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## Integrated learning in homoeopathy: A case-based study model

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### Abstract

**Background:** Integrated learning is an educational approach emphasising meaningful associations between various subjects and topics. It involves linking many topics within a single subject and connecting various topics from different subjects, resulting in a more holistic understanding of the material.

**Methods:** In this study model, a case of asthma in a 3.5-year-old child treated with Natrum sulphuricum was presented with the integration of homoeopathic subjects namely, Physiology, Anatomy, Pathology, Practice of Medicine, Paediatrics, Repertory, Materia medica, Organon of Medicine and Homoeopathic Pharmacy. The objectives are to understand Natrum sulphuricum as a remedy and to evaluate the effectiveness of integrated learning. 15 PG scholars participated in this case-based integrated learning model. The assessment was done through an online open-book examination for the participants.

**Results:** Based on the assessment through the performance rating scale, all 15 participants answered the questions appropriately by applying their subject knowledge to the case and scored between 21 to 25 marks.

**Conclusion:** Integrated learning has paved the way for a higher level of thinking among the participants and has given them an in-depth understanding of Natrum Sulphuricum and bronchial asthma. It has also enabled the participants to actively participate and improve their knowledge of other subjects in application into a case.

**Keywords:** Homoeopathy, integrated learning, case-based study model, open book exam

### Introduction

Integrated learning is a theory that aims to connect different subjects to create a meaningful association. By integrating different areas of study, students can see how different subjects interrelate and build a more comprehensive knowledge base. This approach promotes a holistic learning experience and expands knowledge and experiences. It encourages peer group work to develop open-ended learning styles and problem-solving skills<sup>[1, 2]</sup>. The characteristics of integrated learning include holistic learning, problem-solving ability development, social skill development, education connection to the real world, the combination of subjects, creative and critical thinking, and active participation through collaboration. The types of integration include integration within the subject areas (intra-disciplinary), between subjects' areas (multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary) and beyond the subjects (trans-disciplinary)<sup>[3]</sup>. Teaching with an integrated curriculum has many benefits. Research has found that integration, focuses on basic skills, content, and higher-level thinking, provides a deeper understanding of content, encourages active participation in relevant real-life experiences, provides connections among various curricular disciplines, and accommodates a variety of learning styles, and theories, and multiple intelligences. The disadvantages of integrated learning are lack of time to plan effective units and lack of effort for the integrative approach<sup>[4]</sup>.

### Methods

The sample population consists of 15 PG Scholars and a case of a 3.5-year-old female patient with complaints of hereditary bronchial asthma treated with Natrum sulphuricum was presented with the reportorial analysis. A discussion was made on the application of the knowledge through the integration of different homoeopathic subjects in a single case. After the discussion, the participants were given five questions each carrying five marks to evaluate their knowledge gained from integrated learning. Their performance was assessed through the performance rating scale. Feedback on the session was obtained from all the participants.

**Table 1:** Case presentation

Patient as a whole			
Name: Baby. S Address: Thuckalay OP No:XXX Age: 3.5 Years Child Sex: Female Date: 13.05.2016			
Presenting complaints:			
Location	Sensation/ Character & Pathology	Modalities (A/F, <,>)	Concomitants/ Accompaniments
Respiratory system	Watery coryza Breathing difficulty Cough without expectoration	< cold drinks <sup>++</sup> < rainy weather < night <sup>+</sup> > steam inhalation	Recurrent attack of cold Pain over the right temple of head
<p><b>History of presenting illness:</b> The patient came to the OPD with the complaint of breathing difficulty for two and half years gradually started as recurrent attacks of cold with watery coryza followed by difficulty in breathing worse on intake of cold drinks, rainy weather, night and better by steam inhalation, associated with pain over the right temple of head.</p> <p><b>Family history:</b> Relevant family history of Bronchial Asthma for her paternal grandfather</p> <p><b>Physical generals: Mental generals:</b> Shyness present Appetite: Diminished, 3t/day <b>Reaction to Desire:</b> Warm food and drinks, Aversion: Sweets, Urine: 10-15t/ day, Frequency of urination Desire: Fanning, Aversion: Covering, Sleep: Disturbed due to complaint Thermal: hot patient</p> <p><b>General physical examination:</b> Weight: 14.4 kg, Auricular lymph nodes enlarged on the left side, No pallor, No icterus, No clubbing, No cyanosis, White spots over nails, has a habit of nail-biting, Respiratory rate: 17 breaths/minute, Pulse rate: 111 beats/minute.</p> <p><b>Respiratory system examination:</b> Polyps seen over both nostrils; Normal vesicular breathing is heard all over the lung fields.</p>			
Homoeopathic management:			
Date	Symptom Assessment	Prescription	
13.05.2016	Recurrent attack of cold, Watery coryza, Difficulty in breathing, < cold drinks, > steam inhalation, Breathing difficulty < night, Pain over the right temple of the head associated with breathing difficulty	Natrum Sulph 0/3 / 7 (M) / weekly once	
10.06.2016-27.06.2017	Complaints better, occasionally postauricular lymphadenopathy present, Appetite: decreased	Natrum Sulph 0/3 / 1 D (M) / weekly once	
21.05.2018, 20.08.2018	Follow up after 1 year Complaints better, Appetite: decreased, Stool: Passed once in 3 days, difficult to pass stool	Natrum Sulph 0/3 / 1 D (M) / weekly once	
21.01.2019, 26.08.2019	Complaints better, Appetite: decreased, Stool: Passed once in 2 days, difficult to pass stool	Natrum Sulph 0/3 / 1 D (M) / weekly once	
12.02.2020-12.08.2020	Complaints better, Appetite: decreased, Stool: Once in a day	Natrum Sulph 0/3 / 1 D (M) / weekly once	
16.04.2021, 02.07.2021, 11.02.2022, 11.04.2022, 27.07.2022	Complaints better, Appetite: decreased, Stool: Regular, difficult to pass stool	Natrum Sulph 0/3 / 1 D (M) / weekly once	

