

Review Article

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Homeopathic Approach to COVID-19: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV-2 infection, also known as COVID-19, has a pandemic outbreak, and recent studies show various limitations, including treatment. This virus is chiefly infecting the respiratory tract (RTI) and resulting in Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. Many developed countries, including Italy, England, and the United States of America (USA), are facing many casualties. Unlikely, no specific treatment protocol is available till today. Homeopathic medicine is a branch of alternative medicine, practiced on individualized symptoms similarity. However, historically it has potential in treating epidemic infections like scarlet fever, typhoid, and cholera. In the treatment of RTI and pneumonia, several homeopathic medicines have proven efficacy. This review on the utility of homeopathic medicine might guide the physician to prevent COVID-19 contagion. Homeopathic medicines can help humanity with conventional medical methods to prevent this global catastrophe.

Keywords: Coronavirus, COVID-19, Pneumonia, Homeopathy, Ars Alb

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INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of a febrile respiratory illness due to a coronavirus 2019-nCoV, the city of Wuhan in China, is under global attention. In December 2019, several occurrences of pneumonia noticed in Wuhan, Hubei province in China. However, in response to a notification on 31 December 2019, by the Chinese Health Authorities, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued warnings about a possible emergence of a novel and a major threat to public health (Hui et al., 2020, Parr, 2020). This novel coronavirus is named as 2019-nCoV-2 by WHO, which matches 70% in genetic sequence to previous Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus or SARS-CoV. The researchers proposed SARS-CoV-2 had a bat-human transmission, although unconfirmed (Hui et al., 2020, Cohen, 2020). The recent occurrence of clusters of pneumonia due to 2019-nCoV poses substantial threats to global health. Suffered patients were presenting with fever, malaise, dry cough, shortness of breath, respiratory distress, leucopenia, and lymphopenia. Considering the clinical features, several diseases, including severe pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome, septic shock, etc. were listed in the differential diagnosis (Hui et al., 2020, HKSAR, 2020). However, many questions about the new coronavirus remain unanswered, and with limited clinical information of

the 2019-nCoV infection and data, WHO acknowledged this current infection as a 'Pandemic Infection' (Organization, 2016, Hui et al., 2020).

In this article, we are highlighting the scope of homeopathic medicines in the treatment of patients with COVID-19 infection. Like other pandemic infections, COVID-19 also presenting with common features. To ease our readers, the clinical features, diagnosis, clinical subclasses, and treatment of COVID-19 are described in the boxes.

Box 1: Common clinical manifestation of COVID-19

- Fever, fatigue, dry cough; shortness of breath.
- Chest X-ray may show an inflammatory change, ground-glass opacity, or consolidation.
- Leucopenia and lymphocytopenia may present.
- No other significant findings may not be found to explain the clinical manifestations.

Box 2: Diagnosis (Suspected cases who meet any one of the following criteria) (Bastidas, 2020)

- Respiratory tract swab or blood samples tested positive for 2019-nCoV nucleic acid using Real-Time Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR).
- Genetic sequencing of the respiratory tract swab or blood samples is highly homologous with the known 2019-nCoV.
- Computed Tomography of the Chest may be used as a primary diagnostic tool (Ai et al., 2020).
- Serology-based tests may be used as a screening parameter (Tang et al., 2020)

Box 3: Clinical classifications (1. Silent infection, 2. Acute upper RTI, 3. Mild Pneumonia)

- Asymptomatic infection (silent infection).
- Acute upper respiratory tract infection: - with only fever, cough, pharyngeal pain, nasal congestion, fatigue, headache, myalgia or discomfort, etc., and without signs of pneumonia by chest imaging or sepsis.
- Mild pneumonia: - with or without fever, respiratory symptoms such as cough, and chest imaging indicating pneumonia, but not reaching the criteria of severe pneumonia.

Box 4: Clinical classification (4. Severe pneumonia: showing any of the following) (Bastidas, 2020, Shen et al., 2020, Harris et al., 2011, Bradley et al., 2011)

- a. Increased respiratory rate;
- b. Oxygen saturation <92%;
- c. Hypoxia: assisted breathing, cyanosis, intermittent apnoea;
- d. Disturbance of consciousness: somnolence, coma, or convulsions;
- e. Food refusal of feeding difficulty, with signs of dehydration.

Box 5: Clinical classification (5. Critical cases: featuring the following and require ICU care)

- a. Respiratory failure requiring mechanical ventilation;
- b. Shock, & c. Combined with other organs failure.

