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Novel coronavirus (Covid -19): A pandemic in 2020 and homoeopathy

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Abstract

Human history is observing a very strange time fighting an invisible enemy; the novel COVID-19- 'Novel' stands for new 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus and 'D' for disease. The virus originated in bats and was transmitted to humans through yet unknown intermediary animals in Wuhan, Hubei province, China in December 2019. As this pandemic is very new so very less scientific material is available on the topic. COVID-19 is likely to affect people from many countries in many geographical locations. However, at the time this crisis is generating stress throughout the country. Homoeopathy is a system of Integrative Medicine that was developed in Europe at the end of the eighteenth-century employing medicines prepared according to a well-defined procedure starting from mineral, herbal and animal substances. Thus, Homoeopathy medicines have been extensively used for flu-like symptoms and has long record of success during epidemics and pandemics crisis since old modern times. Selection of the most appropriate Homoeopathic medicine is based on an individual's unique symptoms. So Homoeopathic options can form one part of approach in the prevention or immunity boosting for the current Covid-19 outbreak but should always be used alongside with other measures.

Keywords: Coronavirus, pandemic, epidemic, WHO, homoeopathy, SARS-CoV-2

Introduction

A Pandemic is defined as "an epidemic occurring worldwide or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people" [1] In 2003 the Chinese population was infected with a virus causing Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Guangdong province [2]. A decade later in 2012, a couple of Saudi Arabian nationals were diagnosed to be infected with another coronavirus. The detected virus was confirmed as a member of coronaviruses and named as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). The World Health Organization reported that MERS-Coronavirus infected more than 2428 individuals and 838 deaths [3] In 2020 a new coronavirus is currently holding hostage much of the human population worldwide. This virus SARS-CoV-2, which causes the COVID-19 disease emerged in China from bats into a presumed intermediate species and then into humans. It then spread around the globe with ongoing devastating effects [4] In December 2019 a novel coronavirus, SARS -CoV-2 was identified as the pathogen causing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Wuhan, China. On March 11, 2020, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization [5] As of 26 February 2020, the disease has been detected all continents except for Antarctica [6] As of March 27, 2020, there have been a total of 103,942 confirmed cases with 1689 deaths in the United States. Globally, 27,324 deaths have been reported among 595,800 confirmed cases.⁵ Coronaviruses are enveloped nonsegmental positive-sense RNA viruses belonging to the family Coronaviridae and the order Nidovirales and may distributed in humans and other mammals [7]. Corona represents crown-spikes on the outer surface of the virus thus it was named as coronavirus. Coronaviruses are minute in size (65-125nm in diameter) and contain a single-stranded RNA as a nucleic material, size ranging from 26 to 32Kbs in length (Figure-1). The subgroups of coronaviruses family are alpha (α), beta (β), gamma (γ), and delta (δ) coronavirus [8].

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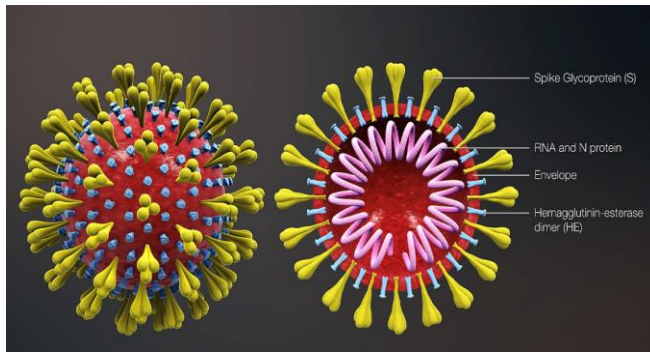


Fig 1: Coronavirus

The common 2019-nCoV symptoms include acute respiratory disease syndrome, including shortness of breath, fever, sore throat, cough, weakness, bodyache and diarrhoea. For some people it may be more serious and may lead to pneumonia or difficulty in breathing. More rarely the disease can be fatal. Older people and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as diabetes and heart disease) seem more vulnerable to the virus and became seriously ill [9]

