

**ROLE OF HOMOEOPATHY IN COVID-19 MANAGEMENT- A
CLINICAL EXPERIENCE****Dr. Niraj Parikh* (MD Homoeopathy) and Dr. Devang Parikh (MD Pharmacology)**

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Article Received on
20 March 2020,Revised on 09 April 2020,
Accepted on 30 April 2020

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr20205-17504

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College (AHMC),
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Coronavirus disease also termed as COVID-19 or SARS-CoV-2 infection has been declared as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). The COVID-19 infection has emerged as a global health emergency spreading over 210 countries and territories around the world as there are no specific established treatments or vaccines available till date. In such a crisis, prevention of the further spread of the infection is the best possible containment approach being advocated by WHO and other health agencies. A vast clinical experience does exist for the immune-boosting effect of Homoeopathic medicines and its role in the prevention of viral infection. The Genus Epidemicus has been used during various disease outbreaks for

preventing the spread of diseases like Cholera, Chikungunya, Japanese Encephalitis, and Dengue Fever, etc. with good results. Given the clinical success in those severe infectious diseases, Homoeopathy as an adjuvant to the standard of care should be evaluated for the management of COVID-19. The Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) have suggested the use of Arsenicum album - 30 for its possible role in preventing COVID-19 infection. Following the same, we had prescribed Arsenicum album - 30 to our patients and our clinical experience is shared here. When there is no or very limited evidence is available for the effectiveness of Homoeopathy, this publication is expected to assist the identification of a better treatment approach and guide further research.

KEYWORDS: Arsenicum album, COVID-19, homoeopathy, immunity, SARS-CoV-2.**INTRODUCTION**

Coronavirus disease is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus also termed as COVID-19 or severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It

has been declared as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020. The COVID-19 infection has already spread over 210 countries and territories around the world.^[1] This is a respiratory disease and virus spread primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes.^[2]

CLINICAL PICTURE

As per the currently available evidence, almost 80% of COVID-19 infected patients will develop mild to moderate symptoms with an incubation period of 1 to 14 days and recover without requiring special treatment. However, it is also observed that many asymptomatic infected patients are present which could either progress to the diseased or act as a carrier. People who have underlying medical conditions and those over 60 years old have a higher risk of developing severe disease and adverse outcomes.^[3]

Common symptoms of COVID-19 infection include fever, dry cough, and throat pain/itching. The other possible symptoms are body ache, headache, shortness of breath and rarely diarrhea, nausea or a runny nose can also be seen.

Confirmatory diagnosis depends on the laboratory testing for COVID-19 either by confirming virus presence or by analyzing the specific antibodies produced in response to infection. Most of the countries recommend Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) for initial screening which detects the coronavirus' Ribonucleic acid (RNA). This confirmatory test is used to identify very recent or active infections. The test is done on respiratory samples such as a nasopharyngeal swab or sputum sample. Additionally, specific antibodies detection (serology) is useful both for diagnosis and population surveillance mainly during the later stage of the infection.^[4]

MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19

At this time, there are no specific established treatments or vaccines available for COVID-19. However, many ongoing clinical trials are evaluating potential treatments. As the world struggles to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO's standard recommendations for the public to minimize exposure to and transmission of a range of illnesses. These include personal and respiratory hygiene, use of personal protective equipment, boosting immunity and identification and quarantine of suspected or confirmed cases.^[5]

During the Ebola outbreak in 2014, the expert group of WHO recommended that “it is ethical to offer unproven interventions with as yet unknown efficacy and adverse effects, as potential treatment or prevention” keeping in view no established treatment or specific vaccine were available.^[6]

ROLE OF HOMOEOPATHY

The preventive aspect of Homoeopathy is well known for many ailments including viral infections.^[7] Historically, Homoeopathy gained prominence following its usefulness for the management of the epidemics of Cholera, Typhoid, Yellow fever, Diphtheria, Spanish Influenza, leptospirosis, Scarlet fever, etc.^[8]

This concept of prevention and treatment of epidemic disease was first put forward by Samuel Hahnemann in the Organon of Medicine 5th edition in aphorism 102, “the whole extent of such an epidemic disease and the totality of its symptoms (the knowledge whereof, which is essential for enabling us to choose the most suitable homoeopathic remedy for this array of symptoms, is obtained by a complete survey of the morbid picture)... is ... ascertained from the sufferings of several patients of different constitutions”.^[9,10]

The Genus Epidemicus (GE) is the remedy selected through observation of several cases of epidemic disease and analyzing the symptomatology of those cases for the most indicated medicine.^[11] It was reported that during the recent past GE had been used during various disease outbreaks for preventing the spreading of diseases like Cholera, Chikungunya, Japanese Encephalitis, and Dengue Fever with good results.^[12] The detailed description of the benefit of homoeopathy in control of epidemics is given by Isaac Golden in a recent publication.^[13]

There is a report that Homeopathy was efficacious during the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918 to 1919, in which at least 20 million people died worldwide. According to Julian Winston, the death rates for patients treated with homeopathy (Genus Epidemicus) were 1 to 2% compared with a 30 to 60% mortality for those treated by conventional treatment.^[14,15]

In a clinical trial supported by the Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH) in patients with Dengue Hemorrhagic fever, add on Homoeopathic treatment has shown early improvement in platelet count and decrease in hospital stay by 2 days.^[16] Similarly, in Acute Encephalitis Syndrome/Japanese Encephalitis, homeopathy as an adjuvant to the standard

management protocol has shown a decrease in the death rate by 15% in comparison to those who received only standard of care.^[17] In both the studies, adverse effects were not observed.

