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Management of fibromyalgia by individualized homeopathic medicine: A case report

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Abstract

Fibromyalgia (FM) is a condition described by generalised body ache and fatigue with other psychological symptom and dysregulation in sleep cycle without any significant systemic illness. An assessment of 22 years old male fulfilling the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) criteria for fibromyalgia, based on psychiatric history of anxiety, depression, sleep disorder, dependence on drug, inconclusive lab testing and family assessment with abrupt occurrence of pain from the October 2023. Physical examination revealed wide spread pain (neck, both shoulders, both upper and lower arms, upper and lower leg, chest, upper and lower back, hip, abdomen). The Widespread Pain Index (WPI) Score and Symptom Severity (SS) Score were significantly high. Examination including X-ray, MRI did not disclose any bony deformity or disease. The frequency of anxiety and stress indicates a need for psychosocial assessment and counselling. After giving constitutional therapy in homeopathy pain is relieved to significant degrees, sleep improved with little to no use of sleeping pills aid.

Keywords: Fibromyalgia, tender points, ACR fibromyalgia diagnostic scale, WPI, SS score

Introduction

Definition: Fibromyalgia is a commonly encountered disorder characterized by chronic widespread musculoskeletal pain, stiffness, paresthesia, disturbed sleep and easy fatigability along with multiple painful tender points, which are widely and symmetrically distributed ^[2]. It is classified in the International Classification of Diseases ICD-11 as chronic primary pain. FMS (MG30.01) has had many names such as fibrositis or fibro myositis.

It is one of the types of soft rheumatism. Risk factors include life events that cause (unresolved) psychosocial distress relating to previous abuse, marital disharmony, alcoholism or illness in the family, poor sleep health, previous injury or assault and low income. FM arises in a variety of races and cultures. The aims of management are to educate the patient about the condition, address unresolved psychological issues, achieve pain control and improve sleep. Wherever possible, education should include the spouse, family or carer. Symptoms are often worsened by emotional or physical stress ^[1].

Fibromyalgia is frequently associated with disturbed sleep, chronic fatigue, headaches and IBS. Patient always appears anxious and depressed. In alternative system of medicine such as Homeopathy we believe that patient's constitution (Physical and mental makeup), family background, past history personal history and miasmatic background plays very important role. In Chronic condition like fibromyalgia, we need to look for Fundamental and Maintaining cause. Treating only present symptom of pain and tenderness is not rational way of treatment but one should focus on individualization for individual case. In homeopathy there is vast number of medicines which covers the symptomatology of Fibromyalgia. Individual homeopathic medicines can be prescribed based on kind of pain, modalities, thermal status of patients and totality of symptoms.

Clinical features: The spectrum of symptoms in fibromyalgia:

Usual symptoms

- **Widespread pain:** Generalized musculoskeletal aching, stiffness and fatigue.

Low back pain

Pain and tightness in the neck and across the upper posterior shoulders.
Muscle pain after exertion and some degree of pain is always present.

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The pain has been described as a burning, gnawing, soreness, stiffness, or aching.

Pain may begin in one region, such as the shoulders, neck, or lower back ("Myofascial Pain Syndrome") before it eventually becomes widespread ^[1].

- Fatiguability
- Broken, non-restorative sleep
- Irritability, poor concentration

Variable locomotors symptoms

- Early-morning stiffness
- Feeling of swelling in hands
- Distal finger tingling or numbness

Additional, variable, non-locomotors symptoms

- Non-throbbing bi frontal headache (tension headache)
- Colicky abdominal pain, bloating, variable bowel habit (irritable bowel syndrome)
- Bladder fullness, nocturnal frequency (irritable bladder)
- Hyperacusis, dyspareunia, discomfort when touched (allodynia) ^[1].

Pathogenesis

Several causative mechanisms for fibromyalgia have been postulated to explain abnormal pain perception. These theories include:

- Abnormalities of the central nervous system.
- Disturbed sleep, Nonrestorative sleep (stage 4 sleep deprivation i.e. non-rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep).
- Deficiency of serotonin metabolites in the cerebrospinal fluid (CSF).
- Reduced levels of growth hormone, which is important for muscle repair and strength. Growth hormone is secreted normally during stage 4 sleep.
- The level of the neurotransmitter substance P increased in the CSF.
- Decreased cortisol response to stress.
- Low urinary free cortisol.
- An abnormal hypothalamic pituitary-adrenal axis (diminished cortisol response to corticotropin-releasing hormone).
- Association with psychological abnormalities (depression, anxiety, somatization, and hypochondriasis, history of sexual and physical abuse and eating disorders) ^[1].

