

CLINICAL VERIFICATION

Ferrum Picricum

A Multicentric Clinical Verification Study conducted by CCRH*

P.S.Chakraborty,^{1,7} J.P.Singh¹, M.K.Rai¹, Pramodji Singh⁷, A.K.Vichitra², A.K.N.Singh⁷, Deepa Chakraborty⁷, D.K.Singh⁶, Hari Singh², Mohan Singh⁵, M.N.Sinha⁶, Rajpal Singh⁷, R.K.Rai⁵, S.Prakash⁶, S.D.Pathak⁶, S.R.Bhagat⁴, Vijay K. Paul⁸, V.K.Singh⁶, Yogendar Rai^{1,5} & V.A. Siddiqui⁷.

1. Homoeopathic Drug Research Institute, Lucknow, (U.P.)
2. Regional Research Institute (H), New Delhi
3. Homoeopathic Research Institute, Jaipur, (Rajasthan)
4. Clinical Research Unit, Jammu (J & K)
5. Clinical Research Unit, Ghaziabad (U.P.)
6. Clinical Verification Unit, Patna (Bihar)
7. Clinical Verification Unit, Vrindaban (U.P.)

Abstract

Ferrum picricum is mentioned in the homoeopathic literature for diseases/complaints like anaemia, malaria fever, impaired hearing, vertigo, epistaxis, tinnitus, loss of voice, indigestion, headache, tired feeling, sexual excesses, loss of blood, constipation, prostate enlargement, warts and corns². These indications needs clarification.

An open multicentric clinical study at various Institutes / Units under Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy was conducted to confirm the use of Ferrum picricum as mentioned in homoeopathic materia medica and to add to its drug picture. For this 3,465 patients were enrolled in the study.

The study not only confirms the therapeutic use of the drug in headache, vertigo, epistaxis, tinnitus aurium, loss of voice, constipation, enlargement of prostate, cough, corns, warts and debility, as mentioned in the homoeopathic literature, but also delineates the characteristics which could help in differentiating Ferrum picricum from other similar remedies. Beside, a set of new symptoms also emerged as clinical symptoms increasing the scope of use of this medicine in clinical practice and suggest a comprehensive proving to get full picture of the drug.

Keywords : homoeopathy; clinical verification; ferrum picricum

Introduction

Ferrum picricum (picrate of Iron) is a salt of iron and its chemical formula is $C_6H_2(NO_2)_3OFe$. It is yellow in colour, odorless, soluble in both water and alcohol. It is prepared by mixing equimolecular mixture of picric acid and ferric chloride. The salt contains not less than 58.0 per cent of picric acid and 14.0 per cent of iron with reference to the substance dried to constant weight on silica gel. 1% alcohol solution is yellow - coloured, clear, transparent liquid.¹

This medicine, however, lacks a systematic proving. Dr. Cooper introduced it in homoeopathic materia medica and gave the leading indications for its use.^{1,2} Referring to its effects in fatigue, he describes it as a medicine for the failure of an organ under exertion, which would not ordinarily strain it- e.g., failure of the voice in public speakers. He has also found it efficacious in controlling senile hypertrophy of prostate which has been later verified by Dr. Dudley Wright.³ Later on, Dr. P. C. Majumdar of Kolkata also found this drug useful for the treatment of some important clinical conditions like anaemia, malaria, impaired hearing, vertigo, indigestion, headache, tired feeling, sexual excesses and loss of blood. Owing to such successful results, this medicine has found its place in Materia Medica⁴.

Address for correspondence:

Director
Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy
61-65, Institutional Area, Opp. D-Block, Janakpuri
New Delhi-110058
Email: crrh@del3.vsnl.net.in
Tel. No. : 011-28521162, 5523, 5749
Fax : 011-28521060

Ferrum picricum is also used for treating liver ailments. It has been found of value in many cases of warts and corns, as has been verified by Dr. Clarke. Dr. Burnett has used this medicine to cure rheumatic arthritis in dark- haired persons. Dr. Puller has also used this drug successfully in curing cases of albuminuria, while Dr. Mende considers it as a specific for nose bleed and for controlling prostatic hypertrophy, especially in aged people.⁵

Clarke mentions a number of clinical conditions like albuminuria, corns, deafness or other diseases of ears, fatigue, jaundice, disorders of liver, lupus, nose bleed, diseases of prostate, rheumatic arthritis, tinnitus, loss of voice and warts.⁶

The medicine is also mentioned in the Boericke's Materia Medica, wherein a small account about its use in the clinical conditions of warts, corns, senile hypertrophy of prostate, epistaxis, chronic deafness and dental neuralgia have been given.⁷

Although the medicine was verified by Clarke and others, it is not popularly used by the homoeopathic physicians of present age, due to the paucity of symptoms. This prompted the Council to undertake an open, multicentric clinical trial under its Clinical Verification Programme to assess the reliability of symptomatic indications.