Considering the clinical success in these severe viral diseases, Homoeopathy as an adjuvant to the standard of care should be explored in the management of COVID-19 patients.

The Health advisory is given by The Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) against coronavirus infection included Homoeopathic medicine Arsenicum album – 30 as a possible preventive measure for flu-like illness such as coronavirus infection.^[18] Scientific Advisory Board of CCRH confirmed that the same medicine has been advised for the prevention of Influenza-Like Illness.^[19,20,21] It is noteworthy that the Arsenicum album is a common homoeopathic remedy prescribed in the cases of respiratory infections in day to day practice. Pharmacologically, the Arsenicum album as one of the constituents in a formulation has been shown to act upon HT29 cells and human macrophages. Also, it showed an inhibitory effect on NF- κ B hyperactivity (reduced expression of reporter gene GFP in transfecting HT29 cells), and inhibition of TNF- α release in macrophages.^[22]

Similar to prevention, Homoeopathic medicines used for flu-like symptoms and have a long-established, traditional usage over many years such as Gelsemium, Arsenicum, Phosphorus, and Bryonia, etc. should also be explored as one of the treatment options for the COVID-19 patients. This shall be applied following the basic principles of Homoeopathy as a holistic therapy in addition to the other standard of care currently advocated for COVID-19 patients.^[23]

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Following the announcement from the Ministry of AYUSH, there was significant demand for Arsenicum alb 30 for the prevention of COVID-19. Between January to February 2020, the author (NP) having two decades of clinical experience practicing Homoeopathy has suggested and prescribed Arsenicum alb 30 to more than 100 families counting more than 400 persons not having COVID-19 related symptoms but many of them were already under homoeopathic treatment for chronic diseases like bronchial asthma, hypertension and diabetes mellitus. Table-1 depicts more than 6 weeks follow-up data of Arsenicum alb 30 as a preventive remedy for COVID-19. It was observed that none of the patients or family members have reported COVID-19 related symptoms during the follow-up till 21st April

2020 nor the name of a single member was found in the published list of COVID-19 positive cases in the relevant area where otherwise more than 1500 COVID-19 positive cases have been reported. Moreover, none of the patients had reported any adverse reaction to the medicine.

Table 1: Clinical experience of homoeopathic preventive remedy for COVID-19.

Beneficiaries	Number	Result till 21 st April 2020
Follow-up	403	No complains
Lost to follow-up	17	Untraceable*
Total	420	
COVID-19 positive in the same area		>1500

* However none of these 17 patient's name have been published in the list of positive cases published by Govt. authority. Hence those also could be considered benefited by preventive Homoeopathic remedy.

DISCUSSION

The evidence of the effectiveness of homoeopathy for increasing immunity and prevention of viral infections is merely clinical with hundreds of years of experience in hand. Use of Homoeopathy for the treatment of However, evidence of mechanism of action at molecular level is lacking and proper reverse pharmacology studies need to be conducted.

The role of homoeopathic medicines in flu-like diseases is well experienced and a similar effect was also observed in our cohort for COVID-19 infection during the follow-up period ranging from 8-12 weeks.

The best way to prevent COVID-19 infection is via social distancing by avoiding contact transmission. In addition to that good health, personal hygiene and immunity are essential for better protection from the current pandemic of COVID-19, especially when we resume our routine lifestyle.

We do agree that the follow up in the presented clinical experience was unplanned and hence, lack a strategic data collection and analysis. However, we strongly believe that sharing our clinical experience would help fill the knowledge gap and strengthen the confidence of all stakeholders. When no or very limited evidence is available, our research is expected to assist the identification of a better treatment approach and guide further research.

CONCLUSION

With no established conventional specific treatment or vaccine available for COVID-19 infection, experience-based homeopathy medicine should be considered along with the multidisciplinary treatment approach. Although the use of homeopathy medicine by us showed promising effects in the prevention of COVID-19 infection in clinical settings, control randomized trials need to be conducted to confirm the findings.

Conflict of interest: Nil

Funding source: Nil

Author's contribution

Dr. Niraj Parikh is MD Homoeopath having more than 20 years of clinical experience, who contributed to gathering data and conceptualizing the manuscript. Dr. Devang Parikh contributed to manuscript writing.

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