Remedy	Nat-s	Nat-m	Pufs	Carb-v	Sulph	Lach	Lyc	Arg-n
<b>Totality</b>	28	29	28	26	26	24	22	20
<b>Symptoms Covered</b>	10	9	8	8	8	8	8	8
[Complete] [Generalities]Cold:Taking, becoming:Easily:	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3
[Complete] [Generalities]Food and drinks:Cold:Drinks:Agg.:	1	4	4	3	4	4	4	3
[Complete] [Generalities]Weather:Damp, rainy, wet:Agg.:	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3
[Complete] [Head]Pain, headache:Sides:Right:	1	3	3	4	1	3	3	3
[Complete] [Nose]Discharge:Thin, watery:	1	3	4	3	3	3	1	1
[Complete] [Respiration]Asthmatic:Hereditary:	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
[Complete] [Generalities]Constitution:Hydrogenoid:	4	3	1	1	0	0	0	1
[Complete] [Respiration]Asthmatic:Night:	4	3	4	3	3	3	1	3
[Complete] [Mind]Timidity:	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	3
[Complete] [Urine]Profuse, increased:Frequent:	3	3	0	0	3	1	1	0

**Fig 1:** Basis of selection of medicine through reportorial analysis

**Table 2:** Integration of homoeopathic subjects in a given case

Pharmacy	Common name: Glauber’s salt Source: It is a vitreous mineral with a white or colourless appearance that forms as an evaporite from sodium sulfate-containing brines, saline playa lakes and saline springs. <sup>[11]</sup> One dose of Natrum sulph was prescribed for 7 days in LM scale. Later, one dose of the same medicine was given every month. 1 dose is one poppy seed-sized medicated globule in one grain of sugar of milk.
Physiology	Asthma: Evaporative water loss from the respiratory tract occurs in exercise-induced asthma and sudden change in weather is a stimulus for evaporative water loss. Natrum sulph: The action of Natrum sulph is to eliminate the waste matter and water from the cells <sup>[6]</sup> .
Anatomy	Lower lobe of the left lung is usually affected <sup>[5]</sup> .
Pathology	T-cell mediated inflammatory response causes the release of cytokines that lead to bronchial hypersensitivity and airway obstruction in asthma <sup>[10]</sup> .
Practice of medicine	According to the so-called ‘one airway, one disease’ view, polyposis, allergic rhinitis and asthma, are on “a continuum of inflammation” within one airway. The inflammatory mediators travel from the upper airways to the lower airways which is the reason the disease of the upper respiratory tract ends in the disease of the lower respiratory tract. <sup>[10]</sup>
Paediatrics	Bronchial asthma represents the most common chronic disease in childhood. An increase in thunderstorms and rainfall is expected to be associated with an increase in episodes of attacks of bronchial asthma. Symptoms occur with changes in season <sup>[9]</sup> .
Organon of medicine	Constitution: Hydrogenoid constitution. Hereditary transmission: Natrum sulph is the first remedy for hereditary asthma in children. Miasm: sycosis - Nasal polyps, breathing difficulty worse on exposure to rainy weather, and on taking cold drinks, at night <sup>[12]</sup> .
Repertory	Complete repertory was used for repertorization since the patient had general symptoms and characteristic particular along with constitution.
Materia medica	Every fresh cold brings on the attack of asthma—asthmatic breathing in young subjects <sup>[5]</sup> . Dyspnoea in damp weather. It is a most useful remedy in humid asthma in children of sycotic parents. Chronic catarrh of the bronchial tubes <sup>[7]</sup> .

**Table 3:** Questions for evaluation

Sl.No.	Questions 5x5=25
1.	What is hydrogenoid constitution?
2.	What are the modalities of the sycotic miasm?
3.	What is the common name of Natrum sulph?
4.	What is the location of respiratory disease in Natrum sulph?
5.	What is the medical explanation for every fresh cold ending in asthma?

**Table 4:** Assessment of the Open Book Examination

The marks obtained by the participants through online open book examination are shown below using a performance rating scale:					
Marks Categorized (out of 25)	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25
Participants	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	15

**Results**

On evaluating the online open-book test using a performance rating scale, all 15 PG scholars scored between 21 to 25 marks. All the participants answered the questions appropriately showing that they realized, analysed,

synthesized and applied the subject knowledge to the case. The feedback from the participants explained their effective learning of Natrum Sulphuricum in understanding humid asthma and hereditary asthma.

**Discussion**

The participants understood that every fresh cold led to bronchial asthma because it is the one airway disease. They understood the application of their homoeopathic knowledge in the selection of similar medicine based on the constitution of the patient, and the miasmatic background considering the patient’s disposition and diathesis. They understood the modalities of sycosis through the study of Natrum sulphuricum. The participants found the method of integrated learning through a case-based study model as a better method of learning and understanding.

**Conclusion**

The integrated learning method has helped in establishing a connection with the homoeopathic subjects’ Physiology, Anatomy, Paediatrics, Pathology, Practice of Medicine, Repertory, Materia medica, Organon of Medicine and Homoeopathic Pharmacy in a case of bronchial asthma. This method has enabled the participants to actively participate and apply their knowledge of other subjects. Thus, incorporating integrated learning in the curriculum can help in building a comprehensive knowledge base and provide a more holistic approach to learning.

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