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Gastroesophageal reflux disease and homoeopathic medicine: A review

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Abstract

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a chronic gastrointestinal disease, especially upper gastrointestinal disease, in which stomach contents reflux persistently and regularly into the lower esophageal end. Consistent and regular reflux of acidic stomach foods causes various symptoms such as dysphagia, food regurgitation, heartburn, odynophagia, cough, hoarseness, and discomfort in the chest. It affects about 20% of the adult population in developing countries.

There are various modes of treatment like allopathy, homeopathy, and ayurvedically, in the allopathic mode of treatment proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), and antihistaminic drugs for symptomatic relief but that does not cure the cause of the disease. But in homeopathy, homeopathic medicine cures the cause of disease along with symptoms of the disease.

Objectives: This review article aims to represent the pathophysiology, clinical manifestation, and diagnosis with homeopathic management of GERD by individual medicine. This homeopathic medicine is selected based on the individual symptoms of patients.

Methodology: A review article was conducted using various peer journals, clinical studies, and case studies that focused on the use of individual homeopathic medicine in the treatment of GERD. This review article's sources were selected from databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, and various books.

Conclusion: This review article presents the clinical value of individual homeopathic medicine to treat GERD. The review highlights the clinical value of individualized homeopathic treatment.

Keywords: Homeopathic medicine, GERD, Gastroesophageal reflux disease, homoeopathy

Introduction

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is an upper digestive disorder present with various symptoms such as dysphagia, food regurgitation, heartburn, odynophagia, cough, hoarseness, and discomfort in the chest ^[1, 6, 7]. There is Consistent and regular reflux of gastric foods into the esophagus, especially in the lower esophageal by the lower esophageal sphincter, which is responsible for chronic inflammation and irritation of lower esophageal mucosa ^[1, 3]. Heartburn-like symptoms are more common after taking food ^[7]. A wide range of symptoms has appeared in pathological gastroesophageal reflux ^[7]. Pathological changes in the lower esophagus are characteristic features of GERD ^[7]. In most of person physiological reflux of gastric foods is present with rapid clearance of the lower esophagus ends due to there being no symptoms ^[7]. There are the following factors that are responsible for the stimulation of GERD symptoms lifestyle habits like alcohol, and smoking, mental stress, oily foods, pregnancy, hiatal hernia, and obesity ^[1]. 10 to 20% population of the Western world suffer from GERD but most commonly 18 to 28% in North America ^[1].

Pathophysiology of GERD

Various types of risk factors for causing GERD like obesity, smoking, alcohol, old age, anxiety, mental stress, depression, and less physical activity, etc. ^[6] Chronic reflux of gastric contents in the lower esophagus end or lower esophageal sphincter with no rapid clearance of lower esophageal ends ^[6]. Which produces inflammation and irritation in the lower esophageal ends, that condition is called esophagitis which condition produces symptoms called GERD ^[7]. There is dysfunction of lower esophageal sphincters and gastric food present for a long time in the lower esophagus end which produces irritation due to lower esophageal sphincter is not closed ^[8].

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There are the following risk factors hiatal hernia, delayed gastric emptying, defective esophageal clearance, increased abdominal pressure, spicy foods, gastric contents, increased gastric acid production, increased bile formation, increased pepsin formation, dietary-related factors like increased intake of fat, chocolate, alcohol, smoking, during pregnancy, and obesity ^[1, 4].

Clinical symptoms of GERD

There are symptoms of GERD are classified into two types Esophageal Symptoms also called Typical Symptoms and Non-esophageal symptoms called Atypical Symptoms.^{1,4} Esophageal symptoms that symptoms are produced due to the involvement of the esophagus like heartburn which is aggravated during sleep ^[1, 4]. Banding, cough, and noticeable regurgitation of sour-tasting gastric foods, dysphagia, and water brush. Non-esophageal symptoms like chest pain, laryngitis, chronic cough, night wake, recurrent chest infection, dysphagia, odynophagia, and hoarseness ^[1, 4]. Other alarming symptoms like dysphagia with anorexia, dysphagia with weight loss, and dysphagia with anemia ^[4].

Investigation of GERD

There are various types of investigation, but they depend upon the history of the patient.

- Endoscopy
- Barium swallow X-rays
- 24-hour Ph monitoring
- Impedence testing
- Esophageal Manometry

Homoeopathic Approach to GERD Management

According to Homoeopathy GERD is not merely a gastrointestinal disorder but a systemic condition influenced by various constitutional factors. Individualized treatment is essential, considering the patient's physical and mental symptoms.