TREATMENT PROTOCOL OF COVID-19

Not surprisingly, there is no specific therapy approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for SARS-CoV-2 induced COVID-19. Several drugs are under clinical trials, although the effectiveness of any drug has not yet determined. Up to now, symptomatic treatment is recommended. In the past few studies, some drugs have shown hope. Such chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine have been successful in the laboratory and clinical trials. The role of Lopinavir and Ritonavir in the treatment of COVID-19 is unclear. Azithromycin and Tocilizumab are proposed to be used as adjuvant drugs (Shen et al., 2020). Corticosteroid therapy is generally not recommended for viral pneumonia; however, it is used to control severe acute respiratory distress. And, until now, WHO, CDC, and FDA have not approved any vaccine for COVID-19 (Shen et al., 2020).

HOMEOPATHY

Combining the essence of Hippocrates 'like cures like' and 'minimum number of medicine', Dr. Hahnemann added the principles of minimal dose, the idea of individualized medicine, the concept of vital force, and the doctrine of dynamization of medicinal substances, and named it Homeopathy. It is a recognized part of the national health system in several countries, including Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Switzerland, India, and Bangladesh (Mazaherinezhad, 2010, Hasan et al., 2019).

HOMEOPATHY IN EPIDEMIC

The homeopathic medical system has clear guidelines for the control of infectious epidemics, and it is well established long before the advent of modern sanitation, vaccination, and antibiotics. In the year 1799AD, Hahnemann used the *Belladonna* drug to prevent the epidemic phase of Scarlet fever in Europe; and in 1801AD, Hahnemann published this information in the form of a pamphlet (Pal and Ningthoujam, 2019). Another homeopathic drug ‘*Aconite*’ proved to be specific to the Scarlet pandemic in Germany between 1800 AD and 1808AD (Taylor, 2001). He was successful in treating typhoid pandemic in 1813AD using *Bryonia alba*, *Hyoscyamus niger*, or *Rhus Toxicodendron* (either singly or periodically) (Hahnemann, 1994). In 1831AD, he described the use of *Camphor*, *Cuprum metallicum*, and *Veratrum album*, as Genus Epidemicus in the prevention and treatment of Asiatic pandemics in the Germanic region. As a prophylactic to the disease, he supported the camphor for the early stages of infection and the *Cuprum metallicum* or *Veratrum album* for later stages (Hahnemann, 1884). Homeopathic medicines have been successful in treating several epidemics, including typhoid, cholera, yellow fever, scarlet fever, smallpox, diphtheria, Spanish flu, meningitis, and polio, which made homeopathy popular at the USA and Europe in the nineteenth century (Ullman, 1988, Pal and Ningthoujam, 2019).

In homeopathy, a patient receives medicine only after being individualized using full case analysis. Symptoms of an epidemic are more or less the same in the affected patients. If several patients have the same drug selected after analyzing, then the prescribed remedy may be used as the specific drug for that geographical area and will be called as ‘Genus Epidemicus’. This should be selected within a few days of pandemic infection. Interestingly, Hahnemann found distinctiveness in various epidemic infections. There is no guarantee that drugs used in previous epidemics, will help in the next outbreak, which Hahnemann mentioned in his article ‘Observations on the Scarlet Fever’ (Milgrom, 2016). Dr. Hahnemann wrote ‘the Organon of Medicine’; a rules-regulation book on homeopathy; in the sixth edition of this book, he explicitly mentioned the selection of ‘homeopathic (specific) remedy’ in Aphorisms 102 (footnotes), 147 and 241. Applying this idea, in 1995, Cuba successfully controlled Keratoconjunctivitis, and in 2007, India controlled Chikungunya at Kerala (Pal and Ningthoujam, 2019). In 2007 and 2008, some other researchers at Cuba demonstrated the effectiveness of homeoprophylaxis against leptospirosis triggered by extensive hurricane damage (Golden and Bracho, 2014).