Methodology

Locations of study

Homoeopathic Drug Research Institute, Lucknow (U.P.)
Regional Research Institute (H), New Delhi
Homoeopathic Research Institute, Jaipur (Rajasthan)
Clinical Research Unit, Jammu (J & K)
Clinical Research Unit, Ghaziabad (U.P.)
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Patients

Patients for the study were selected from OPDs of the respective Institutes / Units of the Council during the period April 1982 to March 2004. Out of 3,565 patients included in the study, 2,161 were males and 1, 404 females.

Medicine

The medicine was procured from licensed pharmacy in various potencies viz., 6C,30C and 200C. The signs/symptoms for *Ferrum picricum* were taken from the available literature. *Ferrum picricum* was prescribed to the patients who were presenting with signs/ symptoms indicating the said medicine.

Follow up, Dose and Repetition

The presenting signs and symptoms, along with other information of the patients, were recorded in predefined case recording proforma. The medicine was prescribed in 6C potency on the first visit. Any change in the presenting symptoms and signs was recorded during the follow-up visits. If there was no change in symptoms and signs for significant period (varies according to the nature of disease), next higher potencies like 30C and 200C were prescribed and still then if no considerable change was noted, the patient was prescribed with other indicated medicine and excluded from the study.

Results

The data of all the patients was collected, analyzed and compiled. A list of clinically verified symptoms is presented below. The symptoms superscripted with figure '2' or '7' are in conformity with the corresponding literature mentioned under reference and the remaining symptoms were found relieved wholly or partially during the study. These symptoms were considered as *clinical symptoms*, and these are however not mentioned in the earlier literature on *Ferrum picricum* (Table 1).

Table: 1 Clinically verified symptoms observed during the study

| Location | Symptom(s) | Improvement Observed (% in bracket) |
|----------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Vertigo | Vertigo ² with general weakness and giddiness ² | 4/3 (75) |
| Nose | Epistaxis ^{2,7} | 68/45 (66.17) |
| Ear | Hearing impaired and buzzing in ears ² | 90/40 (44.44) |
| | with dryness in ear ⁷ | 5/3 (60) |
| | with humming in ear ⁷ | 46/41(89.13) |
| | Tinnitus in ear ^{2,7} | 25/17 (68) |
| | with deafness ^{2,7} | 11/8 (72.72) |

| Location | Symptom(s) | Improvement Observed (% in bracket) |
|------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Teeth | Dental neuralgia ⁷ | 30/20 (66.66) |
| Larynx & Trachea | Loss of voice following excessive use ^{2,7} | 20/16 (80) |
| Stomach | Indigestion with headache worse after meals and tongue furred ⁷ | 2/2 (100) |
| Rectum | Feeling of fullness and pressure in rectum ⁷ | 61/53 (86.88) |
| | Constipation ² | 12/12 (100) |
| Bladder | Frequent urination ⁷ | 209/146(69.85) |
| | worse at night ⁷ | 64/48 (75) |
| | with retention of urine ⁷ | 66/44 (66.66) |
| | Frequent urine with albumin ^{2,7} | 13/10 (76.92) |
| | Retention of urine ⁷ | 50/36 (72) |
| Prostate | Enlarged prostate gland ^{2,7} | 150/101 (67.33) |
| | with scanty frequent urination ⁷ | 8/7 (87.5) |
| Male genitalia | Smarting in neck of bladder and penis ⁷ | 29/25 (86.20) |
| Back | Pain in right side of neck ^{2,7} | 7/3 (42.85) |
| | Pain in right side of neck and arm ^{2,7} | 4/4 (100) |
| Skin | Corns ^{2,7} | 262/156(59.54) |
| | with yellowish discolouration ⁷ | 129/74 (57.36) |
| | Warts ^{2,7} | 492/273(55.48) |
| | pedunculated ² | 133/107(80.45) |
| | multiple ² | 15/2 (13.33) |
| Generalities | Feeling of weakness ² | 76/60 (78.94) |
| | following blood loss ² | 8/6 (75) |
| | with vertigo ² | 7/7 (100) |

N.B. The first figure denotes the number of patients who had that symptom and to whom the medicine was prescribed and the second figure denotes the number of patients who got relief in the said symptom.