Physical examination

- Presence of tender spots on the nape of the neck, trapezius, medial border of the Scapulae, gluteal region, forearms and medial side of the knee.
- There may be local swelling and reactive hyperemia at these tender spots.
- The diagnosis needs exclusion of other rheumatic disorders (Rheumatoid arthritis, polymyositis, hypothyroidism). Investigations are typically normal.

Homeopathic management

Rhus tox

- Pain and stiffness in small of back; better, motion, or lying on something hard; worse, while sitting. Stiffness of the nape of the neck. The brain feels loose or there is

an undulating feeling in the head.

- Pain in the head as if the brain were torn. Stupefying headache with buzzing in the ears. Stitching pains in the head. The muscles of the head are sore.
- Pains in the bones, lameness in the muscles, lameness in the tendons, ligaments, and joints from suppression of sweat, from becoming chilled. < Cold > warmth
- The aching pains, the bruised feelings over the body, restlessness throughout the limbs, and amelioration from motion. While he is better from motion and better from walking, if he continues to walk he becomes exhausted ^[3].

Arnica

- After traumatic injuries, overuse of any organ, strains. A muscular tonic. Traumatism of grief, remorse or sudden realization of financial loss. Limbs and body ache as if beaten; joints as if sprained. Bed feels too hard. Sore, lame, bruised feeling.
- Neuralgias originating in disturbances of pneumogastric. Rheumatism of muscular and tendinous tissue, especially of back and shoulders.
- Inability to perform continuous active work; Nervous; cannot bear pain; whole body oversensitive.
- sharp, pinching pain in head, Scalp feels contracted. ⁽⁴⁾

Medorrhinum

- Several joints are affected at once which afterwards localizes to one joint or part of body. Extensive redness, swelling, pain and tenderness. Pain very severe, < slightest movements.
- Burning palms and soles with oedema of limbs. < Touch > hard rubbing. With intense formication all over body.
- It can be compared as Medorrhinum in day and syphilinum at night. Chronic rheumatic pain with contraction of muscles of posterior part of thigh down to knee.
- Sleepy but cannot sleep ^[3].

Mag phos

- The great anti-spasmodic remedy. Cramping of muscles with radiating pains. Neuralgic pains relieved by warmth. Indisposition for mental exertion.
- Pains are very violent and may affect any nerve. A pain localizes itself in a nerve and becomes worse and worse, sometimes coming in paroxysms, but becoming so violent that the patient becomes frantic.
- Dr. Schuessler's remedy for cramps, convulsions, neuralgic pains and spasmodic effects; showing its influence on Nerves and muscles. Suitable to tired, languid exhausted subjects.
- Nervous, tense, and subject to sudden violent paroxysms of neuralgic pains; sharp, shooting like lightning, suddenly changing places; radiating, boring, constricting; extorting cries;
- **Worse:** Cold, air drafts. Touch. Periodicity. Night. Exhaustion.
- **Better:** Warmth. Hot bathing. Pressure. Doubling up. Rubbing ^[4, 5].

Ruta

- Acts upon the periosteum and cartilages, eyes and

uterus. Complaints from straining flexor tendons especially. Tendency to the formation of deposits in the periosteum, tendons, and about joints, especially wrist.

- Overstrain of ocular muscles.
- All parts of the body are painful, as if bruised. Sprains (after Arnica). Lameness after sprains. Tendons sore. Aching pain in tendo-Achilles. Thighs pain when stretching the limbs. Pain in bones of feet and ankles. Great restlessness ^[4].

