

HOMOEOPATHY IN THE PURVIEW OF DENTISTRY

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There is a prevailing ambiguity among laity and medical personnel as well whether Homoeopathy has any role in the field of oro-dental diseases. This is, however, a bare fact that numerous dental and associated diseases, of course not having irreversible pathological tissue changes, are amenable to homoeopathic treatment. Before contemplating clinical aspects, the target of this paper, let us discuss in a nutshell the origin and fundamental laws of Homoeopathy. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, basically postulated the homoeopathic law of cure. But it was only as early as 1790 when a German physician Dr. Samuel Hahnemann gave it a shape of therapeutic tool. There is a fixed nature's law of cure called *similia similibus curantur*, i.e. Likes are cured by likes, around which whole homoeopathic system revolves. According to this, what a drug can produce in a healthy individual can also cure in the diseased one.

It would not be out of place here to discuss how the dental health affects the general body health since whatever we ingest has to pass via oral cavity and teeth form the masticatory apparatus.

This is, therefore, quite obvious that any oral disease infective or otherwise, may lead to:

(1) maldigestion, diarrhoea and consequently to debility and delayed development of children etc.,

(2) focal infections causing the diseases of stomach (gastritis), heart (SABE), joints (arthritis), kidney (glomerulo-nephritis), eyes (keratitis), paranasal sinuses (maxillary sinusitis) and diseases, in general, of nervous system etc., and

(3) malignant lesions.

The most prevalent disease in adults which accounts for the maximum number of tooth extractions are caries (in younger age) and periodontitis etc. (in older age group). The most common dental and allied diseases, which a general clinician often comes across, are summarised below with indications of homoeopathic drugs.

CARIES

Caries is non-healing, irreversible, slowly progressive decay of tooth exposed to the buccal environment. This is characterized by demineralization of inorganic substances and decomposition of organic structures. Three factors responsible for its initiation and severity are host and teeth, microbial flora, and substrate or diet. The food containing sugars is, as a rule, cariogenic.

Furthermore, eating habits, oral hygiene, irregular teeth arrangement, thicker saliva and hereditary factors are promoting factors for caries formation.

Signs and symptoms:

In enamel (having no sensory nerves)	:	No symptoms.
In dento-enamel junction (quite sensitive spot)	:	There is sub-acute pain while taking cold or sweet substances.
In dentin	:	Cavities are formed and there is mild to severe pain especially with cold.
In pulp (pulpitis)	:	Severe pain with hyperaemia aggravated in recumbent posture and on hot application. Patient gets relief while sitting or holding iced water in the mouth.

Drugs of choice in dental caries:

(1) Kreosote: This is employed in rampant caries with periodontitis, spongy bleeding gums. Teeth dark and erumbles. If applied externally and internally, it excels many other drugs. Potency 3, 30, and ϕ external.

(2) Hecla lava: Gum abscess, caries of teeth. Potency 3X, 6X and external application of the same. It also covers facial neuralgia from carious teeth.

(3) Calcarea fluor. and Fluoric acid: Caries of teeth and upper jaw, dental fistula, teeth feel warm. Syphilitic ulcerations in the mouth. Potency 6X, 30X, 6, 30.

(4) Thuja occidentalis: Decay of crown of teeth while roots are sound. Very sensitive, gums retracted. Potency 30, 200, and ϕ ext.

(5) Mezerium: Root of teeth is carious while crown remains sound. Crumbling with receded gums. Potency 30, 200.

(6) Staphysagria: Caries with gingivitis. Pain relieved by warmth. Potency 3, 30.

(7) Coffea cruda: Pulpitis. Pain relieved while holding ice cold water in the mouth. Potency 6, 30.

