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Homoeopathic management of herpes zoster facialis with Arsenicum album: A case report

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Abstract

Herpes Zoster Facialis is a painful neurocutaneous condition caused by the reactivation of the Varicella-Zoster Virus (VZV), frequently involving the trigeminal nerve. It presents with unilateral vesicular eruptions and intense neuralgia. Conventional management primarily focuses on antivirals and analgesics, which often fail to address constitutional susceptibility or prevent recurrence^[1]. This case report evaluates the efficacy of Arsenicum Album 30C in the management of Herpes Zoster Facialis in a 40-year-old male. The remedy was selected based on the totality of symptoms including burning pain relieved by warmth, restlessness, anxiety, and emotional distress. The treatment followed classical homoeopathic principles of individualisation and dynamic cure.

The case highlights the potential role of constitutional homoeopathic remedies in acute viral conditions, offering not only symptomatic relief but also prevention of complications such as postherpetic neuralgia^[2].

Keywords: Herpes zoster, arsenicum album, homoeopathy, neuralgia, individualisation, vital force

Introduction

Herpes Zoster Facialis is a neurocutaneous disorder caused by the reactivation of the Varicella-Zoster Virus (VZV), the same virus responsible for chickenpox. After the primary infection, the virus remains latent in the sensory ganglia and may reactivate later in life due to factors such as immunosuppression, stress, trauma, or ageing^[3]. When the reactivation involves the trigeminal nerve, particularly its ophthalmic or maxillary divisions, it results in Herpes Zoster Facialis.

The disease is characterised by unilateral dermatomal vesicular eruptions and intense burning or stabbing pain. The severity and duration vary depending on the patient's immune status. Common complications include postherpetic neuralgia, herpes zoster ophthalmicus, Ramsay Hunt syndrome, and secondary bacterial infections^[4].

Pathophysiology

On reactivation, the virus travels along sensory nerves, causing inflammation and damage to neurons. Clinically, this manifests as pain, burning, and erythematous vesicular eruptions on the affected dermatome. These lesions evolve through various stages — macules, vesicles, pustules, and crusts — over 2–4 weeks. The neuralgia may persist long after lesion resolution, significantly affecting quality of life^[5].

Limitations of Conventional Management

Conventional therapy includes antivirals (e.g., acyclovir), corticosteroids, and analgesics. While these aim to control viral replication and relieve pain, they often fall short in preventing recurrence or addressing the individual's constitutional susceptibility. Long-term or inappropriate use may lead to adverse effects, including immunosuppression, drug resistance, and metabolic disturbances^[6].

Homoeopathic Perspective

Homoeopathy views Herpes Zoster as an outward manifestation of an internal derangement of the vital force. The therapeutic goal is not only to relieve symptoms but also to restore balance through individualised treatment.

Remedies are selected based on the totality of physical, mental, emotional, and miasmatic symptoms. Common homoeopathic remedies used in Herpes Zoster include [8]:

- **Arsenicum Album** – For severe burning pain relieved by warmth, restlessness, and anxiety.
- **Rhus Toxicodendron** – For itching and burning eruptions aggravated by cold and inactivity.
- **Mezereum** – For crusty eruptions with intense neuralgia.
- **Ranunculus Bulbosus** – For sharp, stabbing neuralgic pain and bluish eruptions.
- **Apis Mellifica** – For stinging eruptions, better with cold applications.

Case Presentation

Patient Information

Name: XYZ

Age: 40

Gender: Male

Religion: Hindu

Registration No: 33061

Date: 18/03/2025

Presenting complaints

A 40-year-old male presented with

- Multiple fluid-filled vesicles on the right side of the forehead
- Severe burning pain
- Mild fever
- Lacrimation from the right eye
- Marked anxiety and restlessness

History of Present Illness

- Onset: March 12, 2025
- Initially presented with watery discharge from the right eye and small papules
- Papules progressed to vesicles over 1–2 days with increased burning and pain
- Treated with allopathic medicines for 5 days with no relief
- Pain described as continuous and intolerable
- Associated symptoms: mild fever, disturbed sleep, anxiety