HOMEOPATHIC APPROACH TO COVID-19

At present, the treatment of COVID-19 is symptomatic, and managing emergencies using hospital facilities. The homeopathic medical system, whose foundation is based on symptomatic treatment, can play a vital role in tackling this global disaster. Several numbers of homeopathic medicines are there for patients with COVID-19 infection. Review and repartorization of the common symptoms of COVID-19 suggest *Arsenic Album*, *Pulsatilla*, *Silicia*, *Nitrum Muriaticum*, *Phosphorus*, *Calcarea Carbonicum*, *Hyper Sulphur*, *Lachesis*, *Nux Vomica*, *Sulphur* and many other medicines (Figure 1). We pursue this using Synthesis Repertory- Treasure Edition, by Schroyens F, from Repertory Software Radar 10.0. By adding personalized character to these symptoms, a homeopathic physician might easily select the right individual remedy. Recently, India's ministry of ‘AYUSH’, suggested homeopathic medicine ‘Arsenic albumin 30’ as a prophylactic to prevent COVID-19 infection (AYUSH, 2020). Prime general secretary of Liga Medicorum Homeopathica Internationalis (LMHI), an aristocrat association of homeopathic physician, supported this proposal (Dasgupta, 2020).

	ars.	puls.	sil.	nat-m.	phos.	calc.	hep.	lach.	nux-v.	sulph.	bell.	bry
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	11	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
	27	27	27	26	26	24	24	24	24	24	23	23
1. FEVER - FEVER, heat in general (283) 1	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	3
2. COUGH - DRY (404) 1	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3
3. GENERALS - WEAKNESS (802) 1	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	1	2
4. EXPECTORATION - MUCOUS (244) 1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	3
5. NOSE - SMELL - wanting (106) 1	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	2	3	2
6. RESPIRATION - DIFFICULT (425) 1	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	2	3
7. GENERALS - SICK FEELING; vague (120) 1	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	1
8. THROAT - PAIN (217) 1	1	1	3	2	2	2	2	3	1	2	3	1
9. GENERALS - LABORATORY findings - leukocytes - decreased (10) 1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10. GENERALS - LABORATORY findings - lymphocytes - decreased (1) 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11. HEAD - PAIN (584) 1	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3
12. STOMACH - NAUSEA (574) 1	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	2

Figure 1: Repertorization of common symptoms found in COVID-19

Eminent physician Dr. Vithoulkas expressed his silent content to this proposal; however, he pointed out the limitation of access to the patients of homeopathic physicians in this current breakout (Vithoulkas, 2020). Various researchers have proven the efficacy of homeopathic medicine in a similar set of symptoms, as stated in box.3, namely respiratory tract infections and mild pneumonia (Beghi and Morselli-Labate, 2016). The potentiality of homeopathic medicines in managing flu symptoms, as mentioned in box.1 and scope of prophylactic, was demonstrated by some scholars (Siqueira *et al.*, 2016). Researchers found fibrogranulation proliferation tissues in the small bronchioles in COVID-19 patients (Tse *et al.*, 2004); homeopathic medicine *Silicea* and *Arsenicum iodatum* have a prospect in resolving symptoms like pulmonary fibrosis (Vermeulen, 1997). In severe cases, as if in box 4, several homeopathic medicines, including *Cassia sophera*, *Lobelia inflata*, and *Zingiber officinale*, could help along with hospital management. A group of researchers shown the tincture of *Cassia sophera*, prepared from powdered leaves, significantly helps in respiratory distress (Nagore *et al.*, 2009). *Lobelia* is being used as a respiratory stimulator and possess an effective anti-dyspnoetic agent (Joseph E. Pizzorno, 2016); and aqueous extracts of *Zingiber officinale* can serve a suitable chemotherapeutics for the treatment of respiratory tract infection (Okiki Pius *et al.*, 2015).

Recently, in Italy, a group of most positive and probable COVID-19 patients was treated and healed with homeopathic medicines; these patients were preserved in home isolation facilities, and none of them received hospital facilities (Valeri, 2020). In another study in Iran, a small group of COVID-19 patients experienced development with homeopathic treatment (Aditya Kasariyans, 2020).

We acknowledge the limitations of both clinical and in vitro research of homeopathic medicines. Moreover, homeopathic medicine has a long history of criticism in lacking scientific explanation. However, acceptance and application of experimental medicine are not unethical when conventional medicine is facing difficulties (Organization, 2014).

CONCLUSION

This SARS-CoV-2 infection is causing countless deaths worldwide and global health policymakers are struggling in finding an effective solution to control this infection. Scientists are trying hard to fight back this bio-terror. This review article spotted a few homeopathic medicines that may encourage physicians to prescribe patients with COVID-19 symptoms. Applying individualized homeopathic medicine as well as conventional hospital facilities can speed up medical care. Global health authorities and researchers may consider the scope of integration of modern medicine with homeopathic medicine to defeat this pandemic COVID-19.

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