Diagnosis is based on RT-PCR assays for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Patients with pneumonia might have falsely negative upper respiratory samples [10] Although sampling from the lower respiratory tract is recommended by WHO, such as sputum and endotracheal aspirates [11] The differential diagnosis includes all types of respiratory viral infections (influenza, parainfluenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), adenovirus, human metapneumovirus, non COVID-19 coronavirus), atypical organisms (mycoplasma, chlamydia) and bacterial infections. It is not possible to differentiate COVID-19 from these infections clinically or through routine lab tests [12]

There is no available vaccine against severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infections and no drug with proven clinical efficacy. Encouragingly the response from the research community to the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 has been vigorous [13]

General Management

WHO encourages all countries to continue with epidemic preparedness and charges china's success in stanching the crisis to its unprecedented lockdowns with cordon sanitaires.¹⁴ As the World struggles to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO's standard recommendations for the general public to reduce exposure to and transmission of a range of illnesses are as follows which include hand and respiratory hygiene and safe food practices [15]

1. Frequently clean hands by using 70% alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
2. When coughing and sneezing cover mouth and nose flexed elbow or tissue-throw tissue away immediately and wash hands.
3. Avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough. Promote social distancing.
4. If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care early and share previous travel history with your health care provider.
5. The consumption of raw or undercooked animal

products should be avoided. Raw meat, milk or animal organs should be handled with care, to avoid cross contamination with uncooked foods as per food safety practices.

6. When visiting live markets in areas currently experiencing cases of novel coronavirus, avoid direct unprotected contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals [16]

Homoeopathic Approach

Homoeopathy is a time tested two-century old empirical system of healing. It is a natural method of treatment, aimed at curbing a disease naturally, holistically, gently and permanently. It is based on the natural law of healing '*Similia Similibus Curentur*', which means 'let likes be treated by likes' [17]

Homoeoprophylaxis is based on the science of homoeopathy. Homoeopathy is a comprehensive and holistic therapeutic system that was founded in the later 1700's and has been globally for 200 years. Homoeopathy is progressively receiving scientific validation and greater acceptance due to the documentation of significant clinical research outcomes as well as the evolving understanding of physics, nanoparticles and biomedicine. The concept of Genus epidemics comes into play in terms of Homoeoprophylaxis which also act as a curative remedy in some cases under consideration. Three approaches of Homoeoprophylaxis may be used to select the remedy for prophylaxis of a prevailing epidemic -Constitutional Approach, Genus epidemics remedies and Nosode Prophylaxis. When epidemic diseases threaten the population, specific prophylactic remedies can be applied immediately [18].

Homeopathy has an old association with treating epidemic conditions successfully, thus reducing both morbidity and mortality. Homeopathy has reportedly been used both for prevention and management during the epidemics of Cholera, Spanish Influenza, Yellow fever, Scarlet fever, Diphtheria, Typhoid etc. during pre-antibiotic, pre-vaccination eras [19].

The most relevant examples related COVID -19 is the use of homeopathy in the pandemic of Spanish Flu in 1918-20. 20% of the entire world population was infected and 20-40 million people died. During this pandemic it is said that homeopathic medicines were widely used worldwide, both for treatment and prevention. The average mortality under standard treatment was about 30%, while 1-2% or fewer patients died under homeopathic treatment. Besides commonly used homeopathic medicines, such as *Gelsemium*, *Bryonia alba*, *Eupatorium perf.* *Arsenic album*, *Phosphorus* and *Influenzinum* etc [20, 21]

In the present scenario of Covid-19 pandemic, Ministry of Ayush has given the Health advisory again coronavirus infection included *Arsenicum album* -30 as a possible preventive for flu like illness such as coronavirus infection.¹⁹ In one of the studies *Arsenic album* as one of the constituents in a formulation has been shown to affect HT29 cells and human macrophages. Also, it showed ↓NF-κB hyperactivity (reduced expression of reporter gene GFP in transfected HT29 cells), ↓TNF-α release in macrophages.²²

Homoeopathic Medicines for Covid-19

Aconite

This medicine is generally indicated in acute and recent cases. There is great fear and anxiety of mind with great nervous excitability and patient is afraid to go out or into a crowd or even to cross the street. Fever is associated with dryness of skin, red face or pale and red alternately along with burning thirst for large quantities of cold water ^[23].

