

TREATMENT OF DRUG DEPENDENT'S WITH HOMOEOPATHY - AN ATTEMPT

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken with an objective to evaluate the efficacy of homoeopathy in management of drug dependent's withdrawal symptoms. The study covers 261 drug addicts registered during the period from September 1988 to March 1994. Two hundred and nine patients (80.08%) improved, 32 cases (12.26%) did not improve and 20 cases (7.66%) were dropped out of the study.

Rhus toxicodendron was found most effective in 85 cases (40.675%) followed by Avena sativa and Nux vomica which could relieve 43 and 34 cases respectively. Arsenicum album relieved 26 cases while Bryonia alba and Chamomilla relieved 8 and 7 cases respectively. 10M potency of Rhus toxicodendron, Arsenicum album and Chamomilla was found to be most effective, whereas Bryonia alba and Nux vomica in 200 potency and Avena sativa in mother tincture form was found effective.

Introduction

Any chemical substance that brings psychological, physiological or biochemical changes in the body is known as a drug. When drug is taken for reasons other than medical, it becomes drug abuse, which gradually leads to drug addiction/dependency. All the addictive drugs, which produce dependency may be classified into five groups viz. Narcotic analgesics, Stimulants, Sedatives, Hallucinogens and Mild Tranquilizers. *Narco* - a derivative from greek language, means sleep and *analgesic* means pain reliever¹. Narcotics in wider sense may refer to opium and its derivatives or the substances that produce opium-like effect. Narcotic analgesics may be further classified into three major categories viz. natural, semi-synthetic and synthetic. Opium comes under natural narcotic analgesic group and heroin in semi-synthetic, whereas, pathedine and methodone are synthetics.

When a drug dependent person withdraws from the drugs, within 8 to 12 hours of the last dose he feels craving for drugs, anxiety, yawning, restlessness, rhinorrhoea, lachrymation, perspiration, anorexia, aching of bones, back and muscles, cold turkey, dilated pupils and sleeplessness. In severe cases additional

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symptoms like nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, weight loss, fever, rise in blood pressure, twitching of muscles and kicking movement of lower extremities are observed. Symptoms attain its peak in 48 to 72 hours and decline begins thereafter. These manifestations are collectively known as withdrawal symptoms. Above described symptom complex is a classical picture of narcotic drug withdrawal. In alcoholics the tremulousness and delirium tremens are predominant symptoms, whereas in sedative drugs sleeplessness and anxiety are main features². Modern medicines check the withdrawal symptoms with the help of analgesics, anxiolytics, psychotropics and hypnotic drugs.

It is well established that the modern medicines produce several adverse effects too³. In the present study an effort has been made to manage the withdrawal symptoms with the help of Homoeopathic medicines which have almost no side effects.

Material and Methods

The study was made on 261 drug dependent subjects referred by Nav-chetna Drug De-addiction Centre, Varanasi for Homoeopathic trial during the period between Sept. 1988 to March 1994. Data was collected on a semi-structured case recording proforma. Treatment was started only after assessment of motivation and building it to a desired extent, seeking family support and strengthening it. If found to be weak, clinically examining the patient for the ailments accompanying the addiction which may prove to be detrimental during process of detoxification. Such ailing cases were excluded from the study. The medicines were administered usually 8-12 hours after abstinence of drug substance abused when withdrawal symptoms became obvious. Prescription was made on the basis of totality of the symptoms of the individual patient. All the subjects were in the age range of 12 to 52 years and all, except one, were male subjects. More than half of the subjects (52.87%) were in age range of 20 years to under 30 years and over one third of addicts (36.01%) were in 30 years to under 40 years, range. Only 29 cases, constituting

11.11% of the total, were below 20 years or above 40 years of age (Table 1).

TABLE 1
Age Range and Substance Abuse

Age Range	Narcotic analgesics	Mild tranquilizers	Alcohol	Cannabis	Multiple drugs	Total
10 - 20 years	12 (4.60%)	1 (0.38%)	-	-	1 (0.38%)	14 (5.36%)
20 - 30 years	124 (47.51%)	4 (1.53%)	1 (0.38%)	2 (0.77%)	7 (2.68%)	138 (52.87%)
30 - 40 years	87 (33.33%)	1 (0.38%)	3 (1.15%)	1 (0.38%)	2 (0.77%)	94 (36.01%)
40 - 50 years	12 (4.60%)	-	-	-	-	12 (4.60%)
50 - 60 years	3 (1.15%)	-	-	-	-	3 (1.15%)
TOTAL	238 (91.19%)	6 (2.29%)	4 (1.53%)	3 (1.15%)	10 (3.83%)	261 (99.99%)

Two hundred and thirty eight (91.19%) individuals were dependent on narcotic analgesics and rest on other drugs (Table-1). More than half (53.26%) were dependent on drug for one year to less than 5 years and more than one third (39.85%) were dependent on drug for 5 years and more, while only 6.89 percent were using drugs for less than a year (Table 2).