GINGIVAL DISEASES

Diseases of gums may be grouped for convenience as follows:

A. *Chronic gingivitis*: This is very common condition and if remain untreated slowly develops into periodontal diseases (pyorrhoea). The aetiological factors are neglected oral hygiene, soft foods, un-opposed teeth, lack of lip seal, mouth breathing and so on so forth. Numerous systemic factors are puberty, pregnancy, menopause and vitamin deficiencies (vitamin A and C). Blood dyscrasia (leukemia) and drug hazards (anti-epileptic drugs like Pheneltoine) also play a role in its aetiology.

Clinical features: Painless shiny reddening of gum margin and interdental papilla. Bloody pus oozes out from the pockets especially on pressure. Gums usually lose their normal appearance.

B. *Periodontal disease (pyorrhoea)*: It is most common among adults and is almost inevitable after 50. The salient features are gingival bleeding especially on cleaning the teeth, calculus and pocket formation around the teeth filled with pus which oozes out. There is great halitosis (foul odour from the mouth). Extensive bony destruction may eventually lead to loosening of the teeth.

C. *Acute periodontitis (gum boil) or periapical abscess*: Inflammation of the membrane surrounding the root of the teeth. Route of infection is from pulp through apical foramen, from gum margin via lymphatics and from blood stream.

Clinical features: In early stages, teeth felt uncomfortable and elongated. The patient feels that he bites on it before other teeth. He is relieved after applying pressure on teeth. If suppuration is present pain is very severe while it is relieved when sinus is formed. If sub-periosteal abscess is produced, there is also swelling of adjoining mucosa and result is gum boil. General symptoms are pyrexia, malaise and headache. Trismus may complicate the picture.

Drugs of choice in gingival diseases

(1) Mercurious sol.: This remedy is called for in almost all affections of gums. Chronic gingivitis with spongy and receding gums, foul odour from mouth, profuse salivation, and epulis. Pulpitis with periodontitis. Teeth felt loose and painful on touch. Tongue flabby and indented. Moist mouth with thirst. Potency 2, 30, 200 and higher.

(2) Thuja occi.: Pyorrhoea alveolaris, carious teeth, bad odour from mouth. Potency 30, 200, 1000.

(3) Magnesia carb: Gingivitis during pregnancy. Potency 6, 30.

(4) Lachesis: Gums swollen, bluish, spongy and bleed easily with burning and rawness. Acute periodontitis, pain aggravated after sleep. Trifacial neuralgia. Potency 6-200.

(5) Hecla lava and Silicea: Gum boil with suppuration and discharge of bloody, thin pus. Severe pain. Lower potencies.

(6) Plantago major: Pyorrhoea with pain migrating from teeth to inner ear. Potency 30, and ϕ ext.

(7) Staphysagria: Spongy gums bleed easily. Pyorrhoea, toothache during pregnancy. Potency 3-30.

(8) Belladonna: Acute periodontitis, active hyperaemia, throbbing pain, gumboil with fiery red colour. Potency 3-30.

ORAL CANCER

Oral cancer is the most common type of cancer found in India and accounting for 40% of all diagnosed cancer cases. Suspected aetiological

factors begetting oral cancers are tobacco chewing, betel with lime and nuts, alcohol, syphilis, nutritional deficiencies, sunlight, trauma, sepsis and prolonged irritation due to sharp tooth.

The astute way of reducing the incidence of oral cancer is early recognition of pre-cancerous lesions and prevention of their malignant transformation. Various alarming pre-cancerous features are given below so as to enable the clinician to detect and differentially diagnose the would be spine chilling malady and to warn the patient to adopt necessary preventive steps.

A. *Leukoplakia*: It is a white patch on the oral mucosa of more than 5 mm in size and cannot be rubbed off. It cannot be attributed to any diagnosis.

B. *Candidiasis*: This is a fungal infection seen in persons who are malnourished or put on prolonged antibiotic therapy. It may infect infants from dirty water or during parturition, the infection being derived from vaginal flora. Lesions are white patches on mucosa and appear as if something has been sprinkled. When scraped, it may lead to a raw surface.