Treatment History

- Allopathic treatment (5 days) – No relief

Past Medical History

- History of chickenpox in childhood
- No significant family history

Physical Generals

Parameter	Description
Appetite	Normal, 3 meals/day
Thirst	Increased, large quantities
Stool	Regular, once daily
Perspiration	Generalised on exertion
Sleep	Disturbed due to pain
Thermal State	Chilly
Desire	Sweet foods

Mental Generals

- Irritable and anxious due to pain
- Restlessness
- Fastidious nature
- Seeks company
- Emotionally distressed by the lack of improvement

Local Examination

- **Site:** Right forehead
- **Lesions:** Multiple clear vesicular eruptions
- **Pain:** Continuous, burning, severe
- **Associated:** Lacrimation from the right eye, mild fever
- **Aggravation:** Touch, motion, open air
- **Amelioration:** Warmth

Totality of Symptoms

1. Right-sided vesicular eruptions on the forehead
2. Severe burning pain
3. Lacrimation from right eye
4. Pain better by warmth
5. Restlessness
6. Anxiety
7. Fastidiousness
8. Desires company
9. Disturbed sleep
10. Desire for sweets
11. Increased thirst
12. Mild fever

Repertorial totality

Rubrics considered from Kent's Repertory and Synthesis Repertory included

- Mind, anxiety,
- Mind, Company, desire for
- Mind, Fastidious
- Stomach, Thirst
- Skin, Eruptions, burning
- Skin, Eruption, vesicular
- Generalities, warm, ameliorates

Repertorial Analysis

MIND			
1 MIND - ANXIETY			✕
2 MIND - COMPANY - desire for			✕
3 MIND - FASTIDIOUS			✕
STOMACH			
4 STOMACH - THIRST			✕
SKIN			
5 SKIN - ERUPTIONS - burning			✕
6 SKIN - ERUPTIONS - vesicular			✕
GENERALS			
7 GENERALS - WARM - amel.			✕
Remedies	ΣSym	ΣDeg	Symptoms
ars.	7	22	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
caust.	7	18	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
phos.	7	18	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
kali-c.	7	17	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
sulph.	7	15	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
calc.	7	14	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
nux-v.	7	14	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Final Remedy Selection

Arsenicum Album 30C – Selected based on the totality and alignment with key physical and mental generals.

Prescription**Rx**

- **Arsenicum Album 30C** – 2 globules, thrice daily for 3 days
- **Saccharum Lactis 30** – 2 globules, thrice daily for 7 days

Patient Advice

- Avoid scratching or touching the eruptions
- Keep the area clean, dry, and covered
- Avoid exposure to cold wind
- Maintain a nutritious diet
- Ensure adequate rest and hydration

Follow-Up and Outcomes

S. No.	Date	Symptoms	Prescription
1.	18/03/2025	Pain reduced by ~30%; vesicles drying; improved sleep and reduced anxiety	Arsenic album 30c/2 globules/ Thrice daily for 3 days Saccharum lactis 30c/2globules /Thrice daily for 7days
2.	20/03/2025	Marked improvement; scab formation; reduced lacrimation; improved mood	Saccharum lactis 30c/ 2 globules /Thrice daily for 7 days
3.	28/03/2025	Complete healing; no postherpetic neuralgia; patient calm and cooperative	Saccharum lactis 30c/ 2 globules /Thrice daily for 7 days



Before Homoeopathic intervention



After Homoeopathic intervention

restore the disturbed vital force through individualised prescription. This case of Herpes Zoster Facialis successfully managed with *Arsenicum Album* highlights the efficacy of constitutional homoeopathy in acute conditions. Further clinical trials and larger case series are required to validate its broader applicability and establish evidence-based guidelines.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

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Discussion

This case exemplifies the homoeopathic approach in managing acute viral conditions like Herpes Zoster Facialis. *Arsenicum Album*, selected on the basis of individualised totality, offered rapid relief and complete recovery without residual neuralgia. The remedy's alignment with the patient's mental state (anxiety, restlessness), modalities (amelioration by warmth), and characteristic symptoms (burning pain, lacrimation) justified its selection.

This report adds to clinical evidence supporting the utility of homoeopathy in managing acute viral neuralgic conditions. While being a single case, it demonstrates the importance of detailed case-taking, repertorial correlation, and miasmatic understanding in achieving effective outcomes.

Conclusion

Homoeopathy treats beyond the disease label, aiming to

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