The case report

Presenting Illness

On date, 10/05/2024 a male patient, 22 years old student came with dull to severe body ache every now and then since October 2023. Pain was gradually increased since first attack. A patient cannot sit for long time or even household chores is difficult. Pain was deep mostly affecting lower limbs ascending up to neck. Along with pain there was complaint of chronic anxiety, sleep disturbance, continuous headache and fatigue since last 2-3 years.

| Location | Sensation | Modality | Concomitant |
|---|---|---|---|
| Locomotor system Leg pain (Calf muscles) Pain ascends upwards since 6-8 months | Deep bony pain, fatigue ⁺⁺ Tiredness ⁺⁺⁺ . | < mental and physical exertion ⁺⁺⁺ | Disturbed sleep Generalized weakness ⁺⁺ |
| Neck pain since 6-8 months | Stiffness ⁺⁺ | < Morning ⁺ > Movement ⁺ , Stretching ⁺⁺ (temporary) | |
| Headache (B/L from eyes to temples) | Severe continuous heaviness ⁺⁺ | < before and after sleep ⁺ | Burning of eyes ⁺ Irritability ⁺⁺ To light, noise |
| Eye pain | Burning ⁺ | < strain on eyes like reading or watching ⁺⁺ . | Headache |
| Mind | Anxiety, depressive episode, brain fog | < morning | Sleeplessness |

Personal history

Apetite: Adequate, two meals per day.

Thirst: Adequate.

Stool: Twice a day.

Urine: Adequate.

Perspiration: Profuse, even in winter, more on underarms and forehead, No smells, Patient feels hot.

Sleep: Disturbed, wake up tired, sleeplessness due to mental and physical exertion.

Habit: Smoking, 4-5 times per day.

Thermal status: Hot.

Past history

H/O Anxiety attack since 2022: Rx taken from psychiatrist.

H/O Fall on back, injury to tail bone (2023). X ray: revealed no abnormality.

Family history

Mother: Arthritis since 2019.

DM and Hypertension since 2016.

Father: Epilepsy and Hypertension 2021.

Siblings: 1 elder brother-healthy.

Grandmother: Gallbladder cancer.

Grandfather: Natural death.

Mental makeup

Fear of failure, Anxiety with palpitation last for long time

Sad, Depressive mood in morning.

Irritability and anger due to pain.

Dullness of memory, cannot remember because of constant aching and anxiety.

Brain fog.

Physical makeup

Well built, well nourished

Weight: 74 Kg

Height: 5.11 feet.

Hair: Hair fall, Baldness over forehead.

Nail: Pink.

Sclera: White.

Clinical findings

Lab investigation (22/06/2024)

Hb: 13.10 gm/dl

CRP: 2.04mg/dl

ESR: 13 mm/1hr

Vitamin D: 57.10 ng/dl (Sufficient)

Vitamin B12: 501.00pg/dl

Blood urea: 18.00mg/dl

S. Creatinine: 0.96mg/dl

Anti CCP < 0.5 U/ml (NEG)

RA Factor < 15 IU/ml (NEG)

SLR B/L: Negative

Faber B/L: Negative

Power test for right and left leg: 5/5

The ACR Diagnostic criteria score for given case is as following

1. Widespread pain index (WPI) 17 and symptom severity (SS) scale score 10 (part a = 9) (part b =1)
2. Symptoms have been present for more than last 3 months.
3. The patient does not have a disorder that would otherwise explain the pain.

Hence, the patient meets the diagnostic criteria of fibromyalgia

Widespread Pain Index
(1 point per check box; score range: 0-19 points)

1 Please indicate if you have had pain or tenderness during the past 7 days in the areas shown below. Check the boxes in the diagram for each area in which you have had pain or tenderness.

Symptom Severity
(score range: 0-12 points)

2 For each symptom listed below, use the following scale to indicate the severity of the symptom during the past 7 days.

- No problem
- Slight or mild problem: generally mild or intermittent
- Moderate problem: considerable problems; often present and/or at a moderate level
- Severe problem: continuous, life-disturbing problems

| | No problem 0 | Slight or mild problem 1 | Moderate problem 2 | Severe problem 3 |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Points | | | | |
| A. Fatigue | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| B. Trouble thinking or remembering | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| C. Waking up tired (unrefreshed) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

3 During the past 6 months have you had any of the following symptoms?

| | 0 | 1 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Points | | |
| A. Pain or cramps in lower abdomen | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes |
| B. Depression | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes |
| C. Headache | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes |

Additional criteria (no score)

4 Have the symptoms in questions 2 and 3 and widespread pain been present at a similar level for at least 3 months?

☐ No ☒ Yes

5 Do you have a disorder that would otherwise explain the pain?

☒ No ☐ Yes

Life space

Since childhood patient is healthy and intelligent. No significant history of physical or mental illness were noted. He would like to stay in-door and study rather than playing outside. In school, he was above average student. No significant conflict in the family.