Arsenic Album

This medicine is indicated in the cases of anxiety, fear of death and restlessness. Patient is mentally restless but physically too weak to move and cannot rest in any place. There is great thirst for cold water drinks often but little at a time. Difficult breathing and patient are unable to lie down for fear of suffocation. In general, there is midday and midnight aggravation of all complaints ^[24].

Belladonna

This medicine is indicated in the cases violence of attack and suddenness of onset. There is high feverish state with comparative absence of toxemia. Burning, pungent and streaming heat with no thirst in fever. Throat feels constricted, dry as if glazed with redness of conjunctiva and shooting pain in the eyes ^[25].

Bryonia

There is excessive dryness of mucous membrane of entire body with great thirst for large quantities at long intervals. There is dry, spasmodic cough with gagging and vomiting. Headache on coughing, in morning after rising or first opening the eyes. This medicine is usually indicated in the complaints after taking cold or getting hot in summer ^[26].

Eupatorium Perfoliatum

There is great prostration in epidemic influenza, painful soreness of eyeballs and coryza aching in every bone. Loose cough with soreness of chest patient must support the chest with hands. Fever at 9 a.m. one day at noon the next day bitter vomiting at close of chill. Bruised feeling as if broken all over the body. Insatiable thirst before and during chill and fever patient knows chill is coming because he cannot drink enough ^[27].

Gelsimium

There is dizziness, drowsiness, dullness and trembling. In the cases of *Influenza* with no thirst. There is occipital headache preceded by blindness. During fever there is chill without thirst patient wants to be held because he shakes so much. Pulse slow, full, soft and compressible ^[28].

Influenzium

This medicine is indicated in the cases of Influenza, dry and hard cough. General stiffness and ill feeling with chills and headache ^[29].

Justicia Adhatoda

This medicine is highly efficacious for acute catarrhal conditions of the respiratory tract (used in the beginning). Severe dyspnea with cough and tightness across the chest ^[30].

Pulsatilla

This medicine is indicated when there is changeability of

symptoms. There is chilliness without thirst and Chills around 4 a.m. The patient always feels better in open air. Dry cough in the evening and at night, loose cough in the morning with mucoid copious expectoration ^[31].

Rhus Toxicodendron

This medicine is indicated in many cases of influenza, begin in the nose and extend into the larynx with hoarseness. Dry, teasing and tormenting cough with taste of blood in the mouth. There is often violent thirst with painful inflammation of throat. Respiration is hurried and very difficult and hard breathing ^[32].

Conclusion

Homoeopathy is absolutely safe to give any age group of patients be it a new born or elderly person. In case of COVID-19, there is no reason for not attempting homoeopathy. "Dynamics of treatments are changing every day; therefore, homoeopathy should also get an attempt. However, people should follow public health measures and social distancing then there is no harm in taking medicine as preventive measure. Modern medical care and health systems are being tested to handle for effective management of COVID-19. However, there are several gaps, we must remember that "Prevention is Better than Cure". People are overstressed by the compulsions of social distancing and physical barrier methods. Though the existing literature supports the management of symptoms of coronavirus using the Homoeopathic medicines and now this is the need of time to start with translational research to provide scientific evidence for the efficacy and to establish the standard formulation of Homoeopathic medicines for the management of symptoms of COVID-19. From this perspective implementing the suggested interventions plan within the AYUSH healthcare facilities by Homoeopathy workforce may benefit the nation greatly.

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