Clinical symptoms

Following symptoms or part of symptoms are the additional symptoms which were either relieved fully or partially. These new symptoms (superscripted with N

in Table 2) emerged as Clinical Symptoms as these are not mentioned in the known published homoeopathic literature. The result is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Clinical symptoms

| Symptom(s) | Improvement Observed (% in bracket) |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| ● Headache worse after eating | 36/14 (38.88) |
| ● Epistaxis ^{2,7} with bright blood ^N | 62/40 (64.51) |
| worse from heat of summer ^N | 6/4 (66.66) |
| ● Earache ^N | 16/10 (62.5) |
| ● Otorrhoea, pus like discharge, with itching and pain ^N | 38/28 (73.68) |
| ● Otorrhoea with thick, whitish discharge ^N | 25/17 (68) |
| ● Loss of voice ^{2,7} with soreness in throat ^N | 9/7 (77.77) |
| ● Frequent urine ⁷ with burning ^N | 27/17 (62.96) |
| with dribbling ^N | 43/30 (69.76) |
| with pain ^N | 12/7 (58.33) |
| following renal stone ^N | 3/3 (100) |
| with scanty flow ^N | 33/22 (66.66) |
| ● Cough with thick, whitish expectoration | 5/5 (100) |
| ● Dry cough with scanty expectoration | 7/7 (100) |

| Symptom(s) | Improvement Observed (% in bracket) |
|---|---|
| ● Corns ^{2,7} painful ^N on right toe ^N worse on walking ^N | 252/156(61.90) 2/2 (100) 125/75 (60) |
| ● Warts ^{2,7} large, blackish in colour ^N brownish colour ^N conical in shape ^N flat ^N long seedy, with itching ^N sago like ^N small, fleshy and cauliflower like (condylomata) at anus ^N small, hard ^N on neck and face ^N on nepe of neck ^N on thumb ^N on fingers and forehead ^N with mild itching ^N on occasional bleeding ^N on left hand ^N on right hand ^N | 5/5 (100) 133/63 (47.36) 100/39 (39) 6/4 (66.66) 1/1 (100) 11/6 (54.54) 66/22 (33.33) 2/1 (50) 32/16 (50) 21/19 (90.47) 133/107(80.45) 15/2 (13.33) 48/34 (70.83) 7/6 (85.71) 10/6 (60) 12/8 (66.66) |
| ● Small, fleshy and cauliflower like warts (condylomata) at anus | 17/12 (70.58) |
| ● Weakness ² following change of climate following excessive menses ^N with anaemia ^N with breathlessness ^N with paleness of conjunctiva ^N | 5/5 (100) 9/7 (77.77) 3/3 (100) 12/12 (100) 7/7 (100) |

Discussion

The study was mainly focused on the verification of the symptoms of Ferrum picricum as available in literatures. Hence, clinical diagnosis was not made in each and every case. Symptoms which were indicative of Ferrum picricum were prescribed and followed up on subsequent visits of the patients with regard to the disappearance of symptom/signs. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude, whether Ferrum picricum is useful for particular disease conditions as being reflected through this study or not. However, useful information of reliable indications of this medicine has been gathered. Hence, the clinical conditions mentioned in this study showing the usefulness of this medicine are to be treated cautiously. On the other hand, the study suggests that Ferrum picricum may be given to the patients having signs & symptoms which are relieved by this medicine as observed in this study. Moreover, the medicine was prescribed to a large number of patients for certain signs & symptoms and was found to be useful in more than 30% of cases which underline its usage and is subject to re-confirmation. However all the influencing factors which could provoke a relief of a symptom in a patient cannot be ruled out, since these are difficult to envisage. Hence while ascertaining

the improvement, the role of those factors could not be determined.

As it is evident from the literature ^{2,7}, this medicine has signs/symptoms of diseases of urinary bladder and Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy (BPH). The medicine was found to be useful in various symptoms of BPH during the study; out of 209 patients presenting with frequent urination, (Table-1) 146 patients (69.85%) were improved in varying degrees. More improvement was seen (48 out of 64) in the patients who reported of aggravation of their symptoms at night. In cases of 'retention of urine', 36 out of 50 patients reported improvement (72%). Similarly, improvement was seen in patients with burning and dribbling urination, relieving 17 (63%) and 24 (69%) patients, after the prescription of the drug to 27 and 35 patients, respectively (Table-2). Patients suffering from 'scanty urination' were also relieved by the medicine and 22 patients out of 33 patients (67%) reported improvement. Among the patients with urinary difficulties, 150 had enlarged prostate, out of which 101 patients were improved symptomatically (Table-1).

Though only epistaxis is mentioned in the literature, yet it is observed that epistaxis with bright blood responded well to Ferrum picricum. Epistaxis aggravating in summer season was noticed in six patients (Table-2).

Patients having 'impaired hearing' were also relieved with this medicine, as 40 out of 90 patients (44%) improved after taking the medicine. Most of these cases were associated with humming and buzzing in ears, which was also relieved (41 out of 46), (Table-2) after the administration of Ferrum picricum.