Nux vomica

Nux vomica is a polychrests homeopathic medicine. Typical patients of *Nux vomica* are thin, quick, active, very irritable, nervous, and sensitive to all impressions with can not bear noises, odors, light, etc. small mouth ulcer with bloody saliva and swelling of gums. In throat tickling, scraping, and rough feeling with tightness. There is a sour taste with nausea and vomiting especially in the morning after taking foods. Burning pain in the lower esophagus part and stomach with bloating sensation. Acid regurgitation, stomach part very sensitive to pressure, epigastric bloated after eating. Wants to vomit but can not vomit with dyspepsia. Gas, distention of abdomen with spasmodic pain in the abdomen. Constipation with frequently ineffectual urging of stool with feeling as if a part remained in the rectum.

Aggravation – in the morning, mental work, after eating, spices and stimulant foods.

Amelioration – evening

Robinia Pseudacacia:

It is a Specific remedy for hyperacidity and sour eructation. Intense heartburn, sour vomiting, and epigastric discomfort with frontal headache. Intensely acrid eructation, acrid and greenish vomiting, burning pain in the stomach especially at

night, constipation with flatulence. Dull, heavy aching pain in the stomach with nausea and profuse vomiting of sour fluid. Great distension of the stomach with pain in the stomach.

Carbo Vegetabilis

It is a very useful remedy for flatulence, bloating, and burning pain in the chest with distension of the abdomen and a sensation of heaviness all symptoms aggravated by lying down. Eructation, belching especially after eating and drinking. Sour, putrid eructation, water brash. Contractive pains in the stomach which extend to the chest with distension of the abdomen. Digestion is slow with food putrefied before food is digested with colic. Aversion to milk, meat, and fatty foods.

Aggravation – evening, night, fatty food, coffee, milk.

Amelioration – cold

Lycopodium clavatum

It is well Indicated remedy for GERD with weak digestion and excessive gas formation. There is all Symptoms worse after eating, especially from farinaceous or flatulent food. There is weak digestion with disturbed in liver function. Dyspepsia due to fermented foods with regurgitation of food. Excessive hunger with a desire for sweet things, and aversion to bread. Pressure and heaviness of the stomach after taking food with a bitter taste in the mouth. Bloating immediately after taking light foods with distention of abdomen with a constant sense of fermented foods.

Aggravation – 4 to 8 pm

Amelioration – warm foods.

Natrum Phosphoricum

It is a very useful remedy for acid reflux with sour eructation and burning in the esophagus. Acidity is worsened by starchy or fatty foods. Sour eructation, sou vomiting with burning pain in esophagus and stomach. Blister on the tip of the tongue with a moist coating on the tongue. Dysphagia with excessive acidity.

Iris Versicolor

It is a well-known remedy for its action on gastric and hepatic systems. Burning pain in the stomach with vomiting of sour fluids. Heat and smarting burning pain in the stomach with profuse saliva. Burning pain in the whole gastrointestinal tract with a vomiting sensation. Deficient appetite, cutting pain in the stomach. Constipation and burning pain in the anus.

Aggravation – evening, at night.

Amelioration – continuous motion

Clinical Evidence Supporting Homoeopathy in GERD

Several studies and case reports have demonstrated the efficacy of homoeopathic remedies in managing GERD symptoms:

- A 2017 study published in the International Journal of Complementary and Alternative Medicine highlighted the role of *Nux vomica* and Robinia in reducing the frequency and severity of GERD symptoms in a cohort of 50 patients.
- Case studies have reported significant improvement in GERD symptoms with individualized homoeopathic treatment, with most patients experiencing long-term relief without recurrence.

Conclusion

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a prevalent and challenging clinical condition of digestive disorder that significantly impacts the quality of daily life. While conventional and modern treatments provide symptomatic relief of GERD, the homoeopathic system offers a holistic approach to treatment that addresses the root cause of GERD and promotes overall well-being. Remedies such as *Nux vomica*, Robinia, and Carbo vegetabilis have shown promising results in the management of GERD symptoms. Further research, including large-scale clinical trials, is warranted to validate the efficacy of homoeopathic treatments and establish their role as a complementary or standalone therapy for GERD.

Conflict of interest

None.

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