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Hahnemann's perspective of disease in modern lens

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Abstract

During Hahnemann's period, pathology was still in its primitive stage. However, through exceptional foresight and careful observation, Hahnemann established Homoeopathy that was far ahead of its contemporary medical systems. The advancement of pathology helped to verify Hahnemann's perspective of disease, and they harmonize with the modern medicine. Hahnemann detailed various factors as the causes of diseases which correlate with the modern day etiology. He outlined the nature of diseases, their classification and how they transmit from person to person. He illustrated multiple measures for preventing diseases especially epidemics and for maintaining health. He also highlighted the need for auxiliary modes of treatment in cases where medicines alone cannot cure the disease. It is because of this logical analysis of Hahnemann and the fixed cardinal principles that Homoeopathy rests on, the Homoeopathic treatment is tested with time and continue to be effective.

Keywords: Homoeopathy, pathology, modern medicine, lesser writings, prophylaxis, etiology

Introduction

Hahnemann discovered Homoeopathy in the year 1790. In an article titled "An Essay on a New Principle for Ascertaining the Curative Power of Drugs" published in the year 1796, he introduced Homoeopathy with its core principles. Following that, Hahnemann developed his magnum opus, Homoeopathy [1]. During Hahnemann's period, pathology was still in its rudimentary phase. Though little knowledge of anatomy and physiology was gained through the human and animal dissections, no one truly understood the cause of diseases and how they progress [2]. Despite this, through meticulous observation and logical analysis, Hahnemann deduced many facts and conditions that correlate with the modern pathology. It was post-obit of Hahnemann that the science of pathology started progressing. Pathology has advanced significantly in recent years, with new terminology replacing outdated ones. For example, Bright's disease is replaced by glomerulonephritis. However, the conclusions drawn by Hahnemann were tested with time and proven to be rational. In this article, an attempt has been made to compare Homoeopathic concept of disease with modern pathology.

Relation between Homoeopathy and Pathology

Pathology ('pathos'-disease and 'logos' means study) is defined as that branch of science which deals with diseased or abnormal conditions of living being [3]. An organism's response to an irritant is known as a symptom. If the irritation has progressed sufficiently for a definite period, abnormality in structure and function results, which is termed as pathology. These mechanisms may be excited or called into action by absorbed drugs circulating in the blood stream, by toxins of disease, by anaphylactic antigens, psychic influences or by idiopathic factors. When we administer a drug to a healthy individual it produces certain symptoms, which cannot be seen, cannot be smelled, and cannot be touched, but can only be described by patient. We refer to them as subjective symptoms. In addition to these, physical examinations reveal some other systemic alterations. These are nothing but pathological changes [4]. In terms of Hahnemann, the outwardly expressed signs and symptoms are the result of deranged vital force by the action of these morbid agents [5]. According to Hahnemann's Organon, each symptom is fully expressed in terms of sensation, location, and modality. Pathology deals with causes, effects, and changes that occur in living entities. Hahnemann was a firm believer in the multifactorial causation of disease. He even classified diseases into various classes based on their etiology.

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Later, studies executed by Pettenkofer of Munich, a proponent of multifactorial concept of disease^[6] corroborated with Dr. Hahnemann's observations. He briefly classified the causes of disease into exciting causes that manifest as acute diseases and fundamental causes that lead to chronic diseases^[5]. Even before Antony van Leuwenhoek, Hahnemann shed light on the concept of microorganisms as causative factors of diseases and named them as miasmas, due to the fact that he was unaware of modern terms.⁷ Hahnemann emphasized the importance to

environmental factors such as weather changes, meteoric and telluric factors that can lead to diseases. He named the diseases that arise from the usage of hurtful drugs and treatment as artificial chronic diseases which the modern medicine denotes as iatrogenic diseases. Hahnemann classified the diseases that occur from mechanical injuries under local maladies. Modern life style disorders were interpreted by Hahnemann as pseudo chronic diseases which can be treated by avoiding certain foods, drinks and change of place from unhygienic areas^[5].