C. *Lichen planus, Sub-mucous fibrosis (SMF) and Chronic dental ulcer*: They may also lead to cancerous changes and therefore should be taken care of. S.M.F. may be characterized clinically by burning sensation, irritation by chilly and spicy foods and difficulty in movement of tongue and mouth. There is feeling of rigidity in the mouth which shows pervading whiteness all over the oral cavity.

Drugs of choice

If precancerous lesions, as described above, are at all suspected, the patient should at once be advised to consult a dental specialist/the oral cancer detection units, if possible. Various drugs which are otherwise of some use are Arsenic alb., Lachesis, Apis mel., Sulphur, Carcinocin, Nitric acid, Hecla lava and Cholesterinum etc. The constitutional symptoms according to homoeopathic therapeutics must not be omitted.

NEURALGIAS

This term implies any pain in or along the course of nerve. It is of two types. Primary, which is devoid of any pathology, and symptomatic, due to some pathological changes. Few important causes are:

(1) Caries, pulpitis, un-erupted and impacted tooth, buried roots and tumours arising from tooth.

(2) Ulcer in the mouth, trauma, infection of bone, diseases of ear, eye and sinuses etc.

(3) Herpes labialis, and diseases of salivary gland, and mandibular joint etc. There may still be other causes causing neuralgia which will be discussed while describing the range of homoeopathic drugs.

Drugs of choice in neuralgia

(1) *Plantago major*: Of immense importance in giving instant relief. Pain radiates from teeth to inner ear. Potency 30, and ϕ ext.

(2) *Magnesia phos.*: Toothache relieved by hot application. Cramp in facial muscles. Potency 6X, 12X (with warm water).

(3) *Coffea*: Pain relieved while holding icy cold water in the mouth. Potency 6, 30.

(4) *Chamomilla*: Neuralgia during pregnancy, and dentition in children. Pain aggravated by taking anything warm. Potency 3, 30.

(5) *Mag carb.* & *Cheiranthus*: Radiating and darting pain from impacted wisdom tooth and ailments therefrom. Potency 3, 30 and 6X (may be applied locally).

(6) *Spigelia*: Prosopalgia involving eye, zygoma, cheek and temple. Tearing toothache aggravated after taking food and cold drink. Potency 3, 6, 30.

(7) *Arnica mont.*: Pain and haemorrhage after extraction of tooth where injury to muscles predominates. Great soreness in the vicinity of extracted tooth. Potency 3, 6, 30, and ϕ ext.

(8) *Hypericum*: This is indicated where injury to nerves predominates in post-extraction cases. Combination of *Hypericum* and *Arnica* alternately acts like a potent analgesic and anti-inflammatory in dental practice. Potency 6, 30, and ϕ ext. (for gargle).

(9) *Hecla lava*: Periosteitis and osteitis after extraction of tooth or operation of bones/sequelae from injury to bones and periosteum. Potency 3X, 6X.

One thing merits open confession that the list of drugs is not at all exhaustive and therefore study of materia medica is the sheet anchor before prescribing. Moreover, patient, though having local oro-dental ailments, should be treated as a whole according to the homoeopathic philosophy. Any attempt to isolate and employ the drugs on specific lines may dismay the physician and cause unnecessary disrepute to the marvellous Homoeopathy. Consistent and diligent efforts by physician even in dealing with the paediatric problems during dentition with the homoeopathic medicament (*Abrotanum*, *Calc. phos.*, *Argentum nitricum* and *Chamomilla* etc.) may save the nibbling children from contracting rickets, marasmus, chronic diarrhoea, mental irritability and above all abnormal physical and mental growth. Last but not the least, it is hoped that consolidated efforts by both dentists and homoeopaths may prove of value in restoring patient's homoeostasis in general and ameliorating dental problems in particular the only and highest mission of physician. The novice but ambient efforts in this article by the would be doctors, having meagre knowledge in the subject, are expected to open a new vista for both the disciplines of medicine to consolidate.

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