

Asparagus Racemosus and Vitex Agnus-Castus: A Combined Approach for Hormonal Regulation in PCOS

K. H. Charde¹; K. M. Bhusari²

^{1,2}Bhauasaheb Mulak College of Pharmacy

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Abstract: Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a complex endocrine disorder characterized by hormonal imbalances, chronic anovulation, hyperandrogenism, and metabolic disturbances. Recently, herbal therapies have gained attention as complementary approaches due to their multi-targeted mechanisms and favorable safety profiles. This review explores the combined therapeutic potential of Vitex agnus-castus and Asparagus racemosus in managing hormonal dysfunction associated with PCOS. Vitex agnus-castus primarily influences the hypothalamic–pituitary axis through dopaminergic activity, leading to reduced prolactin levels, improved LH/FSH ratio, enhanced luteal phase function, and restoration of ovulation. Meanwhile, Asparagus racemosus, rich in steroidal saponins and phytoestrogens, directly affects ovarian tissues by modulating estrogen receptors, promoting follicular development, reducing oxidative stress, and supporting progesterone balance. Together, these herbs offer complementary regulatory support, addressing both upstream pituitary signaling and downstream ovarian hormone production. Their combination shows promise in enhancing menstrual regularity, alleviating androgen-related symptoms, and promoting overall reproductive health in women with PCOS. Further advanced clinical trials are essential to validate their synergistic efficacy, identify optimal dosages, and confirm long-term safety. This review underscores the importance of integrating multi-herbal strategies in managing hormonal dysregulation in PCOS.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) is a complex and prevalent disorder primarily affecting women of reproductive age. This condition leads to sub-fertility in nearly 70% of women due to difficulties with ovulation. PCOS disrupts normal ovarian function because of the presence of cysts on the ovaries. Symptoms include obesity or weight gain, high blood pressure, diabetes, abnormal lipid profiles, dandruff or oily skin, dark patches on the neck and underarms, chronic pelvic pain, acne, elevated male hormone levels resulting in hair thinning or male-pattern baldness, excessive body and facial hair in women, and irregular or infrequent menstruation with immature follicles. According to the National Institutes of Health Office of Disease Prevention, PCOS is a heterogeneous disorder affecting approximately 5 million women of childbearing age, nearly 7% of adult women. This endocrine abnormality is the most common issue among females aged 18 to 44 years, impacting 5 to 10% of them. Hormonal balance is crucial for women's health, influencing reproduction, mood, and metabolism. Imbalances in hormones such as estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone can lead to various complications.

Reproductive challenges, mood swings, and metabolic issues. The endocrine system is responsible for producing

hormones that control various physiological processes, and any disruptions can significantly impact women's overall well-being. Furthermore, hormonal stability is intricately connected to the reproductive system. [3,4] Hormonal imbalances, such as polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) and irregular menstrual cycles, can negatively affect fertility and contribute to difficult reproductive conditions. [5] Resistance to insulin and low-grade inflammation has been found in women. Certain factors such as lifestyle changes, few environmental toxins exposure, and diet negatively affect PCOS. If it is left untreated, it might lead to serious health conditions. It also has a direct impact on fertility. [6] who exercise less or do not exercise at all, and who are obese. The findings used for the treatment of the condition include the presence of ovarian cysts, no ovulation, and androgen levels are high. Ultrasound techniques can be used for the detection of the presence of any cysts. Several other parameters producing similar symptoms in the condition can also be used for the diagnosis includes hypothyroidism, hyperplasia, and elevated levels of prolactin in the blood. [7] Hormonally, women have a lot going within their bodies due to the fact that estrogen levels dictate a lot of things ranging from metabolism to fat storage even the fat distribution which in turn can lead to issues like cardiovascular diseases and even make one prone to type 2 diabetes if estrogen levels are not maintained. [8,9]