Complaints of anxiety attack started in January 2022 after failure of relationship.

The anxiety attack described by patient, as if there was feeling of heart beating too fast with bouts of breathlessness. Such episodes can continue for 2 days. He also left the home for a while. Patient has consulted psychiatrist for good 2 years on and off.

Patient soon developed need for sleeping pills due to disturbed sleep cycle. He must need to sleep in day time to gain the energy. Headache follows if patient has not sleep in day time.

Patient grow irritable to sounds, light and air.

In august 2023, patient succumbs to the injury to tailbone, X ray revealed no abnormalities. After 1-2 Months his body ache started, first only lower limbs were affected, soon the pain ascended up to the neck. Pain was accompanied by fatigue, generalized weakness, poor sleep,

Weak memory, brain fag, lack of concentration, lack of motive, change in appetite, headache and morning stiffness.

Case analysis and repertorization

After taking complete history, totality of symptoms formed and repertorization done (Hompath version 5.0). Patient is given following medicine after repertorization.

Totality of symptoms

1. Anxiety with palpitation
2. Sadness and Depression prevail in morning
3. Brain fag
4. Irritability with anger due to pain
5. Palpitation for long time
6. Generalized weakness
7. Sleeplessness even after physical and mental exertion
8. Profuse perspiration on forehead and underarms
9. Heavy and Painful lower limb, extending up to neck
10. Dull continuous headache
11. Headache extending to eyes
12. Morning stiffness of neck
13. Eyes strain on watching and reading

Repertorization

| Symptoms: 13 Remedies: 1135 Applied Filter | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|--------|
| Remedy Name | Ph-ac | Kali-p | Kali-c | Nat-m | Ars | Calc | Phos | Lach | Sulph | Nux-v |
| Totality | 35 | 32 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 30 | 30 | 29 |
| Symptom Covered | 12 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 10 | 11 |
| Kingdom | Minerals | Minerals | Minerals | Minerals | Minerals | Minerals | Minerals | Animals | Minerals | Plants |
| [Complete] [Mind]Anxiety: (915) | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| [Kent] [Chest]Palpitation,heart: (203) | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| [Complete] [Mind]Sadness: (930) | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| [Kent] [Perspiration]Profuse: (133) | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| [Kent] [Extremities]Heaviness,tired limbs: (120) | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| [Kent] [Head]Pain,headache in general: (258) | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| [Kent] [Head]Pain,headache in general:Extending to :Eyes: (22) | | | 2 | 1 | | 2 | | 2 | 3 | |
| [Kent] [Generalities]Weakness, enervation (see lassitude,weariness): (309) | | | | | | | | | | |

| Symptoms: 13 Remedies: 1135 Applied Filter | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|--------|
| Remedy Name | Ph-ac | Kali-p | Kali-c | Nat-m | Ars | Calc | Phos | Lach | Sulph | Nux-v |
| Totality | 35 | 32 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 30 | 30 | 29 |
| Symptom Covered | 12 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 10 | 11 |
| Kingdom | Minerals | Minerals | Minerals | Minerals | Minerals | Minerals | Minerals | Animals | Minerals | Plants |
| [Kent] [Head]Pain,headache in general:Extending to :Eyes: (22) | | | 2 | 1 | | 2 | | 2 | 3 | |
| [Kent] [Generalities]Weakness, enervation (see lassitude,weariness): (309) | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| [Boericke] [Mind]Brain-fag: (27) | 3 | 3 | | 2 | | 3 | 3 | | | 2 |
| [Kent] [Chest]Palpitation,heart:Anxiety: (84) | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| [Kent] [Mind]Sadness,mental depression:Waking,on (see morning): (16) | 2 | 2 | 1 | | | | | 2 | | |
| [Kent] [Mind]Irritability (see anger): (245) | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| [Kent] [Sleep]Sleeplessness:Mental :Exertion,after: (16) | 2 | 2 | 2 | | 3 | | | 2 | | 2 |