TABLE 2
Duration of Drug Abuse and Improvement Index

Duration	Improved	Not improved	Drop out	TOTAL
Under 6 months	6 (2.30%)	-	-	6 (2.30%)
6 months - 1 year	11 (4.21%)	1 (0.38%)	-	12 (4.59%)
1 - 3 years	56 (21.46%)	7 (2.68%)	6 (2.30%)	69 (26.44%)
3 - 5 years	58 (22.22%)	9 (3.45%)	3 (1.15%)	70 (26.82%)
5 yrs & above	7 (2.89%)	15 (5.75%)	11 (4.21%)	104 (39.85%)
TOTAL	209 (80.08%)	32 (5.75%)	11 (4.21%)	104 (39.85%)

More than half (51.35%) of patients started using drug under peer group pressure and 21.07% out of sheer curiosity to taste it and experience the effect thereof. 44 cases (16.86%) were of premorbid personality who used one or the other drug regularly before the present one. Twenty eight cases (10.72%) resorted to drug due to factors like anxiety, frustration, sexual problems and family problems etc. (Table 3).

Results and Discussion

Two hundred and nine cases (80.08%) improved out of the total 261 cases on whom homoeopathic trial was conducted, 32 cases (12.26%) did not improve and 20 cases (7.66%) were dropped out of the study for various reasons (Table 3).

TABLE - 3
Improvement Index in Relation to Cause of Addiction

Cause of addiction	Improved	Not improved	Drop out	Total
Anxiety	4 (1.53%)	-	-	4 (1.53%)
Curiosity	49 (18.77%)	3 (1.15%)	3 (1.15%)	55 (21.07%)
Family problems	2 (0.77%)	-	-	2 (0.77%)
Frustration	5 (1.92%)	1 (0.38%)	1 (0.38%)	7 (2.68%)
Loneliness	2 (0.77%)	-	-	2 (0.77%)
Medical prescription	1 (0.38%)	-	-	1 (0.38%)
Peer group pressure	107 (41.00%)	15 (5.75%)	12 (4.68%)	134 (51.35%)
Premorbid personality	30 (11.50%)	10 (3.83%)	4 (1.53%)	44 (16.86%)
Sexual problems	9 (3.44%)	3 (1.15%)	-	12 (4.59%)
TOTAL	209 (80.08%)	32 (12.26%)	20 (7.66%)	261 (100%)

Rhus toxicodendron was found to be most effective medicine as it alone relieved 40.67% cases. Next to this were Avena sativa and Nux vomica which covered 43 (20.57%) and 34 (16.27%) cases respectively. Arsenic album was effective in 26 cases (12.44%), whereas Bryonia alba and Chamomilla relieved eight (3.82%) and seven cases (3.35%) respectively (Table 4).

10M potency of Rhus toxicodendron, Arsenicum album and Chamomilla was found to be most effective gave best results, whereas 200 potency of Bryonia alba and Nux vomica, and Avena sativa in mother-tincture form was found to be efficacious (Table 4).

TABLE 4
Drugs Found Useful with Potency

Name of the drug	Total no. of patients relieved with %	Potency	No. of Patients relieved
Rhus toxicodendron	85(40.67%)	30	2
		200	10
		1M	4
		10M	70
		50M	5
Nux vomica	34(16.27%)	30	1
		200	30
		1M	6
		10M	1
Avena sativa	43(20.57%)	Q	43
Arsenicum album	26 (12.44%)	30	1
		200	9
		10M	20
Chamomilla	7(3.35%)	200	1
		10M	7
Bryonia alba	8(3.82%)	200	8
		1M	1
		10M	2
Kali phosphoricum	3 (1.44%)	6x	3
Ipecacuanha	2 (0.96%)	200	1
		1M	2
Cuprum metallicum	1(0.48%)	10M	1

Reliable indications of drugs found useful

Rhus toxicodendron	Physical restlessness Aching and tearing pain Pain aggravated rest, repose Pain ameliorated continued movement, pressure
Avena sativa	Restlessness Excessive lachrymation

Nux vomica	Excessive rhinorrhoea Sleeplessness Irritability, anger Gripping pain in abdomen aggravated before stool ameliorated after stool Frequent, scanty, unsatisfactory stool Chilliness
Arsenicum album	Mental restlessness-moves here and there but finds no relief Anxiety, nervousness, fear Chilliness Profound weakness Profuse vomiting
Bryonia alba	Pain aggravated movement, ameliorated rest, pressure Constipation, no desire for stool Desire to sit quietly, to lie down
Chamomilla	Restlessness Irritability, anger Aggressive behaviour Unbearable pain
Kali phosphoricum	Nervousness Sleeplessness
Ipecacuanha	Intense nausea & vomiting Severe aching pain
Cuprum metallicum	Cramping pain in the extremities Coarse tremors

Conclusion

The present study clearly demonstrates that Homoeopathic medicines are equally efficacious in the management of withdrawal symptoms of drug addicts. Homoeopathic medicines, which do not produce side effects, may be a recourse to check the menace of the chemical dependency. The clinical effect seen in this study can be considered as an encouraging beginning in this challenging field.

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"The organism is indeed the material instrument of life, but it is not conceivable without the animation imparted to it by the instinctively perceiving and regulating dynamis, just as the vital force is not conceivable without the organism, consequently the two together constitute a unity although in thought our mind separates this unity, into two distinct conception for the sake of easy comprehension."

Organon of Medicine 6th edition - Section 15
Samuel Hahnemann