Table 1: Comparison of Hahnemann's and modern terminology of causation of diseases

Hahnemann's Terminology	Modern Terminology
Miasma	Microorganisms (Bacteria, Viruses etc)
Artificial chronic diseases	Iatrogenic diseases
Pseudo-chronic diseases	Life-style disorders
Local Maladies	Mechanical injuries
Mental diseases	Psychiatric illnesses

Hahnemann untangled the nature of dynamic diseases as acute and chronic diseases. However, unlike the modern medicine that classifies these diseases based on their duration of disease, Hahnemann classified them based on their expressions. According to him, acute diseases are those that arise due to transient explosion of latent psora and recovers quickly to their dormant state if it is not too violent

in nature to cause death of the patient. Likewise, chronic diseases are slow in onset and progression. These arise due to fundamental causes which are deep rooted miasms^[5]. Even today's homoeopathic doctors follow this classification of diseases while deciding on how to treat the patient in front of them.

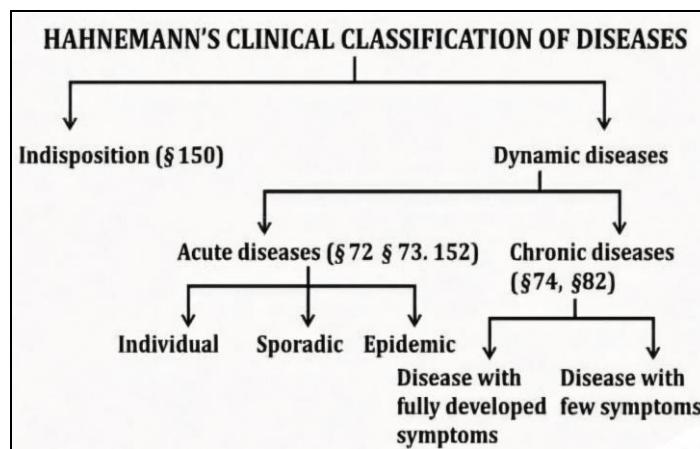


Fig 1: Hahnemann's classification of diseases

Transmission of diseases

Hahnemann detailed several possible ways of infection transmission^[8]. In various instances, he used the terms infectious and contagious for the diseases that spread from one person to another in overcrowded places. In his work called the theory of chronic diseases, he states that a person with infectious psoric itch may have vesicles containing clear fluid. When this person touches any objects, the fluid may contaminate the object. Any other person who touches these objects may also contract this infectious psoric itch (fomite transmission). He also explained about sexual and vertical transmission of diseases. While talking about syphilis and gonorrhoea, which he knew very well judging by his article Instructions for Surgeons Respecting Venereal Disease. He spoke about congenital miasms, i.e., symptoms present from birth that seemed to be "inherited" from the mother during childbirth via "local affections" in the mother's genital tract. His conclusions were similar regarding Psora^[9].

Latent period

Hahnemann demonstrated that during the progression of the disease, miasms like Psora, Sycosis and Syphilis remains latent for a period of time and reveal themselves later with

signs and symptoms^[10]. Today, the microbiologists agree that certain diseases remain latent during unfavourable conditions and can cause secondary infection when sufficient conditions are present^[11].

Prevention of diseases

Pathology is crucial for disease prevention by enabling early detection through screenings (blood tests, biopsies), understanding disease mechanisms for targeted interventions, guiding personalized medicine, and supporting public health surveillance for outbreak control, all by analysing body samples at cellular/molecular levels to spot risks before symptoms manifest, leading to better outcomes and tailored prevention strategies. There are four stages of prevention namely primordial, primary, secondary and tertiary prevention during the clinical course of a disease^[12].

In Aphorism 4, Hahnemann said that a physician must be aware of those things that derange the health and he should know how to eliminate them from healthy individuals. All his life, Hahnemann worked for improving the quality of health of human beings so as to prevent them from getting sick.