Patients suffering from 'painful corns' were benefited by this medicine, as is evident from the fact that 156 patients out of 252 (60%) showed improvement after prescription of the medicine (Table-2). Out of these, 129 patients were having corns with yellowish discoloration, (Table-1) which were relieved in 74 patients (57%).

Ferrum picricum also showed good result in removing various types of warts. 273 out of 492 patients (Table-1) reported improvement (55%) after the prescription. Out of these cases, 133 had pedunculated warts, while 66 had cauliflower like warts. While comparing the data, it was found that the medicine is more useful for warts on thumb since 80% of patients were relieved of these complaints after the prescription (Table-2). The medicine was also found to be suitable for warts on back of neck and face. Itching in warts was present in 48 patients and 34 patients got relieved. The medicine was also found to be of value in cauliflower like warts in anus, since 12 out of 17 patients (71%) were improved after the administration of medicine. Various other kinds of warts like flat warts, conical warts and brownish coloured warts were also relieved with this medicine.

Sensation of 'full feeling in rectum' was improved by this medicine, since 53 out of 61 patients (Table-1) reported improvement (87%) after its application.

20 patients (67%) of dental neuralgia were also benefited by the use of this medicine (Table-1).

Ferrum picricum was found to be a very useful medicine for the patients (6 out of 8 i.e. 75%) suffering from weakness following blood loss due to Menorrhagia. One of which is menorrhagia, which was relieved additionally during the treatment (Table-2).

Besides the above symptoms, a number of signs/symptoms viz., otorrhoea, otalgia, headache and dry and productive cough were also concomitantly improved when prescribed for other indications of *Ferrum picricum* (Table-2).

Repertory

A concise repertory of the verified symptoms, according to Jost Kunzli Von Fimmelsberg Kent's Repertorium Generale, has been compiled for the purpose of quick reference. Rubrics / sub rubrics in italics are new rubrics, i.e., not mentioned in the above referred repertory, while rubrics / sub rubrics in normal roman letters are the existing rubrics of the said repertory which are reconfirmed by this study.

Physicians may include these rubrics in their personal repertories for their day to day reference in practice. Council will be obliged if the feedback is given, so that the work could be carried out further by the Council.

VERTIGO

with general weakness

HEAD

PAIN

eating, after
indigestion, with
WARTS, forehead

EAR

DISCHARGES

pus like
thick
white

DRYNESS

ITCHING

NOISES

BUZZING
HUMMING

PAIN

HEARING

IMPAIRED

LOST (Deafness)

NOSE

EPISTAXIS

blood, bright
hot weather (*heat of summer*)

FACE

WARTS

MOUTH

FURRY Tongue

TEETH

PAIN

NEURALGIC

THROAT

PAIN

sore
loss of voice, with

Ferrum Picricum
P. S. Chakraborty et al

STOMACH

INDIGESTION
headache, with
furry tongue, with

RECTUM

CONSTIPATION
FULLNESS
PRESSURE
WARTS
small, fleshy and cauliflower (condylomata) like
in anal region

BLADDER

PAIN
smarting
RETENTION of urine
urine passes by drops
URINATION
night
dribbling
frequent

PROSTATE GLAND

ENLARGEMENT
frequent, scanty urination, with

URETHRA

PAIN
burning

URINE

ALBUMINOUS
SCANTY

GENITALIA

PAIN
smarting, penis

LARYNX & TRACHEA

VOICE
lost
overuse of
singers
soreness in throat, with

COUGH

DRY

EXPECTORATION

SCANTY
THICK
WHITE

BACK

PAIN
cervical region
right side
WARTS
cervical region

EXTREMITIES

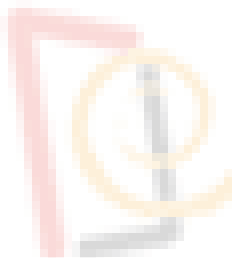
CORNS
painful
walking, on
yellowish
Toe, right

PAIN
upper limbs
right

WARTS
Hand, right
left
Fingers
Thumb

SKIN

WARTS
bleeding, occasional
brown
blackish
cauliflower
conical
flat
fleshy
hard
itching
large
long
multiple
pedunculated
sago like
seedy
small



GENERALITIES

WEAKNESS
anaemia, with
breathlessness, with
change of climate, with
conjunctiva pale, with
loss of blood, from
menorrhagia, from
vertigo, with

Conclusion

The study is an attempt to verify the symptoms of *Ferrum picricum*, as available in the literature. Additional symptoms, which were not available in the literature, have also been emerged as the new clinical symptoms. These new information widens the scope of medicine. Hence, there is also scope to conduct further and more controlled studies on this medicine basing on other parameters, so that the symptoms, especially the additional ones, could be verified again, paving the way for ascertaining the reliable

characteristics of *Ferrum picricum*, and thus, the medicine could find its apt place in the Homoeopathic Materia Medica.

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