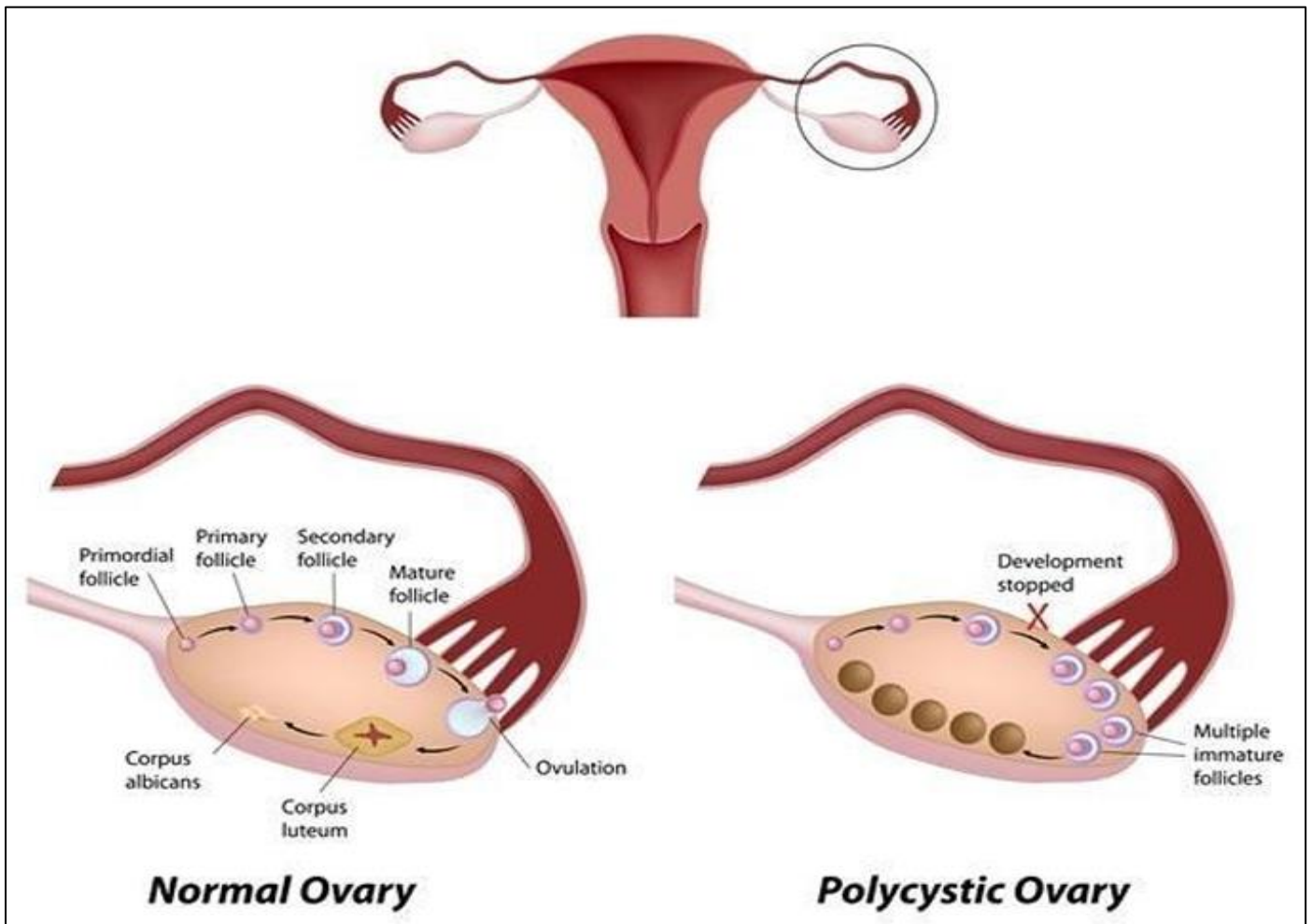


Fig 1 View of a Normal and Polycystic Ovary

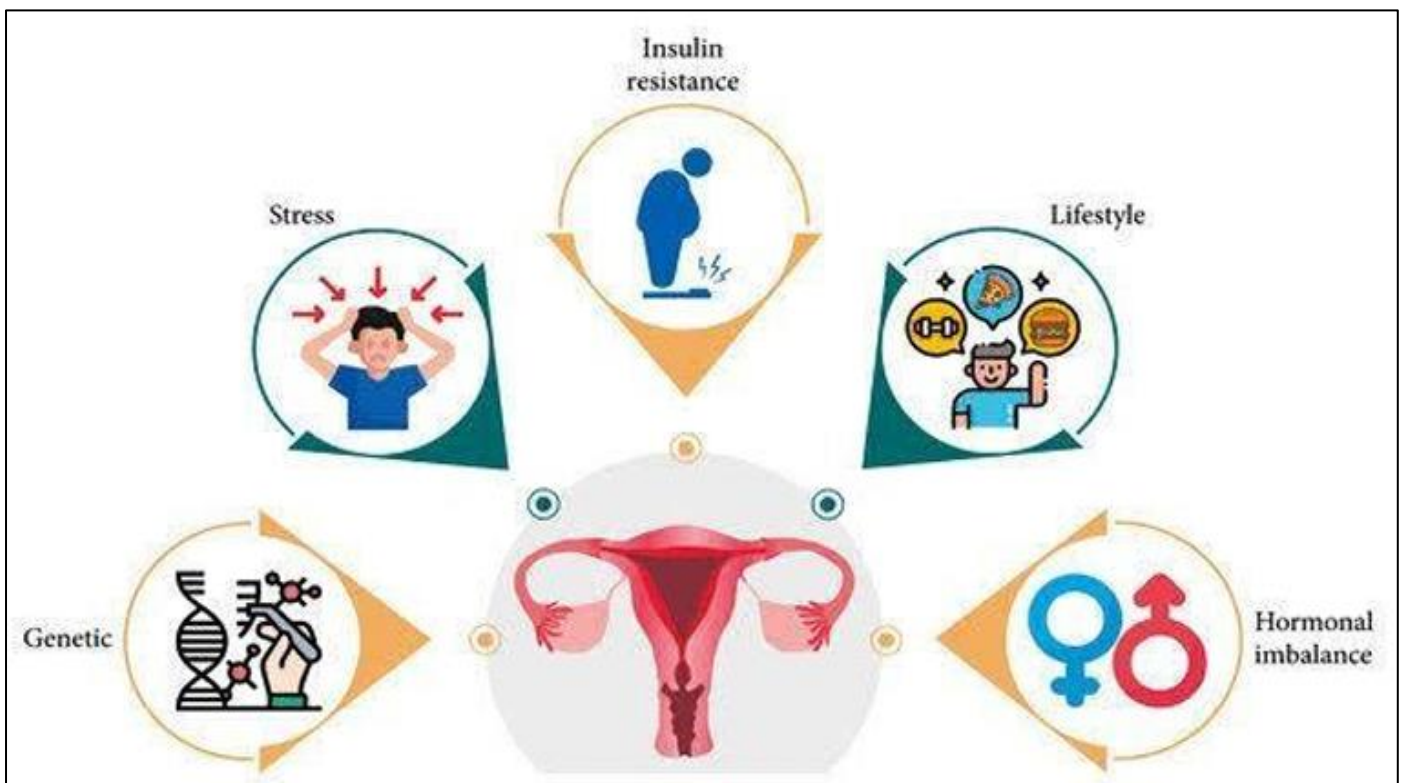


Fig 2 Causes of PCOS

**II. HERBAL DRUG TARGETING
HORMONAL REGULATION**

➤ *Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus)*

- Botanical Overview
- Scientific Name: *Asparagus racemosus*
- Family: Asparagaceae
- Common Names: Shatavari
- Plant Parts Used: Fleshy, tuberous roots



Fig 3 *Asparagus Racemosus* (Shatavari)

Table 1 Phytochemistry of *Asparagus Racemosus*

<i>Class</i>	<i>Compounds</i>	<i>Function</i>
Steroidal saponins	Shatavarins I–IV	Hormonal modulation, adaptogenic effects
Flavonoids	Quercetin, rutin	Antioxidant, anti-inflammatory
Alkaloids	Asparagine, racemosol	Nervine, adaptogenic properties
Polysaccharides	Fructooligosaccharides	Immunomodulatory, prebiotic effects
Phenols	Various	Antioxidant activity

