ineffectiveness in emergency or serious situations make them unappealing to larger masses. Adhering to siddha's personalized treatment, taking every individual as a separate entity makes its unsuitable for all [24].

Conclusion

Healing should extend beyond just the physical body, addressing the mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of an individual. Siddha medicine, when integrated with conventional medical practices, can provide a comprehensive approach to health by targeting these often-overlooked aspects, thus promoting holistic healing. Siddha holds significant potential in supporting a wide array of health conditions, making it crucial for healthcare professionals to understand its principles, safety, and efficacy. Awareness and integration of this practice into conventional healthcare can enhance the management of various conditions, contributing to overall well-being. Scientific research, especially through multidisciplinary collaborations, can further validate and expand siddha applications, potentially leading to innovative preventive and therapeutic strategies. This approach could pave the way for a new paradigm in medicine, fostering Integrative Medicine, which combines the strengths of both traditional and modern healthcare systems.

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