Repertorial result and Therapeutic intervention Kali Phos was chosen as the remedy based on a totality of symptoms, including individualization, repertorial analysis, and consultation with Materia Medica. Repeated Dose of Kali Phos 30 given considering the severity and intensity of pain, consisting of 4 globules per dose thrice a day for 15 days. Adjustments in dosing frequency were made during follow-ups as per complaint by patient. No change in potency was done as favourable result obtained in each follow up with change in repetition

Rescription

Kali Phos 30 TDS for 15 days

Adv: follow up after 15 days or as per need

Follow up and outcome

25/05/2024: Painful episodes at various interval

Appetite reduced

Sleep unrefreshed

Rx, Kali Phos 30 QDS

Adv: Follow up after 15 days or as per need.

10/06/2024: Pain relieves temporary

Frequent numbness of fingers

Feels dizzy, headache occasionally

Thirst increases

Sleep disturbance

Rx, Kali Phos 30 every 4 hourly

Adv: Follow up after 15 days or as per need.

20/06/2024: Improvement in fatigue and mood is improved

Sleep disturbance still persist, headache better

Patient stays awake till late night, feels unrefreshed and drowsy all day.

Rx, Kali Phos 30 TDS

Adv: Follow up after 15 days or as per need.

5/7/2024: Marked improvement in mood and fatigue

Sleep disturbance reduce

General ability of exertion improved

Memory better

Rx, Kali Phos 30 BD

Adv: Follow up after 15 days or as per need.

Discussion

The given case shows the efficacy of individualized Homeopathic treatment in managing fibromyalgia. The case was diagnosed based on history of complaints, clinical examination and ACR diagnostic Criteria for Fibromyalgia. The treatment from allopathic medicine was habit forming and costly for the patient. Here, Homeopathy provided freedom from heavy dosing and dependency on drugs. A proper cause and progress of the condition kept in view with history of disease, family and personal history, mental symptoms. A physical and mental correlation of symptoms is well presented. After forming totality of symptoms, repertorization done using HOMPETH software. From the repertorization results, which included prominent medicines like Phosphoric acid 35/12, Kali Phos 32/12, Kali Carb 31/12, Nat Mur 31/11, Arsenic 31/10.

The choice of remedy was Kali Phos in 30C potency repeated thrice a day for 15 days. Kali Phos selected on basis of certain key points and marks obtained in repertorization such as: continuous present of symptom such as pain and fatigue, overworked brain causing brain fog and weakness of memory, present of emotional factor as cause, prominent anger and irritability brought up on by mental and physical exertion, mental worries and over work bringing physical symptom without actual pathology behind it, disturbed sleep schedule with poor quality of sleep. Follow-up assessments were done every 15 days or as per need. Laboratory tests revealed no abnormalities. During first follow up patient complaint of temporary relieve and not much change in tender points with sleep problems. Kali Phos 30 was continued for next 15 days more frequently, in following follow ups patients improved overall, reduce tender points, better sleep, less fatigue and better ability to focus mentally. Eventually doses were tapered down up to minimum repetition. The WPI score decreased from 17 to 10. In SS severity score: Fatigue reduce from 3 marks to 1 that is severe to mild, waking up unrefreshed also lowered to 1 from 3, trouble remembering still at 2. Overall improvement in mood and sleep cycle with marked improvement in fatigue and weakness.

Conclusion

The result of this case report suggest that individualized homoeopathic medicines selected on basis of totality of symptoms is effective in the treatment of fibromyalgia. With the help of repertorization and knowledge of materia medica Kali Phos is used in this case. A long lasting action of this anti-psoric remedy helped patient to get rid of over use of painkillers, lift the brain fog. Oversensitivity towards external environment, pain and mental worries is controlled very well by this drug. A relief from this remedy also suggest the psychological origin of fibromyalgia without any systemic disease or pathology.

Consent of the patient

The patient has provided verbal consent for their clinical information to be included in the journal anonymously. All

identifying details regarding the patient have been withheld at the patient's request and for ethical considerations.

Conflict of interest: Not available

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