Asparagus racemosus, commonly known as Shatavari, offers significant benefits for women's health and is frequently used in traditional medicinal systems like Ayurveda, Unani, and Siddha. This herb, part of the Asparagaceae family, is essential in Ayurvedic medicine for its various health benefits for women. [10] Shatavari is particularly beneficial for fertility and reproductive health, addressing issues such as infertility, menstrual cycle regulation, and ovarian follicle development. It contains phytoestrogens, which are natural plant-based estrogens that help balance the reproductive system. Additionally, Shatavari aids in insulin regulation for those with hyperinsulinemia.[11]

Research highlights Shatavari's positive effects on women with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), as it enhances follicle-stimulating hormone levels and promotes

folliculogenesis. The herb is also effective for menstrual issues like menorrhagia (heavy bleeding) and painful periods, thanks to its primary component, saponin, which supports uterine mobility and is beneficial during pre-menopause[12]. For infertility treatment, Shatavari enhances the folliculogenesis process, prepares the womb, and reduces miscarriage risks. Its roots are used to strengthen uterine muscles in cases of abortion.[13]

The phytoestrogens in Shatavari help regulate the ovarian cycle, especially in reproductive-age women, and alleviate symptoms such as heavy bleeding and premenstrual discomfort. Additionally, it helps reduce stress levels, making Shatavari a valuable ally in promoting women's health and addressing various reproductive challenges.

III. VITEX AGNUS-CASTUS (CHASTEBERRY)

➤ *Botanical Overview*

- Scientific Name: *Vitex agnus-castus* L.
- Family: Lamiaceae
- Common Names: Chaste tree, Chasteberry, Monk's pepper
- Plant Parts Used: Fruit/berry extracts (most commonly), sometimes leaf or seed extra



Fig 4 *Vitex agnus-castus*

Table 2 Phytochemistry of *Vitex agnus-cacastus*

Phytochemical	Chemical Class	Mechanism Relevant to Hormonal Regulation	Role in PCOS Management
Agnuside	Iridoid glycoside	Dopaminergic D2 receptor agonism → decreases prolactin	Regulates LH/FSH ratio; improves menstrual regularity
Aucubin	Iridoid glycoside	Anti-inflammatory, antioxidant	Reduces ovarian inflammation and oxidative stress
Vitexin	Flavonoid	Modulates pituitary hormone release	Helps balance LH and FSH; improves ovulation
Casticin	Flavonoid	Dopamine agonist; inhibits prolactin	Supports luteal phase function; reduces androgen excess
6β,7β-Dihydroxy - vouacapane	Diterpene	Neuroendocrine modulation	Supports follicular maturation
Essential oils (1,8-cineole, sabinene, α-pinene)	Volatile oils	Anti-inflammatory and antioxidant	Reduces ovarian oxidative stress; supports endocrine function
Oleuropein derivatives	Phenolic compounds	Anti-inflammatory; improves insulin sensitivity	Indirectly reduces androgen production
Linoleic acid	Fatty acid	Estrogen receptor binding activity	Helps modulate estrogen levels
Rotundifuran	Diterpene	Strong dopamine D2 receptor agonist	Lowers prolactin, improves progesterone levels