Hahnemann gave importance to diet and regimen and

exercises as a measure to prevent many diseases. The statement "abstinence from things that are necessary for the support of life" suggests that a deficiency of vitamins, minerals, and other essential nutrients can result in diseases (eg, marasmus and anaemia). He recommended using diet and regimen and advises exercise along with medicine when necessary to cure the disease in aphorism 73 and 74. For instance, if a disease resulted from a deficiency of essential nutrients, he advocated providing those nutrients to treat the disease [13].

Similarly, he mentioned that certain habits and lifestyles can also act as causes for diseases. These include various forms of addiction, such as alcohol and substance abuse, as well as prolonged periods of staying awake at night, leading a sedentary lifestyle, excessive exercise, and overeating. Furthermore, residing in unhealthy and unsanitary environments, such as areas with significant water stagnation and pollution, can also lead to diseases. He also pointed out that persistent mental stress can contribute to the onset of diseases. From this, we can understand that Hahnemann did not blindly adhere to the notion that every disease is solely caused by dynamic factors. Instead, he rationalized the causes based on their nature and advocated appropriate treatments. A physician should be knowledgeable about all these to be a preserver of health [5]. Hahnemann gave special emphasis on the prevention of epidemics. An epidemic is a sudden, unusual increase in the number of cases of a disease in a specific community or region, significantly exceeding the normally expected level. When an epidemic spreads across multiple countries or continents, it is called a pandemic. In order to prevent epidemics, Hahnemann gave an outline of the structure of towns, where paper mills, military hospitals, prisons, dealers of old cloths, butcher's shops should be located in the town. He even informed about when and how the drainage of a town should be cleaned in order to prevent them from causing diseases [14].

In a letter to Minister of Police, he suggested that the only means for checking an epidemic in its early stages is to separate health from the diseased individuals which we call as quarantine. He gave directions on how to identify the sick effected by the epidemic and their treatment. In that letter he advised on how the setup of hospital building specified for managing epidemics should be even to the minute details about the bed sheets, doors and windows. He also explained regarding the medical personnel like physicians and nurses, the protective measures they should take, guidelines to check the infected, instructions to handle the deceased, specifications for the recovered individuals. These instructions prove to be still valid as we have noticed in the recent epidemics and pandemic. He said that a remedy that can prevent a healthy individual from getting infected from the disease miasm, can also be used on the infected persons to stifle the disease in its initial stages [14].

Supportive care

Supportive care is crucial for improving quality of life in serious illnesses by managing symptoms, side effects, and stress, encompassing physical (pain, fatigue), psychological (anxiety, depression), social, and spiritual needs for both patients and families, from diagnosis through survivorship or end-of-life, helping patients tolerate treatment better and live more fully. It's a holistic, patient-centered approach that complements primary treatments like cancer therapies, addressing the whole person, not just the disease. Hahnemann threw spotlight on the auxiliary modes of treatment such as Galvanism & electricity, Magnetism, Mesmarism, Massage and Baths. Hahnemann recognized their value in the cases where medicines alone cannot bring

about desired results in the patient. Now a days, these are replaced by counseling, psychotherapy, physiotherapy, music therapy etc.

Conclusion

Homoeopathic prescriptions are based on the cardinal principles as established by Hahnemann. The Homoeopathic medicines that were proved during Hahnemann's time still prove to be valuable in the treatment of patients. However, pathology helps us to give a deeper understanding of how these medicines are effective. Due to Hahnemann's exceptional & advanced foresight, his teachings could not be fully comprehended until science had confirmed and clarified the truths that formed its foundation, a task that science has accomplished with extraordinary efficiency. Homoeopathy is an ocean of medical system where pathology acts as a tool to explore the depths of that ocean. Homoeopathy relies on holistic approach. We cannot achieve the permanent cure by considering only the symptom similarity or pathological similarity. We should frame a totality considering both the symptoms and pathology which gives the complete picture of the disease.

Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest related to this study.

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