Vitex agnus-castus, commonly known as chasteberry, is a highly esteemed herbal remedy traditionally used to address gynecological and endocrine disorders. Its therapeutic benefits are attributed to a variety of bioactive compounds, including iridoid glycosides (agnuside, aucubin), flavonoids, essential oils, and diterpenoids. These compounds exhibit dopaminergic activity and interact with the hypothalamic–pituitary–ovarian (HPO) axis, making Vitex particularly effective in managing hormonal imbalances, such as those associated with PCOS. Historically, Vitex has been utilized to alleviate menstrual irregularities, infertility, and symptoms of estrogen–progesterone imbalance, which are commonly seen in endocrine dysfunctions like PCOS [17-19]. The primary action of Vitex agnus-castus in managing PCOS is its dopamine-D2 receptor agonist activity, which targets the anterior pituitary. By enhancing dopaminergic inhibition, Vitex reduces the overproduction of prolactin, a hormone that often disrupts ovulation and leads to luteal phase defects. Elevated levels of prolactin can diminish gonadotropin releasing hormone (GnRH) pulsatility and hinder follicular maturation. By decreasing prolactin levels, Vitex aids in restoring the normal secretion of FSH and LH, leading to better folliculogenesis and more regular menstrual cycles. This mechanism is particularly significant for PCOS patients, especially those with mild hyperprolactinemia or luteal insufficiency, who experience anovulation and menstrual irregularities. [20-22] In addition to its role in prolactin modulation, Vitex plays a crucial part in regulating progesterone by enhancing corpus luteum function. Many women with PCOS face luteal phase defects, marked by insufficient progesterone production, leading to irregular cycles and infertility. Research suggests that Vitex encourages the release of luteinizing hormone (LH) as a result of reduced prolactin levels, which in turn fosters the development of a healthy corpus luteum capable of producing adequate progesterone. Elevated progesterone levels help restore a balanced estrogen–progesterone ratio, potentially easing symptoms such as endometrial instability, premenstrual syndrome, and chronic anovulation that are often linked to hormonal imbalances in PCOS. [23-25] Vitex also exhibits phytoestrogenic and antiandrogenic effects, which may enhance its effectiveness for managing PCOS. Certain flavonoids found in Vitex can attach to estrogen receptors (ER- α and ER- β), providing a mild estrogen-modulating effect that helps to balance estrogen dominance. Furthermore, preliminary research indicates that Vitex may alleviate androgenic symptoms by lowering testosterone levels or enhancing sex hormone binding globulin (SHBG) concentrations, although evidence specifically in PCOS patients is still limited. Nonetheless, Vitex's capacity to regulate estrogen and androgen activity contributes to improved menstrual regularity, fewer acne issues, and overall better reproductive endocrine health. [26-28] Another factor that enhances Vitex's effectiveness in managing PCOS is its influence on GnRH pulsatility. By regulating dopaminergic and opioid signals, Vitex can normalize both the frequency and amplitude of GnRH release from the hypothalamus. This results in a more stable secretion of FSH and LH, which is particularly important in PCOS, where elevated LH:FSH ratios can lead to androgen excess and anovulatory cycles. Addressing this neuroendocrine imbalance enhances ovarian

responsiveness, encourages ovulation, and aids in restoring natural menstrual cycles. [29-31].

IV. EFFECT OF COMBINATION OF VITEX AGNUS-CASTUS AND ASPARAGUS RACEMOSUS IN HORMONAL REGULATION

How Vitex agnus-castus and Asparagus racemosus Work Together in Hormonal Regulation Combining these two herbs give synergistic effect, because each acts on different hormonal pathways: Vitex agnus-castus and Asparagus racemosus work together effectively to regulate hormones through complementary actions at both the pituitary and ovarian levels. Vitex agnuscastus primarily impacts the hypothalamic–pituitary axis by functioning as a dopamine agonist, which reduces elevated prolactin levels and restores a healthier LH/FSH ratio. This process promotes ovulation and boosts progesterone secretion. Conversely, Asparagus racemosus provides phytoestrogenic, antioxidant, and adaptogenic benefits that directly support ovarian function. Its steroidal saponins help modulate estrogen receptors, enhance follicular maturation, and decrease ovarian inflammation. When these two are combined, Vitex improves upstream signaling from the pituitary, while Asparagus racemosus enhances the responsiveness of the ovaries downstream. The result is a more balanced level of estrogen and progesterone, improved menstrual regularity, and harmonized reproductive hormones overall. This dual action is especially advantageous for managing hormonal imbalances associated with PCOS.

V. CONCLUSION

Hormones are crucial to women's overall health, influencing reproductive, mental, and metabolic well-being. Combining Vitex agnus-castus and Asparagus racemosus offers a promising, multifaceted approach to addressing hormonal imbalances in women with PCOS. Vitex agnus-castus primarily affects the hypothalamic–pituitary axis by lowering prolactin levels, restoring the LH/FSH ratio, and enhancing ovulation and progesterone production. Meanwhile, Asparagus racemosus works mainly at the ovarian and peripheral hormonal levels through its phytoestrogenic properties, supporting balanced estrogen activity, reducing ovarian inflammation, and promoting follicular maturation. Together, these herbs provide complementary benefits that help normalize reproductive hormones, regulate menstrual cycles, and alleviate symptoms associated with androgen excess.

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